

# PREVIEW

## The Christmas Bet

A Ten-Minute Play By Lauren Grove

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On Christmas Eve, two young siblings are on a stakeout for Santa! When they toss their net over the jolly old elf, they realize Father Christmas is... their actual father. What is Dad doing putting presents under the tree? Is Santa real? What is happening?! The Christmas Bet uses humor and heart to tell the story of two children learning the truth about Santa... Until the North Pole's most famous resident makes a surprise appearance!

## Characters

**Billy** - A young boy determined to prove the existence of Santa.

**Emma** - Billy's younger sister.

**Dad (Richard)** - Billy and Emma's well-meaning father.

**Mom (Susan)** - Billy and Emma's mother.

**Surprise Cameo** – A secret, surprise visitor!

## Setting

A modern-day living room on Christmas Eve

### **Act I, Scene I**

*(We begin in a dimly lit living room. Lights are up at only 50%, but we can see a small, well-loved living room set up for Christmas. A tree stands regally in the corner, casting a festive glow. Decorations are hung on the mantle and a plate of cookies sits on the coffee table, accompanied by a cool glass of milk. Holiday music plays quietly as we watch the seemingly empty living room in the quiet house. A soft jingle of bells is heard. Could it be Santa on a nearby roof?? The room goes quiet again. Then, after a few moments, two little heads pop up unexpectedly from behind the sofa.)*

BILLY: Ok, let's go over the plan one more time. *(He pulls out a clipboard and a pencil.)*  
Phase One: We sneak out of bed once Mom and Dad are asleep.

EMMA: Check.

BILLY: We quietly get Dad's fishing net out of the garage.

EMMA: *(She holds up the old, beat-up net.)* Check.

BILLY: We make sure the cookies and milk are in the exact center of the table.

EMMA: *(She glances at the coffee table, eyeing the distance.)* Check.

BILLY: Ok, we're ready for Phase Two. First, we wait.

EMMA: Right. *(They fall into silence and look around the living room. After a moment...)*  
How long does that part take?

BILLY: It could be a while. He has to fly all over the world.

EMMA: *(She nods, eager to seem as "wise" as her older brother.)* What happens after we wait?

BILLY: That's the best part. Once the big guy comes down the chimney, we get real quiet. *(Emma nods, putting her finger over her mouth.)* When he goes for the cookies, BAM! We jump out and trap him in the net. Then I can prove to Pete Zimsky once and for all that Santa is real.

EMMA: Yes! *(Beat.)* Who's Pete?

BILLY: This booger face in my class. He was telling everyone Santa wasn't real. *(Emma gasps. The horror!)* And he said Christmas is for babies.

EMMA: I'm not a baby.

BILLY: That's why we have to catch Santa. We need proof he's real.

EMMA: *(She pushes up the sleeves of her cutesy Christmas pajamas, arms herself with a candy cane, and puts on her game face.)* Let's do this.

*(They wait for a few moments in silence until a rustling sound is heard offstage.)*

BILLY: Did you hear something?

EMMA: I think so.

*(The rustling sound happens again.)*

BILLY: There it is again.

EMMA: I hear it!

*(The sound of footsteps grows steadily louder.)*

EMMA: He's coming! He's coming!

BILLY: Get ready...

EMMA: I was born ready.

*(A figure enters, wearing a Santa hat and red pajamas. The figure carries several packages.)*

EMMA: *(She whispers.)* It's him!

BILLY: Shh, quiet.

*(Emma nods and the two crouch, ready to pounce. They watch the figure put a few presents under the tree. The figure then approaches the coffee table and picks up a cookie.)*

BILLY: Now, Emma! Go! Go!

*(Emma emerges, brandishing a candy cane and shouting what can only be described as a war cry. She startles the figure, who turns to her. As the figure is distracted, Billy covers him with the net.)*

BILLY: We got him!

EMMA: Yes!

BILLY: Get ready to pay up, Pete!

*(The figure, who is Dad – of course – struggles under the net. Amidst his struggles, he barely hears the voices surrounding him.)*

DAD: Who's there? What's happening!

EMMA: Billy, he doesn't sound like the Santa from the mall.

BILLY: *(Billy battles to hold the net's pole as Dad thrashes about.)* It's him.

DAD: Get this thing off me!

*(Emma goes in for a closer inspection. She squints in the poor lighting.)*

EMMA: Where's his beard?

BILLY: He doesn't have a beard?

EMMA: And no big belly. That's not Santa!

BILLY: Are you sure?

EMMA: *(She shouts loudly.)* Intruder! Intruder!

DAD: *(He stops struggling and turns towards the shouting.)* Wait, Emma?

EMMA: *(She recognizes the voice.)* Dad?

BILLY: *(He questions his sister)* Dad?

DAD: Billy?

*(Mom enters in a bathrobe and flips the light switch, bringing the lights up to full.)*

BILLY/EMMA: Mom! *(They run to her.)*

DAD: Susan?

MOM: What is going on??

EMMA: Dad's an intruder.

MOM: *(To Emma.)* What? *(She turns her attention to her husband.)* Why are you in a net, Richard?

DAD: That's what I'd like to know. *(He eventually frees himself from the net now that Billy isn't holding the pole.)*

MOM: *(She turns away, wrinkling her nose.)* You smell like fish.

DAD: It's not me, it's the net.

MOM: Get rid of it, please.

DAD: *(He puts the fishing net against the far wall. He smooths his hair and straightens his pajamas.)* Ok, would someone like to tell me what just happened?

