



## Christmas in Five 1-Minute Plays

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### 1. Bethlehem Suite

**A Hotel Clerk Changes Christian History By Acting Like One, or, “Now What Goes UNDER the Tree?”**

(A new comedy by Neil Simon Peter)

*Lights up slowly on the lobby of small inn. Faded, chipped sign says, “Inn of Bethlehem.” Fresher, newer hand-painted sign – with misspelling -- says, “Welcome Censis Travellers.”*

*Man behind desk leans back in chair, dozing. Young couple, Joseph and Mary, enter wearily. Young woman is extremely pregnant. They do not speak, but their noise upon entering startles the hotel clerk, who responds comically, knocking over cup. He grumbles and gripes as he reaches for a cloth to clean up the spill.*

**Joseph:**

We are sorry.

**Clerk:**

Not as sorry as me. I have to tell you, we’re all booked.

*Joseph & Mary are defeated, exhausted.*

**Joseph:**

Everybody is full. (Sighs.) Can my wife at least sit for a moment?

**Clerk:**

Of course. Are you here for the census?

**Joseph:**

What else? Looks like it’s good for *your* business.

**Clerk:**

Yes.

**Joseph:**

And bad for mine. I have twelve chairs to build. The wood is in Galilee. But I am here.

*Mary becomes still. She has quickly fallen asleep. Both men notice and are quiet.*

**Clerk:**

She's at peace.(Pause.) My friend from Galilee, I have a little space in the back, if you don't mind a friendly sheep or two...

*Mary's sleep deepens, her breathing is louder, nearly a snore. Joseph's head hangs in weariness.*

**Clerk:**

What am I saying! You'll take *my* room. It's the best in the inn.

**Joseph:**

The best? I have very little money.

**Clerk:**

Consider it an early Christmas present.

**Joseph:**

Huh?

*Lights fade with Mary's rhythmic breathing the only sound against a backdrop of stillness.*

## 2. Franchise

*Nicholas of Bari, the Bishop of Lycia, sits wearily on his throne. The year is 343.  
Stage Design Note: The Bishop would probably not have any décor older than 341.*

**Offstage voice:**

Bishop, the merchant is here.

*Nicholas waves in the merchant.*

**Merchant:**

Bishop Nicholas of Bari. I speak for all when I say, we love what you do.

**Bishop:**

And what is it that I do?

**Merchant**

The Bishop is humble. But who doesn't know that, under cover of night, he tosses gold coins into windows – right into stockings drying by the fire.

**Nicholas**

That happened once. *And* it was an accident.

**Merchant**

All due respect, Excellency, it was brilliant. And it's also time to expand. To spread this act of benevolence all over the world!

**Nicholas**

I'm exhausted!

Merchant

That's where I come in. We have others do what you do. Exactly the same way. Let me show you how.

*Merchant unveils a big poster board visible only to the bishop.*

**Bishop:**

Who is that?

**Merchant:**

You.

**Bishop:**

I don't own a red suit.

*The merchant pulls a red coat out of a bag and holds it up.*

**Merchant:**

You wear this for a year. During the full moon, you get spotted. Word gets around. All of a sudden, this coat...is *you*. And anyone in the world *wearing* a coat like this is suddenly...you, Bishop.

*Nicholas is intrigued. Stands up and scrutinizes the poster board.*

**Nicholas:**

You should fire your artist. Those eight little horses look weird.

**Merchant** (*delightedly*):

Just hear me out...

*Lights to black.*

### 3. First Thread Unravels

*Mother and 7-year-old child center stage, facing the audience. They hold Christmas shopping bags.*

**Child:**

It's Santa!

**Mother:**

Well, actually, the real Santa is at the North Pole. This is one of his helpers.

**Child:**

He looks exactly like Santa.

**Mother:**

He does. But he's just a helper.

**Child:**

At school, I feed and clean up the gerbils in our science lab. Mrs. Trowbridge says I'm her helper. But I don't look anything like her.

**Mother:**

We should finish up. One more store to go.

**Child:**

Do you look exactly like your boss at work?

*Mother reaches to rub her temples and closes her tired eyes. Cut to black.*

## **4. The Godfather 2.5: Thanksgiving Sleeps with the Fishes**

*Michael Corleone and Santa are seated on two chairs facing each other.*

**Michael Corleone:**

It's done. Macy's will launch their Christmas shop on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

*Santa leans forward.*

**Santa:**

Excuse me? The day after...?

**Michael Corleone:**

Halloween. Yes.

**Santa:**

You mean Thanksgiving?

**Michael Corleone:**

Those are the old ways, Santa. My father's ways. Those days are over. Now, Christmas season starts November 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Santa:**

The music, too?

**Michael Corleone:**

Bing Crosby, Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer, the two-front-teeth song...they all start on the radio and in the stores on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

(Pause)

**Santa:**

Michael...we're bigger than U.S. Steel.

## 5. Step Up

*Department store. Lights are dim. Santa is seated on an elevated chair. Three steps lead up to the chair. Six or seven children wait in line to be next to sit on Santa's lap.*

*We hear the store PA system: "...The best savings and value on your Christmas decorations and gifts right here, now till Saturday, so shop, save and celebrate!"*

*Light holiday music comes on. The kids are buzzing with anticipation.*

*Lights up on a cross little girl, seated on Santa's lap, with arms folded in defiance. Her face is contorted in an angry, grimace. She glares, eyes locked onto Santa's, challenging him.*

*Santa stares back for the longest moment but weakens. Breaks his gaze. Breathes deeply. Looks at the row of children. Looks back at the little girl on his lap. Finally, he breaks the silence.*

**Santa:**

I don't believe in me, either.

*After a long a pause, little girl slowly softens. Uncrosses her arms. Pats Santa on the arm. Rests her head on his shoulder.*

*Fade to black.*

## Encore: Before He Changed *Us*

*Manger. Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus. Cattle are lowing.*

Mary:  
The baby awakes.

Joseph:  
But no crying he makes.

Mary:  
Still. He needs changing.

*Joseph takes the baby. Lays him down. Picks up a fresh diaper. Unpins the old diaper.*

Joseph (recoils):  
Holy crap!

(Joseph and Mary look at each other in alarm, then break into congenial laughter. A choir of angels descend upon the manger and sing a medley of songs to conclude the evening's presentation.)