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The Time of Nick – the pitch

Nick, an orphan carried by the North Wind and raised by exiled elves, finds true love, saves a village and thwarts the greedy Lord Steel. With help from a courageous little girl and a sack-full of elfish magic, the awkward teenager fulfills his destiny, becoming... Santa Claus!

The Time of Nick – the story in brief

“You've never seen this Nick before!”

The elves have sought refuge in a small cottage in the Claus Forest, after being exiled from the village of Tightwood. One day, the fierce North Wind deposits a baby in their fireplace. They decide to keep him and turn their forest refuge into an “elfanage.”

Years later, baby Nick has become a spoiled adolescent. He decides to leave the elfanage and find his own way in Tightwood. The elves fear that “elfist” villagers will give him a hard time. As Nick arrives in the village, Tightwood lives up to its chilly reputation. The only one who shows him any kindness is Maddie, the young baker’s daughter. Acting unselfishly for a change, Nick gives her a toy he has whittled.

When Holly steps off the train, everything changes for Nick. He envisions a lifetime with this fun-loving young woman, but how to gather the courage to say hello? Nick can only stutter “ho, ho, ho...”

Holly is not the only passenger getting off the train on this occasion. Lord Steel has returned to his hometown after living abroad. His father, owner of Tightwood’s lumber mill, lost a fortune to a gambling habit, and set fire to the mill for the insurance money. His son’s plan is no better. He intends to demolish the village to make room for a grand casino, his personal cash cow. First, he will reclaim his old family home, and run the operation from there. When Lord Steel learns that the mansion’s current owner is Holly’s aunt, he realizes the pretty new arrival is the key to his ambitions, and begins to woo her.

Lord Steel burns down the village bakery to make room for his casino. Holly and Nick run into the burning building to rescue the baker, and as they come out, Lord Steel blames Nick for being part of an elfish plot to burn down the village. The villagers, succumbing to an age-old prejudice, believe him. With a shout of “Down with elves,” they leave for the elfanage. Holly and Nick hurry off to warn the elves.

As the elves well know, when greed takes over, nature will hit back. The elves announce a test, which the villagers must pass, or else the village will be permanently buried in snow

from a deadly blizzard. They must place what they value the most at the village's highest point, the infamous Devil's Horn. Holly and Nick volunteer to go on the dangerous mission with Lord Steel. But the village breaks out in chaos, and Holly has to stay behind to get things under control. She is convinced Nick will pass the test, and she promises to marry the one who returns from the mountain. She is thinking of Nick, but Lord Steel overhears her.

The entourage faces dangerous obstacles on their way up the mountain, and Lord Steel's evil intentions are exposed. Nick has to go the last distance alone, and thanks to Maddie, the little girl and the toy he gave her, he realizes what the test is all about. It's not about the thing; it is about the act of giving. As he places the object atop Devil's Horn, the storm suddenly dies. He has saved them all!

Lord Steel has no intention of letting Nick take any credit. He overpowers Nick and ties him to a tree stump, leaving him to die. Lord Steel will steal the role of hero! He will marry Holly and become the rightful owner of the mansion.

Holly is excited about Nick's return, and she starts to organize their wedding. When Lord Steel enters alone, claiming that Nick has perished, Holly is heartbroken!

Lord Steel insists on getting married right away. Holly fights back, as the ceremony is interrupted twice. Lord Steel gets frustrated. He commands every door and window to be shut, making Holly a virtual prisoner, and preventing others from coming to her rescue. There's only one entrance he doesn't consider... the chimney!

"Ho, ho, ho!" Nick may have climbed the mountain as a naïve teenager, but thanks to the help of one little girl and a magical party of elves he comes down the chimney as Santa Claus, just in the nick of time.

The villagers and elves of Tightwood are reunited. They share Santa's vision of a holiday dedicated to the gift of giving. Holly and Nick complete the wedding ceremony, then take off in a flying sleigh to see the world.

Every child in the audience has learned: If you have the courage to be kind, you will be rewarded by a visit from Santa. Be sure to welcome him into your home!

The Time of Nick – the detailed synopsis

ACT 1

SCENE 1

At the Elfanage.

A fierce wind blows outside the elves' cottage in the Claus Forest, making those inside anxious. Are the villagers coming to get them? Suddenly something falls down the chimney. It's a baby! Alfie, the elf-in-chief, believes the baby has been sent to them by the North Wind.

“IN AN ORPHANAGE RUN BY ELVES”

The elves are singing and dancing happily, transforming the cottage into a warm and cozy elfanage, suitable for nurturing children. Baby Nick is put into a bed, and as they sing, he grows into an adolescent. By the song's end, he has grown very annoyed and shouts at them: “How do you stay so happy ALL the time!”

