

Mr. Hartwell's Christmas

Bob Rinfret





ArtAge supplies books, plays, and materials to older performers around the world. Directors and actors have come to rely on our 30+ years of experience in the field to help them find useful materials and information that makes their productions stimulating, fun, and entertaining.

ArtAge's unique program has been featured in *Wall Street Journal*, *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *American Theatre*, *Time Magazine*, *Modern Maturity*, on CNN, NBC, and in many other media sources.

ArtAge is more than a catalog. We also supply information, news, and trends on our top-rated website, www.seniortheatre.com. We stay in touch with the field with our very popular e-newsletter, *Senior Theatre Online*. Our President, Bonnie Vorenberg, is asked to speak at conferences and present workshops that supplement her writing and consulting efforts. We're here to help you be successful in Senior Theatre!

We help older performers fulfill their theatrical dreams!

ArtAge Publications
Bonnie L. Vorenberg, President
PO Box 19955
Portland OR 97280
503-246-3000 or 800-858-4998
bonniev@seniortheatre.com
www.seniortheatre.com

NOTICE

Copyright: This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the United States of America, Canada, and all other countries of the Universal Copyright Convention.

The laws are specific regarding the piracy of copyrighted materials. Sharing the material with other organizations or persons is prohibited. Unlawful use of a playwright's work deprives the creator of his or her rightful income.

Cast Copies: Performance cast copies are required for each actor, director, stage manager, lighting and sound crew leader.

Changes to Script: Plays must be performed as written. Any alterations, additions, or deletions to the text must be approved.

Permission to Film: You do not have permission to film, record, or distribute the play in any medium. You are also not allowed to post on electronic services such as, but not limited to, YouTube. Exceptions must be granted by written permission from the publisher.

Royalty: Royalties are due when you perform the play for any audience, paying or non-paying, professional or amateur. This includes readings, cuttings, scenes, and excerpts.

The royalty for amateur productions of this show is posted online. It is payable two weeks prior to your production. Contact us for professional rates or other questions. Royalty fees are subject to change.

Insert the following paragraph in your programs:

*Performed with special permission from ArtAge Publications' Senior Theatre
Resource Center at 800-858-4998, www.seniortheatre.com*

Mr. Hartwell's Christmas © 2020 by Bob Rinfret

MR. HARTWELL'S CHRISTMAS

By Bob Rinfret

CAST

MR. HARTWELL: 60+ slightly overweight

STORE MANAGER: Efficient, slim and short

DESK SERGEANT: Any age

POLICE OFFICER: Any age

GIRL: About 10 to 12

BOY: About 8 to 10

HOMELESS PERSON: Older

SALLY: Any age, petite and pretty

EXTRAS: Homeless people, any age

Place:

Scene I: An alley behind a department store (8pm)

Scene II: The Local Police Station (10pm)

Scene III: Same Alley (Midnight)

Time:

Present day.

Production Notes

If you use scenery, the Department Store front and the Police station can be built on the same flat. The flat should be able to rotate around to reveal each set. The steps leading up to the store would be behind the Desk Sergeant's desk when turned so that the desk appears raised.

The Santa sack should be oversized so that any items hidden inside won't be seen. The actor should take care to give the illusion that the sack is empty when they reach in. The easiest way is to only add the items for each specific scene.

MR. HARTWELL'S CHRISTMAS

Scene 1

Setting: The scene is an alley behind a department store. We see a small set of stairs leading up to a door that says, "Service Entrance." The alley is seedy looking, with cans and trash strewn about. There is a single streetlamp off to one side providing the only light. The rest of the alley is typical of any big-city alley. As the play opens, we hear shouting. The door opens and out tumbles Santa Claus—or at least this particular Department Store's version of one. Santa tumbles down the small flight of stairs, landing up against a pile of trash. He tries to gather himself as the Store Manager appears at the door. He is a small person of short height and stature wearing a dark suit. A clock off-stage, chimes 8 times.

STORE MANAGER: ...and stay out this time, you bum. I've told you before that we don't allow no drinking on the job.

MR. HARTWELL: (*Staggering to his feet, and sounding as though he has had one too many already...*) But, I assure you, I am perfectly capable of performing my duties. This is only a temporary state, brought on by an over-abundance of...cough medicine that I am consuming to relieve a persistent scratchy throat. I didn't want to appear ill in front of the little ones. (*He staggers a bit more then sits on the stoop...*)

STORE MANAGER: Cough medicine my eye. If that's cough medicine, it's at least 100 proof and comes out of a bourbon bottle.

