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## **Family Plays**

# ONCE UPON A SANTA CLAUS

Book and lyrics by  
Sylvia Ashby

Music by  
Thomas J. Halpain

Based on L. Frank Baum's  
*Life and Adventrues of Santa Claus*

# ONCE UPON A SANTA CLAUS

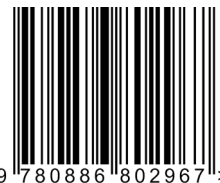
**Drama with optional songs. Book and lyrics by Sylvia Ashby. Music by Thomas J. Halpain. Based on L. Frank Baum's The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus. Cast: 17 to 35+ actors, flexible.** This fast-moving play narrates the life of Nicholas, a foundling, from his discovery by the immortals until his old age when he is near death. On a youthful trip into the world, Nicholas dedicates his life to helping children, often victims of poverty and sickness. Now Santa is dying. A unanimous vote of the immortals is needed to bestow the Golden Mantle of Immortality on a human; however, Prince Grim feels no human is worthy. Opposition is overcome on Christmas Eve and Santa sets forth with rejoicing by all. The title role consists of the boy, young Nicholas, and the young man, Nicholas. In the course of the play, the actor playing the young man evolves into our familiar, folksy image of Santa Claus. These transitions, theatrical and compressed, are in no way confusing on stage. Notes, pertaining to Nicholas as well as other aspects of production, can be found at the back of the playbook. *Scenery can be elaborate or suggestive. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Music score available. Demo/accompaniment CD available. Video available. Code: O93.*

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Once Upon a Santa Claus



# ONCE UPON A SANTA CLAUS

Freely adapted

by

**SYLVIA ASHBY**

from L. Frank Baum's

*Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*

with music by

**THOMAS J. HALPAIN**

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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SYLVIA ASHBY

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“Produced by special arrangement with  
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**For Harlan Reddell**

# ONCE UPON A SANTA CLAUS

## *Cast*

*(Minimum: 17; Maximum: 33 or more)*

QUEEN ZEPHYRA, ruler of Wood Nymphs  
SYLVAN, a Nymph  
WILLOW, another Nymph  
MASTER WOODSMAN, ruler of Forests  
NYMBLE, an Elf  
PRANX, another Elf  
SPRIGGAN, a Grim  
SPRAT, another Grim  
PRINCE GRIM, their ruler  
YOUNG NICHOLAS (NICKY), as a boy  
NICHOLAS, young man who ages gradually  
PETER, young boy  
SARAH, his sister  
SUSAN, young visitor  
WILL, her brother  
ELSA, rich child  
TERRY, another young visitor  
UGHWUZZ TRIBE, monstrous creatures (3 or more)  
KING UGHWUZZ, their leader  
DASHER, a Reindeer  
DANCER, another Reindeer  
LISA, young girl  
PAT, her brother  
MOTHER, their mother  
AUNT MEG, visitor  
ROB, her nephew  
BETH, her niece  
KATE, another niece  
LADY ELNORA  
MISTRESS MEADOWS } Immortal Council  
MASTER MARINER }

First produced at Monterey High School, Lubbock, Texas, under the direction of Harlan Reddell



## ABOUT THE PLAY

This script is freely adapted from *Life and Adventures of Santa Claus* by L. Frank Baum. The action of the play is continuous and runs about an hour. With doubling, the show can be performed by 17 actors (see pp. 33-34 for suggestions). Many roles can be played by either sex. Scenery can be elaborate or suggestive.

The title role consists of the boy, Young Nicholas, and the young man, Nicholas. In the course of the play, the actor playing the young man evolves into our familiar, folksy image of Santa Claus. These transitions, theatrical and compressed, are in no way confusing on stage. Notes, pertaining to Nicholas as well as other aspects of production, can be found at the back of this playbook.

