

**'Twas the Night Before  
the Night Before  
Christmas**



**R. Eugene Jackson**

Inspired by the poem by Clement Clarke Moore

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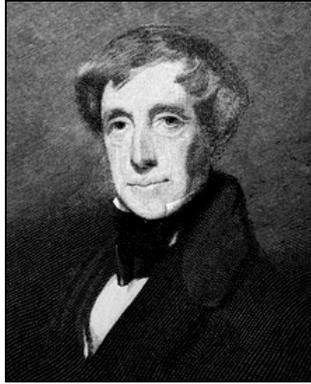
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## 'Twas the Night Before the Night Before Christmas

**HOLIDAY COMEDY.** Inspired by the poem by Clement Clarke Moore. 'Twas the night before Christmas, and there isn't one present under the Perkadilly's tree. Wait! It's the night *before* the night before Christmas. No wonder Santa hasn't arrived! The family's two children and their pet mouse, dog, and cat are all relieved. But when two of Santa's elves arrive to check their lists to see who has been naughty or nice, the Perkadilly children and pets realize they've got a few too many checks on the naughty side. However, all is not lost. They have 24 hours to perform good deeds before Santa's elves return to check their lists twice. Adorable characters abound in this delightful holiday comedy. A Christmas carol may be included, if desired.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 75 minutes.



Clement C. Moore (1779-1863)

## About the Story

"'Twas the Night Before Christmas" is the first line of the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas," which was written by Clement Clarke Moore, a professor of Oriental and Greek Literature who had grown up in Queens. The poem was first published in the *Sentinel* in Troy, NY, on Dec. 23, 1823. Many modern depictions of Santa Claus are attributed to this poem including use of a sleigh, the names of the eight flying reindeer, the tradition of delivering toys to children, his arrival on Christmas Eve instead of Christmas Day, and his physical appearance, which was reportedly inspired by a local Dutch handyman with whom Moore was acquainted. Today, the poem is considered to be one of the most famous American poems ever written. Four hand-written copies of the poem still exist, with three of the copies housed in museums.

## Characters

(4 M, 5 F, 7 flexible)

(With doubling: 4 M, 4 F, 5 flexible)

**MOUSE:** Very hungry mouse who lives inside the Perkadilly home; flexible. Note: A puppet can be used, if desired.

**CHEEKY:** The Perkadilly's cat who thinks she's the queen of the house; female. Note: A puppet can be used, if desired.

**DOGGY:** The Perkadilly's dog who likes to sleep on the sofa and goes poo in the neighbor's yard; flexible. Note: A puppet can be used, if desired.

**PHILIP PERKADILLY:** Loveable father who gets annoyed when the animals sleep on the sofa; male.

**BEVERLY PERKADILLY:** Philip's wife; female.

**JACK PERKADILLY:** Has only been "sort of" good this year and worries he may end up with just empty boxes for Christmas; male.

**JILL PERKADILLY:** Has only been "sort of" good this year and worries she may end up with just empty boxes for Christmas; female.

**SERGEANT BUMBLERUMP:** Police officer on the lookout for Christmas thieves; wears a rumpled suit or uniform; flexible.

**SHIRLEY/BUTCH:** Outspoken teenager who is a member of the police department's COPS program; wears a uniform-looking shirt and skirt/slacks; flexible.

**VICKI/JIMMY:** Shy teenager who is a member of the police department's COPS program; wears a uniform-looking shirt and skirt/slacks; flexible.

**LUCY/WOODROW:** Santa's elf who is checking to see who is naughty or nice; flexible.

**TRACY/TIM:** Santa's elf who is checking to see who is naughty or nice; flexible.

**WOMAN:** Poor young mother with a baby; wears rags; female.

**LOLA:** Burglar who breaks into homes to steal Christmas presents; wears all-black clothing including a Lone Ranger-style mask; female.

**BURT:** Burglar who breaks into homes to steal Christmas presents; covered in soot; wears all-black clothing including a Lone Ranger-style mask; male.

**SANTA:** Has white hair and a white beard and wears a standard Santa suit

**Note:** Character names may be changed to reflect the ethnic makeup of the cast. For flexible roles, change the script accordingly.

## **Options for Doubling**

**LOLA/WOMAN (Female)**

**LUCY/SHIRLEY (flexible)**

**TRACY/VICKI (flexible)**

## Use of Puppets

If using puppets, the operators of the hand puppets should be dressed in black with as much of their faces covered as practical. Please note that the actors operating the puppets may be unable to accomplish all the physical actions described in the script. The point is to express the ideas of the movements.

## Setting

The Perkadilly's home.

## Sets

**Perkadilly's living room/dining room.** There is a tall fireplace SR with a chimney that Santa can enter and exit through. Seven empty stockings hang from the fireplace mantel. One stocking is much larger than the others. A decorated and lit Christmas tree with no packages under it is upstage of the fireplace. A sofa sits CS. At LC is a table with a few chairs and a tablecloth that reaches the floor in front. A SL door leads to outdoors. A doorway at UCS leads to other rooms of the house.

