HER CHRISTMAS HAT
A FARCE IN ONE ACT.

From the book, “The White Christmas and Other Merry Christmas Plays”
By Walter Ben Hare

CHARACTERS:

WARREN WILLIAMS  A Young Architect
KITTY         His Wife
MISS MINERVA MOCKRIDGE  From Kankakee
MAGINNIS GOOGIN  The Janitor of the Apartment
MRS. HONORIA GOOGIN  His Wife
EDDIE       The Elevator Boy
MRS. LAURA LACEY   Kitty's Chum
HOGAN        A Policeman
HARD TIMES ANNIE A Beggar

TIME OF PLAYING--About Forty-five Minutes.

SCENE: Living room in an apartment house. Furnishings as desired.
Several Christmas wreaths adorn the room. KITTY is discovered comfortably seated down L. reading a fashion magazine. The door bell at R. rings.

KITTY. Come in.

Enter EDDIE, the colored elevator boy. He carries several Christmas packages.

EDDIE. Yas'm, I'm in.

KITTY. Eddie!

EDDIE. Yas'm, it's me. I 'clare I's loaded up like a reg'lar old Santa Claus. (Laughs loudly.) Yas'm, I sure am.

KITTY. Anything for us, Eddie?

EDDIE. Two packages for you and one for Mr. Williams. Santa Claus is sure liberal to you-all.

KITTY (taking the three packages). Thank you, Eddie.

EDDIE (briskly). I don't usually bring up de mail, Mis' Williams, but this is Christmas Day and mos' everybody is anxious to git all dat's comin' to 'em. I knows I is.

KITTY. Have you had a merry Christmas, Eddie?

EDDIE. No'm, not yet. All I got is a yaller and green striped necktie.
from (insert local name). He's been wearin' it for more'n a year.

KITTY (has opened smaller package). Oh, it's from Rannie Stewart. (Takes off tissue paper, disclosing a small bit of white embroidery tied with a huge pink bow.) Mercy! Another pin-cushion cover. That makes six I have already. Cost about twenty cents, and I sent her a perfectly lovely doily embroidered with scarlet forget-me-nots. I'll never send Rannie Stewart another present as long as I live. (Throws box and wrappings into waste basket.) Pink! And she knows my rooms are in blue and yellow. Eddie!

EDDIE. Yas'm.

KITTY. Here's a little Christmas present for you. (Hands it to him.)

EDDIE (reads card on it). "Merry Christmas to my Darling Kittens." Is dat for me?

KITTY. Oh, no; not the card, just the embroidery.

EDDIE (holding it up). Lawdy, Mis' Williams, what is dis yere? A dust cap?

KITTY. It's a cover for a pin-cushion. Isn't it a dear?

EDDIE. I hopes you'll excuse me, but honest I hain't got no more use for dat thing dan a pussy cat has for a hot water bottle.

KITTY (opening larger package). Throw it in the waste basket, Eddie. This is from Warren. I know the handwriting. It looks like a hat. (Opens box and removes wrappings, disclosing a hideous red and orange hat.) Heavens, what a nightmare! Red and orange and a style four years old. It must have come from the five and ten cent store. Look at the plume! Oh!

EDDIE (admiring it). Um-um, dat shore am a fine present. Your husband certainly am a man ob taste, he shore am.

KITTY (sarcastically). Yes, he has wonderful taste, hasn't he? A little bizarre. No, it's more than bizarre; it's baroque.

EDDIE. It looks like a hat to me.

KITTY. I know what I'll do. (Wraps it up and puts it back in box.)

EDDIE. Dat certainly was a nice present, Mis' Williams. Must have cost a heap of money.

KITTY. It probably did. But it isn't my style. And Madame Brunot never exchanges hats. What a shame! I suppose he paid an enormous price for it and I could have satisfied myself with one for half the money. If only men would allo...
KITTY (kisses her). That's right, Lolly. I was just going over to your apartment. I have a little present for you.

LAURA. A present? You dear! (Kisses her again.)

KITTY. Yes. Here! (Gives her the box containing the hat.) I hope you'll like it.

LAURA. A hat? Oh, you darling! (Kisses her again.)

WARREN (outside L.). Kitty!

KITTY (goes to door at L.). Yes, Warren?

WARREN. I can't find my collar button.

KITTY. Did you look on the dresser?

WARREN. Of course I did. I've looked every place except in the refrigerator.

KITTY. I'll be back in a minute, Laura. Excuse me. (Hurries out L.)

LAURA (opens the box hastily and takes out the hat). Red and orange! Horrors! And I gave her a cut glass cold-cream jar that I got at the auction. I wouldn't wear this to a dog fight. Eddie!