The elves gather around Nicholas, trying to wake him up. Nick is grumpy, and asks for breakfast in bed. The elves have had enough of Nick's bad manners, and tell him to make breakfast himself. He should clean up after himself, too; the place is a mess from the whittling he has been doing at night. Toys everywhere! Nick gets upset and blames the elves for not making him feel at home in the elfanage. Alfie attempts to calm him down, reminding Nick that he always feels this way around the Yuletide, and the elves are his family now. This is his home! Nick doesn't care. He needs to find his own way, his purpose in life. He steals one of the elves' socks, and leaves for Tightwood. Alfie worries that the elfiest villagers will give Nick a hard time...

SCENE 2

On his way to Tightwood.

“SHINE THE LIGHT”

Nick feels lost, and he desperately wants to find a place to call home. Nick tries to convince himself that he can be someone to other people. But who is he, really? “I've always been a stranger, will I ever find myself?” He just wants to fit in. Nick leaves for the village of Tightwood, “in search of a home.”

SCENE 3

At the village square in Tightwood.

Maddie, the baker's daughter, opens the windows, and discovers to her delight that it has snowed. She runs out to make a snowman. The village wakes up, and we soon learn that this gray and weary village has lost both joy and hope. The misery started with the mill fire eighteen years ago, which cost most of the villagers their jobs. The elves were blamed for the

deed and were effectively banned from the village. Christmas has not been celebrated in all these years, to Maddie's great disappointment.

Nick arrives at the square with his backpack, optimistic about finding a place to stay. But he is soon disappointed by villagers who bully him for smelling like elves and take his toys away. Nick disowns any connection with the elves, and gets his toy back. It smells so good from the bakery, and he goes there to get something to eat. He meets Maddie, who is fascinated by one of Nick's toys, a wooden horse.

Suddenly, we hear the sound of a train approaching. The villagers can't believe their ears. The train is stopping in Tightwood, the first time in years! Could things be changing for the better?

“A CHANGE OF SCENE”

The villagers get ready for the train to stop. Holly steps out of the steam, carrying suitcases. She sings while the villagers hawk their wares to the passengers stepping off the train. Among the passengers are Lord Steel, Jr. and his companion Count Garbanzo. Lord Steel has come to Tightwood to get back what his father lost. He will reclaim his family home, demolish the rest of the village, and build a casino, which will make him rich. The villagers sing about their situation, and Holly sings about her new life without her mother.

Mrs. Stockman, the baker, throws Nick out of her shop after realizing he doesn't have any money. Nick gets in the way of Lord Steel and his companion, who has come to look at the bakery, which is his preferred location for a grand casino.

Nick feels unwelcome, and doesn't know where to go. He stumbles over Holly, who is sitting on her suitcase, waiting. She immediately mistakes Nick for her aunt's butler. Seeing Holly for the first time, makes time freeze for Nick, and he starts to sing (as if in his own bubble):

“IT MAY TAKE A LIFETIME”

Nick's curious to understand what's happening to him; his heart's pounding, his palms are sweating and his entire body wants to dance.

Holly and Nick discover that Holly has mistaken Nick for another man. They start throwing snowballs at each other, laughing. The butler, Fiznor, is hit by a snowball as he arrives, and he and Holly leave for the mansion. Nick discovers that Holly has forgotten one of her suitcases, and he decides to follow them.

In the meantime, Lord Steel and Garbanzo are thrown out of the bakery shop. Mrs. Stockman is uninterested in making a deal. Lord Steel disparages the elves, and she stops. He tells his companion: “See! They just need a common enemy. They'll soon be fighting over the chance to work for me.”

SCENE 4

At the mansion.

Holly arrives at her aunt's mansion. Mrs. Fairfield, still mourning the loss of her beloved

husband, has lost her zest for life, and she's conflicted about Holly bringing all her colors and lively energy into the house.

“WHY DON'T YOU MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME”?

Mrs. Fairfield, Fizznor and the servants welcome Holly to the mansion, and show her around her new home. When Holly's installed in her room, someone arrives at the main door. It is Nick bringing Holly's suitcase. He is dismissed by Fizznor and Mrs. Fairfield, and Nick gets Holly's attention through a window instead. She lets him in, and Nick is so impressed by the house. He would love to call such a place home. Holly shows him around through a game of hide and seek, until they are interrupted by a new arrival at the door. This time it is Lord Steel and Count Garbanzo. Lord Steel has returned to get his family home back, and they charm Mrs. Fairfield into letting them stay for the night.

