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Dramatic Publishing

The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus

by
L. FRANK BAUM

Dramatized by
by
PAT COOK



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF SANTA CLAUS)

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The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus

A Full-length Play

For 9 men, 8 women, 10 either gender, 5 children, extras.

CHARACTERS

FRANK BAUM author and narrator of the story
NECILE Wood Nymph and foster mother to Claus
AK the Master Woodsman and ruler of the forest
QUEEN Ak's wife and gentle lady
WILL king of the Knooks and Faeries
A RYL one of the worker Immortals
A KNOOK another of the worker Immortals
A NYMPH another worker Immortal
CLAUS a young bearded man
WEEKUM a curious and cute boy
MAYRIE likewise curious and cute girl
JACK FROST a spritely Winter Pixie
AWGWA #1 one of the ugly child taunters
AWGWA #2 another child taunter
MAID a brash no-nonsense maid
REINDEER #1 forest creature and friend to Claus
REINDEER #2 another forest creature
BARLO a Knook who becomes an Elf
LEM another Knook

CHILD #1 a child who needs a toy
CHILD #2 another toyless child
CHILD #3 a third child without a toy
KING AWGWA loudmouthed king of the child taunters
QUEEN AWGWA King Awgwa's equally odious wife
AWGWA #3 a worker Awgwa
AWGWA #4 another worker Awgwa
WATER SPRITE QUEEN queen to the Sprites and Ryls
KING GNOME quarrelsome king of the Gnomes
QUEEN IMP beautiful queen to the Imps and Nymphs
PRINCE FLASH ruler of the birds of the skies
BO Master Mariner, ruler of the seas
FAERIE #1 worker and scroll reader
FAERIE #2 worker and blower of conch shells

Plus EXTRAS to play FAERIES, RYLS, KNOOKS, NYMPHS
and AWGWAS.

While there are 17 fixed roles, flexible casting may be used on
the other roles with regard to men or women. As for the
AWGWAS, they are coarse, hairy, scowling creatures.

The Life And Adventures of Santa Claus

SCENE 1 “The Burzee Woods”

(The LIGHTS come up on a very old table, as old as time itself. DR. Sitting, writing at the table, is FRANK BAUM. He thinks, then marks through a line or two. He sees the audience.)

FRANK. Oh, please, excuse me, I didn't see you there. *(He rises and adjusts his tie and coat.)* I get so involved with my work here. What? I'm writing a new book. It's called *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*. Oh, where are my manners. Frank Baum. Very pleased to meet you. I'm a writer. Uhm, I wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy Gale? Scarecrow? Tin Ma—that's the one! This story I am writing now, well, this one's a little odd. It's about Santa Claus. Right, the one and only. This was where I first heard the story, the REAL story about Santa Claus. Right here in the Burzee Woods. For a long time no man had ever come here—there's still parts that are unexplored. Why? I think they're afraid of the Knooks, Faeries, Nymphs and Ryls. Oh, those are the Immortals. They look out over things—the Ryls watch over the flowers and plants, the Nymphs watch over the trees, the Knooks are in charge

of the beasts and the Faeries look out over humans. (*He leans and speaks in a confidential tone.*) But it wasn't a Faerie that told me this story, it was a Wood Nymph. Her name was Necile!

(*Suddenly a loud thunderclap sounds and a cloud of smoke signals—a solitary LIGHT onstage, illuminating NECILE.*)

NECILE (*with booming voice*). Who tells my story?!

FRANK (*to the audience*). Sounds like the Wizard himself. (*He turns to NECILE.*) Necile! Don't you recognize me? Frank!

(*NECILE moves to FRANK slowly as the LIGHTS return to the table.*)

NECILE. Frank? It's been so long I...Frank? (*She looks him up and down.*) You have gotten so much heavier.

FRANK. Well, I guess, it's the way some mortals are.

NECILE. And haven't aged well at all. What're you doing to your hair?

FRANK. I had no idea you were still around, after all this time.

NECILE. And I look far better than you. Years, centuries even, make no difference to us.

FRANK. I was trying to write down the story of Santa Claus. Remember, your story, the one you told me—

NECILE. No! That is not a story to be written down, it is a story to be told. And only to a child.