EDDIE. Yas'm.

LAURA. You've been a good boy to us all year. I'm going to give you a lovely Christmas present.

EDDIE. Is you?

LAURA. I'm going to give you this duck of a hat. (Holds it up.)

EDDIE (delighted). Dat red and yaller hat?

LAURA. Yes. Hurry and put it in the box. I don't want Kitty Williams to know I gave her Christmas present away. (They put it in box.)

EDDIE. Um-um! Dat shore am some Christmas present. Won't ma lady-love be delighted with all dat gorgeousness? I certainly am much obliged to you, Mis' Lacey; I shore am.

LAURA. When Kitty comes back tell her I was called to the 'phone. (Goes to door R.) I'll never give Kitty Williams another present as long as I live. (Exits R.)

Enter WARREN WILLIAMS from L.

WARREN. Hello, Eddie. Are you acting as Santa Claus?

EDDIE (who has put the hat on floor at rear). Yas, sah; yas, sah. I's old Santa Claus to most everybody 'cept maself. Looks like old Christmas done passed me by.
WARREN (sees package on table). Hello, here's a present for me.

EDDIE. Yas, sah. I brung it up.

WARREN (opens it). Cigars! From my wife. (Looks at box dubiously.) She must have got them at a bargain sale. (Reads cover.) Santas Odoriferous. (Passes box to Eddie.) Have a cigar, Eddie.

EDDIE. Yas, sah. Thank you, boss.

WARREN (lighting one). Now, that certainly is a sensible present. So many women don't know how to select a cigar, but Kitty--

EDDIE (smoking). Yas, sah. Your wife certainly am a lady ob discernibility. She shore am.

WARREN. So many women give their husbands such foolish presents.

EDDIE. De lady in Apartment B done give her husband a pearl La Valliere for Christmas.

WARREN (takes cigar from mouth, looks at it a moment, replaces it and smokes furiously). You like a good cigar, don't you, Eddie?

EDDIE (removes his cigar, looks at it, replaces it). Yas, sah. I likes a good cigar.

WARREN. I tell you these are something like cigars, aren't they?

EDDIE. Yas, sah. Dey's sumpin like 'em, boss, but not quite.

WARREN (chokes and then throws cigar in cuspidor). I don't believe I care to smoke just now.

EDDIE (does the same). Neither does I, boss; neither does I.

WARREN. You wouldn't like a nice box of cigars for a Christmas present, would you, Eddie?

EDDIE (slowly). No, sah, I don' 'spects I would. Ma lady-love don't like to hab me smoke no cigars, kase she says it contaminates ma presence. Well, I's got to go and delibe de res' ob my Christmas packages. Merry Christmas, boss. (Exit R., carrying the hat in the box.)

Enter KITTY from L.

KITTY. Warren, I've laid out the costumes in your room. They're too lovely for anything.

WARREN. Well, did you get it?

KITTY. Get it?

WARREN. Your Christmas present.
KITTY. Oh, yes, I got it. (Looks around.) Why, where is Lolly?

WARREN. She probably got tired of waiting and went back to her apartment. How did you like the hat?

KITTY. It was a dream. You're such a good boy and you have the most wonderful taste in the world.

WARREN. Your cigars were just what I wanted.

KITTY. Why aren't you smoking one?

WARREN. I did. Just one.

KITTY. Just one?

WARREN (hastily). I mean--I only smoke one cigar in the afternoon, you know. But where is your hat?

KITTY. I'm going to have it fixed over a little, Warren. Just enough to suit my own individuality, you know.

WARREN. Jack Dawson gave his wife a cook stove.

KITTY. Speaking of impossible presents, I just got the most horrible pin-cushion cover from Rannie Stewart. I threw it in the waste basket.

WARREN. That's what comes of promiscuous giving. I told you how it would be. First I decided not to buy anything at all, but I couldn't resist that hat. Your tickets to the masquerade dinner and ball are the rest of the present.

KITTY. But I told Lolly we'd take tickets from her.

WARREN. I know. I haven't bought the tickets yet. I meant the money for them was the rest of your present. That and the hat. All my presents are beautiful practical things that every one wants.

KITTY. Yes, that's so. You have wonderful taste.

WARREN. I didn't even give Eddie anything.

KITTY. It doesn't matter. Oh, Warren. (Sits on arm of his chair.) I'm so glad we're going to have tonight all to ourselves. Aunt Minerva would have spoiled everything.

WARREN. Is she so very awful?

KITTY. Not awful; just good. Real downright good. And so intellectual. I'm sure she'd never approve of a Christmas masquerade.

(Ring at the bell at R.)

KITTY. See who it is.

WARREN admits MAGINNIS GOOGIN from R.
GOOGIN. Merry Christmas, sor.

