

The Naughty List

by Derek Sonderfan

Lights up to a typical living room/dining room. It is festively decorated, and cluttered. There is a small dining room table SL with a few chairs around it. SANTA is at a laptop typing away. CS is a couch with a high arm facing USR to a TV (a person should be able to lie there without being seen by the audience). There is a video game controller wire leading from the TV to the couch. There is a lounge chair CS facing DSR. On it sits MRS. CLAUS, reading a romance book.

SANTA is dressed as SANTA normally is when it's not Christmastime – gray pajama shirt with suspenders keeping on his black pants. He has a beard, typical SANTA. MRS. CLAUS is more like a bedraggled housewife than anything in popular depictions.

SANTA

[cheerfully singing]

*I'm making a list,
I'm checking it twice;
I have OCD,
That's why I'm checking it twice.
Iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii am coming to town.*

MRS. CLAUS

Do you know other songs?

SANTA

I see you when I'm sleeping...No, wait, that's not how it goes. How's it go?

MRS. CLAUS

How do you consistently forget the words?

SANTA

*I see when you're awake. That's it.
I see you in your underpants—
Uh oh.*

MRS. CLAUS

[curtly, spoken] It's 'he knows if you've been bad or good—'

SANTA

Honey, help.

MRS. CLAUS

What did you do now?

SANTA

I think I just wiped out the rams.

MRS. CLAUS

I assure you you didn't wipe out the rams.

SANTA

I don't understand how to use these spread-outs.

MRS. CLAUS

Spreadsheets! Hold on, I'm coming. *[Gets out of her chair and goes to SANTA]* What is it you're trying to do?

SANTA

I'm trying to go through my naughty list. It keeps saying 'invalid field procedure.' I don't even know what that means.

MRS. CLAUS

What button are you using to scroll up and down?

SANTA

[after scouring] F11.

MRS. CLAUS

Just use the mouse. Click here, and the screen will scroll. Okay?

SANTA

Thanks sweetie. You can expect a big gift in your stocking this year, ho ho ho.

MRS. CLAUS

[going back to her chair] A vacation, I hope.

SANTA

Let's see. Wendy Classer – naughty: talking back to her mommy and not doing her homework. Not too bad – she gets a dolly and some socks. Ho ho. Little Billy Clatch – naughty: arson. Hmmm, I would normally give charcoal, but that might send the wrong impression. He gets a lava lamp and non-redeemable bus passes to Poughkeepsie. Lucas Clathwright – naughty. Ho ho ho boy. Tormenting his baby sister, causing his parents divorce, performing 'rude' public displays with a wheelbarrow and some whipped cream. Not a good little boy indeed! He gets sweaters, and plenty of them!

MRS. CLAUS

Nick, I'm trying to read.

SANTA

You know thinking out loud helps me think. Now where was I? Mitsy Clattenpoots – naughty. Having the name Mitsy Clattenpoots. Coal. The Clatty brothers? Coal. Coal. You? Coal. Coal. Ho ho coal!

MRS. CLAUS

Fine, I'm going out to the lanai to read.

SANTA

It's thirty-five below zero.

MRS. CLAUS

I like the numbing effect; it soothes me.

She exits.

SANTA

Renita Claucker – naughty. Selling her body for Tang. [*Takes off his spectacles, rubs his eyes and looks at his list again*] This has been the strangest year I can recall! She gets a can of WD-40 and a gift certificate to the Gap. Mrs. Claus... [*pauses*] Mrs. Claus - naughty.

He looks back to the doorway where Mrs. Claus exited, then back to his computer.

Mrs. Claus – naughty: repeated improprieties outside of marriage, lying to her husband, unpaid parking tickets. [*pause*] Oh, Mrs. Claus!? Can you come back in here a second? I found another problem on my computer!

After a moment, she comes back in. He rises and stares at her.

MRS. CLAUS

It isn't hard, Nick. Scroll using the mouse and... when you... want... what? Don't look at me like that. What?

SANTA

Ho. Ho. [*seething*] HO!

