

One Hundred Elves

A Holiday Play in One Act

By
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STORY OF THE PLAY

Theatrical producer J.W. Allsworth has committed to putting together a spectacular holiday production for Radio City Music Hall's 100th anniversary celebration. The problem is, he promised the sponsors 100 authentic North Pole elves for the big finale, and he is having trouble finding that many. He phones Santa's workshop and speaks to Phelps, the head elf, who says he will have all the singers and dancers needed at the first rehearsal in a few weeks.

The plan, however, is kept a secret because Phelps wants to surprise Santa by using the money to pay off the workshop's overdue mortgage. Upon discovering that Santa has downsized the factory to only 50 elves, Phelps organizes a worldwide search for all past employees and finally come up with exactly the required number. Even Gustavia, the oldest elf in the world, agrees to help, but she must be kept warm from the time she leaves her home in Florida until she returns after the show.

Phelps promises, but on opening night, a staged snowstorm effect freezes Gustavia solid as she waits in the wings for her entrance. With only 99 elves to go on stage, panic sets in. Now the sponsors will pull their funding, J.W.'s agency will go under, and Santa will lose his workshop.

That is when Gustavia, immobile but conscious, recognizes J.W. as her son from a brief marriage with a North Pole mailman over 30 years ago. J.W. finally admits that he is half-elf, which is better than no elf at all, and he goes onstage with the chorus line. The show is saved, and all ends well.

Approximately 45 minutes.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(Widely flexible cast. Approx 2 m, 5 w, 7 either gender,
and one offstage male voice.)*

J.W. ALLSWORTH: Producer at Radio City Music Hall.

MISS PATELLA: J.W. Allsworth's efficient young secretary.

MARCIA ALLSWORTH: J.W. Allsworth's shrewish wife.

ARTHUR: J.W. Allsworth's director brother-in-law.

PHELPS: Santa's head elf.

JEEVES: Phelps' assistant elf.

TWINKLE: Elf.

SNOW: Elf.

DRIZZLE: Elf.

JINGLE: Elf.

GUSTAVIA: The oldest elf in the world, lives in Miami.

PRISCILLA: Choreographer at Radio City.

FLO: Stage Manager at Radio City.

IRENE: Technical director at Radio City.

SANTA / RADIO CITY ANNOUNCER: Offstage voice.

SETTINGS

*The several settings required can be indicated by a simple
piece or two of furniture.*

Scenes 1, 2, and 3: J.W.'s Manhattan office and Phelp's
office at the North Pole.

Scenes 4 and 5: Radio City Music Hall, empty stage and
backstage.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: The Manhattan office of J.W. Allsworth. The set is SR: a cluttered desk, fax/phone, large potted plant, and hat tree. MISS PATELLA, J.W.'s secretary, is seated in a chair left of the desk, taking dictation on a laptop computer while J.W. paces.)

J.W.: ...authentic! And underline "authentic!" Read it back, Miss Patella.

MISS P: Yes, J.W. "Dear Arthur. As I've said before, you are the director. And, as you have so often reminded me, you are my wife's brother. However, I am the producer. And family or not, that makes me the boss. And when the boss says he wants one hundred elves for the big finale, that is exactly what the boss means. One hundred honest-to-goodness, pointy-eared, pint-sized, North Pole little people: one for each of *Radio City Music Hall's One Hundred Years in the Big Apple*. What the boss doesn't want is leprechauns. Leprechauns are not elves. Leprechauns are Irish. Elves are North Polish. Any kid over the age of two will know the difference, and I will not put myself in that kind of danger on opening night. Come get your leprechauns, Arthur. They are not in a good mood, I am not in a good mood, and you will be another unemployed director wandering Forty-Second Street if I don't see you in here and them out of here in one hour. Authentic elves, Arthur. Authentic!"

J.W.: Did you underline "authentic"?

MISS P: (*Punching a key.*) Yes, Mr. Allsworth.

J.W.: Good. Send it.

MISS P: (*Punching another key.*) Done.

J.W.: Wait. Don't send it.

MISS P: But I already did, Mr. Allsworth.

J.W.: Marcia is going to kill me.

MISS P: Kill you, sir? Mrs. Allsworth?

J.W.: I threatened her brother. She's like a lioness when it comes to her family.

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MISS P: But surely Mrs. Allsworth will understand that...

J.W.: Understand? Let me tell you what my wife understands, Miss Patella. She understands that her father started this production company and wisely turned it over to me when he retired. She understands that her simpleton brother, Arthur, was left out of the deal, because he would have driven it to ruin in a month. She understands that I toss a show Arthur's direction once in a while only to keep peace in the family, because if I don't, she will take her half of the company, sell it, and open up a strip mall in Yonkers. She's got me over a barrel, Miss Patella. That big old proverbial barrel.

(ARTHUR and MARCIA enter SR with printouts of J.W.'s letter.)

MARCIA: Jonathan, I want a word with you!

J.W.: I knew you would. *(Indicating the letter.)* How did you get that so fast?

MARCIA: You sent it by e-mail, not carrier pigeon. Everybody in the company has a copy. What is going on here, and why are you publicly demeaning my brother? And what on earth are these little people doing all over your waiting room?

J.W.: That's what I would like to know! Arthur, why did you send me leprechauns when I specifically asked for elves?

ARTHUR: I didn't think it would make any difference, J.W.

J.W.: You thought...? Of course it makes a difference, you numbskull! I promised the sponsors one hundred authentic North Pole elves for the big Christmas show finale, and, besides, I already made the initial contact!

ARTHUR: But I don't see why leprechauns couldn't...

J.W.: *(Pulling him aside.)* Arthur, not only has it already been advertised that Santa's own are going to appear on the Radio City stage -- a theatrical first, I don't have to tell you -- but leprechauns are just, well, so difficult to work with. They have those obnoxious little attitudes, you know, like they can't get over their...obvious...differences.

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J.W.: (*Cont'd.*) Elves, on the other hand, act as if they don't even know they're short...or have that...ear thing. Now, Marcia, Arthur and I have to get some work done. It would be a big help if you and Miss Patella would escort the little guys to the A train.

MARCIA: They're taking the subway?

ARTHUR: They live in the subway, Marcia. And they'll be the first to tell you it's a far cry from the Lochs of Ireland.

J.W.: (*To Arthur.*) See what I mean? Attitudes.

MISS P: (*Exiting and calling out to the Leprechauns in the waiting room.*) C'mon, guys, Mr. Allsworth is treating us all to Irish coffee at the Shamrock Deli. It's on the way.

J.W.: I am? Now wait a minute...

MARCIA: It's the least you could do, Jonathan. (*Holds out her hand for money.*)

J.W.: Oh, all right. (*Gives her some cash.*) Just get them out of here, will you?

(*MARCIA exits.*)

J.W.: (*Crossing to his desk.*) Now where is that phone number?

ARTHUR: What phone number, J.W.?

J.W.: The phone number. The head man himself. The big "S."

ARTHUR: (*Gasp.*) You're going to call Stephen Sondheim?

J.W.: Not Sondheim, you nincompoop. Santa.

ARTHUR: Oh, that big "S." (*Sits in Miss Patella's chair, does a double take, and stands up again.*) S-Santa? ... Claus? ... Santa Claus?

J.W.: That's the one.

ARTHUR: You know Santa Claus?

J.W.: (*Still searching the desk.*) We've spoken.

ARTHUR: (*Suddenly cool.*) Well...so have I...once. In Macy's. When I was five... (*Suddenly un-cool.*) This is so radical! You're going to call Santa Claus!

J.W.: Not if I don't find his number, I'm not! Help me out here, will you?

End of Freeview

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