Nick suspects that Lord Steel has bad intentions, and warns Holly, who leaves to welcome the visitors. Lord Steel learns that Holly is the sole heiress and starts to woo Holly, making Nick cringe as he hides.

Holly and Nick are eventually left alone in the grand hall, where Nick accidentally steps on the curtains, which collapse, flooding the room with daylight. Fizznor catches them red-handed, and Lord Steel alarms Mrs. Fairfield, telling her that Nick tried to kiss her niece. Nick is thrown out of the mansion, yet another proof he doesn't belong anywhere.

“WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS?”

Lord Steel is left alone, musing about how he will take down Nick, this irritating whippersnapper who can't seem to get out of his way. Lord Steel is convinced that no one will stop him from turning this village into his private money-making machine.

SCENE 5

At the village square.

Nick returns to the village, disappointed, cold and hungry. He has nowhere to spend the night. He's afraid even the snowman will give him a cold shoulder, but the snowman actually asks him what he can do for him. There's no time to answer, as Holly enters breathlessly. She wants to make sure Nick is all right.

“HELLOES AND GOODBYES”

Holly and Nick get to know each other a little better. Nick finds it hard to say hello, and to be himself around people. Holly sings about how difficult it is to say goodbye.

As Holly runs back to the mansion, some strange creatures appear. It is the elves in disguise. They impersonate a tree, a lamp post, a dog... and hey! The snowman is Alfie undercover. Nick is trying to find a place to sleep, but having a hard time; the bakery steps are too hard, it isn't dark enough and he misses his comfort blanket. The elves make Nick comfortable without blowing their cover. They sing him a lullaby:

“THE COURAGE TO BE KIND”

The purpose of life is to encourage kindness and love. They urge Nick to understand “that when the world has lost its mind, it takes a bit of courage to be kind.”

The elves vanish as a window in the bakery is opened with a squeaking sound. Alfie loses a lump of coal from his costume, and Nick is surprised to find it. He remembers a dream where he had a singing dog on his belly telling him to be kind. A plate of cookies is put on the windowsill above the bakery to cool. Nick smells the irresistible aroma of cookies. He just has to have one. He climbs a ladder to steal one cookie, then another. He is caught red-handed by Maddie, causing him to fall. She offers to give him some warm milk with the cookies, and Nick doesn't understand her generosity. Maddie tells him it makes her feel good. This is a discovery to Nick, and he decides to give Maddie his wooden horse. She names him Star.

“JUST WHAT I’VE ALWAYS WANTED”

Maddie is beside herself with joy. No one has ever given her anything before. Maddie and Nick play together.

Lord Steel and Garbanzo arrive at the square, having conspired to burn down the bakery to make room for the casino. Seeing Nick and Maddie at the square, Lord Steel understands he has the perfect scape goat – he can blame Nick for everything, and get him out of the way.

Holly and Mrs. Fairfield arrive at the square, Holly to look for Nick, Mrs. Fairfield to make sure Holly doesn't do anything rash. Suddenly, they smell something burning. There are flames coming from the bakery, and Mrs. Stockman's screams are heard from inside. Holly runs into the building to save her, and Nick follows her. As they come back out, they meet Lord Steel who accuses Nick of being part of an elfish plot to burn down the village. The villagers believe him, and start chanting “Down with elves!” Nick and Holly understand that the elves are in grave danger, and run into the forest to warn them. The villagers soon follow.

SCENE 6

At the elfanage.

Holly and Nick arrive at the elfanage, where they warn Alfie about what's coming. Alfie has had a feeling it would come to this, and the other elves and children are already safely in hiding. As the villagers arrive, aggressively chanting and threatening with their shovels, they stumble over one of Alfie's trip traps. They're stopped once more by a falling tree on Alfie's command. Alfie confronts the villagers, telling them to turn against Lord Steel. Greed has upset nature, there's a devastating blizzard forming, which threatens to permanently bury the village in snow. They might never see the sun again. Fortunately, there is a way of preventing this tragedy, if only the villagers are able to pass a test.

“THE TEST”

Alfie describes how the village will be destroyed if it's not able to pass the test. The villagers are terrified as stormy winds begin to blow. The elf-in-chief tells them how they can pass the test by leaving what they value most at the village's highest point, Devil's Horn.

Everyone is scared. They start to discuss which object is the most valuable, and who should go on such a suicide mission. Alfie points to Nick as the person who should go (after all, he's

the son of the North Wind), and although surprised and scared, Nick volunteers to go along with Holly. He has only one condition: The villagers must leave the elves in peace!