FRANK. But you told it to me.

NECILE. Because you have the heart of a child, you know how they behave, their songs, their secrets. *(She looks out.)* And you're blaring it out to all these people? Can they be trusted?

FRANK. They're with me.

NECILE. I won't hold it against them. *(She looks out again.)* He makes up things, you know. *(She looks back at him.)* Talking scarecrows and tin men and cowardly lions.

FRANK. Will you help me tell the story?

NECILE. No. I will tell it and you stay quiet. *(To the audience.)* Telling the truth doesn't suit him. *(She looks back at him.)* Neither does this suit. *(She feels his jacket.)* Don't they pay you writers?

FRANK *(to the audience)*. The story began when Necile found a baby in the woods—

NECILE. Wrong, again wrong. Mortals cannot be trusted! *(She sighs deeply.)* I will show you how it all happened.

(She moves him over R. She turns upstage and slowly arcs her arm. LIGHTS come up fully onstage. There are two large wooden thrones upstage. Near the thrones are a pair of raised platforms. Sitting on the one throne is AK and on the other, QUEEN. Several FAERIES, RYLS, KNOOKS and NYMPHS are dancing near them to some rather enchanting MUSIC. She turns back to the audience.)

Each full moon we all dance here. This is the royal circle of the Queen. Ak, the Master Woodsman, he is our king. Now, as it happened, everything was quiet

throughout the Burzee Woods. Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.

FRANK. That's been used.

NECILE. You going to let me tell this?! Just then, with a voice sounding like thunder, the Master Woodsman spoke! (*She and FRANK turn and listen.*)

AK. Hey, hey, hey! (*No one stops dancing.*) Everybody?

QUEEN. What is it, Ak?

AK. Can you make them stop?

QUEEN. Of course, honored one. (*She yells quite loudly.*)
HEY!

(The MUSIC immediately stops and everyone freezes in their positions.)

AK. Thank you.

FRANK (*to NECILE*). Voice like thunder?

NECILE. Shh!

AK. Come, my people, and sit a minute. I have a story to tell which concerns us all.

(The others draw near the thrones and rest a bit as they listen.)

QUEEN. Something happened on your last trip outside the Burzee Woods?

AK. Indeed it did. And it involves—a mortal! (*The others gasp.*) You know it is against our laws to communicate with humans, even forbidding their seeing us. I know you Faeries watch over them. (*Two FAERIES stand and bow.*) Yes, yes, and a fine job you're doing as well. Down in front. (*The FAERIES sit again.*) Well, here's

what happened. I was walking back into the woods when I came upon a small human—a child, they call it.

(The others mutter among themselves, "Child!" "A mortal child!" and such.)

NECILE. This is my cue. *(She exits off R.)*

AK. That's right, a group of them is called "Children"!

(The others all go "AHHH.")

QUEEN. But you did not touch this...child, did you? That would be against your laws.

AK. Yes. No! I mean you're quite correct, my dear. I did not. *(He looks a bit sheepish.)* Well, I DID make some provision for it.

QUEEN. I KNEW you were hiding something. What provision, as you call it?

AK. I had Shiegra, the lioness, wait by it and see nothing bad happened to it. After all, it was such a puny thing.

QUEEN. Yes, but they grow. *(AK shoots her a look.)* I've heard.

(WILL stands and raises his hand.)

AK. Here we go. *(Addressing WILL.)* Yes, King Will?

WILL. As king of tha' Knooks, Your Highness, you are well aware that I am in charge over those who watch over tha' beasts.

AK. We all know what your job is, Will, get on with it.

WILL. If you are to make such arrangements, with all due respect, I shoulda been told!

QUEEN. He has a point.

AK. He ALWAYS has a point. (*He leans forward.*) I am telling you now, Will. Hear my voice? Am I going too fast for you?

WILL. But now it's too late!

AK (*leans still further forward*). Says who? (*He eyes WILL.*)

WILL (*smiling quickly*). Good point. (*He sits and mumbles to himself.*)

QUEEN. I believe Will is concerned about what the human foundling would do if left in the forest.

