

*The Life and Adventures
of Santa Claus*



Adapted from the story by L. Frank Baum

Tracy Wells

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The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus

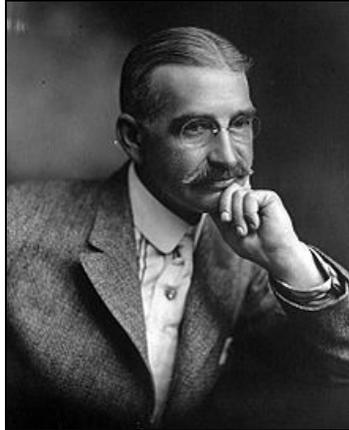
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For Connor and Natalie

The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus

HOLIDAY CLASSIC. Adapted from the book by L. Frank Baum. As a baby, Santa Claus is found orphaned in the Forest of Burzee and is adopted by a wood nymph. When Santa becomes an adult, he goes to live in the Laughing Valley and begins to make toys in his workshop and give them to children in the nearby village. This enrages the Lord of Lerd, who has banned all toys in the village. Santa's toys have also angered the Awgwas, who are annoyed that the children are so busy playing with toys, they don't have time to be naughty anymore. The Awgwas, with the help of the Lord of Lerd and Jack Frost, set out to rid the land of Santa Claus once and for all. Young audiences will delight in learning Santa's real name and what it means, how he became immortal, who built his workshop, why he loves the color red, and why he delivers toys at night.

Performance time: Approximately 45-60 minutes.



Lyman Frank Baum (1856-1919)

About the Story

Children's book author L. Frank Baum was born in Chittenango, NY, and grew up on his family's large estate. Baum loved Christmas and was known for dressing as Santa Claus for his family. *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus* was published in 1902, and Baum published a sequel in 1904 entitled, "A Kidnapped Santa Claus." Santa, Ryls, and Knooks appear again in Baum's novel *The Road to Oz* in which the Wizard of Oz makes giant soap bubbles to carry them back to the Laughing Valley. Baum's best known work is his children's novel, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, which is the basis for his 1902 musical *The Wizard of Oz* and the 1939 film adaptation featuring Judy Garland. Baum wrote 55 novels, 83 short stories, and 200 poems before he died of a stroke in 1919. He spoke these final words to his wife before he died: "Now we can cross the Shifting Sands." This is a reference to the magical dessert that surrounds the Land of Oz, which causes anyone who sets foot onto the sand to turn into sand, thus cutting Oz off from the rest of the world.

Characters

(8 M, 8 F, 18 flexible)

(With doubling: 6 M, 8 F, 16 flexible)

SANTA CLAUS: Young man at the start of the play who grows into the older, white haired and bearded Santa Claus at the end of the play; wears at least one article of red clothing until he dons a traditional Santa suit near the end of the play; male.

JACK FROST: Creates ice and snow and likes to nip at the noses of children; yearns to live in the Forest of Burzee; wears blue and white and is adorned with snow and ice; male.

AK: Master Woodsman; wears a cloak and white clothing that is adorned with leaves, flowers, and twigs; has a long beard and carries a long wooden staff; male

NECILE: Claus's foster mother, a wood nymph; wears green and is adorned with leaves and twigs; female.

QUEEN ZURLINE: Queen of the wood nymphs; wears green and is adorned with leaves and twigs; female.

NELKO: Wood nymph; wears green and is adorned with leaves and twigs; female.

KILTER: Wood nymph; wears green and is adorned with leaves and twigs; female.

FAIRY QUEEN: Fairy; wears wings and a pastel flowing costume; female.

WISK: Fairy; wears wings and a pastel flowing costume; female.

RYL PRINCESS/PRINCE: A Ryl, an elf-like creature; wears a crown and purple clothing adorned with flowers; flexible.

NUTER: A Ryl, an elf-like creature; wears pink clothing adorned with flowers; flexible.

YELLOW: A Ryl, an elf-like creature; wears bright yellow clothing; flexible.