MRS. CLAUS

What? Is it your comp—

SANTA

Someone has *not* been a good girl this year.

MRS. CLAUS

What did I do?

SANTA

Who did you do? Let's start there.

There is a beat.

MRS. CLAUS

It was only a matter of time, I suppose.

SANTA

Don't play coy with me!

MRS. CLAUS

I'm not. I just admitted it. I've cheated on you.

SANTA

Look, I'm not... you're... okay, you've... you've admitted... uh... wow. I don't know what to say to that. Could you play coy? It would help me out a great deal.

MRS. CLAUS

Nick, you had to see this coming. I haven't been happy for years.

SANTA

So *talk* to me about it, don't go running around—

MRS. CLAUS

I've tried to. Several times. Your head is always in Christmas, not me.

SANTA

I don't remember you bringing it up once.

MRS. CLAUS

I made us sign up for marriage counseling. We went for six months.

SANTA

Well, you should see what our supposed *marriage counselor*, Mr. So-Called Andrews, did to get himself on my *naughty* list this year.

MRS. CLAUS

See, Nick, this is what I mean. Everything for you is about Christmas; you get totally immersed in it. And that's fine – I like a man with hobbies.

SANTA

Well, Christmas is the most wonderful time of year. How could I not get lost in it?

MRS. CLAUS

I know, I *like* Christmas, it's not that.

SANTA

Why, without Christmas, we'd be stuck with Chanukah. I mean, if you like playing with candles and not eating as your one big hurrah for the year—

MRS. CLAUS

Nick, you're missing what I'm saying.

SANTA

Not to mention it's my *job*. It's what puts bread on the table.

MRS. CLAUS

Your elves make bread, Nick. They make all of our dinners.

SANTA

[*changing to jolly*] Oh, and they're *very* good at making things, aren't they?

MRS. CLAUS

Your devotion is commendable, it really is. But I need more. *I... need.* I need a man who will have *time* for me. Not constant time, but a little time.

SANTA

Why try to hide it from me until now when you *knew* I'd find out on my lists?

MRS. CLAUS

I didn't try to—I handed you divorce papers, Nick. Twice.

SANTA

You did?

MRS. CLAUS

Yes. You proofread them for grammatical and spelling mistakes and told me you didn't get the ending.

SANTA

I did?

MRS. CLAUS

It doesn't matter what time of year it is. You're always all about Christmas and not about me. About *us*.

SANTA

I was bound to find out, you know. I have *powers*. I see you *when you're sleeping*.

MRS. CLAUS

Apparently not.

SANTA

I go to every house in the world in one night.

MRS. CLAUS

Let's just say that that's not all you do very fast.

SANTA

Now that was just uncalled for. You're beginning to look a lot like Satan. Coal is too good for you. You get the second season of *Girlfriends* on VHS.

MRS. CLAUS

I'm being honest with you now. It may be late, but—

SANTA

Who was it?

MRS. CLAUS

What?

SANTA

With whom did you tarnish the sanctity of our marriage?

MRS. CLAUS

Does it matter?

SANTA

Of course it matters! Who was it?

MRS. CLAUS

Wendell.

SANTA

My brother? You slept with *my brother*?!?!?

MRS. CLAUS

We only slept together once! It's just... Wendell can provide me with the things you can't when you're too busy with Christmas.

SANTA

Of course he can give you all the time you need. He's worthless. The man spends every waking minute on that couch playing video games. He's shiftless, lazy, and quite frankly, he's a waste of bones. I even tried to make him one of my elves. He can't even make *cookies*! He's a useless, useless person.

MRS. CLAUS

Look, maybe we shouldn't talk about this now.

SANTA

Ho ho ho, I think we *should* talk about this now.

WENDELL pokes his head up from the couch. This should be the first time anyone in the audience knows he's been on the stage the whole time.

WENDELL

Dude, do you at least want me to, like, go into the other room or something?

MRS. CLAUS

Yes, Wendell, I think—

SANTA

No, let's all stay here and talk this through. Ho boy, I'm running *way* behind schedule now – I might need Frosty's help tonight with the wrapping.