WARREN. The same to you, Googin.

GOOGIN. I jest drapped in to see if you naded any more heat or anything like that. My, my, but I've been working hard the day. Sure, to be the janitor of an apartment house is no cinch at all, at all. And paple are not as liberal as they used to be, aven at Christmas time.

WARREN. Have a cigar.

GOOGIN. Thank ye, sor. (Smokes one.)

KITTY. Warren, you'd better try on your costume. I might have to change something, you know.

WARREN. But I--

KITTY. Please. We haven't got much time. It's after four.

WARREN (crosses to left). All right. (Exits L.)

KITTY. Now, Mr. Googin, I want you to go down stairs and tell your wife to come up. I have a nice little present for her.

GOOGIN (brightening). Have ye, now? A prisint for Honoria? Sure, it's a kind and thoughtful lady ye are.

KITTY. She's at home, isn't she?

GOOGIN. She is that.

KITTY. Ask her to come up here and wish us a merry Christmas.

WARREN appears at L.

WARREN. Kitty, how does that ruffle thing work? I can't get it around my head at all. I don't know the combination.

KITTY. Oh, I must have sewed it together. Can't you get it over your head?

WARREN. Not without choking myself.

KITTY. Wait a minute. I'll rip it for you. (Exits L.)

WARREN (gets box of cigars and hands it to Googin). Here's a little Christmas present, Googin. They're awfully good. I smoked two of them.

GOOGIN (lights one). Thank ye, sor.

WARREN. Don't let my wife see you smoking in here. She doesn't like it.

GOOGIN (chokes, takes cigar from mouth, looks at it). What kind of a stogie is it, Mr. Williams?
WARREN. It's pure Havana. Santas Odoriferous.

GOOGIN (smells it). It's odoriferous all right, all right. Begorry, it smells like someone had been burnin' the beans.

WARREN. That's the way all pure Havanas smell.

GOOGIN. I think I'll chop 'em up and smoke 'em in me pipe. Much obliged, sor, and merry Christmas to the both of yeez. Tell yer wife that me and Honoria will be right up. (Exits R.)

Enter KITTY from L.

KITTY. It's all right now. I left an opening. And I sewed on the last pompon. Warren, don't you think we ought to remember the Googins?

WARREN. I do remember them. When people have faces like the Googins one never forgets them.

KITTY. He's such a good janitor. Really, I think we ought to make them a little present.

WARREN. But I'm busted, Kitty. Those masquerade tickets will take our last cent.

KITTY. We might give the Googins some little thing here. (Looks around.) I have it!

WARREN. Yes?

KITTY. We'll give them Aunt Minerva's picture.

WARREN. Thank goodness. At last we've found a use for Aunt Minerva's picture. Ever since you hung it up there it's haunted me. But the Googins don't want it.

KITTY. I'm sure they will. They're frightfully poor and it would just match their furniture, I'm sure. Henceforth Aunt Minerva shall shed her light in the basement.

Enter MRS. GOOGIN from R., followed by GOOGIN, smoking a cigar.

MRS. GOOGIN. A merry Christmas to the both of yeez. (To KITTY.) Me man Maginnis tould me ye wanted to see me.

KITTY (at R.). Yes, indeed; come right in.

MRS. GOOGIN. I know what it is, darlin'. Sure it's a bit of a prisint fer me and the childer, now ain't it, Mrs. Williams? (Smiles.)

KITTY (at R.). What a good guesser you are.

MRS. GOOGIN. The Widow O'Toole, her in Apartment C, was after givin' me one of her ould worn-out waists. But I took her down a peg as quick as a wink. I'm a lady, I am, and me mother was a lady before me, and I don't accept cast-off clothes fer Christmas prisints.
KITTY. You don't. (At R.C. near front with MRS. GOOGIN.)

GOOGIN (at rear L. with WARREN). And nather do I.

MRS. GOOGIN. The ould bachelor in Apartment F gave me a fine prisint. I brung it up to show yeez. (Shows fancy waste basket, tied with ribbon bows.) It's a new bunnet. (Puts it on her head.) Sure, that's a Christmas prisint that touches me heart.

KITTY. I'm going to give you that picture. (Points to crayon portrait.)

MRS. GOOGIN. The picture of the ould lady, is it?

KITTY. Yes. It's a lovely frame.

MRS. GOOGIN. And it's a nice lookin' ould lady, too. She looks a little like me own mother, who before she was married to a Mulvaney was a McShane.

KITTY. Warren, take it down.

WARREN. With pleasure. (Takes picture down.)