## Synopsis of Scenes

**Scene 1:** Living room; two days before Christmas.

**Scene 2:** Living room; Christmas Eve, noon.

**Scene 3:** Living room; late Christmas Eve.

## Props

7 stockings (one is much larger)	Blanket
Pajamas, for Jack	Aspirin (a piece of candy)
Pajamas or nightgown, for Jill	Large bag filled with food cans
Broom	1 can labeled "Beenie Weenies"
Large half-filled bag	Baby doll wrapped in a blanket
2 Lone Ranger-style black masks	Wad of money (play money)
Small notebook	Handcuffs
Pencil	Hair scarf, for Beverly
2 clipboards	Bathrobe, for Philip
2 Pens or pencils	Brown clay (for doggie poo)
Nightgown or pajamas, for Beverly	Santa's toy bag filled with gift boxes and fruit
Old dress and apron, for Beverly	Sack lunch with a cookie inside
Hair rollers	Bottle of cider
2 unbreakable place settings that include a plastic glass of milk, a piece of toast, and other misc. lunch foods	Cheese in a Christmas box
Plate of eggs	Big bone in a Christmas box
Pajamas, for Philip	Crown in a Christmas box
Shorts and old ragged T-shirt, for Philip	Christmas card
Bucket	Puppets (opt.): a comical-looking mouse, a fluffy dog, and a regal-looking cat.
Mop	
Plastic bowl of dry cereal	

## Special Effects

Sound of Cheeky hitting the floor  
Doorbell (or knock on the door)  
Scuffling  
Snarling  
Screaming  
Baby crying  
Soot (dark powder)  
Smoke  
Christmas jingle bells  
General ruckus: grunting, muffled screaming, kicking  
Sound of scratching and groaning rising up chimney  
Heavy footsteps  
Sound of Santa's sleigh landing on the roof  
Christmas carol music (opt.)

"'Twas the night before  
The night before Christmas,  
When all thro' the house  
Not a creature was stirring,  
Not even a mouse..."

## Scene 1

*(AT RISE: The Perkadilly's living room. There is a tall fireplace SR with seven empty stockings hanging from the mantel. One stocking is much longer than the others. A decorated and lit Christmas tree with no packages under it is upstage of the fireplace. A sofa sits CS. At LC is a table with a few chairs and a tablecloth that reaches the floor in front. A SL door leads to outdoors. A doorway at UCS leads to other rooms of the house.)*

NARRATOR: *(Mysterious voiceover.)*

“’Twas the night before the night before Christmas,  
and all through the house  
not a creature was stirring...”

*(Curtain rises. Stage lights fade up to about ¾. Mouse pops up from behind the sofa, squeaks like a mouse, and quickly looks right, left, up, down, left, right, forward.)*

MOUSE: Whoo-wee! Looks like I’ve got the whole house to myself!

NARRATOR: *(Voiceover. Discouraged.)* “...except for a mouse.”

MOUSE: They watch TV in here and always leave food scraps between the sofa cushions. That’s what I call sloppy eating. But when they eat sloppy, I eat good! *(Nuzzles between the cushions and comes up smacking on food.)* Mmmm. Popcorn. My favorite...next to cheese.

NARRATOR: *(Voiceover.)* “...and a cat.”

*(Mouse stops and faces forward.)*

MOUSE: A cat? *(Looks around.)* Where’s the cat?

*(Cheeky pops up from behind the other end of the sofa and licks her lips.)*

CHEEKY: (*Superior attitude.*) Slurp, slurp. (*Spots Mouse.*) I am sooooo hungry! And I think I see a meal over there...a mouse!

MOUSE: Uh-oh! I think she's talking about me! (*Shudders.*) I think I hear my mama mouse calling me. (*Disappears behind the sofa.*)

CHEEKY: I would chase her, but it would be too much trouble. A cat's life is a life of leisure. I am the queen, and this is my domain. Ho-hum. (*Settles down.*)

NARRATOR: (*Voiceover.*) "...and a dog."

CHEEKY: A dog? If he comes near me, I'll scratch his eyes out!

(*Doggy appears from behind the SL table and pants like a dog.*)

DOGGY: Ruff-ruff. (*Growls.*) Grrrrr!

CHEEKY: (*Suddenly nervous.*) W-w-while I am not afraid of a d-d-dog, I think...I think I may need to use my litter box! (*Quickly disappears behind the sofa.*)

DOGGY: (*Smiles.*) Well, now that the cat got rid of the mouse, and I got rid of the cat, it's time for me to take a well-deserved rest...on the sofa. (*Chuckles.*) Of course, my owners don't want me on the sofa, but they're in bed asleep. So they'll never know. (*Moves to the sofa cushions, walks in a circle, and makes himself comfortable.*) Mmmm, this is nice and cozy. I'll just sleep here for the rest of the night. (*Revels in the comfort.*) Mmmm! Double-mmmm!