The citizens of Tightwood argue over which object is the most valuable, but there isn't much of value left in the village. Nick suggests that a home is the most valuable, and Lord Steel agrees; the villagers have to bring all their deeds! Mrs. Fairfield is reluctant to give away the mansion, she has promised her late husband to keep it in the family. But she can give away the most precious thing she owns – a crock which stands on her mantelpiece back home. Everyone is convinced this is the most precious thing. Mrs. Fairfield insists that she won't trust anyone else but Lord Steel to bring the crock to Devil's Horn. Meanwhile, Lord Steel has overheard Holly telling Nick that she will marry the one who saves the village, and he accepts the challenge. It's decided that Lord Steel, Garbanzo, Nick and Holly will go together.

“YOU’VE NEVER SEEN THIS NICK BEFORE”

Nick wants to prove to himself and everyone else that he can be brave, but really, who is he kidding? The villagers celebrate Lord Steel as their hero and savior as the two men prepare for their mission.

INTERMISSION

ACT 2

SCENE 7

At the village square.

“RED IS YOUR COLOR”

Nick is preparing for the mission, but he's freezing. The elves decide he needs a magic suit that will keep him warm and safe, one he must never take off! They dress him in a red suit, while Nick tries to argue that red maybe isn't his color. The elves won't hear of it. They insist, and Nick gives in as he grows warmer.

Holly arrives at the square, ready to leave for the mission. Soon, the rest of the entourage comes too, dragging a *pulk* sled.

Maddie tries to catch Lord Steel's attention. She has brought what she thinks is the most valuable thing, the wooden horse, but he rejects her offer. Undeterred, Maddie hides in the supplies as a stowaway.

Mrs. Fairfield gets hysterical when she understands that Holly is leaving her. The villagers have moved into the mansion while waiting out the storm, and her house is in chaos. She implores Holly to help her restore order! Holly reluctantly agrees. She tries to say goodbye to Nick, but Lord Steel interferes. He wants to make sure she actually will marry the one who returns after having saved the village. Holly confirms this, looking at Nick.

“HELLOES AND GOODBYES” - REPRISE

Holly can't bring herself to say goodbye as she watches her new love depart for the mission without her. She prays he will be all right.

The entourage gets ready to leave. Lord Steel and Nick are on their way, while Garbanzo returns to say goodbye to Mrs. Fairfield.

“UTMOST URGENCY”

Garbanzo reveals his “burning need” to Mrs. Fairfield, promising her an exciting life when he returns from the dangerous mission, and she’s intrigued.

SCENE 8

In the mountains.

The entourage reaches the base of Devil's Horn. A steep, narrow path leading the way up to the highest point, is seen. There are icy cliffs on each side. At the far top of this peak is a solitary tree. The wind’s howling...

“THE HIGHER I CLIMB/A SLIPPERY SLOPE”

Nick gains confidence as he masters the elements. He helps Lord Steel and Garbanzo overcome hurdles climbing the mountain, cheering them on. Garbanzo is thinking about Mrs. Fairfield, while Lord Steel thinks of no one but himself.

On a ledge right below the peak of the mountain, the expedition takes a short rest. Lord Steel and Garbanzo quarrel, neither is willing to go the last distance. Nick volunteers to do it, thinking of the elves and Holly.

Lord Steel would like to enjoy the valuables hidden in Mrs. Fairfield’s crock. He opens it, and discovers that it is filled with the late Mr. Fairfield’s ashes. They spread in the wind. Lord Steel smashes the crock in frustration. While desperately searching through the supplies for the missing valuables, he discovers Maddie.

Nick puts his red coat around Maddie to keep her warm. Lord Steel and Garbanzo quarrel. When Maddie gives Nick the wooden horse, he realizes what the test is really about: Giving is the most precious thing.

Nick’s determined to pass the test and save them all. He climbs the last distance and places the horse at the top of Devil’s Horn. The storm immediately dies, proving he has passed the test.

Lord Steel is ready to take credit for saving the village. Garbanzo says he is in hurry to get back to Mrs. Fairfield. Lord Steel misunderstands his intentions, thinking that Garbanzo plans to marry Mrs. Fairfield and “steal” the mansion from him. Lord Steel pushes Garbanzo off the cliff to a certain death.

Lord Steel reveals his true intentions to Nick, and then attacks him. Maddie attempts to intercede, giving Lord Steel a hard fight and kicking him in the shins.

Nick outmaneuvers Lord Steel, making it possible for Maddie to escape. But without the red

coat, Nick is weakened and easily taken by Lord Steel, who ties him to a fallen tree trunk. He leaves Nick to die of exposure.

SCENE 9

At the mansion.