MRS. GOOGIN (taking the picture). Sure, I have no picture of me own mother at all, at all. More's the pity. I'll jist take this picture and then I'll be after tellin' all me frinds that it is a likeness of me mother who was a McShane from County Kilkenny. (Sits R.)

GOOGIN. Would ye decave yer frinds, Honoria?

MRS. GOOGIN. A little deception is the spice of life. And besides it looks enough like herself to be her own photygraft. Don't it, Maginnis?

GOOGIN. Sure it looks like a chromo to me.

MRS. GOOGIN (angrily). A chromo, is it?

GOOGIN. Yis, or wan of them comic valentines.

MRS. GOOGIN. Listen to that now. He says me own mother looks like a chromo and a comic valentine. I'm a lady, I am, and me mother was a lady before me, and if I wasn't a lady, sure I'd break the picture over yer head, Maginnis Googin. Insulted am I and right before me face! (Weeps.) Oh, wurra, wurra, that me own ould mother, who was a McShane, should live to see that day whin her daughter's own husband would call her a comic valentine. (Weeps and rocks back and forth.)

GOOGIN (close to her). I said nawthin' about yer mother, Honoria Googin. I only remarked that the picture resimbled a comic valentine. And it do. And I'll lave it to Mr. Williams whither I'm right or no.

MRS. GOOGIN (rises with dignity, goes to KITTY). I thank ye kindly fer yer prisint, Mrs. Williams, and I wish yeez all the compliments of the season. (Turns to GOOGIN savagely.) As fer you, Maginnis
Googin, ather ye beg me mother's pardon fer yer insults, or it's nather bite ner sup ye'll git in my house this night. (Sails out at R. carrying picture and waste basket.)

GOOGIN. Wait a minute. Listen to me, Nora, darlin'. Let me explain. (Follows her out at R.)

WARREN. Well, there goes Aunt Minerva.

KITTY. And she sent it to us last Christmas.

WARREN. I'm glad she decided not to visit us this year. Money is scarce at the end of the month and she's better off in Kankakee. New York isn't any place for Aunt Minerva on Christmas Day.

KITTY. I'm afraid auntie's gait is not quite up to New York in the holiday season.

WARREN. I think I'll try on my costume. Are you sure I can get into the ruff now?

KITTY. Oh, yes. Wasn't that stupid of me? Just like making a skirt and then sewing up the top of it. (Exit WARREN at L.)

Enter GOOGIN from R.

GOOGIN. Sure, it's a sad time we're havin' down in the basement.

KITTY. What has happened?

GOOGIN. Herself has locked the door of the apartment and divil a bit will she open it at all.

KITTY. Why, Mr. Googin!

GOOGIN. I'm in a pretty pickle now. All me money is locked up in me house with Honoria. You could be doin' me a great favor, if ye would, Mrs. Williams, mum.

KITTY. What is it, Mr. Googin?

GOOGIN. Go down to the basement and tell me wife to open the door to her lawful wedded husband.

KITTY. Why, of course I will. (Exits R.)

GOOGIN (sits down comfortably and lights a cigar from his box). Sure, it's a sad Christmas for me, so it is, whin Honoria lets an ould picture come bechune a man and his wife. (Smokes.) Begorry, I smell something. (Sniffs.) It's awful. (Rises.) Some wan is burning some rubber. Maybe I've got too much hate on in the radiators. (Sniffs.) My, my, what an awful smell. (Removes cigar and looks at it, smells it, makes horrible grimace.) Oh, ho, so it's you, is it? (Throws it in cuspidor.) No wonder they call it Santas Odoriferous. If that cigar came from Havana they'd ought to take it back there again and give it a decent burial.
Enter EDDIE from R. with the hat in box.

EDDIE. Say, Mr. Googin!

GOOGIN. What is it, Eddie?

EDDIE. Does you want to buy a nice Christmas present for a lady?

GOOGIN. Maybe I do. What is it?

EDDIE. A nice hat. Right in de latest style. Jes' come home from de millinery store. Mis' Lacey gib it to me for a Christmas present, and I ain't got no use for it.

GOOGIN. Begorry, that's a good idea. I'll make peace with me wife. Eddie, I'll trade ye a nice box of cigars for the hat.

EDDIE. Is 'em some ob Mistah Williamses cigars?

GOOGIN. They are. Santas Odoriferous.

EDDIE. Man, man, I wouldn't deprive you ob dem cigars for de world.

GOOGIN. Sure it's no depravity at all, at all.

EDDIE. I'll sell you de hat for two dollars cash money.

GOOGIN. Two dollars, is it?

EDDIE. Yas, sah, and it's worth 'bout ten dollars. De lady done say it's worth more'n ten dollars.

GOOGIN. I'll take it. (Takes out old wallet, counts out two dollars in small change and gives it to EDDIE.)

