

SETTING: *New York City, 1823. Various locations including the newspaper office of the Chronicle, the streets of the city, the night sky and the home of Clem Moore, especially the Parlor and Clem's Bedroom.*

AT RISE: *The streets of the City on Christmas Eve. One by one, the denizens of the street enter from various locations – first the POLICEMAN, then the NEWSBOY, then the CANDY SELLER, then the BEGGAR.*

#1 'Twas the Night Before Christmas

POLICEMAN

Twas the night before Christmas...

NEWSBOY

Twas the night before Christmas...

CANDY SELLER

Twas the night before Christmas...

(BEGGAR stops downstage center and addresses the audience.)

BEGGAR

Twas the night before Christmas.

(He lays a finger aside of his nose and flicks it knowingly at the audience a la "The Sting." POLICEMAN blows his whistle.)

POLICEMAN

There'll be no dawdling in these streets, Christmas or no! Go about your business!

(Everyone resumes what they were doing as the POLICEMAN exits. BEGGAR takes off his hat and begins to beg to the unseen throngs. NEWSBOY steps forward, pulling a rolled up newspaper out of his bag. He opens it as he sings...)

NEWSBOY

*Go about your business
No time left to lose
Nothin' quite like Christmas
When you sell the news*

NEWSBOY (cont.)

*Extra! Extra! Read all about it!
Tonight is Christmas Eve
Santa Claus is coming!*

*Extra! Extra! Read all about it!
For all those who believe
Santa Claus is coming!*

(CANDY SELLER steps forward, carefully inspecting his bags of sugar plums.)

CANDY SELLER

*Got to know the difference
Sorting out the sweets
Christmas is big business
When you work the streets...*

CANDY SELLER

*Sugar plums!
Sugar plums for
Sale!*

*Sugar plums!
Sugar plums for
Sale!*

NEWSBOY

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

CANDY SELLER

*Juicy and sweet
The best Christmas treat
Sugar plums!
Sugar plums for sale!*

(CANDY SELLER and NEWSBOY cross to opposite sides of the stage, tending to unseen customers. BEGGAR crosses down center, addressing the audience with hat in hand.)

BEGGAR

*Christmas is a-coming and the goose is getting fat
Please put a penny in the old man's hat...
If you haven't got a penny a hay-penny will do
If you haven't got a hay-penny then God bless you.*

BEGGAR
*God bless you,
 Everyone
 God bless you*

CANDY SELLER
*Sugar plums!
 Sugar plums for
 Sale!*

NEWSBOY
Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

BEGGAR
If you haven't got a hay-penny then God bless you.

(NEWSBOY and CANDYMAN freeze as the music shifts. MARY enters at a run, clutching a rag doll. She trips over the Beggar's feet and sprawls to the ground. Her doll skids away from her.)

#2 Lena's Waltz (Underscoring only)

MARY
 My doll!

BEGGAR
 I've got it!

(He picks the doll up and returns it to MARY.)

Here you go, young lady. Good as new.

MARY
 Oh, thank you, sir!

BEGGAR
 She's quite unusual...

MARY
 Lena's a rag doll. My great grandmother made her a long, long time ago...

(MARY stares at her lovingly.)

BEGGAR
 You love her.

MARY
 Yes, sir. I love her very much...

#3 Lena's Waltz

MARY (cont.)

*Lena's the one I can tell every secret
Since she's my best friend, I know she will keep it
And on those nights when the summer sky's storming
She holds me tight, keeps me safe until morning...*

*Lena, I promise to love you forever
No one can take your place – no one, not ever!
No matter what happens, you'll always be with me
Lena, the doll of my dreams...*

(MARY stops dancing and clutches Lena to her. Music continues under.)

Oh, Lena! Forgive me!

(She begins to cry.)

BEGGAR

Child – why are you crying? What's the matter?

MARY

Lena... I have to sell my Lena...

BEGGAR

Sell your doll? Whatever for?

MARY

I need the money. My mama...

PETER (O.S.)

Mary? Mary, where are you?

MARY

(Desperate)

Please sir, which way to the pawnbroker's shop?

BEGGAR

It's just around the corner, but...

(PETER enters and sees her.)

PETER

Mary!

(MARY runs off.)

PETER (cont.)

Mary, come back here!

(He exits after her. Music shifts as NEWSBOY and CANDY SELLER unfreeze and begin to sell their wares again.)

#4 Sugar Plums for Sale/Extra! Extra!

CANDY MAN

*Sugar plums!
Sugar plums for
Sale!*

NEWSBOY

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

*Sugar plums!
Sugar plums for
Sale!*

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

(Music continues under as BEGGAR approaches NEWSBOY.)

BEGGAR

Spare a penny for a poor man?

NEWSBOY

I ain't got nothin' for the likes of you!

BEGGAR

But it's Christmas Eve.

