

FATHER CHRISTMAS



AND THE HUBBARD FAMILY

Heather Lynn

Adapted from the play *Make-Believe* by A.A. Milne

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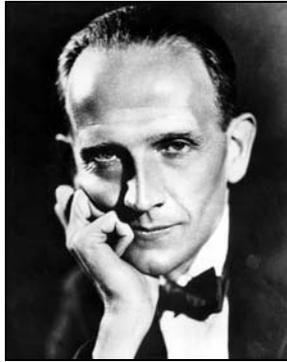
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MAKE-BELIEVE: A CHILDREN'S PLAY IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS was first produced at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, England, on December 24, 1918, with the following cast: Marjory Holman, Jean Cadell, Rosa Lynd, Betty Chester, Roy Lennol, John Barclay, Kinsey Peile, Stanley Drewitt, Ivan Berlyn, and Herbert Marshall.

FATHER CHRISTMAS AND THE HUBBARD FAMILY

HOLIDAY WITH MUSIC. Adapted from the play *Make Believe* by A. A. Milne. Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard, a poor, childless couple, have only their nine imaginary children to keep them company. Each year, the Hubbards eagerly await Christmas hoping that Father Christmas will bring them a child. When the Hubbards receive an invitation to appear at Father Christmas's court, they are overjoyed. There, the Hubbards meet Father Christmas and his other guests, who include Bluebeard the pirate, Robinson Crusoe, Goldilocks, and Red Riding Hood. To make up for the years he has neglected the Hubbards, Father Christmas presents them with nine special gifts. Filled with humor and whimsy, this play is a true holiday delight and includes several Christmas carols.

Performance time: Approximately 30-45 minutes.



A. A. Milne (1882-1956)

ABOUT THE STORY

English author Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956) was born in Hampstead, London, and is best known for his Winnie-the-Pooh books. Milne joined the British Army during WWI and served as an officer. He married in 1913, and his only son, Christopher Robin Milne, was born in 1920. During his writing career, Milne wrote more than 30 plays as well as several novels, story collections, poems, and works of nonfiction.

CHARACTERS

(8 M, 8 F, 11 flexible, extras)

(With doubling: 4 M, 5 F, 9 flexible)

MR. HUBBARD: Would like Father Christmas to bring him real children for Christmas; very poor and has to wear evening wear since he has no other clothes; male.

MRS. HUBBARD: Has nine imaginary children since Father Christmas hasn't brought her any real children in the past; very poor and has to wear an evening dress since she has no other clothes; female.

PETER/PAM: Caroler; wears winter clothing; flexible.

JONAS/JANET: Caroler; wears winter clothing; flexible.

JENNIFER/JAMES: Caroler; wears winter clothing; flexible.

MARTHA/MICHAEL: Caroler whose feet are always cold; wears winter clothing; flexible.

HUMPHREY/HENRIETTA: Caroler; wears winter clothing; flexible.

LIZ/LOU: Burglar; flexible.

BILL/BELLINDA: Burglar; flexible.

POLICE OFFICER: Wears a police uniform; flexible.

FATHER CHRISTMAS: Sings a Christmas carol; wears a Santa suit and has a long white beard; male.

USHER 1, 2: Father Christmas's court ushers; wear uniforms; flexible.

ROBINSON CRUSOE: One of Father Christmas's guests; wears tattered clothing; male.

GOLDILOCKS: One of Father Christmas's guests; wears a dress and has golden hair; female.

RED RIDING HOOD: One of Father Christmas's guests; wears a red cape and hood; female.

BARON BLUEBEARD: The infamous pirate who is one of Father Christmas's guests; has a long beard and carries a sword; male.

YOUNGEST BEAR: Accompanies Goldilocks to Father Christmas's court; wears a bear costume; flexible.

ADA: Imaginary child; female.

BERTRAM: Imaginary child; male.

CAROLINE: Imaginary child; female.

DENNIS: High-spirited imaginary child; male.

ELSIE: Imaginary child; pretty with the golden ringlets of hair; female.

FRANK: Imaginary child who has a fondness for animals; has curly brown hair; male.

GWENDOLINE: Imaginary child; female.

HAROLD: Imaginary child; male.

ISABEL: Imaginary child; female.

EXTRAS: As Townspeople, Carolers, and Guests.

OPTIONS FOR DOUBLING

ADA/JENNIFER (female)

BERTRAM/PETER (male)

CAROLINE/MARTHA (female)

DENNIS/JONAS (male)

ELSIE/LIZ (female)

FRANK/HUMPHREY (male)

GWENDOLINE/POLICE OFFICER (flexible)

HAROLD/BILL (male)

ISABEL/YOUNGEST BEAR (flexible)

SETTING

Hubbards' home, Christmas Eve.

SET

The Hubbards' drawing room. It is simply furnished with a small table and two cane chairs.

Exterior of the Hubbards' house. There is a window and a working door with a doorknocker.

Court of Father Christmas. The holiday decorations are made of candy. There is a throne for Father Christmas.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: The Hubbards' drawing room.

Scene 2: Outside the Hubbards' home.

Scene 3: The Hubbards' drawing room, moments later.

Scene 4: The Court of Father Christmas.

PROPS

Magazine

Lanterns, for Carolers

Hat, for Peter

Coins

Gold watch and chain

Diamond necklace

Lantern, for Police Officer

Decorations made from candy

Throne

Key

Sword, for Bluebeard

Socks, for Mr. Hubbard

Stockings, for Mrs. Hubbard

Fake snow, opt.