EDDIE. Yas, sah. Dat's right.

GOOGIN. There's yer two dollars.

EDDIE. And dere's yer hat. (Gives him box.) Excuse me, boss. I hears de elevator bell. (Exits R.)

GOOGIN (opens box and looks at the hat). Begorry, I've been robbed. Eddie! Ye thavin' nagur, come here. Niver in all the world would me wife wear an orange hat. She hates orange worse ner pizen.

Enter KITTY from R. GOOGIN has hat in the box.

KITTY. It's all right, Mr. Googin. I had a long talk with your wife and she's all ready for you.

GOOGIN. Ready for me? With a flatiron belike.

KITTY. No, no. Her face is wreathed in smiles. She's waiting for you with a real Kilkenny welcome.

GOOGIN (smiles). Is she now? Sure, Mrs. Williams, mum, it's a grand
lady ye are. Excuse me, mum, but this bein' Christmas day, I was wonderin' whether you'd be after accepting a wee bit of a Christmas present from the likes of me?

KITTY. Why, Mr. Googin, how very kind and thoughtful.

GOOGIN (hands her the box). It's here, mum. A fine hat it is. Right out of the millinery store.

KITTY. Oh, thank you so much. I'm just crazy to see it. (Takes it out.) What! (Stares at it.)

GOOGIN. Ain't it a beauty, mum?

KITTY (recovering). Oh, yes, indeed, Mr. Googin. But it is a far too expensive present for you to give me. You'd better give it to your wife. Here, I'll wrap it all up again.

GOOGIN. But me wife won't wear orange.

KITTY. Tell her to take off the orange and replace it with a green bow. I'll give her a nice green gauze bow.

GOOGIN (smiling). Will ye now?

KITTY. Yes. Take it down to her now. It will please her so much. She'll welcome you with open arms.

GOOGIN. I'll do it. (Takes box.) And I'm much obliged for your trouble, mum. (Exits R.)

KITTY. Warren!

WARREN (outside L.). Yes?

KITTY. Are you dressed yet? It's nearly five o'clock.

WARREN. Sure.

Enter WARREN from L., wearing white Pierrot costume.

KITTY. Oh, it's a dream.

WARREN. I feel like a fool. Say, Kittens, you'd better get into yours.

Enter MRS. GOOGIN from R. with picture.

MRS. GOOGIN (not seeing Warren). Sure I had to run up to tell yeez that everything was all right, Mrs. Williams. And it's a darlin' y' are.

KITTY. Oh, I'm so glad.

MRS. GOOGIN (seeing Warren). Howly snakes of Ireland, what's that?

KITTY. That's Warren.
MRS. GOOGIN. He gave me such a start. I thought it was wan of them circus clowns got loose, mum.

WARREN (gayly). Wait till you see me with my paint on. (Runs out L.)

MRS. GOOGIN. Me husband has given me his consint and I can hang up the picture in me drawing-room, and he furthermore says that me mother is a quane and the picture is her perfect likeness.

KITTY. Then I'm sure you'll have a very merry Christmas, Mrs. Googin.

MRS. GOOGIN. I brought you up a little Christmas gift, mum.

KITTY. You did?

MRS. GOOGIN (takes out the hat). Ain't it a beauty?

KITTY. Indeed it is. But really you should keep that for yourself.

MRS. GOOGIN. Indade I'll not. I says to Maginnis, says I, "She's trated me like a lady, and I'll trate her like a lady also." So, here's yer Christmas prisint and many happy returns of the day.

KITTY. But this is such an expensive present, Mrs. Googin. Really, I--

MRS. GOOGIN (loftily). What's ixpense bechune frinds?

KITTY. I don't think I ought to accept such a lovely gift.

MRS. GOOGIN. Ye'll be hurtin' me feelings if ye don't. I'm a lady, Mrs. Williams, and me mother was a lady before me, and I have very, very sensitive feelings.

KITTY (sighs, then takes hat and box). Very well, Mrs. Googin. Thank you so much.

MRS. GOOGIN. And now I'll be goin' back to the basement. I hope ye have a pleasant time at yer party, mum.

KITTY. Thank you, Mrs. Googin.

MRS. GOOGIN. Are you goin' to fix yerself up like a circus clown, too?

KITTY. Oh, no. I'm to be Pierrette.

MRS. GOOGIN. Pierrette, is it? Well, look out ye don't git pinched. Merry Christmas. (Exit R.)

Enter WARREN from L.

WARREN. Kittens, there's a poor beggar woman out on the back steps. Can't you find something for her?