Composed by Thomas J. Halpain, a "multivoice" digital synthesizer score, with music cues, sound effects, and song accompaniment, is available on tape from I. E. Clark. A piano/vocal score is also available. The show can be performed with or without songs.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### *Properties*

#### Scene 1

Swaddled infant—in a grove

Chalice cup—Willow

Magical wands. Try slender tubes or large straws filled with glitter which sprays out—Nymphs

Garland of flowers—Sylvan

Bouquet of flowers—Nymble

Small wooden pipe—Pranx

Wooden toy horses. These props suggest Nicholas's progress as a toy-maker: He receives a small wooden horse from Sprat, makes a larger painted one to show Sylvan, and finally presents child with a still finer horse on wheels.

Crutch—Peter

Bits of food—Peter

#### Scene 2

Axe—Nicholas

Doll—in Susan's sack

Other toys. The finished toys can be pre-set, perhaps in a large basket placed on stage during transition into Scene 2. For the final scene, toys can be placed during the preceding business with children. Or Santa's helpers can bring on sack already filled (p. 31), then add a few last-minute items.

Clubs—Ughwuzz Tribe

Rope, mouth gag—Ughwuzz Tribe

Horn—King Ughwuzz

Small weapons—Elves, Grims

Sleigh with harness—Grims

Woolen stockings (later stuffed with candy, toys, etc.)—Lisa, Pat

#### Scene 3

Walking stick—Nicholas

Bed. A small bed or cot can roll out during the transition into Scene 3; bed can also roll back after the transformation.

Flowers—Elves

Food—Grims

Magic Mantle. More of a shawl than a robe, it may descend from the flies, or Nymphs can bring it on. A section of shiny gold cloth works fine.

### *Casting and Directing*

Three actors play the title role: First we meet the boy—YOUNG NICHOLAS (Nicky); then NICHOLAS as a young man who ages; finally the Double, the OLD MAN, who appears at the opening of Scene 3 (p. 26) and transforms into the energetic Santa Claus in traditional garb (p. 30).

Gender is not important in casting the Ughwuzz, Grims, Elves, Reindeer; in fact, several of the children's names are purposely ambiguous (Pat, Terry).

The following doubling schedule is a suggestion for reducing the cast to 17: Willow, Susan, Mother, Aunt (delay Willow's entrance, p. 28). Young Nicholas,

Will, Rob. Ughwuzz 1, Lisa, Lady Elnora. Ughwuzz 2, Dancer, Beth. Ughwuzz 3, Dasher, Kate. King Ughwuzz, Old Man (Nicholas's double). Sarah, Elsa, Mistress Meadows. Terry, Pat, Master Mariner.

The action of the play is continuous. The script is divided into three scenes for convenience only. It is important that children see the traditional Santa in the beginning of the play so they can relate this unfolding tale to the Santa they know so well.

To help distinguish between **Elves** and **Grimms**, consider the following suggestions: Light and slender, Elves have a flair for song, dance, acrobatics; speak in high voices. More gnome-like, Grimms are heavy set with mossy wigs and beards, walk duck-footed, and speak in lower, more growlish tones. (See *Costumes* notes)

The transformation effect at the end of the play works extremely well and is fairly simple to pull off. The Double need not resemble Nicholas at all. The Double speaks no lines, is heavily padded, his clothing is identical to the work clothes Nicholas wears, his face is hidden behind a full beard; he walks bent over with a cane—to mask any height difference—and immediately lies down in bed, arm across face or facing upstage. The Mantle is draped over him by Nymphs. He rises, stares in astonishment at the Mantle, then makes a hasty exit—along with the Mantle—during a blackout. In his place stands newly invigorated Nicholas in full Santa suit.

Several scenes can be played on the apron in front of the curtain: Nicholas and Master Woodsman traveling the world (Scene 1), Nicholas departing for the Valley (Scene 1), and the Christmas trip with sleigh (Scene 2).