Holly enters from outside, telling everyone that the test has been passed. They have been saved! She's excited she soon will see Nick again, and she gets people to start to prepare for the wedding.

“IT MAY TAKE LIFETIME”

Holly imagines how wonderful life with Nick will be.

Suddenly the doors open, and Holly is heartbroken to see that Lord Steel enters. Alone.

“I, ALONE”

Lord Steel claims that Nick has killed Garbanzo, before succumbing to the elements himself. Holly is in shock and disbelief. She flees the room. Lord Steel is eager to get the wedding ceremony started and, after the briefest moment of silence in memory of those left on the mountain, villagers go to fetch his bride and begin the wedding ceremony.

SCENE 10

At Devil's Horn.

Meanwhile, the elves have reached Nick. His hair has turned permanently white from the frost. They give him back his red coat. They untie him, and get him onto a sled. Nick's in a hurry. How to make this thing fly?

“DOWN THE MOUNTAINSIDE”

They “fly” down the mountainside, avoiding obstacles, making three jumps and arriving safe and sound on the ground.

Nick has to hurry to the mansion to tell everyone how the test was passed and how the gift of giving will make them all happy again. But first he has to get his sack of toys...

SCENE 11

At the mansion.

Holly is brought to Lord Steel, she doesn't understand why they won't let her look for Nick, she's convinced he's still out there. Lord Steel excuses her behavior, blaming it on her bridal nerves. Without Holly realizing what is going on, Lord Steel begins the wedding ceremony.

“THE CEREMONY”

The wedding vows are interrupted three times:

First, it's Maddie who enters through the doors, telling everyone that Nick was the one who

passed the test. She accuses Lord Steel of killing both Garbanzo and Nick as she hears that Nick is dead, too. Everyone dismisses her story; she has always had such a vivid imagination.

Holly starts to understand what is happening and, increasingly, resists.

The second interruption is caused by Garbanzo, who accuses Lord Steel of pushing him off the cliff. He barely survived, landing in a tree dangling from the snowshoes Mrs. Fairfield gave him. Lord Steel complains that Garbanzo is clearly making this up. Besides, he is a thief and arsonist. Wasn't it actually Garbanzo who set the bakery on fire? The villagers discover Garbanzo's burnt hands, and Mrs. Fairfield doesn't know what to think. She orders the villagers to take the Count to her room and lock the door.

Holly tries to sneak out.

Lord Steel stops her. He doesn't want any more interruptions, and orders all the doors and windows locked. He takes things in his own hands, and begins to recite the last part of the wedding vows as Nick comes down the chimney with a confident: "Ho, ho, ho!!!"

At last, the villagers grasp that Lord Steel has been deceiving them all along. They turn against him angrily, wanting to thrash him and throw him in jail. Nick intervenes, telling them all to find the courage to be kind. He asks Lord Steel whether he has been naughty or nice. Everyone laughs when Lord Steel says, "Nice?" Nick finds the lump of coal, and gives it to Lord Steel, saying: "Don't look so disappointed. If you hold on to that long enough, it *could* turn into a diamond!"

Mrs. Fairfield throws Lord Steel out of the mansion.

Nick has brought presents for everyone:

"TOYS"

Nick hands out presents (toys whittled from wood) for everyone, and they're amazed by how Nick could know what they'd want. Nick tells everyone about his own discoveries about the happiness derived from giving. And it doesn't have to be a thing; you can give of your time, your kindness or your acceptance.

There's only one who doesn't get a present, and this is Jolly, one of the elves. Nick says he hasn't forgotten about her. He gives Jolly her socks back, saying that they will be as good as new once they've dried. Jolly hangs them on the mantelpiece to dry, instantly creating a Christmas tradition.

Now Holly can't wait any longer. She wants to marry Nick, and it has to happen now! She wants the place to shine and she tells everyone what to do. Nick has to leave the room, he's not supposed to see her until the ceremony.

SCENE 12 (Epilogue)

In the grand hall at the mansion.

The grand hall is now fully decorated for the wedding; there are lights and bright colors everywhere. Holly is dressed in a red wedding gown, holding a bridal bouquet of mistletoe. She's almost outshined by Jolly, who enters in her fully decorated tree costume. Everything is just perfect.

“CHRISTMAS FROM NOW ON”

Alfie opens the door and reveals Santa as we know him. He follows Santa “down the aisle” to Holly, and the wedding ceremony starts. Everyone celebrates – greeting, hugging and kissing both villagers and elves. Nick and Holly take off from the rooftop in a flying sleigh. They disappear into the horizon, bringing toys to everyone.

THE END