WENDELL goes back to playing his video game, now sitting up.

MRS. CLAUS

See, this is my point, everything goes back to Christmas with you.

SANTA

It IS almost Christmas, you know. I'm still only on the C's on my naughty list. Don't forget, I still have Ryan Seacrest to get to, and we all know how long *that's* gonna take.

MRS. CLAUS

You're not listening at all. When will you get *to me*?

SANTA

I just did. [*reading off the list*] Repeated improprieties outside... wait, *repeated*? I thought you said you only did it once.

WENDELL

We only did it once, dude. And I had *way* too many Jager bombs that night. I'm sorry.

MRS. CLAUS

We only slept together once.

SANTA

Then who else? *Repeated* improprieties...

MRS. CLAUS

[*after a beat*] Manny, the landscaper.

SANTA

We have a landscaper?

MRS. CLAUS

He was just trying—

SANTA

Wait, we have a landscaper? We're on the north pole; we live on fifteen feet of ice! A *landscaper*?

MRS. CLAUS

He does the ice sculptures, Nick.

WENDELL

Yeah, dude, they're really cool.

SANTA

Oh. Okay, I know him. Yes, he does very nice work.

MRS. CLAUS

Look, we were only together from... since February. I should... probably... not have... started that sentence.

SANTA

Ho ho oh my head. I need a seat. This is all too much.

MRS. CLAUS

When you made your vows to me, you promised to *be there* for me, through sickness and health, for better or for worse, and during *all four seasons*. You're not. Manny is, mainly because all of our seasons are winter and his concentration is pretty much *just* ice sculptures. It's convenient.

SANTA

I just want to know one thing. Do you love me?

MRS. CLAUS

I don't know. I did at one point. But you're no longer the person I fell in love with.

SANTA

No longer the person *with whom* you fell in love.

MRS. CLAUS

When did you become such a grammar nazi?

SANTA

Bad grammar can put a person on the naughty list.

WENDELL

Really?

SANTA

Yeah, little known fact. So can chronic tardiness, watching reality television, and immediately classifying comedic theatre below dramatic theatre just because it doesn't purport to change the world.

A comic beat so the audience can feel guilty.

MRS. CLAUS

Look, Nick, the truth is I fell in love with you when you were still Our Holy Father St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra. I loved you when you were sitting idly by as a saint, beloved of all people around the world. I loved you even in the 16th century during that weird phase when you used to leave treats inside the clogs of believing Dutch children. But when your boss came to you and said, "Nicholas, I've got a promotion in mind for you," and you took this gig, that's when it started. The whole... Christmas madness thing. That's when I lost my husband to the ghost of Christmas Always.

WENDELL

Yeah, never trust a boss who says they have a promotion idea, man.

MRS. CLAUS

Wendell, when was the last time you worked, even a *day*?

WENDELL

[after a beat] Is this, like, a trick question?

SANTA

Do you love me anymore, Mrs. Claus?

She remains silent.

What have I done wrong? I spend my living delivering joy and brand-name merchandise to millions of children and families. I am the very symbol of gratuitous kindness. I don't see how I could—

Just then, a scantily-clad girl in a fuzzy bikini walks by and kisses SANTA on the cheek. She speaks like an overzealous polite helper.

EVE

Santa, sweetie, we've got a great publicity spot lined up for tomorrow, it's gonna be great! We need you in costume tomorrow at nine with... the Misses... and.....what? Is this a bad time?

MRS. CLAUS

All right, while we're getting everything out in the open—

SANTA

You did her too!?!?

MRS. CLAUS

What? No! I thought you were having an affair with her!

SANTA

Me and Eve? Ha, that's funny. She's one of my little helpers.

MRS. CLAUS

You spend so much time with her and the others.

SANTA

Oh ho ho no you don't. I see where you're going with this. I've spoken to you about this at great length. See, with [*disdainfully*] religion taking so much attention away from the true meaning of Christmas, you know we needed to update our image. Bring the commercialism and idolatry back. You even helped me come up with a few ideas.

MRS. CLAUS

I did not suggest you taking on harlots.