- RED:** A Ryl, an elf-like creature; wears bright red clothing; flexible.
- BLACK:** A Ryl, an elf-like creature; wears black clothing; flexible.
- GREEN:** A Ryl, an elf-like creature; wears bright green clothing; flexible.
- BLUE:** A Ryl, an elf-like creature; wears bright blue clothing; flexible.
- PRINCE WILL:** A Knook, a gnome-like creature, who is the guardian of the forest animals; wears grey and brown clothing; male.
- PETER:** A Knook, a gnome-like creature; wears grey and brown clothing; male.
- LORD/LADY OF LERD:** Rich lord/lady of the village who has outlawed toys in the village; wears expensive-looking clothes; flexible.
- BESSIE BLITHESOME:** Rich, spoiled daughter of the Lord/Lady of Lerd who would like to have friends and play with toys; wears an expensive-looking dress; female.
- MAYRIE:** Girl who lives in the village; wears rags in shades of gray and brown; female.
- WEEKUM:** Mayrie's brother; wears rags in shades of grey and brown; male.
- MERCHANT 1, 2:** Village merchants who want to hire children to work for them for pennies; flexible.
- FLOSSIE:** One of Claus's reindeer; flexible.
- GLOSSIE:** One of Claus's reindeer; flexible.
- KING/QUEEN AWGWAS:** Fearsome beast and ruler of the Awgwas; wears a crude crown made of "stone"; flexible.
- AWGWAS 1-5:** Fearsome beasts; flexible
- YOUNG CLAUS:** Claus at age 5; wears at least one red article of clothing; male.
- ADOLESCENT CLAUS:** Claus at age 13; wears at least one red article of clothing; male.

Options for Doubling

YOUNG CLAUS/WEEKUM (male)
ADOLESCENT CLAUS/NED (male)
MERCHANT 1/FLOSSIE (flexible)
MERCHANT 2/GLOSSIE (flexible)

Setting

The Forest of Burzee and Laughing Valley.

Set

Forest of Burzee. There should be a few free standing trees and an optional forest backdrop. Trees and woodland plants are present.

The Village. There should be shop fronts and houses with chimneys painted in brown and grey and looking as if they were made of stone and wood, circa 1500-1600s. One house has a window and door that opens.

Claus's workshop in Laughing Valley. A window with a view of a mountain and meadow is CS. Inside the workshop is an empty shelf, a bed, and a worktable with tools and a stool. There is a small fireplace with a stack of logs and smaller pieces of wood next to it.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: The Forest of Burzee/village.

Scene 2: Claus's workshop in Laughing Valley.

Scene 3: Village/Forest of Burzee

Scene 4: Claus's workshop in Laughing Valley.

Props

| | |
|--|---|
| Small basket for baby doll | Large toy bag |
| Baby doll | 2 Wooden toy soldiers |
| Red baby blanket | Wooden toy sailboat |
| 2 Carts for Merchants | Wooden puppy |
| Misc. wares for Merchant's carts | 6 "Rock" swords, for Awgwas |
| 2 Baskets with handles | Gray beard (not white), for Claus |
| Small package of chicken bones | Toy bear |
| Large horn, for Ak | Toy horse |
| Ax | 2 Wands, for Fairies |
| Chisel | 2 Thorns, for Ryls |
| Hammer | 2 Vines, for Knooks |
| Pillow | 4 Tree branches |
| Blankets | Glitter |
| Pot of flowers | 2 Toy dolls |
| Small wood pieces | Sleigh (opt.) |
| Wooden cat | Wooden flute |
| Painted wooden cat | Small potted pine tree |
| 5 Small paint cans labeled red, blue, green, yellow, and black | Christmas tree ornaments |
| 5 Paintbrushes | White wig, for Claus |
| | White beard, for Claus |
| | Traditional Santa suit with large belly |

Special Effects

Door knock
Howling wind
Nighttime lighting
Bright light effect

*“Man is only able to live upon this earth
for a short while.
He must toil for the things he needs
and then pass away
as the leaves do in autumn.
Yet every man has his purpose,
which is to leave the world better
than he found it.”*

—Claus

Scene 1

(AT RISE: *The Forest of Burzee is on one side of the stage and the village is on the other. For the forest, trees and woodland plants are present. For the village, all scenery is in shades of brown and grey and should be made of wood and stone. Shop fronts and houses are present. There are two carts with wares to sell. Lights up on the forest. A small basket containing a baby doll wrapped in a red blanket is at the base of a tree. Necile enters, followed by Nelko. Both are wearing green dresses with ornaments of leaves and twigs.*)

NECILE: What a glorious day to be a wood nymph! I remember when these trees were saplings. It seemed like it would take forever for the saplings to turn into fully grown trees. But here we are—many years later—and they are magnificent.

NELKO: Many years later is right! What birthday are you celebrating this year? Is it 212 or 213?

NECILE: It's 219, actually, although I don't look a day over 187, if I do say so myself! (*Starts to pull "weeds" near a tree.*) We have tended to these trees for many years and have fended off weeds and drought. The trees are big and strong now and only need us to maintain them.