SOUND EFFECTS

Knock at the door

2 Christmas carols (for Carolers to sing)

Sound of heels clicking

Children tramping off

Christmas carol (for Father Christmas to sing solo)

Holiday music

Song for Crusoe, Goldilocks, Riding Hood, and Bluebeard to sing or dance to.

“While Shepherds Watched Their Flock by Night” or another Christmas carol

"I HOPE FATHER CHRISTMAS
WON'T GIVE ME A BICYCLE.
A STOCKING HAS A TENDENCY
TO STRETCH OUT A BIT
AFTER IT HAS HAD A BICYCLE IN IT."

—MRS. HUBBARD

SCENE I

(AT RISE: *The Hubbards' shabby, poorly furnished drawing room. Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard are wearing formal evening dress because they have no other clothes. Mr. Hubbard is reading a magazine. Mrs. Hubbard is sitting with her hands in her lap. Mrs. Hubbard sighs. Mr. Hubbard impetuously throws down his magazine.*)

MR. HUBBARD: Dearest, you sighed?

MRS. HUBBARD: (*Quickly.*) No, no, Henry. In a luxurious and well-appointed home such as this, why should I sigh?

MR. HUBBARD: True, dear. Not only is it artistically furnished, as you say, but it is also blessed with that most precious of all things... (*Picks up his magazine.*) ...a library.

MRS. HUBBARD: Yes, yes, Henry, we have much to be thankful for.

MR. HUBBARD: We have, indeed. But I am selfish. Would you care to read?

(*Mr. Hubbard tears out a page of the magazine and hands it to her.*)

MRS. HUBBARD: Thank you, thank you, Henry.

(*They sit in silence for a few moments. Mrs. Hubbard sighs.*)

MR. HUBBARD: Darling, you *did* sigh. Tell me what grieves you.

MRS. HUBBARD: Little Isabel. Her cough troubles me.

MR. HUBBARD: (*Thoughtfully.*) Isabel?

MRS. HUBBARD: Yes, dear, our youngest. Don't you remember? She comes after Harold.

MR. HUBBARD: (*Counting on his fingers.*) A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I— (*Realizes.*) Dear me! Have we got nine already?

MRS. HUBBARD: (*Imploringly.*) Darling, say you don't think it's too many!

MR. HUBBARD: Oh, no, no, not at all, my love. After all, it isn't as if they were *real* children.

MRS. HUBBARD: (*Indignantly.*) Henry! How can you say they are not real?!

MR. HUBBARD: Well, I mean they're only the children we thought we'd like to have if Father Christmas gave us any.

MRS. HUBBARD: They are just as real to me as if they were here in the house. Ada, Bertram, Caroline, the high-spirited Dennis, pretty Elsie with the golden ringlets, dear little fair-haired Frank—

MR. HUBBARD: (*Firmly.*) Darling one, Frank has curly brown hair. It was an understood thing that you should choose the girls, and I should choose the boys. When we decided to take... (*Counting on fingers.*) ...A, B, C, D, E, F...a sixth child, it was my turn for a boy, and I selected Frank. He has curly brown hair and a fondness for animals.

MRS. HUBBARD: I daresay you're right, dear. Of course, it is a little confusing when you never see your children.

MR. HUBBARD: Well, well, perhaps someday Father Christmas will give us some.

MRS. HUBBARD: Why does he neglect us so, Henry? We hang up our stockings every year, but he never seems to notice them. Even a diamond necklace, or a few oranges, or a Christmas card would be something.

MR. HUBBARD: It is very strange... (*Thinks.*) Possibly the fact that the chimney has not been swept for some years may have something to do with it, or he may have forgotten our change of address. I cannot help feeling that if he knew how we had been left to starve in this way, he would be very much annoyed.

MRS. HUBBARD: And clothes. I have literally nothing but what I am standing up in. I mean, sitting down in.

MR. HUBBARD: Nor I, my love. But at least it will be written of us in the papers that the Hubbards perished in faultless evening dress. We are a proud family, and if Father Christmas deliberately cuts us off in this way, let us go

down proudly! Shall we go on reading, or would you like to walk up and down the room? Fortunately, these simple pleasures are left to us.

MRS. HUBBARD: I've finished this page.

MR. HUBBARD: Have another, my love.

(Mr. Hubbard tears out another page from his magazine and hands it to her. They read for a little while until they are interrupted by a knock at the door.)

MRS. HUBBARD: Someone at the door? Who could it be?

(Mr. Hubbard stands.)

MR. HUBBARD: Just make the room look a little homier, dear, in case it's anyone important.

(Mr. Hubbard exits. Mrs. Hubbard alters the position of the chairs slightly. Mr. Hubbard enters.)

MRS. HUBBARD: Well?

MR. HUBBARD: A letter. *(Opens the letter and begins to read.)*

MRS. HUBBARD: *(Impatient.)* What is it?!

MR. HUBBARD: *(Whistling with surprise, excitement.)* Father Christmas! An invitation to court! *(Reads.)* "Father Christmas, at home, 25th December. Jollifications, 11:59 p.m." My love, he has found us at last!

(They joyfully embrace.)

MRS. HUBBARD: Henry, how gratifying!

MR. HUBBARD: Yes! *(Pause. Sadly.)* But we can't go...

MRS. HUBBARD: *(Sadly.)* Yes, I have no clothes...

MR. HUBBARD: *(Sadly.)* Nor I...

[END OF FREEVIEW]