MR. HARTWELL: You have your cough medicine and I have mine. (*He reaches into his coat and removes a flask. He opens it and finishes what little bit he has left. When it's gone, he examines the bottle...*) Oh dear! I guess I'll have to go to the drug store and have them refill my prescription. (*Again, staggering to his feet...he looks at the Manager...*) Since you do not seem to require my services any longer, I would like to appreciate my wages so that I may take my leave of this establishment.

STORE MANAGER: Wages! Are you nuts? After all the ruckus you caused in there? You're lucky I don't have you thrown in jail. (*Looking at his watch...*) Here it is 8 o'clock on Christmas Eve and I'm stuck without a Santa. I've got a hundred screaming kids and just as many screaming mothers. What am I supposed to do now, get Gerald from the stock room to play Santa?

MR. HARTWELL: I'm certain he'll do a wonderful job.

STORE MANAGER: Just get out of here, and don't come back. *(He goes inside and slams the door behind him.)*

MR. HARTWELL: Sir, I shall see that the Santa's Union hears of this outrage. Why. I have been playing this role for as many years as I can remember. How dare you insinuate that I am not worthy. *(He goes up to the door and tries to open it...it's locked...He starts to bang on the door...)* Let me in, do you hear! Let me in at once... *(The door opens...The Store Manager appears and pushes Mr. Hartwell down the stairs again. He lands against the garbage bags once again...The door slams shut...Mr. Hartwell sits there. It begins to snow...Slowly, he looks up...)*

MR. HARTWELL: Perfect! What a wonderful ending to a simply uninspiring day. *(As Mr. Hartwell sits there a young boy and girl approach him dressed in old and worn clothes. They see him and stop, not truly believing what is in front of them. Finally, the little girl slowly walks up to Mr. Hartwell and taps him on the shoulder...)*

GIRL: Santa?

MR. HARTWELL: *(Startled by the sudden appearance...)* What? Who? Oh, yes, Santa. And what can I do for you?

GIRL: It is you. *(She turns to her brother...)* Jimmy, look. It's him, it's really him.

BOY: *(He comes running over...)* Is it? Is it really you? I can't believe it. It's you. It's really you.

GIRL: *(To her brother...)* See, I told you we'd get to see him. *(To Santa...)* We waited for three hours to see you, but they said we had to leave if we didn't buy anything. So, they made us go. But you're here. And we're so happy to see you Santa. *(Looking around...)* Where's your Reindeer? Is he all better?

MR. HARTWELL: *(Still trying to recover from the shock, he tries to stand, but staggers again and decides to remain seated on the stoop...)* Huh? What Reindeer?

BOY: The man inside said that you had to leave because your Reindeer was sick. Is he better?

MR. HARTWELL: *(Finally catching on...)* Reindeer? Sick? Oh! Yes! Reindeer. Yes, of course. No, he wasn't feeling too well, but he's much better now.

GIRL: Where is he?

MR. HARTWELL: Where is who? Oh. The Reindeer! Uh! I sent him up to the roof, with the others. Wouldn't want him to be lonely.

BOY: Which one was it?

MR. HARTWELL: Which one is what?

BOY: Which Reindeer is sick?

MR. HARTWELL: Oh! Uh! Basher!

GIRL: Basher? (*Looking confused, then smiling...*) you mean Dasher!

MR. HARTWELL: Yes, Dasher of course. He's fine now. He's with the others. Uh! (*Trying to remember their names...*) You know Jingle and Holly and...uh! Fred...

BOY: I know! It's...Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen...

GIRL: Comet and Cupid and Donner and Blitzen...

BOY: and Rudolph!

GIRL: Oh yes, Rudolph. He's my favorite.

BOY: Mine Too.

MR. HARTWELL: Yes, Yes. They're all fine. They're all up on the roof. Waiting. We have a long night ahead of us you know.

GIRL: Yes, we know, that's why we had to come down tonight to see you. We know that this is the only chance we'll get to ask you for a present.

BOY: We sent you a letter. Did you get it?

MR. HARTWELL: Letter? Oh yes, a letter. Why of course I got it. And it was a very nice letter too. (*He finally gets up and tries to get them to move along...*) but now I think it's time for you two to be on your way. I'm sure your Mommy will be looking for you.

GIRL: No, our mommy is working. She won't be home till very late.

MR. HARTWELL: Working? Then how did you get here?

GIRL: We walked. It's only five blocks.