NELKO: How wonderful is that! It means we have done our duty as wood nymphs.

NECILE: Yes, but there must be more to our work than just pulling weeds and watering roots. Don't you ever feel like there's something missing, Nelko?

NELKO: Quiet, Necile! You wouldn't want Ak, the Master Woodsman, to hear you.

NECILE: I suppose you're right. I'm just going to collect some water from the stream to feed this tree's thirsty roots. (*Starts to cross to the tree where the basket is located. Sees basket.*) What's this? (*Bends down and picks up the doll.*) Why, it's a baby! A human baby boy!

NELKO: A baby?! What's a baby doing out here? We are miles from human civilization.

NECILE: I don't know. (*Snuggling doll.*) But isn't he adorable?

NELKO: Don't get too attached, Necile. You know it is against the laws of the forest for nymphs to interact with humans. Queen Zurline won't like this one bit.

NECILE: But he's all alone and needs someone to care for him.

(*Ak and Queen Zurline enter.*)

AK: (*To Nelko and Necile.*) It's always nice to see wood nymphs hard at work protecting the forest.

ZURLINE: (*Indicating baby.*) What do you have there, Necile?

NECILE: (*Holding doll tightly.*) Please don't be angry with me, Your Majesty. But I found this human baby lying in a basket over by that tree. He is all alone, you see, and needs someone to care for him.

ZURLINE: We care for trees and forest plants, Necile. We don't care for children. Are you unhappy being a wood nymph?

NECILE: I have enjoyed my work these many long years, but, lately, I have begun to feel like something is missing from my life. All that's left for me to do here in the forest is to maintain the work that I have already done.

ZURLINE: (*To Ak.*) The human race has never penetrated the Forest of Burzee. Allowing Necile to care for this child would break the laws established by you, Master Woodsman. I leave it to you to decide what is to become of this child.

AK: (*Stroking his beard thoughtfully.*) Necile shall keep the baby, and I will give it my protection. But I shall warn you all that this is the first time I have relaxed the law, and it shall be the last time. Nevermore, until the end of the world, shall a mortal be adopted by an immortal.

NELKO: What will you call him, Necile? He must have a name.

NECILE: I shall name him "Claus," for that means "little one."

ZURLINE: That is a lovely name. But, instead, let him be called "Neclaus," for that will mean "Necile's little one."

NECILE: I love it! (*Snuggling doll.*) And I love him already. This is the happiest day of my life!

(Jack Frost enters.)

JACK FROST: Well, well, well...what do we have here?

AK: What are you doing in the Forest of Burzee, Jack Frost? You know you are not welcome here.

JACK FROST: Oh, you know me, Ak, old friend. I like to cause a little mischief here and there.

AK: Well, take your mischief elsewhere, Jack. We have important matters to attend to.

JACK FROST: (*Playfully.*) Ak, I'm offended! I only wanted to take a peek at the little bundle of joy Necile has. (*Rushes around to the other side of Necile. Necile turns away and hides the baby.*) What's the matter, Necile? Don't you want me to give your new baby boy a kiss? (*Puckers.*)

NECILE: Stay away from him, Jack! Everyone knows your kiss will turn a human heart to ice.

JACK FROST: Oh! So it's a human child, is it? What an odd thing to find in the Forest of Burzee. I suppose you think you're going to raise that baby here amongst the wood nymphs?

AK: Necile will raise the child as her own, and the baby shall receive every protection that the forest has to offer. So you can take your mischief—and your kisses—elsewhere, Jack Frost. You cannot hurt young Claus...not as long as I have anything to say about it.

JACK FROST: Is that so? Well, we'll see about that. (*Turns to exit.*) You can't hide him away forever, Ak. (*Evil laugh. Exits.*)

NELKO: Don't worry about Jack Frost, Necile. Let us show the other wood nymphs the newest inhabitant of our forest home.

(Nelko and Necile exit.)

ZURLINE: *(To Ak.)* Are you sure the human won't destroy the Forest of Burzee? We have lived here so long without disruption. I must admit...I have reservations.

AK: We will see in time. I have a good feeling about this child. With the love and care of Necile and the other wood nymphs, he will grow up to be a strong, smart, and kind man.

(Ak exits arm in arm with Zurline. Forest of Burzee, years later. A small lighting change indicates time passing. Young Claus runs on followed by Necile.)

NECILE: *(Laughing.)* I'm going to get you, Neclaus!

YOUNG CLAUS: No you won't, Mother. I'm too fast for you!

NECILE: You are strong and fast, but I will catch you!

YOUNG CLAUS: Am I the strongest boy in all of the forest, Mother?

