

**VIRGINIA.** Good, you're not dead. Here, let me help you up.

*(She helps him up with some struggle.)*

**FRANCIS.** Oh thank you. Thank you so much!

**VIRGINIA.** It's no problem. Merry Christmas.

**FRANCIS.** Oh wait! *(A little embarrassed:)* Um...Do you know where the soup line is?

**VIRGINIA.** Yeah, it's just up this street and around the corner.

**FRANCIS.** Thank you. I haven't eaten all day.

**VIRGINIA.** I'm sorry. Are you out of work, too, like my friend's mother?

**FRANCIS.** Well, no, not exactly. Well...I guess if I don't turn things around soon, I will be out of a job. Christmas can be such a stressful time!

**VIRGINIA.** Tell me about it. I have been thinking about a Christmas problem all day. I have asked so many people for help, and no one can give me an answer.

**FRANCIS.** Yeah. I've had those problems myself sometimes. But ya know what? Sometimes the answers to our problems are right in front of us. We just don't see them.

**VIRGINIA.** But I always thought, "seeing is believing."

**FRANCIS.** Not necessarily. *(He sits on the bench with VIRGINIA.)* When I was a kid I used to be afraid of monsters in my room. I would go to sleep with the lights on all the time. And then, one day, my mother bought me a stuffed animal. It was a cat, purple with white spots. I thought that was kind of weird. But anyway, my mother said that this cat was called Pippy, and that he was here to protect me from the monsters in my room.

**VIRGINIA.** A stuffed animal?

**FRANCIS.** That's right. A stuffed animal. After that night, I didn't have any more nightmares or any more scary images about monsters in my room. I slept with Pippy 'til I was twenty years-old.

**VIRGINIA.** How old are you now?

**FRANCIS.** Twenty.

**VIRGINIA.** You still sleep with a stuffed animal?

**FRANCIS.** No, I don't sleep with Pippy anymore. I gave Pippy to my little sister about six months ago.

**VIRGINIA.** But what can a stuffed cat do? Pippy isn't real.

**FRANCIS.** I don't know. Yes, on one hand, I know that Pippy is a stuffed animal. But on the other hand, Pippy is very real to me. When I go to sleep at night, it's nice to know that he's there—in my mind. Just the presence of Pippy gives me great comfort; I know he's there to protect me. Our minds are a wonderful thing. For me, my mind gives Pippy life, and for me, Pippy will always be there to protect me from the monsters in my room. Do you get what I'm sayin', kid?

**VIRGINIA.** I guess. Well, I think so. *(The city bell tolls four o'clock.)* Oh no, I have to get home. Merry Christmas! *(Starts to leave.)* And put some ice on your head. It'll heal faster.

**FRANCIS.** I will. And a Merry Christmas to you, too! *(FRANCIS quickly begins to head in Virginia's direction.)* Hey I never got your naaaaame! *(He slips and falls again.)* Hey! Fast little girl. *(Pause.)* I wish Pippy could be here to help me up. Stupid cat!

### Scene 6

#### The O'Hanlon House. Late Afternoon

*(MRS. O'HANLON is at the table wrapping presents. VIRGINIA comes rushing in. She takes off her coat and proceeds to walk past her mother towards her bedroom.)*

**MOTHER.** Virginia.

**VIRGINIA.** Yes, mama?

**MOTHER.** Where are your scarf and gloves?

**VIRGINIA.** Oh, I hope you didn't mind. Since I had an extra pair, I gave them to Mary Lou.

**MOTHER.** I see. *(Pause.)* I heard that Mary Lou's mother was just recently let go from her job.

**VIRGINIA.** Yeah. Mary said it had something to do with slow business and cut backs.

**MOTHER.** Well, it was very nice of you to give her your extra scarf and gloves. Do you want to help me wrap these presents for your cousins?

**VIRGINIA.** No thanks. I'm going to my room to read. *(She turns to leave.)*

**MOTHER.** Virginia.

**VIRGINIA.** Yes?

**MOTHER.** I know something is wrong. You were upset this morning and you look upset now. What is it?

**VIRGINIA.** Well, it's just that Mary Lou is one of the nicest people I know, but Santa never comes to visit her on Christmas. Yet, Harry Benson, a boy in our class and the world's meanest kid, gets new toys every year. I just can't help but wonder if there is a Santa Claus. I mean, I think I've seen him down at Sammy's Toy Store, but Mary Lou tells me that that's not really him. I just don't know anymore, Mama.

**MOTHER.** Oh Virginia. You have too much on your mind for a little girl your age. You need not worry about these things now. Ask yourself: Do you believe in Santa Claus?

**VIRGINIA.** I want to. But no one can seem to give me a straight answer.

**MOTHER.** Well, it is a complicated world, Virginia. I know that is not the answer you want, but that is the answer I have. But if Santa is real to you, then he is real. Santa will stop by tonight I'm sure.

**VIRGINIA.** I just wish he would stop at Mary Lou's house too. I wish there was more I could do for her.

**MOTHER.** I know, sweetheart. I know.

*(SAMANTHA enters with extra wrapping paper looking a bit annoyed at seeing VIRGINIA.)*