

Elves: Disaster in the Control Room

A Virtual Play

By Mollie Ottenhoff

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DEDICATION

To Vivvi, my Spark, and WallyBen, my Bob. And to Santa, for all the joy and magic.

STORY OF THE PLAY

We are in the control room of Santa's Elves on Christmas Eve—our view is exactly what Santa sees on his sleigh monitors. Santa is about to take off, and we are getting an inside look at how that happens from the control room monitors. Papa Elf is retiring next year after 108 years in charge. Spark is in the lead this year, and if all goes well, he/she will be the next Chief Elf. But a disaster awaits that just might cancel Christmas...

CHARACTERS

(Flexible cast of 13)

SPARK: Assistant Elf. First try at Christmas Night, looking to have a smooth night to earn the promotion to Chief Elf.

PAPA: Chief Elf. Getting old and is very forgetful.

WINKY: Trainee. Is the "leader" of the three trainees.

BLINKY: Trainee. Mostly repeats what Winky says.

BOB: Trainee. Speaks in a monotone. Is noticeably less animated than the other two trainees.

MEEPS: Launch Dept. Constantly harassed by Hugo. In the end, the villain.

HUGO: Security Dept. Bully of an elf who yells at Meeps a lot.

ITSY: Reindeer Dept. Super amped up, spins and moves a lot.

HARP: Christmas Spirit Dept. Sings a lot, very happy elf.

APPLE: Energy Dept. Rosy cheeked, is eating cookies most of the time. Loves sweets and cookies and popsicles and...

HANDY: Task Manager. Serious, to-do-list elf. Constantly making notes and checking things off on his lists. Wants to keep on task.

CLUCK: Assistant to the Assistant. Idolizes and kisses up to Spark.

SANTA: Has only one monologue at the end. This can also be played by Papa or another elf.

** Elves can be played by actors of any gender. You are free to adjust pronouns where necessary.*

PRODUCTION NOTES

- This play is intended to be performed online. A stage manager will have to let characters into and out of the waiting room. Alternately, you could have all characters' screens showing, with empty desks if they are not in scene. Have actors "rename" themselves to their character name and department. This will help the audience keep track.
- Even though the actors aren't together, the elves are supposed to be in the same room. Choose locations with similar backgrounds, or use a virtual background. This works best (eliminates the blur effect) if the actors have good lighting and something plain or, best, a green background.
- Because elves are all in the same room, when an elf enters, the actor greeting them can look to his right and speak as if there is a door there.
- If you want to add special effects, have elves step down from their stools and hats move across the bottom of screens to make it look like the elf is walking around the control room. If you don't want to attempt this effect, just have characters reach off camera for their prop. Make the elves look "small" in their desks by having them climb up to sit and drop down to get off their seats.
- To help train the audience's eye to the right place, actors should keep movements minimal when they are not speaking or moving the plot forward. They can be busily typing or reacting to the action. But be mindful of where and how the plot is moving forward.
- Another trick to focus the audience—actors can wave or do a similar natural movement when their department is checking in.

SCENES

Scene 1: Welcome to the Control Room. Spark and Papa are first to arrive in the control room.

Scene 2: The Trainees. They are filled in about how it all usually works.

Scene 3: Meet the Elves. We check in with all departments.

Scene 4: The Launch. As it gets closer and closer to launch time, the elves start falling asleep one by one. It goes dark. There are alarms and noises.

Scene 5: The Red Button. Everyone wakes back up to discover the button that cancels Christmas has been pressed! They find the elf who is responsible.

Scene 6: The Big Man. Santa checks in and congratulates the elves, talking about behavior, forgiveness, and kindness.

Scene 1: Welcome to the Control Room

(AT RISE: SPARK sits at his desk, turning on various switches, pressing buttons, doing important "systems go" tasks.)

SPARK: Testing, testing. Is the sound working? Ahhhh, here we are. Back again, my favorite night of the year. Christmas Eve. The night before Christmas. The night mama kisses Santa Claus. The night of a billion cookies. Here ... turn this one on ... that one ... alright, a couple of flicks of that ... *(Looks at a big red button.)* Just not that one. Never that one.

(PAPA'S SCREEN turns on.)

SPARK: Oh hi, Papa. You're here early.

PAPA: *(Wears glasses low on his nose.)* Early for what? I was just here to check if there were any leftover cookies from any meetings...

SPARK: Um ... early for the launch? Did you forget it's Christmas Eve?

PAPA: Oh, right, yes, yes, the launch. Yes, that's what I'm here for. Do you know if there will be cookies?