NEWSBOY

So what? You think folks hand me money on account of it bein' Christmas? No, sir! Nobody cares about me, Christmas or no Christmas. I got to earn my own way sellin' these papers...

*Extra! Extra!
Read all about it!
Tonight is Christmas Eve!
Santa Claus is coming!*

(NEWSBOY exits. BEGGAR crosses to CANDY MAN.)

BEGGAR

Spare a penny for a poor man?

CANDY SELLER

Get outta here! You're ruining my business!

BEGGAR

But it's Christmas Eve...

CANDY SELLER

And Christmas Eve is the only day sugar plums are sold! So leave me be! I gotta make a living!

(He raises a sack of sugar plums in the air.)

*Juicy and sweet
The best Christmas treat
Sugar plums!
Sugar plums for sale!*

*(Music out as CANDY SELLER exits. POLICEMAN approaches
BEGGAR.)*

POLICEMAN

There'll be no begging on these streets, mister. Move along, now.

BEGGAR

But it's Christmas Eve...

POLICEMAN

Christmas Eve or no – move along.

*(BEGGAR exits. POLICEMAN watches him a moment then turns
to exit opposite. He bumps into MARY who is entering at a run.)*

Whoa, now, young lady! What's your hurry?

MARY

I'm looking for the Candy Seller, sir.

POLICEMAN

Candy Seller?

MARY

The woman who sells sugar plums!

POLICEMAN

Oh, her. You just missed her.

MARY

Can you tell me where she went?

POLICEMAN

How should I know? Now get along home with you. The sun is setting – children don't belong on the streets after dark.

(POLICEMAN exits. PETER enters opposite and sees her.)

PETER

There you are!

(MARY tries to run off. PETER chases her and grabs her arm.)

MARY

Let me go, Peter!

PETER

What are you doing out here on the streets?

MARY

None of your business! Now let me go!

PETER

(Still holding on)

Mama told us we weren't to leave the house!

MARY

Mama is sleeping. She won't know that I'm gone.

PETER

Mary!

MARY

I had no choice, Peter! I had to sneak out. It's Christmas Eve.

PETER

So?

MARY

Sugar plums are only sold on Christmas Eve! Look...

(She holds up a penny. PETER gasps.)

PETER

Where did you get that penny?

(He reaches for it. She pulls it away quickly.)

Did you steal it?

MARY

No!

PETER

Then where did you get it? Tell me! Tell me or I'm going to...

MARY

I sold Lena.

PETER

Your rag doll...? But Mama gave her to you *specially*. Lena was her doll when she was little, and her mama's doll before that...

MARY

I know, Peter.

PETER

You loved Lena – and now you sold her so you could eat sugar plums?!

MARY

The sugar plums aren't for me! They're for Mama!

PETER

Mama...?

MARY

Sugar plums are Mama's favorite treat.

PETER

Yes, but she wouldn't want you to sell Lena...

MARY

Peter, listen to me! I heard you and Papa talking to the doctor last night. Mama is very, very sick... isn't she?

PETER

Yes.

MARY

The doctor wants her to have an operation...

PETER

Yes. But it costs too much. It's not possible.

MARY

Without that operation, this is Mama's last Christmas... isn't it?

(Beat. PETER can't bring himself to say it.)

Mama loves sugar plums and I mean for her to have them. This is our last chance, Peter... are you going to help me or not?

(She holds out her hand. PETER takes it.)

PETER

Let's go find the Candy Seller.

(They run off, bumping into MR. VAN BUREN, who is entering.)

MR. VAN BUREN

Watch where you're going, you ragamuffins!

(They're gone.)

The world is coming to no good – no good, I say! All these brats running around loose, terrorizing the streets...

(CANDY SELLER enters opposite.)

#5 Sugar Plums for Sale/ Extra! Extra! (Reprise)

CANDY SELLER

*Sugar plums!
Sugar plums for sale!*

(Music continues under as VAN BUREN approaches him.)

VAN BUREN

How much?

CANDY SELLER

Two cents a bag, sir.

VAN BUREN

Two cents? Last year they were only a penny!

CANDY SELLER

That was then, sir. This is now. Two cents, sir.

VAN BUREN

Two cents a bag is highway robbery!

CANDY SELLER

Oh, but take a whiff, sir! Have you ever sniffed such sweetness, sir?

(CANDY SELLER waves the bag under Van Buren's nose.)

*Juicy and sweet
The best Christmas treat...*

VAN BUREN

Give me that!

(He swipes the bag and hands the CANDY SELLER two cents.)

Here's your blasted two cents.

CANDY SELLER

Thank you, sir – and Merry Christmas.

VAN BUREN

Hmph!

(NEWSBOY enters opposite.)

CANDY SELLER

*Sugar plums!
Sugar plums for...
Sale!*

NEWSBOY

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

(CANDY SELLER exits. VAN BUREN approaches NEWSBOY.)

NEWSBOY

Buy a newspaper, sir? I got three Tribunes left, two Heralds...