### *Costumes*

For the **Elves**, consider leotards, short pants, stocking caps, and bright colors. For the **Grimms**, dark homespun, thick stockings, short boots or buskins, britches, and broad-brimmed hats. The **Master Woodsman** wears a regal floor-length robe and a crown of leaves. The **Ughwuzz** are rather monstrous creatures in appearance. They have shaggy hair and long tails, and wear animal skins and tattered rags.

Once grown, **Nicholas** can wear the same basic outfit—gradually adding wool cap, glasses, beard, longer hair (slowly changing color), padding, etc. for age. Grimms can present him with a complete Santa suit or only jacket, belt, and hat. He appears in complete suit after transformation in final scene.

### *Music, Sound, and Special Effects*

This script can be produced with or without songs, or with just one song for the finale. The piano/vocal score and an audio tape with music cues, sound effects, and song accompaniment are available from I. E. Clark, Inc.

A number of scenes lend themselves to dance or choreographed movement: The "naming scene" should have a ceremonial quality—the Nymphs can circle with garlands. Similarly, Nymphs carrying the Golden Mantle can take on a processional quality. Business involving Elves also lends itself to movement—especially during their songs.

Possibilities for special effects include snow falling in Scene 2 and the finale; smoke from the mountain top when King Ughwuzz appears; smoke or billowing clouds blowing away from sleigh, to give travel idea in Scene 2; strobe lights or mirror ball when Nymphs appear during the battle scene. For a mys-

terious glowing effect on Master Woodsman's cloak (during journey with Nicholas), try ultraviolet paint under black light. This would also work on descent of the Golden Mantle.

The Set

This script can be staged with elaborate or minimal scenery. The Forest can be suggested by a few cutout trees. The Valley setting consists of a cottage and a mountain peak. For the cottage, Grims and Elves can erect intersecting walls; a painted cutout, rolled or flown in, also works. A cutout in front of a platform can establish the mountain area. The cave, which is not visible but only implied, can be situated behind the mountain, or off in the wings. To eliminate mountain entirely, let Ughwuzz appear and disappear from wings.

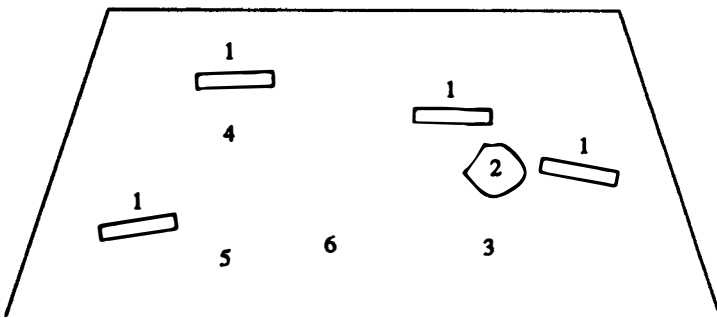
More extensive scenery could include three-dimensional trees, forest backdrop, and borders. The line of trees works as background for both Forest and Valley locales. Think of the Forest as giant trees, gnarled limbs, entwining branches overhead, and rich foliage. For Scene 2, a more elaborate cottage could be shifted on, along with the mountain.

Toward the end of Scene 1, when lights dim in the Forest, action shifts downstage, facilitating the transition into the Valley.

The chimney top needs to be large enough for Santa to climb into and duck behind. This piece, as well as the fireplace mantle, can slide at Left as needed, or be pre-set.

One production used a combination of standard platforms, risers, and step units across the width of the stage. Ragged green and brown cloth strips were stapled to these units. Actors were able to peer through strips as well as make entrances and exits through them. This design created an easy, inexpensive basic set with a fantasy look. On Stage Right, the higher platforms provided a mountain top; on Stage Left, they provided a dramatic position for the Immortal Council and for Sylvan's appearances.