KITTY. No, I haven't a thing. (Sees hat box.) Oh, yes, I have! Tell her to come in. (Exit WARREN at L.) Now, I'll be rid of my Christmas hoodoo. (Puts hat in box.)
Enter HARD TIMES ANNIE from L., weeping loudly.

ANNE. Oh, oh! On Christmas day! Just to think of it. Oh! (Wails.)

KITTY. What is it, my good woman? What's the matter?

ANNE. Oh, mum, it's starving I am. A poor lone widow with sivin little children huddled up in the straw in a stable. No fire have we, no coal have we, no food have we. And on Christmas day, too. (Cries.) Could ye let me have a little money, mum?

KITTY (looks in her purse and shows audience that it is empty.) No, I haven't any money.

ANNE. And it's such hard times we're having. With the cost of living so high and me with sivin children. No fire have we, no coal have we, no food have we.

KITTY. I'm so sorry for you.

ANNE. Thank ye kindly, mum. And can you help me a little?

KITTY. How would you like a nice winter hat? It's perfectly new and has never been worn. It's red and orange.

ANNE. Oh, lady, yer a fallen angel, so yer are, fallen right down from the skies. I'd rather have a nice winter hat than have a bushel of coal.

KITTY. There it is. And merry Christmas.

ANNE. Thank you, mum. Has it got flowers on it or feathers?

KITTY. Feathers.

ANNE. Oh, thank ye. Yer a fallen angel; indade ye are, mum.

KITTY. You'd better go out this way. (Points to R.) I don't want my husband to see what I've given you.

ANNE. I know how it is, mum. I've had two of 'em meself. But nather one was a circus clown, mum. I suppose that makes 'em bad-tempered.

KITTY. Yes, I suppose so. Good-bye.

ANNE (crosses to door R.). Merry Christmas, mum. And bless ye for what ye have done for me this day. Yer a fallen angel, mum; indeed yer are. (Exits R.)

Enter WARREN from L.

WARREN. Get rid of her?

KITTY. Yes. Gave her some little things. Now I must hurry and dress. How nice you look. I'll be ready in ten minutes. (Exit L.)
(Ring at bell R.)

WARREN (opens the door, admitting LAURA). Hello, Lolly.

LAURA. Are you all ready?

WARREN. Kittens has just started to dress. Did you get the tickets?

LAURA. Yes. Here they are. Jim's waiting for me.

WARREN (takes the two tickets). Thank you.

LAURA. I had an awful time getting the places reserved.

WARREN. Ten dollars, aren't they?

LAURA. Yes.

WARREN. Just a minute, till I get the money. Sit down. Kittens has the money. (Exit L.)

LAURA (calls after him). Hurry, please, Warren.

WARREN (outside). All right.

LAURA crosses to R. and sits. She takes up the fashion magazine and reads a moment. Rises impatiently and walks around the room, showing marked impatience. After a pause KITTY enters from L. wearing a kimono.

KITTY. Laura!

LAURA. Yes, dear.

KITTY. That hat I gave you!

LAURA. The hat?

KITTY. Yes, the one I gave you for Christmas. Warren had just given it to me as a present, and as it wasn't becoming to me so I gave it to you. Where is it?

LAURA. Why?

KITTY. He put ten dollars in it at the millinery shop. It was hidden in the lining. The ten dollars for the tickets.

LAURA. Good heavens!

KITTY. So that pays you for the tickets, doesn't it?

LAURA. But I gave it away.

KITTY. Why, Laura!

LAURA. It wasn't becoming to me, either. I gave it to Eddie.
KITTY (weakly). To Eddie?

LAURA. Of course I didn't know it had ten dollars hidden in the lining.

KITTY. I didn't think you'd treat my present that way.

LAURA. Now, Kittens--

KITTY (angrily). Gave it to the negro elevator boy. Well, I like that! That hat cost ten dollars.

LAURA. I never could have worn it.

KITTY. But you shouldn't have given it away.

LAURA. Warren gave it to you and you gave it away.

KITTY. That's different.

LAURA. Shall I explain to Warren?

KITTY. No; for goodness sakes, don't do that! I haven't a cent to my name and I can't explain to Warren. How can I tell him I gave his Christmas present away?

LAURA. Send for Eddie and make him give you the ten dollars.

KITTY. Eddie hasn't got it.

LAURA. What did he do with it?

KITTY. I don't know. A beggar woman has the hat now. I saw her with it.

LAURA. Then she has the ten dollars.

KITTY. Laura, you'll have to trust me until the first of the month.

LAURA (coldly). Oh, very well. It's of no importance.

KITTY. Now, Laura--

LAURA (crosses to door R.). In the future I'd advise you to keep your Christmas presents. I must go now. Jim is waiting for me.

KITTY. Lolly--

LAURA. We'll probably see you at the dinner. (Exit R.)