(*NECILE enters from R, carrying a wrapped baby.*)

AK. That's not our concern. Surely, the child will be rescued by one of its own kind. (*He sees NECILE.*) Wait a minute, this could be something.

FRANK (*to the audience*). See, here comes Necile. She had gone to the edge of the woods and found the baby and—

NECILE (*yells at FRANK*). Don't make me come over there!

FRANK. Sorry! (*He puts a hand over his mouth and sits at the table.*)

NECILE. May I say something to the Master Woodsman?

AK. Keep it short.

QUEEN. Necile, what are you carrying there?

NECILE. A little something. (*She looks lovingly at the baby.*) Something for me.

AK (*suddenly rises*). Why, you have brought the human child into our land! Into our very group!

(*The others jump to their feet and separate away from NECILE.*)

WILL. This is what I was afraid of!

NECILE (*to the others*). Do not be afraid. He won't hurt you.

A RYL. How do you know it's a "he"?

NECILE. Oh, grow up!

QUEEN (*now slowly rising*). Is this true, Necile? You have broken our laws by bringing it here?

NECILE. But it was so helpless, it needed me.

AK. But I made arrangements!

NECILE (*to the others*). Right, he left it with a lion! Men!

AK. Silence! (*He moves to her.*) I know you, Necile. I know you are tired of your daily chores and wanted something more in your life.

NECILE. That's true. But, don't you see? This—(*She indicates the baby.*)—is what I believe I am to do. To raise this baby as my own.

(*The others gasp.*)

QUEEN (*moves to NECILE*). It is forbidden!

NECILE. How?

QUEEN. How, she asks. (*To AK.*) You talk to her, she's your favorite!

(*The others mumble among themselves, such phrases as "She's his favorite?" "Did you know that?" "Since when?"*)

AK (*to QUEEN*). You're not helping. Necile, you know the laws here in the Burzee Woods, laws we have all lived by for centuries.

NECILE. Laws which you yourself made.

AK. That is why I don't have any problems with them.

NECILE. But you yourself met the child and took care of her, by placing Shiegra to watch over it.

AK. Uh, well...

NECILE. So, how can you forbid me taking care of the baby when you yourself did the same thing?

QUEEN (*laughs*). She gotcha!

AK. Yeah, I hear. All right. (*To the others.*) Necile may keep the baby and I will give it my protection. (*The others come closer, some even to look at the baby.*) But this is it! No more humans shall be cared for by an Immortal!

NECILE. I just want the one.

(The rest are now grouped around NECILE, looking at the child and talking among themselves.)

A KNOOK. What will you call him?

NECILE. I've been thinking about that. I shall name him "Claus." It means "little one."

A NYMPH. Claus. Such a nice name.

(The others agree.)

QUEEN. Why not call it "NeClaus." That way, everyone will know he is yours. Necile, NeClaus.

NECILE. That will be his full name, then. NeClaus. But I shall call him only Claus.

FRANK (*to the audience*). NeClaus. You see, as in Saint Nicklaus, the name—(*NECILE glares at him and clears her throat loudly.*) Sorry.

AK. And we shall raise him as one of our own. And teach him our ways!

QUEEN. Let the celebration continue!

(The enchanting MUSIC begins as AK and QUEEN exit off L. The others dance and frolic. NECILE likewise dances, holding her newfound love.)

NECILE. And he is going to be cared for in the best way I know. I'll make him a bed of the softest moss. *(She dances over to a platform and places the bundle behind it. In the same fluid move she then pulls up a YOUNG BOY.)* And he will grow tall and strong and be loved by all the Immortals! *(She and the YOUNG BOY dance.)* He will be smart in the ways of the Burzee Woods! He will not be afraid of anything and have many friends. *(She dances him to R where he exits and an ADOLESCENT BOY enters, wearing the same clothes.)* Stronger and smarter he will grow! And he will love all—but most of all the one who takes care of him and loves him the most! *(She dances him over to L where the ADOLESCENT exits and CLAUS, THE MAN, enters dancing. It is at this time, the others dance offstage.)* He will become all that he can as a human and also know the ways of the Immortals! He will be my love, my family and love me most of all! *(She dances him over to R where he dances off. She holds out her arms but he does not return. The MUSIC then fades out.)* But he now has too much human in him. He stays away longer and longer from his trips into the woods. *(She lowers her arms and becomes forlorn.)* He stays away too long. It is as if...