Floor Plan



- 1—Trees
- 2—Rock
- The following are to be rolled or flown in as necessary.
- 3—Santa's cottage
- 4—Mountain
- 5—Fireplace mantle
- 6—Chimney

# ONCE UPON A SANTA CLAUS

## Scene 1

### Music 1: Overture

*[As LIGHTS come up, SANTA CLAUS, in traditional costume, enters to greet audience. MUSIC under]*

SANTA CLAUS. Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas. Hello, boys and girls. Do you know who I am? *[Pause for response]* Of course you do! But I wasn't always called Santa Claus. Ohhh no. For I was a child once. Like you. But that was a very long time ago. Perhaps you've never even heard the story of my early days—the strange tale of how my life began. *[QUEEN ZEPHYRA, chief Wood Nymph, enters. SANTA CLAUS gestures toward her]* Queen Zephyra can tell you the whole story, for she was there from the start—almost. She knows what really happened . . . once upon a time . . . *[Exits as QUEEN ZEPHYRA joins in, overlapping his line]*

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. . . . once upon a time, long, long ago, in a dark forest, far away in the lands of the North, a small baby was found . . . Who was he? Where did he come from? That is still a mystery . . . *[She slips away; MUSIC segues into:]*

*[ Music Cue 2: Crying Baby. SYLVAN, a graceful but determined Nymph, searches grove, finally discovering the swaddled infant]*

SYLVAN. Oh my! What is this? A baby? A baby animal . . . ? *[Another CRY. She picks up baby]* No hair . . . no claws . . . no tail. Fingers . . . toes . . . A human baby! Poor little thing. Ohhh, is that a smile I see? *[Fearful]* What should I do? *[QUEEN ZEPHYRA and MASTER WOODSMAN enter majestically; he wears floor-length robe, crown of leaves. WILLOW, a Nymph, offers him chalice cup. SYLVAN watches, hesitant]*

WILLOW. We have awaited your return, Master Woodsman. Welcome.

MASTER WOODSMAN. *[Sensing]* There is a strange presence in the Forest.

SYLVAN. [*Approaches cautiously*] Sire, look what I found. At the edge of the Forest. A babe in the woods. Human. I think.

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. What's this! Where did he come from?

WILLOW. Let me see! [*Awed*] Never have I seen a human child before! Look—he's smiling!

MASTER WOODSMAN. [*Outraged*] Sylvan, you have defied me! All contact with the human race is strictly forbidden.

SYLVAN. But he was in danger—there are ferocious beasts roaming . . . Please, Master Woodsman. Let me keep the little fellow.

MASTER WOODSMAN. Here? In the Great Forest of the North! Where the human race has never ventured?

SYLVAN. Please, Master Woodsman. You see how weak and helpless he is.

MASTER WOODSMAN. Not another word. The matter is settled.

SYLVAN. [*Pleading*] How can it be wrong to protect an innocent child?

WILLOW. Sylvan, it is not allowed. Not proper.

SYLVAN. But why?

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. Sylvan, you don't understand. Humans are not like us—

MASTER WOODSMAN. Here in our forest glade we live happily . . . without the sorrows of humankind.

SYLVAN. Yet I have heard stories about Master Woodsman assisting these pitiful folk!

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. [*Smiling*] True enough. She is right about that.

MASTER WOODSMAN. [*Defensive*] Oh—I admit—I have rescued children who wandered off . . . I helped for a moment—nothing more!

SYLVAN. Then let me care for this infant. Master Woodsman, I beg you.

MASTER WOODSMAN. The Law, child. The Law.

SYLVAN. You created the Law of the Forest. Who would oppose Master Woodsman of the World?

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. True enough. She is right again!

SYLVAN. If I cannot keep him, what then? We abandon him to the wolves? Can Master Woodsman be so cruel?

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. Do consider her request, Master Woodsman.

MASTER WOODSMAN. Well . . . [*Relenting*] So be it! Sylvan,

the child is yours. But hear me: Never again will a human be adopted by an Immortal.