KITTY (crying). I'll never give another present away as long as I live.

WARREN (outside L.). Hurry, Kittens; it's almost time to go.

KITTY. In a minute. (Exits L.)
Enter EDDIE from R., followed by MISS MINERVA. She carries the hat in her hand.

MISS M. That will do, boy. Mr. Williams is my nephew. I'll find him.

EDDIE. Lawdy, now she's got de hat. (Exits R.)

Enter WARREN from L.

WARREN (to MISS M.). I beg pardon?

MISS M. Heavens!

WARREN. What's the matter?

MISS M. I thought you were a ghost.

WARREN. I am Mr. Williams.

MISS M. You are? (Drops everything, runs to him and shakes both his hands heartily.) Don't you know me?

WARREN. No; never saw you before in my life.

MISS M. I'm your Aunt Minerva.

WARREN. Not Aunt Minerva Mockridge from Kankakee?


WARREN. But I thought you said you weren't coming.

MISS M. I changed my mind. And I wanted to surprise you and Kitty.

WARREN. Well, you did. You've surprised us all right.

MISS M. Let me sit down. I've had such an adventure. (Holds up hat.) See what I brought you?

WARREN. A hat?

MISS M. Yes, what's left of it.

WARREN. It looks just like the one I gave Kittens for a Christmas present.

MISS M. I got out of the taxi at the corner and was walking along trying to find the house when all of a sudden I heard a great commotion down the street behind me. I turned around and just then a man darted right at me, slapped the hat in my hand and was off like the wind. A crowd of policemen were chasing him. I slipped into the vestibule of a building and luckily it was this house.

Enter EDDIE and HOGAN from R.

EDDIE. You can't come in yere. Not unless you got a search warrant.
HOGAN. I saw her run into the vestibule, boy--and I'll find her if I have to search every apartment from piano to ice-box. (Sees MISS M.) There she is now. That woman just came up in the elevator, didn't she?

EDDIE. Yassir, boss; dat's de one.

HOGAN (goes to MISS M.). Come on with me. I guess I've got you at last.

MISS M. What do you mean?

WARREN. Officer, this lady is my aunt. I am Mr. Williams, the owner of this apartment.

HOGAN (to EDDIE). Is that man the owner of this apartment?

EDDIE. Yessir, boss; dat's Mr. Williams.

HOGAN. And you say this lady is your aunt?

MISS M. Of course I'm his aunt.

HOGAN. That'll do you! Keep still or I'll put the bracelets on ye.

WARREN. Well, she said she was my aunt.

HOGAN. Have ye ever seen her before?

WARREN. No, sir.

HOGAN (turns to EDDIE at R.). Ye hear? He thinks she's his aunt and yet he niver seen her before. This woman is a crook. One of the worst in the country. She's old Boston Bell and is wanted in Omaha for highway robbery, in Salt Lake for arson, in Chicago for shoplifting, in Columbus for assault and battery, and in New York for receiving stolen goods.

WARREN. And I thought she was my Aunt Minerva.

MISS M. (at L.C.). Warren Williams, are you going to let that man stand there and insult me? Throw him out of your house.

HOGAN (C.). I was standing on me beat when I saw Dopey Daniel snatch a swell hat from a poor old woman. She screams and he hot-foots it down the street with me after him. This dame was standing at the corner. She was working with him. He saw we had him all right, so he slipped the hat to her and she made a getaway up the elevator. Come on, Boston Bell. I've got you with the goods on you. I want that hat for evidence. Now will you come easy or must I use the cuffs? (Pulls her to door R.)

MISS M. (screams). Kitty, Kitty! Help, help!

Enter KITTY from R.

KITTY. Aunt Minerva! (Rushes to her and embraces her.) What is the meaning of all this?
AUNT M. (at R., weeping). Oh, Kitty, Kitty, I'm arrested. On my first visit to New York. Oh, why did I ever leave Kankakee?

KITTY. Warren, make him release her.

HOGAN. Are you sure she's your aunt?

KITTY. Of course I am. Why, we have her picture. There it is. Oh, no--I'd forgotten.

HOGAN. I believe the whole gang of yeez is a bunch of crooks. Yeez look like crooks, all drissed up like clowns and things.

KITTY. Eddie, call the janitor.

EDDIE. Here he comes now.

Enter GOOGIN from R. with MRS. GOOGIN.

HOGAN. Maginnis Googin, is it yerself?

GOOGIN. What's goin' on here, Hogan. Who's been pinched?

HOGAN. This dame is Boston Bell. We got her with the goods. She stole a hat.

KITTY. Why, that's my hat. Isn't it, Warren?