*(Billy and Emma look at each other and have a silent argument while Mom and Dad watch. Emma gestures that they should come clean, while Billy vehemently shakes his head no. Finally, Emma turns to face her parents.)*

EMMA: We were trying to catch Santa.

MOM: What?

EMMA: But instead, we caught Dad.

MOM: I don't understand.

BILLY: *(He sighs, ready to confess.)* I bet Pete Zimsky \$5 that Santa is real.

DAD: Why would you do that?

BILLY: Because I love money. And I *hate* Pete Zimsky.

EMMA: He's a booger face.

DAD: I see.

BILLY: So, we came up with a plan to catch Santa. We didn't mean to trap you in the net, Dad.

EMMA: Yeah, we're sorry.

DAD: And what exactly were you going to do with Santa once you caught him?

BILLY: Oh...

EMMA: Uh...

BILLY: I hadn't exactly thought that far ahead.

EMMA: Phase Three was a work in progress.

MOM: *(She's heard enough.)* Ok, it's after midnight. We'll deal with this in the morning. Everyone back to bed. Come on. *(She begins corralling her family out of the living room.)*

BILLY: But how am I gonna win the bet? I need real proof, Mom!

MOM: Bed. Now.

BILLY: *(He huffs.)* Fine. *(The family goes to exit, with Billy at the rear. Suddenly, he stops short as something occurs to him.)* Wait, why was Dad putting presents under the tree so late?

*(Everyone turns to Billy. Dad goes to him, thinking fast.)*

DAD: Oh, uh, they were just some last-minute presents your mom and I forgot to put out.

EMMA: *(She glances at the packages.)* Isn't that the same wrapping paper Santa always uses?

DAD: It is, it is... Uh... You know, your mom found the exact same wrapping paper at Target. They really do have everything. *(Name of store can change to reflect local community.)*

BILLY: Why were you wearing a Santa hat?

DAD: I wanted to be festive.

BILLY: Ok, but why were you going to eat the cookies?

DAD: I was hungry?

EMMA: Those cookies are for Santa.

BILLY: Something smells fishy and it's not the net. *(He turns to his parents.)* What's going on?

MOM: *(She looks knowingly at Dad.)* I think it's time.

DAD: Time for what?

MOM: You know... *(She gives Richard a look, speaking in code.)* Time to let the cat out of the stocking...

EMMA: *(Full of excitement)* We're getting a cat for Christmas?!

DAD: Aw, Susan, no. Not yet.

MOM: Half the kids in Billy's class already know.

BILLY: Know what?

DAD: What about Emma? She's too young.

MOM: Her brother will tell her anyway.

EMMA: Tell me what?

MOM: It's time, Richard.

DAD: But on Christmas Eve?

MOM: You were just trapped in a fishing net.

DAD: That could happen to anyone.

BILLY: We're standing right here, you know!

*(Mom looks to Dad. He shakes his head. They have a silent conversation mirroring the one Emma and Billy had earlier.)*

MOM: *(She gives her husband a glare all wives and mothers seem to have perfected.)*  
Richard.

*(Dad sighs and gives her a “go ahead” gesture, even though he’s clearly heartbroken. Mom leads Billy and Emma to the sofa and sits down beside them. Dad leans against the wall.)*

MOM: Come sit by me. Let’s have a little talk.

BILLY: Is this the birds and fleas talk?

MOM: Birds and bees, and no. Where did you hear about that?

BILLY: Tommy Rhoades said his mom and dad talked to him about birds and bugs or something, and then he wouldn’t look at any of the girls in our class for a month.

MOM: No, sweetie, I want to talk about Santa.

EMMA: He’s real, right mom?

MOM: Well, he’s... Uh... Here’s the thing. Santa is less of a real person and more of... an idea.

EMMA: What?

BILLY: I don’t get it.

MOM: Santa represents the magic of Christmas. But he... he isn’t an actual man.

BILLY: Wait, so Santa ISN’T real?

MOM: Not exactly.

BILLY: I don’t believe it!

MOM: I’m sorry, but it’s true.

BILLY: But, but... what about the Easter Bunny?

MOM: Not so much.

BILLY: The tooth fairy?

MOM: *(Her tone reveals the “no” before she even says it.)* Well...

BILLY: This is a house of lies!

*(Billy runs to the corner of the living room.)*

MOM: *(She looks to Dad.)* Feel free to jump in at any time.

DAD: This was your idea.

MOM: *(She sighs, rises, and crosses to Billy.)* Honey, Santa... Well, he's all about giving, right? He gives presents to all the good little girls and boys.

BILLY: Or so you led us to believe.

MOM: Right... But, you know, that's what the spirit of Santa is all about. Giving to others and spreading Christmas cheer.

BILLY: So, Santa is just some story.

MOM: But he's a fun story! The idea of Santa adds a little extra magic to the holidays.

EMMA: I still don't understand. Who eats the cookies and drinks the milk?

MOM: Dad does.

*(Billy shoots a look at Dad. Oh, the betrayal!)*

DAD: Gee, thanks, Susan.

EMMA: Don't you mail our letters to the North Pole?

MOM: *(She goes back to the couch.)* No, Dad and I read them.

EMMA: Who is the Santa at the mall?

MOM: He's just a nice old man who works for the department store.

BILLY: You let us sit on some random stranger's lap? Is there no end to this madness?!

## END PREVIEW

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