SYLVAN. You will have no cause for regret. I promise.

WILLOW. What shall we call him? He must have a name. It's only proper.

SYLVAN. His name shall be Nicholas. My own dear Nicholas.

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. Excellent. We bless his name. *[NYMPHS set baby on bench or rock, resting in a pool of LIGHT. Music Cue 3: Naming. NYMPHS circle with sparkling wands]*

NYMPHS. *[Chanting]* Nicholas . . .

MASTER WOODSMAN. Let him be Nicholas . . .

ALL. Nicholas . . . Nicholas . . .

NYMPHS. *[Kneeling around the baby]* You came to us

From darkness into light.

We will remember

One magic night.

MASTER WOODSMAN. Let no beast or reptile harm him. Let him walk fearlessly through the Forest. He has my protection. *[MUSIC up as NYMPHS rise and circle the baby, blessing him with their wands]*

NYMPHS. May the power of my wand be yours. *[MAGICAL SOUND: WAND POWER]*

MASTER WOODSMAN. *[Bowing]* Queen Zephyra, farewell. *[Crosses]* Let me warn you, Sylvan. We Immortals live forever, without sickness or death—

SYLVAN. I know!

MASTER WOODSMAN. You will remain young forever, but Nicholas will change. In years to come—he will grow white-haired and feeble—

SYLVAN. So? That is the future.

MASTER WOODSMAN. The future comes quickly. Someday Nicholas will be only a memory. Remember my words. *[Exits]*

#### Music 4: Lullaby

SYLVAN. *[Heedless]* No matter. The future is far . . . far away. Nicholas is mine for now. *[Holding baby, sings:]*

Sleep, sleep, my little one,

You'll be my lad, my own dear son.

In time to come you'll go away—

I wish my love could help you stay.

*[SYLVAN exits with baby, followed by WILLOW. PRINCE GRIM strides angrily to the Queen]*

PRINCE GRIM. That child was granted special protection from animals. Why was I not consulted! Only I have such power. We Grimms have authority over all animals in the Forest.

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. Let me remind you, Prince Grim: Master Woodsman reigns over all forests and all things dwelling in them.

PRINCE GRIM. I'm telling you, Zephyra—that boy is not one of us. Never has been. Never will be. Et cetera. Et cetera.

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. It is the decision of Master Woodsman.

PRINCE GRIM. Furthermore, the Immortal Council was not even consulted about this adoption. Et cetera. Et cetera.

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. That decision is final, Prince Grim!

PRINCE GRIM. Very well! But remember, Zephyra, rules are rules. Expect trouble. *[Crossing]* Trouble, trouble, trouble. *[Exits]*

### Music 5: Transition

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. There was no trouble. Not yet . . . *[SUN-LIGHT]*

SYLVAN. *[Enters calling:]* Nicholas . . . Nicholas . . . ? *[Sits, weaving garland of flowers]*

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. Under Sylvan's watchful eye little Nicholas grew quickly. The cheerful lad made friends with all the Immortals of the Forest. Almost all. Nymphs taught him to love trees. Grimms taught him to love animals. And the love of plants and flowers he learned from Elves. *[Offstage laughter of ELVES. Chased by PRANX, NYMBLE enters with bouquet, stops in mid-chase to offer Sylvan a flower. Playful, competitive, ELVES enjoy their own antics]*

ELVES. Nicky. Nicky. *[PRANX steals bouquet. YOUNG NICHOLAS (NICKY), a small boy, enters running]*

YOUNG NICHOLAS. Wait for me. Don't go so fast. Your legs are too long. *[He embraces Sylvan. NYMBLE retrieves bouquet, shows a flower to Young Nicholas]*

NYMBLE. What's this?