EVE

Helpers, we're *helpers*.

SANTA

Oh, so now you have a problem with the Clausettes?

MRS. CLAUS

Tell me, what purpose do they serve?

SANTA

Sex sells, darling. You can't deny that.

MRS. CLAUS

So you *have* had sex with her!

EVE

Golly no, Mrs. Claus. Me and Holly and Angel and Mistletoe, well we—

SANTA

Holly, Angel, Mistletoe and I.

EVE

Right. We plan everything for Santa so he can concentrate aaaaall his efforts on making sure the good children get the toys, and the naughty children get cholera.

SANTA

Coal.

EVE

[happily] Right.

SANTA

Honey, I'm trying to make this Christmas the best Christmas ever. You know how hard it's been for me – first my sleigh needs new struts, then settling the breaking and entering lawsuits for last year, then the elf union threatening to strike, then that little episode we had with Cupid and Dancer, and now we have Runner... and Pamper... and Punky, Gunner, Kraken, Dancer Jr., Heaven, Bowler, Grumpy, Sledder, Cheddar, Poots, Monkey, Chandelier, Muffler, Blintzes and Carl?

WENDELL

Heh. I forgot about Blintzes.

SANTA

I need the Clausettes to help me.

MRS. CLAUS

How come you never asked me to help?

SANTA

That's not your job. Your job is to put on the frilly hat, the apron, the spectacles, and bake cookies. Gingerbread men. They're your favorite.

EVE

And you're sure great at makin' em, Mrs. Claus!

MRS. CLAUS

Nick, that's it. You have to decide. Do you choose Christmas? Or me?

SANTA

I don't... I can't. Christmas is the greatest day of the year.

MRS. CLAUS

Is that what you choose?

There is a pause. Then WENDELL, to the video game.

WENDELL

Dude, die already! I've shot you, like, a million times!

MRS. CLAUS

Wendell!

SANTA

I can't turn my back on Christmas.

MRS. CLAUS

I never thought it would come to this.

SANTA

I don't want to choose either. You just put me in a—

MRS. CLAUS

Well Nick, I'm sorry... that you... feel...

She runs out of the room to prevent crying in front of everyone. There is definitely an awkward moment as EVE is trying to gauge what SANTA is thinking. WENDELL turns his attention back to his video game.

SANTA

[back to jolly] Well, those gifts aren't going to allocate themselves.

EVE

Don't you want to go after her?

SANTA

Ho ho ho! Christmas is right around the corner, my little helper. And this is definitely going to be the best Christmas ever!

EVE

If you're sure.

SANTA

[back at the computer] Now, where was I?

EVE

How about I bring you some milk and cookies?

SANTA

[looking at computer] Janice Claucker. Hershell Clauptephentertaed ...however you pronounce that. Mrs. Claus... Wendell Claus...

There is another awkward moment. SANTA takes just a beat but then moves on merrily. EVE, who hadn't quite left the room, relaxes and exits the room to get milk and cookies.

Ah, here we go. Tony Clavicle – naughty: extortion from his company; voting Republican. He gets coal. Little Molly Claxenberry – naughty: cheating on her spelling tests. She gets a dictionary, just for irony purposes. Boris Clay – naughty: coal for him!

The lights slowly start to fade to black as he goes through his list. EVE steps out onto the apron of the stage and addresses the audience.

EVE

We all expected Mrs. Claus to come back later that night – at least I did. But she didn't – she moved back to her old house in Pennsylvania, sending a truck to get her things. As for Santa, if it bothered him, he never showed even the slightest sign. He prepared for Christmas, almost *attacked* it, twice as hard as ever, and the only thing he would say was that it was going to be the greatest one ever. And on Christmas night, when all the boys and girls were asleep in their bed, dreaming about plums of all things, one naughty girl stayed up to see what Santa had for her.

Lights come up to MRS. CLAUS in a nightgown, sitting on a rocking chair. It is very late. She is in a small room with a tiny Christmas tree.

MRS. CLAUS

[singing quietly] Have yourself a merry little Christmas.
Let your heart be... sad.

