

Yes Virginia, There Is A Santa Claus

Adaptation by Emily McClain

Based on the Original Letter to the Editor published in the *New York Sun* December 1897

Cast

5 Female, 3 Male

Virginia O'Hanlon- 8 years old. Curious and skeptical little girl.

Maureen O'Hanlon- Mid 30's, Virginia's mother.

Patrick O'Hanlon- Mid 30's, Virginia's father.

Miss Edna Crowley- 60's. Virginia's school teacher.

Pansy Matthews- 8 years old. Virginia's playmate.

Adelaide St Clair- 8 years old. Schoolyard bully.

David St Clair- 10 years old. Adelaide's brother.

Frank Church- Mid 40's. Newspaper editor for the *New York Sun*.

Settings

School yard

O'Hanlon home

Newspaper office

(Lights up on the yard of an elementary school. VIRGINIA O'HANLON and PANSY MATTHEWS enter, taking turns playing with a jump rope.)

PANSY

(Chanting as VIRGINIA skips rope)

Cinderella dressed in yellow
Went upstairs to kiss her fellow.

Made a mistake

Kissed a snake

How many doctors did it take?

1, 2, 3, 4...

(VIRGINIA misses and gets tangled in the rope)

VIRGINIA

Ouch! Rats- I thought I'd make it to at least ten this time!

PANSY

Here, let me have a turn!

(VIRGINIA hands her the jump rope and as PANSY is getting ready to start, ADELAIDE and DAVID enter. Both siblings are dressed nicer than VIRGINIA or PANSY.)

ADELAIDE

I told Daddy that I wanted a new pair of ice skates AND a new bicycle for Christmas. He laughed at me!

DAVID

You got new skates last year.

ADELAIDE

I know! But I've worn them already out and besides, I don't like the color blue anymore. I want green skates this time.

VIRGINIA

Why do you need new skates and a bicycle?

ADELAIDE

I'm not going to ride ice skates in the summer!

DAVID

Or a bicycle when it's snowing!

ADELAIDE

Mind your business, Virginia!

PANSY

I'm going to ask Santa for a new bicycle too.

ADELAIDE

Your Daddy can't afford to get you a new bicycle.

PANSY

I know. That's why I'm going to ask Santa.

DAVID

Don't be stupid. There's no such thing as Santa.

VIRGINIA

What are you talking about?

PANSY

I'm not stupid!

ADELAIDE

Only babies believe in Santa. It's for babies. Everyone knows Santa isn't real.

PANSY

That's not true! My Mommy said that Santa brings us a present if we're very good. And he did! He brought me a doll just last year.

DAVID

That doesn't prove anything.

ADELAIDE

My Daddy bought me three dolls.

VIRGINIA

Your Daddy is rich.

ADELAIDE

If Santa was real, he'd have to be rich too.

DAVID

But he isn't real.

VIRGINIA

You don't know that!

DAVID

Oh yes I do!

ADELAIDE

He does too! He's ten and he knows!

PANSY

Just go away, Adelaide. We don't want to play with you.

ADELAIDE

You can't make me! *(Calling offstage)* Miss Crowley! Miss Crowley!
(EDNA CROWLEY enters. She is a sour spinster woman who doesn't care for children and yet inexplicably became a teacher anyway.)

EDNA

What's all this racket? You children are supposed to be playing quietly.

ADELAIDE

Miss Crowley, Virginia and Pansy are telling me I can't play with them and it's hurting my feelings.

EDNA

Is this true?

VIRGINIA

Yes ma'am.

PANSY

She and her stupid brother said there wasn't a Santa Claus!

EDNA

Don't use foul language, Pansy.

PANSY

Yes ma'am.

EDNA

(Speaking to Virginia)

Listen to me, Missy. You aren't the mayor of the playground and-

VIRGINIA

But Miss Crowley!

EDNA

Don't interrupt! Adelaide and her brother are perfectly welcome to play here if they would like.

ADELAIDE

Nyah-nyah!