SPARK: Just like every year, Papa. Gotta keep our energy up.

PAPA: Right, right. Well, I'll stick around like I said. I want to make sure it all goes well for you. That's why I'm really here. That, and cookies. You know, Spark, in my 108 years of running Santa's control room here I've had some of my favorite memories.

SPARK: Wow! 108 years? I knew you'd been doing it a while, but, man, 108??

PAPA: Yes, yes. It didn't always go smoothly, but it was the challenge! The barriers to overcome. The victory of it all at the end of the night, when the Big Man returned 1 billion cookies happier. Picturing the children with their presents. Yes, sir, that's what made it all worth it.

SPARK: You're right, Papa.

PAPA: That and all the cookies. You know, my favorite memory from all those years is... *(PAPA'S eyes glaze over as he remembers...)*

SPARK: *(Pause.)* Papa?

PAPA: What? Who? Huh?

SPARK: You were saying your favorite memory from all those years was...?

PAPA: I was? Hm, well, I don't remember. Memory ain't what it used to be. Your big night leading for the first time tonight, right, Spark? You know, if you do well tonight, they just might let you take over as Chief Elf when I retire next year.

SPARK: If all goes well.

PAPA: Oh, that's right, I'm supposed to do my main job and give you the magical advice. Let me just press the Magical Advice Generator button. Which one is it? Is it that red one over there by you??

SPARK: *(Flings self over the button desperately.)* No, don't touch it!!!!

PAPA: Just joking, son, just joking. Goodness. I may be an old fogey, but I know the number one rule of Christmas.

SPARK and PAPA: Don't press the red button.

PAPA: Now, let's see. Magical advice. Generated by North Pole Magic to perfectly apply to this year's Launch and flight. I always loved the advice I got over the years ... There was the year it told us "Two front teeth" is not ACTUALLY what Little Sally wants. Come to think of it, it did feel strange to be wrapping up teeth... And the classic year where we all learned, "Don't eat the yellow snow." All that time we were thinking it was snow cones... Here we go. *(Presses a button.)* Okay, here it is! Your magical advice for tonight! It says... *(Squints and struggles to read.)* "The poop is in the cookies."

SPARK: What?

PAPA: It says right here, "The poop is in the cookies." Well, maybe I don't want the cookies after all...

SPARK: Papa, that can't be right.

PAPA: It is, it is! Well, actually maybe you're right. It doesn't sound right. Where are my glasses? Let me double check. Jingly Christmas, now, I can't find them anywhere! Have you seen them? I must have forgotten them again...

SPARK: Papa.

PAPA: What?

SPARK: They are on your face.

PAPA: Oh, that's right. Sometimes that's where I keep them. Okay, now. Let's read this again... *(Adjusts glasses farther up face.)* It says, "The proof is in the pudding." Just like I said the first time!

SPARK: "The proof is in the pudding..." not sure what it means...

PAPA: It came from the Magic Advice Generator, so you will know by the end of the night!

SPARK: *(Rubs hands together.)* Everyone should be here any moment! How about a cookie to get ready for the night?

PAPA: I don't know why, but I've lost my appetite for them at the moment ... I'm just going to take a quick nap before the excitement starts.

SPARK: Papa, you know elves don't sleep, right?

PAPA: I know, but I learned the magic elf spell to try sleeping, and now I can't seem to stop! I love a good nap! When you sleep, you get to do a thing called snoring. Do you know what snoring is? And dreaming! It's marvelous.

SPARK: The magic spell that can make an elf sleep, huh? Sleeping just like the humans do. The world is full of wonders! Just make sure you keep that magic spell away from me. I can't be falling asleep on this important night!

PAPA: Oh, don't worry. You have to be right up close in order for the spell to work. I couldn't even come close to reaching you with the magic spell from here! The only problem with the spell is that it turns my hands red when I perform it.

SPARK: That can't be good! Don't let the reindeer see. They will definitely make fun of you!

PAPA: It's worth it! Now, I'd better get to napping!

(PAPA performs the spell and falls asleep as the SCREEN goes dark.)

Scene 2: The Trainees

(SCREENS on. Trainees are not sitting at the desks yet. SPARK turns to look one direction as if they just all walked in the door. PAPA is sleeping.)

SPARK: Ahhh, welcome trainees! You are all here—the best place to be on the best night of the year—the control room!

(WINKY, BLINKY, and BOB are heard off screen.)

WINKY: Hi, I'm Winky!

BLINKY: Hi, I'm Blinky!

BOB: Bob.

SPARK: Your desks are right over here. Go ahead and take a seat!

End of Freeview

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