FRANK. As if he is curious. Curious about the outside world.

NECILE *(moves to FRANK)*. I never understood that about him. We always know our ways and our customs. We have no need for this...

FRANK. Desire to know more, to explore?

NECILE. You have to understand, this was not our way.

FRANK. It was his. He is a human, after all.

NECILE. I had hoped he would not be so infected.

FRANK. Still, it happened just like that and became a turning point in his life.

NECILE (*a bit angry*). And he had help, as I was to find out. Ak, the Master Woodsman, had a hand in this!

(NECILE again arcs her arm and the LIGHTS come up on the thrones. AK and QUEEN are on their thrones. The others sit around them.)

AK. Necile? (*He holds out a hand.*) Got a minute? We need to have a little talk.

NECILE. And it “happened.” On this particular day ... (*She lowers her head sadly and moves to the thrones.*) What is it we need to talk about, Master Woodsman?

AK. I have been with your human. I have seen him grow and ask questions. Questions no Immortal can answer. So I have taken him out of the woods.

NECILE. But why?

AK. Hey, I’m making this up as I go! We do not know HIS ways. So I took him out of the woods and showed him other humans. How they are, how they live.

NECILE (*quickly moves downstage and calls out*). Claus?

AK (*rises*). He has changed, Necile.

NECILE (*louder*). Claus!

AK. He is different!

NECILE. Claus!!

AK. He is no longer one of us!

NECILE (*turns*). NO! He will ALWAYS be one of us.

AK. See for yourself.

(He holds out an arm. CLAUS enters from R. NECILE rushes to him.)

NECILE. Claus! What the Master Woodsman said, is this true? Are you... changed?

CLAUS *(holds her)*. Not toward you, Mother, that will never change. *(He then moves from her to the others.)* But I have seen others like me, I have seen my people. I knew I was different from all the Immortals, even though you never let on. All this time I thought that I was one of a kind. But there are others, so many others like me. *(He looks off.)* Out there.

QUEEN. Indeed, they outnumber us. And a gang of them gets together and they start building—

AK. Quiet!

(CLAUS moves among the Immortals, telling his tale to his rapt audience.)

CLAUS. I have seen them. Big ones, little ones, fat ones, thin ones. I think, though, that most of all I remember their faces. All sorts. Pleasant, reckless, anxious, they live their lives day to day, never knowing, always wondering. Some work at tedious jobs, other strut around pompously! *(This draws a murmur from his audience. Several turn and look at AK.)*

AK. I saw that.

CLAUS *(his tone softens)*. Especially I remember the children. Ragged little children rolling in the dust of the streets, playing with scraps and pebbles. Other children,

wearing fine clothes and fed sugar plums! Yet, and this is the odd part, those children were no happier than the ones in rags.

AK (*moves to CLAUS*). Childhood is the happiest time of the humankind, I have heard. During those years they are carefree and joyful.

CLAUS. Yet all, rich children and poor children, seem equally fair and sweet.

AK (*to NECILE*). You see, Necile? You... well, none of us, age. He, as a human, does and this changes him. At first you were like a mother to him. Now, you are like a sister. Soon, as you well know, you will be like a daughter to him.

NECILE. Being human curses him with age!

AK. Now, you knew that when you took him for your own. (*To CLAUS.*) So, my lad. What will you do?

CLAUS (*takes NECILE's hands*). My mother, I will love and cherish to the end of my mortal life. (*He looks at AK.*) But I have a plan. While there is still time, I want to bring happiness and joy to all the human children. They need it most.

(*NECILE exits off L.*)

AK. That is a noble idea...if you must be among humans in the first place. But beware.

CLAUS. Of what?

AK. When you go out in the world of humans you shall have the protection of the forest and all of us here. You may call upon the Ryls, the Knooks, the Nymphs and the Faeries for help.