WARREN. I thought it looked familiar. (Takes hat.) Yes, that's your hat. (Takes two five-dollar bills from the lining.) Now, I know it's your hat.

KITTY. But where did you get it, Aunt Minerva?

MISS M. Some man ran into me in the street and left it in my hand.

GOOGIN. Hogan, sure I think you've made a mistake.

HOGAN. Do you know these folks, Googin?

MRS. GOOGIN. I know them, Officer Hogan. It's the Williamses, and they're both perfect ladies. And I'm a lady, and so was me mother before me.

GOOGIN. Hush, Honoria. Ye've been drinkin' too much frozen egg nog.

MRS. GOOGIN (crying). And the ould lady that ye've pinched, sure I blave it's me ould mother from Kilkenny, Ireland. Oh, Maginnis, they've pinched me ould mother.

GOOGIN. It's all a mistake, Hogan.

HOGAN (to MISS M.). Ye say a man ran into you in the street and left this hat in your hand?

MISS M. Yes, sir.
HOGAN (to KITTY). And you say it's your hat?

KITTY. Of course it is.

WARREN (goes to HOGAN, gives him a five-dollar bill). I think that will be all, officer. Merry Christmas.

HOGAN. Merry Christmas to all of yeez. (Exits L., followed by EDDIE.)

KITTY. Mrs. Googin, this is my aunt, Miss Mockridge from Kankakee.

MRS. GOOGIN. Sure, I thought it was me ould mother from Kilkenny. Ye look enough like her to be her own twin sister, ye do.

GOOGIN. I came up to inform yeez that the taxi do be waiting.

MISS M. Taxi? Are you going out?

KITTY (looks at WARREN). Well--er--that is--er we--

WARREN. Yes, er--we thought you weren't coming.

MISS M. Where are you going?

KITTY. We were going to a masquerade dinner dance, but now that you've come we'll stay at home.

GOOGIN (to MISS M.). Ye'd better go to the dance, mum. Ye'll have the time of yer life. Faith, they've nothin' like it in Kankakee. Come on, Honoria.

MRS. GOOGIN. All of yeez come down and take tea wid me in the marnin' fer breakfast. Merry New Year and happy Christmas to all. I'm a lady and me mother was a lady before me, and I knows a lady whin I sees her. So I wish yeez all a happy Christmas and many of them. (Exits R. with GOOGIN.)

WARREN. Shall I send the taxi away, Kittens?

MISS M. I should say not. I'm going to that masquerade ball, if it's the last thing I ever do. That's why I came to New York. (Takes out purse.) Here's a hundred and twenty dollars. That's enough to see us through until breakfast, isn't it?

KITTY. We mustn't keep the taxi waiting. Come on, auntie. We're going to show you the time of your life.

MISS M. But I haven't any costume.

KITTY (puts the hat on her head). There you are. Now you're all fixed. I knew I could make some use of my Christmas hat. Hurry, Warren. (They hurry out R. as curtain falls.)

CURTAIN.

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NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION.

This little satire on Christmas giving has been written to provide forty-five minutes of amusement for a holiday audience. The stage settings are very simple, a room with two doors being all that is required.

COSTUMES.

WARREN--A brisk young business man of about twenty-five. Ordinary winter suit for first entrance. Change to white Pierrot costume with white pumps, white socks, white pajama suit with large black pompons, or discs of black satin, on it. Large stiff ruff of white tulle. Face whitened with grease paint. Black patches. Black satin half-mask in hand. Head covered with close fitting white covering in Pierrot style.

Kitty--A bright, vivacious young wife of twenty-two. Afternoon dress at first, but choose one that may be quickly changed. Changed to kimono as indicated in text. On last entrance she wears a Pierrette costume, white pumps, hose, white tulle dress with very full skirts, ankle length. White clown cap. The dress may be trimmed with black satin discs, or pompons, or toy balloons in festoons, as desired.

MISS MINERVA--Aged forty-five. Gray hair. Spectacles. Dark traveling cloak and hat. Grip. She discards cloak and hat when Hogan releases her, showing a very gay dress beneath. Paint gray wrinkles of grease paint on face.


MRS. GOOGIN--Portly lady in gaudy dress of calico. Gray hair, parted. Green bows on costume. Face red and lined with gray grease paint. Use a decided Irish brogue.


LAURA--Afternoon dress for first entrance. No hat, as she lives in the same apartment house. Masquerade costume and opera cloak for last entrance.

HOGAN--Irish policeman. Uniform, helmet, billie, etc.

ANNIE--Old shoes, very ragged dress, old gray shawl on head. Stragglng locks of white hair show beneath shawl. Red patches. Face heavily lined with gray grease paint. Very old and dirty apron.