MR. HARTWELL: Five blocks! In this weather. Alone? I don't think that's a very wise thing to do. You could both catch your death of cold. (*Looking at the coats they're wearing...*) Especially in these old things. I wish there was something I could do. Maybe I have some gum or something in my coat pocket.

BOY: Why don't you check your bag? (*He points to an old sack lying near the stairs...Mr. Hartwell hadn't noticed it before...*)

GIRL: Yes, your bag. Oh, please Santa, we've been very good this year.

MR. HARTWELL: (*Looking at the sack...then at them, ...*) What, that old thing? No, you don't understand, that's just an old sack that's lying here, I don't think there's anything in it and besides, I uh...I gave away all my toys inside...sorry.

GIRL: Oh, please check Santa. We've been very good. All I want is a doll and Jimmy only wants a fire truck. Won't you look...please?

MR. HARTWELL: I'm sorry. I know that's what you asked for, and I'll see what I can do later this evening, but as you can see this sack is...(*he reaches for the sack expecting to find it empty; realizing that there is something inside, he looks inside. He stares at the opening for a few seconds then reaches in and pulls out a small doll. He looks at the doll for a second, then looks in the sack again, pulling out a fire truck.*) empty? (*He examines each gift, then the sack again...he shakes his head, picks up the presents and gives one to each.*)

GIRL: (*Seeing the presents...their eyes get wide and they jump up and down.*) Oh Santa. Santa That's just what we wanted. Thank You, Thank you. Look Jimmy. Just like the ones we saw in the window. These are wonderful! Oh, thank you Santa, thank you. Come on, let's go home and wait for mommy, so we can show her.
(*They start to leave*)

MR. HARTWELL: Now how did that happen? (*He looks into the sack again and then back at the children.*) I only wish I had new coats for the both of you, but as you can see the sack is...(*As he's talking, he realizes there's something else in the sack. He reaches in and pulls out a small coat, then he reaches in again and pulls out another...he looks at them for a second*

and then at the children...) wait, perhaps you could also use these. *(He hands them each a coat...)*

GIRL: Oh, thank you Santa. These are wonderful. This is the best Christmas ever. *(She goes up to him and kisses him on the cheek...he smiles...)* I love you Santa. *(she grabs her brother's hand and starts to exit)* I hope your reindeer feels better. Goodbye!

BOY: *(Waving as they leave...)* Goodbye...Merry Christmas. *(They exit)*

MR. HARTWELL: *(Looking stunned...)* You're welcome...And Merry Christ...mas. *(He watches them leave and then looks at the bag.... he turns it inside out...it's empty...)* I know this thing was empty. *(Looks in the bag again...)* It is empty. But, those toys, and those coats...how? This is very strange indeed. Maybe I drank more than I thought. *(He sits and examines the bag some more.)*

HOMELESS PERSON: *(As he is sitting there, an old person, dressed in rags, walks up to him)* That was nice.

MR. HARTWELL: *(Looking up)* What? I'm sorry, did you say something?

HOMELESS PERSON: I said that was nice. What you did for those kids. That was nice.

MR. HARTWELL: Yes, I suppose it was, but I don't know how I did it.

HOMELESS PERSON: What do you mean? You're Santa Claus. You can do anything you want. Especially tonight, it being Christmas Eve and all. Say you wouldn't have anything in that bag for me would you?

MR. HARTWELL: *(Jokingly)* I assure you, I have no idea how that happened, and I am not *really* Santa Claus.

HOMELESS PERSON: Sure, you are. You look like Santa and you gave those two kids presents. And I was just wondering if maybe you have anything in that sack for me? I could sure use some gloves or a new hat and maybe a scarf.

MR. HARTWELL: I wish I could help, but I don't think I can do it again. It was a fluke. There must have been some gifts left in this sack by its previous owner, and just out of sheer coincidence, it was what those two adorable children wanted.

HOMELESS PERSON: Yea! I understand. It's easy to help those kids 'cuz they's cute. I ain't so cute I guess. Well, thanks anyway Santa. *(starts to walk away...)*

MR. HARTWELL: No, please I am not trying to slight you. You must believe me, they simply asked me for a present and I reached into this sack and...*(he reaches into the sack and ...)* Oh boy!...*(he looks at the person and then at the sack...his hand comes out and he 'holds up a hat, gloves and a scarf...stunned, he looks at the person...)* Will these do?

HOMELESS PERSON: *(He takes the items...)* Hey! Thanks Santa, thanks a lot, wait until I tell the fellas down at the Mission. Merry Christmas to you. *(exits)*

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!