

VIRGINIA. Because. I want to believe in him. I have my whole life. And right now, I'm beginning to think he doesn't exist. Nobody can give me a straight answer. It's like people are avoiding me whenever I ask them about it. Why papa? Why are people not giving me a straight answer? Do they not believe? I have been believing.

FATHER. Well, isn't that enough?

VIRGINIA. No, because of my doubts. There are so many things that don't make sense. Why does Mary Lou not get a Christmas like me? If Santa is real, shouldn't she get a Christmas too? She's as good as I am.

FATHER. I don't know, Sweetheart.

VIRGINIA. Well, that's why I have to talk to Santa. So I'm going to wait.

FATHER. You can't wait for him all night, Virginia. He won't come.

VIRGINIA. Why not?

FATHER. Because...that's part of the rules. That's part of the magic of Christmas. If you stay up all night, then it's like saying, you don't believe in him. You have to believe. If you do, then he is real and he will come. But you have to accept the magic. You have to sleep.

VIRGINIA. Well, then how will I ever know if he's real?

FATHER. You just know. You believe. You... I'm sorry. I wish I had a better answer for you, Virginia.

VIRGINIA. That's okay. (*Thinks for a moment.*) Hey papa? Was that true about what you said earlier?

FATHER. What do you mean?

VIRGINIA. About *The New York Sun*. You said, "If it's in *The Sun*, it must be true." Is that really true?

FATHER. Well, yes. I'd like to think so.

VIRGINIA. What if I wrote them a letter and asked them? Do you think they would respond?

FATHER. Well, maybe. But it's getting late, Virginia. The stories are probably already off to publication.

VIRGINIA. Can we try? Please papa? I have to know the truth. I have to know if he's real. *(In tears:)* Please Papa. If you don't know the answer, then they will tell me.

FATHER. Virginia, if you write to them, they probably won't answer. Even if they did, it probably wouldn't be the answer you want.

VIRGINIA. Do you believe in Santa Claus papa?

FATHER. Of course I do.

VIRGINIA. Then let me write the letter. I want to write the letter. If you say that *The New York Sun* writes the truth, then their answer will work for me. No matter what. Please papa? Please?

FATHER. *(Thinks for a moment.)* Okay, Virginia. Write your letter.

(She goes to the table and gets out a sheet of paper. She writes her letter. She puts her letter in an envelope.)

VIRGINIA. Who do I address it to?

FATHER. I don't know. I've never written a letter to the editor before. I suppose address it to "*The New York Sun.*"

(She writes down the address.)

VIRGINIA. Here you go papa.

FATHER. Thank you. Now you need to go to bed, Virginia. I will take this down to the postman.

VIRGINIA. I hope I get an answer Papa. Please hurry.

FATHER. I will Virginia. Now go back upstairs to bed. Good night sweetheart. Merry Christmas.

VIRGINIA. Merry Christmas.

Scene 9
Francis' Office. Late at night

(FRANCIS is back at his typewriter trying to find a story.)

FRANCIS. Think. Think. Think. *(Bangs head on table once.)* THINK!
Ow! *(He falls off his chair.)*

(The POSTMAN enters.)

POSTMAN. Hello? Hello? Is anyone here?

FRANCIS. (Appears from behind the desk.) Yes. I'm here. What can I do for you?

POSTMAN. Well, I have a last-minute letter to the editor of *The New York Sun*. Is that you, sir?

FRANCIS. Well, it is tonight. I'm surprised to see someone working so late!

POSTMAN. Well, we're the US Postal Service. We have a reputation to maintain! Especially on the holidays.

FRANCIS. I suppose you're right.

POSTMAN. Here you are then. (Gives the letter to FRANCIS and hands him a clipboard, too.) Please sign.

FRANCIS. It's still a bit late tonight for a mail delivery to the paper, don't you think?

POSTMAN. Well, it's the strangest thing. We were about to lock up at the post office, when a man came in and insisted this letter be delivered tonight. He said that it was important for his daughter, that it meant everything for her.

FRANCIS. His daughter, huh?

POSTMAN. Yes. He said, "My daughter is eight years old. I don't want her to grow up too soon. Please do this for my daughter, or for any child who may be in jeopardy." I have no idea what he was talking about, but he was so insistent, that I just couldn't refuse.

FRANCIS. Only eight years old? What could an eight-year-old possibly want with *The New York Sun* on Christmas Eve? (He opens the letter and reads it to himself. He bangs his head on the table again in utter defeat.) The impossible question! On this night of all nights!

POSTMAN. What is it?

FRANCIS. (Reads out loud:) It says: "Dear Editor: I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in *The Sun* it's so.' Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus? Virginia O'Hanlon. 115 West Ninety-Fifth Street."

POSTMAN. (*Slightly giggles at his expense.*) Well good luck with that one! Well, I'm well past the clock. Merry Christmas.

FRANCIS. Merry Christmas.

(*The POSTMAN exits.*)

FRANCIS. (*He falls back into his chair.*) Virginia O'Hanlon. After today, I don't know if Santa exists, either.

(*WALTER enters.*)

WALTER. Francis.

FRANCIS. (*Slightly alarmed.*) Oh, hello, sir.

WALTER. Do you have my story?

FRANCIS. No, sir.

WALTER. Well, that's that then.

FRANCIS. I'll just pack up my desk tonight—

WALTER. (*Interrupts.*) What were you doing at that soup line today?

FRANCIS. I was getting some food.

WALTER. Why there?

FRANCIS. Because I couldn't afford to go anywhere else. (*Slightly annoyed.*) And neither could Mary Lou.

WALTER. Mary Lou?

FRANCIS. Yeah, Mary Lou Parker. A little girl, about eight years old. I sat there today, listening to her tell me that she did not believe in Santa Claus, because life wasn't fair.

WALTER. I didn't know things were going that bad for you Francis.

FRANCIS. (*Stands with conviction.*) Well, with all due respect sir, you didn't even think to ask. (*WALTER looks back at him. FRANCIS realizes he "stepped over the line" and sits back down, again defeated.*) Look, you're right, I don't have my voice anymore. I am bad for this busi-