YOUNG NICHOLAS. Daffodil! No—dahlia! No—

SYLVAN. *[Encouraging]* You remember, Nicholas—



YOUNG NICHOLAS. Daisy! *[ELVES jump up and down, clapping. SYLVAN beams]*

PRANX. Nicky, tell me this: What did the bee say to the flower? *[NICKY shakes his head]*

NYMBLE. Will you be my honey! *[ELVES laugh; NICKY is bewildered]*

PRANX. How about this one: When is a spotted dog most likely to enter a house? *[Another pause]*

NYMBLE. When the door is open! *[ALL three laugh. ELVES compete with acrobatics: NYMBLE cartwheels, PRANX fails, NICKY succeeds. More applause. PRANX reveals small wooden pipe]*

PRANX. Listen. *[Music Cue 6: Pranx Pipes. NYMBLE dances]*

### Music 7: That's What I Like About Elves

YOUNG NICHOLAS. Pranx, let me try. *[Peculiar sounds as he practices]*

NYMBLE. You can do it, Nicky! *[NICKY finally gets tune right. ELVES dance, then sing:]*

ELVES. We race, we chase,  
We skip, we hop,  
We jump for joy  
And never stop!

YOUNG NICHOLAS. *[Sings:]* Giggling, wiggling,  
Spinning like a top.

That's what I like about Elves.

ALL. That's what we like about Elves.

ELVES. We dance, we prance,  
We flip, we flop,  
We romp and run,  
Until we drop.

YOUNG NICHOLAS. Giggling, wiggling,  
Spinning like a top.

That's what I like about Elves.

ALL. That's what we like about Elves.

*[MUSIC stops abruptly as YOUNG NICHOLAS spies Grims off-stage. Gnarled and ungainly, these gentle, rather serious folk walk duck-footed and speak in growlish tones. SPRIGGAN is more out-*

*spoken; SPRAT, the shy one. As NICKY tries to run off, ELVES pull him back]*

SYLVAN. Don't be afraid. *[SPRIGGAN enters cautiously]*

PRANX. That's Spriggan. He's a Grim. *[SPRAT enters]*

NYMBLE. And Sprat. *[SPRAT tries to run off; SPRIGGAN pulls him back]*

SYLVAN. Don't be afraid.

SPRIGGAN. That's Nicky.

SPRAT. *[Timid]* What's a Nicky?

PRANX. *[Encouraging Nicky]* Grimms are friendly.

SPRIGGAN. Loyal, brave, generous—

SPRAT. *[Whispering]* Trustworthy. Don't forget trustworthy.

SYLVAN. Helpful, kind—

SPRAT. Spriggan, should I give him this? *[SPRIGGAN nods.*

*SPRAT approaches, shyly offers small wooden horse]*

YOUNG NICHOLAS. For me? Thank you very much, Sprat.

SPRIGGAN. Don't say thank you. Embarrasses him.

YOUNG NICHOLAS. A horse! Wonderful. Did you carve it?

SPRAT. *[Awkwardly staring at feet]* Toy. *[Runs off; SPRIGGAN follows]*

YOUNG NICHOLAS. *[Puzzled]* Toy? What's that? *[Racing after]* Sprat, Sprat. Show me how to make a toy. *[Exits]*

SYLVAN. Take care, Nicholas. *[ELVES pursue Young Nicholas out]*

### Music 8: Transition

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. Years passed and they were happy ones . . . *[Grown to young manhood, NICHOLAS enters, whittling on larger horse. This actor, aging gradually, plays Nicholas for the rest of the play]*

GRIMS. *[Off]* Nick. Nick. Wait for me. Don't go so fast. Your legs are too long.

SPRIGGAN. We have short legs.

SPRAT. *[Proudly]* But big feet.

NICHOLAS. *[Showing horse]* What do you think, Sprat?

SPRAT. *[Not as shy as before]* Needs work. Tail's not right. Here. Like this. *[NICHOLAS sits at Sylvan's feet, whittling and whistling as SPRAT supervises]*

SYLVAN. [*Admiring*] Green . . . yellow . . . blue . . . Who painted it?