WENDELL enters from the side, with SANTA following, carrying a large, nearly empty bag.

WENDELL

See, dude? The front door is *so* much easier. Oh. Hi.

MRS. CLAUS

Hello Wendell. Nick.

SANTA

Wendell, go feed the deer. Oh, and tell Rudolph to stop singing that stupid song.

WENDELL

Got it. *[he exits]*

MRS. CLAUS

I didn't think you'd come.

SANTA

It's Christmas. Everyone gets a stop from Santa on Christmas.

MRS. CLAUS

What about Jews?

SANTA

They don't leave milk and cookies. Hey, a man has to eat.

MRS. CLAUS

Sorry, I didn't leave you anything.

SANTA

You're right: you left me with nothing.

MRS. CLAUS

So did you come all this way to personally give me a stocking full of coal?

SANTA

No, funny thing, with natural resource shortages, there isn't enough coal to go around this year. Instead, I have to give out AOL CDs to all the naughty children.

MRS. CLAUS

[chuckles] You always had a great sense of humor.

SANTA

I'm being dead serious. The elves didn't even have to make them – I have gotten enough of them in the mail over to years to keep me until next year, maybe the year after.

MRS. CLAUS

Why are you here, Nick?

SANTA

Santa has a present for you.

MRS. CLAUS

I don't want it. Look, Nick, I stayed up this late because I never said goodbye. And I also never apologized. What I did was wrong. I didn't want you to return to the North Pole without knowing that... I'm sorry.

SANTA

[getting a small package from his sack] Here, open it.

MRS. CLAUS

Can you please spare me the embarrassment of whatever Tim Burton-esque gift this is?

SANTA

Open it.

MRS. CLAUS

You deserve someone who can share in your love of Christmas. That's what I've realized. And I hope you can find her.

SANTA

Mrs. Claus, please open my present.

She reluctantly takes the package and opens the gift. It is a typed letter. She looks at it.

MRS. CLAUS

A letter of resignation?

SANTA

From now on, I'm going back to being St. Nicholas the Wondermaker, Archbishop of Myra.

MRS. CLAUS

Really? Why? I thought Christmas was the best day of the year.

SANTA

Christmas is so great because of who you spend it with.

MRS. CLAUS

You mean... with whom you spend it.

SANTA

[a warm chuckle] I'm quitting Christmas, dear. This was my last year.

MRS. CLAUS

Who's taking over?

SANTA

Wendell. That's why I'm taking him around this year.

MRS. CLAUS

Wendell Claus? I gotta say, it doesn't have the same ring.

SANTA

You were right – I made a promise to you. And I hope you'll remember the promise you made to me not to have sex with other people—

MRS. CLAUS

Stop it!

SANTA

Mrs. Claus, will you... I assume you haven't gone back to your maiden name of Ms. Van der Stoodle?

MRS. CLAUS

[chuckles] No.

SANTA

Mrs. Claus, will you take an old fool back?

MRS. CLAUS

I'd love to.

They kiss.

Can the sleigh handle bringing all my stuff back up north?

SANTA

Are you kidding me? It's *freezing* up there. I was thinking Key West. I'm almost a thousand bloody years old.

MRS. CLAUS

Can I convince you to stay the night here?

SANTA

You *were* my last stop. Convenient how that worked out, isn't it?

MRS. CLAUS

I love you, Nick.

SANTA

I love you too, Mrs.

She starts to exit to the bedroom. SANTA stops her.

Hold on. [*he walks to the side and shouts out*] Wendell! It's all you, man. I'll see you tomorrow.

WENDELL

[*from offstage*] All right, dude. On Dasher, on Punky, on Blintzes, on Monkey!

MRS. CLAUS

Do you really think Wendell can handle Christmas?

SANTA

With the kids today and technology, nobody knows video games better than Wendell. I think he'll be just perfect for it.

WENDELL

[*from offstage*] Merry Christmas to all, dudes.

SANTA

Merry Christmas, Mrs. Claus.

MRS. CLAUS

Now let's have ourselves a good night.

Blackout.