

ACT TWO

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REED: Yeah, it's all a big joke to you but I can't help it. I just—when I was a kid I used to have this recurring nightmare: Santa was like Big Brother. He'd see me when I was sleeping. He'd know when I was awake. He'd know if I'd been bad or good.

AUSTIN: Oh grow up for goodness' sake.

MATT: So—you're afraid of Santa Claus.

REED: (*Quiet; serious*) Yes! I have Santa Claustrophobia.

MATT: Reed, you should love Santa. He saved Christmas!

REED: Stop saying that!

AUSTIN/MATT: But it's true.

MATT: Before Santa was popularized by the poem *The Night Before Christmas* in 1822, churches were closed on Christmas because the celebrations were too dangerous and too pagan.

AUSTIN: But then, after that poem, Santa was everywhere! On posters, in advertising, in stores. Suddenly Christmas was safe and wholesome. People figured out that instead of drunken riots, Christmas could be about love, and family, and giving—

MATT: And getting—

AUSTIN: And that's when families—and churches—began to celebrate Christmas the way you know and love it. I know it's a cliché to say commercialization has ruined Christmas but actually, when you think about it, commercialization *saved* Christmas.

(REED *takes this in, then quietly exits.*)

MATT: Where's he going?

AUSTIN: It's a lot to process.

MATT: Yeah. For Reed's sake, I'm glad Santa couldn't get here tonight, but I wanted to ask him about my

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wish list. You know what, I'm gonna call his 800 number.

AUSTIN: Whose 800 number?

MATT: 1-800-SANTA. Don't worry, I'll put it on speaker.

*(Over the speakers, we hear the noise of dialing, ringing, and the click of someone answering.)*

AUSTIN: 1-800-SANTA?

MATT: Yeah, I found it online...

*(Suddenly we hear REED speaking on an offstage microphone. In an Indian accent.)*

REED/SANTA: (O S) Ho, ho, ho. 1-800-SANTA. This is Sanjay Claus.

*(Beat)*

MATT: Where are you from?

REED/SANTA: (O S) Oh, I am from the North Pole.

MATT: You have a very unusual accent.

REED/SANTA: (O S) That's the way everyone talks up here.

AUSTIN: Hey Santa, Austin Tichenor here...

REED/SANTA: (O S) Oh I have very bad news for you, Austin Tichenor.

AUSTIN: What's that?

REED/SANTA: (O S) No presents for non-believing Pagans.

AUSTIN: I'm not a pagan!

*(AUSTIN crosses away. During this next dialogue, he notices the Christmas tree lights aren't on. He follows the extension cord into the wings, discovers it's not plugged in, then finds an outlet on the proscenium or on the floor near the tree. He plugs it in, but the lights still don't come on.)*