NICHOLAS. Nymble showed me how.

SYLVAN. A most handsome horse indeed.

SPRAT. Toy.

NICHOLAS. Tell me something, Sylvan. Why am I so different? Why, in this whole Forest, is there no one like me?

SYLVAN. [*Evasive*] I . . . I . . . do not know, Nicholas—Perhaps—

[*MASTER WOODSMAN enters Left; QUEEN, WILLOW, Right. TWILIGHT*]

ALL. [*Bowing*] Master Woodsman.

WILLOW. [*Offering chalice cup*] Welcome home, Master Woodsman.

MASTER WOODSMAN. We drink to the health of our precious grove.

SYLVAN. Nicholas, this is Master Woodsman. [*He bows*]

MASTER WOODSMAN. A fine young man . . . sturdy and straight as a sapling. You should be pleased.

SYLVAN. I am, sire. Nicholas is my pride and joy.

NICHOLAS. [*Kneeling*] Master Woodsman, they say you are wisest of all. Then perhaps you know why there is no one like me? Why am I the only one?

MASTER WOODSMAN. [*Horrified*] You know absolutely nothing about your true self?! They have kept you in the dark. [*Decisively*] Sylvan, it is time. Past time!

SYLVAN. [*Apprehensive*] Time for what?

MASTER WOODSMAN. Time for Nicholas to leave the Forest and meet his fellow creatures. Time to discover his true family: Human-kind.

SYLVAN. [*Clinging to Nicholas*] No, Master Woodsman. He is so happy here. With us.

MASTER WOODSMAN. Nevertheless, Nicholas shall accompany me on my journey through the world.

NICHOLAS. That would be an honor indeed. When do we depart?

MASTER WOODSMAN. At once.

SYLVAN. He is far too young. Later. Some other time.

QUEEN ZEPHYRA. Master Woodsman knows best.

SYLVAN. No. Please, Master Woodsman!

MASTER WOODSMAN. He is not a babe in the woods any more. You must let him go.

NICHOLAS. I am ready, sir. *[Embraces Sylvan]*

MASTER WOODSMAN. *[Kisses her hand]* Queen Zephyra

The hour has come to bid you all farewell.

The outcome of our travels? Time will tell.

*[ Music Cue 9: As LIGHTS dim in forest, others vanish quietly. NICHOLAS and MASTER WOODSMAN cross downstage]* Place your hand upon my cloak. Hold fast while we journey through the air. Now we shall encircle the globe and study the strange ways of the human family. *[STORM MUSIC: TRAVELERS strain as if buffeted by wind. NICHOLAS struggles to maintain grasp on Master Woodsman's billowing cloak]* Hold tight. If you lose your grip, you will be separated forever from your home in the Forest. You will be lost. *[TRAVEL MUSIC: They pantomime motion of travel]*

NICHOLAS. Amazing! I am one of millions! I am not alone!

MASTER WOODSMAN. At last you understand. Immortals are few, but humans many. *[Offstage VOICES of children playing games]*

NICHOLAS. *[Seeing children in audience]* Look! All those children! Just like me—when I was young. Aren't they delightful! So happy and joyous. *[Pointing to a little girl in audience]* Look—that little girl over there—in the bright dress. She has such a wonderful laugh. *[And to a little boy]* And that little fellow over there! I was a tiny tot like that once. Children! I think I like them!

MASTER WOODSMAN. Children are the same everywhere—all love to laugh and play.

NICHOLAS. But look at the faces of the older ones. Some are smiling and eager. Others—worried and worn. Why are they so troubled?

MASTER WOODSMAN. They constantly struggle for wealth—which they prize so dearly.

NICHOLAS. Why are those men in gray uniforms hurting the ones in brown?

MASTER WOODSMAN. They like to quarrel—about borders—beliefs—

NICHOLAS. Tell me, Master Woodsman. Why are so many old and sick?