(Necile slowly crosses to Young Claus.)

NECILE: You are, indeed, my darling boy.

(Ryl Princess enters, wearing purple. Nuter enters, wearing pink. Both are adorned with flowers.)

RYL PRINCESS: We were just in a nearby clearing tending to our flowers, as all Ryls do, when we spied the two of you out enjoying the forest.

YOUNG CLAUS: Your flowers are so beautiful. Mother takes me to look at them every day to learn my colors.

NUTER: And what colors have you learned?

YOUNG CLAUS: All of them, Nuter. The buttercups are yellow, and the poppies are red. The marigolds are orange, and the irises are blue. And all of the leaves and ferns are green!

RYL PRINCESS: Well done, Claus! Now, if you would like, I will show you where some lovely violets grow.

YOUNG CLAUS: I can't wait!

(Necile chuckles as Ryl Princess exits SL followed by Nuter and Young Claus. Forest of Burzee, years later. A small lighting change indicates time passing. Adolescent Claus enters, followed by Prince Will and Peter.)

ADOLESCENT CLAUS: *(To Peter.)* So you really expect me to believe that a brown bear sleeps all winter long without hunting for food?

PETER: Do you doubt me, Claus? It is the duty of Knooks like me to watch over the beasts of the forest.

PRINCE WILL: The brown bear eats large quantities of food before it hibernates and stores the extra as fatty deposits its body uses during the winter months.

ADOLESCENT CLAUS: That's amazing!

(Necile stands.)

NECILE: Neclaus has always been a curious boy, Prince Will. Sometimes I think he is too smart for his own good.

ADOLESCENT CLAUS: Am I the smartest boy in all of the forest, Mother?

NECILE: You are the most clever boy I have ever met.

PRINCE WILL: Come now, Claus. Peter and I will show you the caves where the bears of this forest hibernate. Then you will see how they make a home for the winter.

ADOLESCENT CLAUS: I can't wait!

(Necile shakes her head and smiles as she watches Prince Will exit, followed by Peter and Adolescent Claus. Forest of Burzee, years later. A small lighting change indicates time passing. Santa Claus enters with Fairy Queen, Wisk, and Ak. Santa Claus is now a young man.)

CLAUS: *(To Wisk.)* Tell me more about the men and women and children that you and the other fairies protect. I am the only human in the Forest of Burzee. Now that I am a man, I yearn to know more about others like me.

WISK: Humans are a kind and humble race of mortals, Claus. But most of all, they love one another. The one being in this world—mortal or immortal—that is able to give the greatest amount of love is a child. And there is no greater love than that of a child.

CLAUS: I so wish I could experience that kind of love for myself.

FAIRY QUEEN: I think it may be time for you to go out into the world to learn about your own kind.

CLAUS: But am I strong enough, Mother?

NECILE: You are, indeed, my darling.

CLAUS: Am I smart enough?

NECILE: You are the cleverest man I have ever met.

CLAUS: Am I kind enough?

NECILE: *(Embracing Claus.)* You have the kindest heart of anyone I know.

CLAUS: Then I am ready to go out into the world and learn more about people like me.

AK: Then bid goodbye to Necile, for you shall accompany me on my journey through the world. You will learn about your people and discover all that it means to truly be human.

CLAUS: *(Takes Necile's hands.)* Goodbye, Mother. I am so lucky to have a wonderful mother like you.

NECILE: Goodbye, my sweet boy. *(Claus exits with Ak, Fairy Queen, and Wisk. Calls.)* May you learn all you need to about

humanity. And may you discover who you really are, and who you are truly meant to be!

(Lights down on Forest. Lights up on village. Necile exits. Merchant 1, 2 bustle about with their carts, straightening their wares.)

MERCHANT 1: Business is booming! I was thinking of taking on one of the village children as an apprentice to help me.

MERCHANT 2: That's a great idea. After school and their chores, the children of the village have nothing to occupy their time. We might as well put them to work.

(Ak enters with Claus, who is carrying Ak's cloak. Merchant 1, 2 resume work.)

AK: *(To Claus.)* Here we are in the village on the outskirts of the Forest of Burzee. Remember, Claus, to hold fast to my cloak. As long as you do that, you will remain unseen.

CLAUS: I will remember, Master Woodsman.

AK: Very well. For if you forget and release your grasp, you will separate yourself forever from me and your home in the Forest of Burzee.

(Mayrie and Weekum enter, skipping.)

CLAUS: Why are those humans so tiny?

AK: They are children.

[END OF FREEVIEW]