VIRGINIA

But they called my father a liar!

EDNA

Why ever would they do that?

DAVID

Did not! You're a liar!

EDNA

Be quiet, Mr. St. Clair!

VIRGINIA

They said there's no such thing as Santa Claus and my father told me he's real but if he's not real then that means he lied to me!

EDNA

Oh. Yes. Well, you see, Virginia... perhaps you should ask your father when you get home if he can explain it to you. Now then. I think we've had enough outside time today. Let's go inside a few minutes early, children.

ALL CHILDREN

Aww... / Why? /Just a few more minutes, please Miss Crowley!

EDNA

No! Get inside right this instant!

ALL CHILDREN

Yes Miss Crowley...

(The children exit and EDNA follows, exasperated. The focus changes to the other side of the stage where the lights and set reflect the O'HANLON home with a table and chairs. MAUREEN is setting the table

for dinner and PATRICK is sitting reading the paper. VIRGINIA enters with her books, out of breath and upset)

VIRGINIA

Mother! Mother!!

MAUREEN

Oh my goodness, Virginia! You're all flushed- what's going on?

PATRICK

Come sit down, sweetheart.

VIRGINIA

I had the worst day. Adelaide St. Clair and her horrible brother were so mean to me and Pansy.

MAUREEN

Oh, don't pay a bit of attention to those horrible children.

PATRICK

What did they say?

MAUREEN

Really, darling, don't encourage this. They're just schoolyard bullies, Virginia. You need to ignore them.

VIRGINIA

But they said you and Father were liars!

PATRICK

What?

MAUREEN

Why on earth would they say something like that?

VIRGINIA

Because David said there's no such person as Santa Claus. He said that he doesn't exist at all but you told me that he was real and that he brought presents to good boys and girls at Christmas and... Well? Is it true?

MAUREEN

I... Oh... um, well, Patrick darling, why don't you answer her?

PATRICK

Well... *(He glances at the paper he was reading)* Ah! You know what you should do, Virginia? Ask a professional. Write to the good folks at the New York Sun. They will know for sure one way or the other.

MAUREEN

What a wonderful idea. Here, go get some paper and an envelope and you can write to the paper tonight. I'll help you mail the letter tomorrow.

(VIRGINIA exits offstage to get paper and a pencil, MAUREEN gives her husband a stern glance.)

A letter to the newspaper? Really? That's your brilliant plan?

PATRICK

Now, now, Maureen. *(As VIRGINIA reenters)* You know if it's printed in The Sun it's got to be true!

(VIRGINIA sits down at the table while her parents stand beside her.)

VIRGINIA

Who do I address the letter to, Father?

PATRICK

I suppose you'd better address it to the Editor.

VIRGINIA

All right. *(She pantomimes writing while speaking aloud)* Dear Editor, I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends tell me there is no Santa Claus. My father says "If you see it in the Sun, then it's so." Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus? Sincerely-

(As she is reciting the letter, FRANK CHURCH enters holding a letter as he reads along with her speaking the final sentence of her letter. He speaks directly to the audience.)

FRANK

I receive a lot of letters every year from our devoted readers. Some people are angry about silly things, but occasionally people are writing in because they are upset about injustice or corruption. People never write a letter to the editor about something happy, have you noticed that? But when this particular letter from a little girl in Manhattan came across my desk, it sparked something in me that I haven't had in a long time: a sense of hopefulness. I knew I couldn't leave her letter unanswered. So, I sat down at my typewriter and wrote this response:

*(As he speaks, the members of the ensemble enter, each carrying their own copy of the letter, and read when indicated. *Directors may determine how the lines are broken up but it should end with everyone speaking in unison, including the parents, VIRGINIA, and her classmates and teacher.)*

FRANK

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or

imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world. You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not even the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10 thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

(VIRGINIA runs across the stage and hugs FRANK tightly. The members of the ensemble exit in character until only FRANK and VIRGINIA are left on stage. Lights fade.)

END OF PLAY.