(*Doggy falls asleep and snores loudly. Mouse peers over the top of the sofa and squeaks angry mouse sounds.*)

MOUSE: Hey, Doggy. I'm trying to sleep, but your snoring is keeping me awake. Can you keep it down a bit? Hey, Doggy! I'm talking to you. Yeah...you! Dog! Wake up! (*Pause. Louder.*) You're keeping me awake with your obnoxious snoring. (*To herself.*) It's a wonder he doesn't

keep himself awake with all that racket. (*Shouts.*) Hey! I said, wake up! (*Doggy doesn't stir.*) I said... (*Leaps onto Doggy, squeaking.*) Wake up! (*Jumps up and down on Doggy.*) Waaaaakeee uuuuup! (*Takes one big final jump onto him.*) Up, up, up!

DOGGY: (*Waking up.*) What...huh...what...? Who's bouncing on me?

(*Mouse sits on the sofa back.*)

MOUSE: I guess that would be me.

DOGGY: (*Angrily.*) Grrrr! Why did you disturb my peaceful sleep?

MOUSE: Peaceful? Doggy, you were snoring like a wounded rhinoceros!

(*Mouse imitates his snoring noises.*)

DOGGY: I was not.

(*Cheeky appears on top of the sofa.*)

CHEEKY: (*To Mouse.*) He's right, Mouse.

MOUSE: What?!

CHEEKY: He wasn't snoring like a wounded rhinoceros.

DOGGY: (*To Mouse.*) You see?

CHEEKY: It was more like a dying hyena! (*Howls like a hyena.*)

DOGGY: (*Insulted.*) All right, you two, get ready. I'm gonna sink my powerful teeth into both of you. (*Neither Cheeky nor the Mouse are afraid.*) And...and chew you up! Grrr! (*Cheeky and Mouse simply stare at him.*) Hey...you're supposed to be scared of me! I'm a mean, ruthless mutt! Grrrr...again.

CHEEKY: You can "grrrr" all you want to.

MOUSE: We're not afraid of you...much.

CHEEKY: (*To Doggy.*) As the only royalty in this house, I command you to stay awake.

DOGGY: Why, Cheeky? You sleep all day and roam all night.

MOUSE: Yeah, but you sleep all day and all night.

DOGGY: *(To Cheeky.)* Give me one good reason why I need to wake up.

CHEEKY: Because it's the night before Christmas.

DOGGY: *(Smiles.)* Oh! Well, that's a good reason!

MOUSE: *(Excitedly.)* Really? It's the night before Christmas?

*(Doggy crosses SR on the sofa and looks beneath the Christmas tree.)*

DOGGY: Then where are all my presents? I don't see them under the tree. In fact, I don't see *any* presents under the tree.

MOUSE: *(To Cheeky.)* Are you sure it's the night before Christmas?

CHEEKY: Listen, Mouse...I'm a cat. And cats are really smart. We know these things.

MOUSE: *(Looking at the tree.)* But there are no presents under the tree for you, either.

CHEEKY: What?! No presents for me? *(Looks.)* Why, this is outrageous! Santa Claus has never forgotten me before. I mean, cats deserve Christmas presents...lots of Christmas presents. Lots and lots of Christmas—

MOUSE: We get the message, Cheeky. But there are no presents under the tree...for anybody.

CHEEKY: *(Angry.)* I don't understand. I sent him a letter and told him what I wanted. I sat on his lap at the mall and told him again...four times! And I sent him six [emails] and eight [tweets]. I even tried to call him on Jill's cell phone, but all I got was a message saying, "You have reached Santa Claus's automated answering service. He's busy. Call back next year." *[Or insert other means of communication.]*

DOGGY: *(Sadly.)* We were totally forgotten. So what do we do now?

CHEEKY: *(With bravado.)* What do we do now? We wake up the whole family and demand an explanation!

DOGGY: Good plan.

CHEEKY: Okay, Doggy. You go wake them up, and we'll wait here.

DOGGY: All right. *(Starts to exit, but stops.)* No. Wait. It was your idea. Besides, I don't think they want to be awakened in the middle of the night.

CHEEKY: But this is an emergency! Mouse?

MOUSE: Don't look at me. Anytime they see me, they scream.

CHEEKY: Well, I see that the cat has to take charge here. *(Regally.)* I shall return shortly. *(Starts toward the door USC.)* But don't unwrap anything until I get back.

MOUSE: Cheeky, there isn't anything to unwrap.

CHEEKY: Oh, right. Okay, here I go. *(Exits USC.)*

MOUSE: I'm just not sure this is the night before Christmas, you know?

DOGGY: Don't worry. Cheeky will take care of it. Meanwhile, I'll take a little snooze.

MOUSE: Okay. Just don't snore.

DOGGY: I don't snore! *(Walks in a circle before lying on the sofa.)*

MOUSE: But, Doggy—

DOGGY: Shhhhhh!

MOUSE: Okay. Shhhhh. I think I'll take a little nap, too. *(Goes to sleep and snores loudly.)*

DOGGY: *(Perks up.)* And she tells me not to snore!

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**