The Night Before Christmas
(Cajun Version)

By Roland Bienvenu, Jr.

Twas the night before Christmas when all through the bayou
Not a creature was stirring
Not even at Mamou.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care
In hopes that Papa Noel soon would be there.
The children were nestled cozily in their beds,
While visions of hot boudin danced in their heads.
And Mama in her kerchief and I with a sore elbow
Had just settled down after last night’s fais-do-do,
When out on the bayou there rose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter
Down to the kitchen I ran like a doe,
Tore open the shutters and spilled the gumbo.

The moon on the surface of the water near Carencro
Gave a luster of midday to the pirogues below,
When, what to my wondering eyes could make out,
But a red pirogue, pulled by eight catfish, no doubt!
With a little old boatman full of gaiety, I tell,
Mais, I knew right away it was Papa Noel
More rapid than crawfish his coursers they came,
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name.
"Now, Louie! Now Lucien!
Now, Terence and Tomas!
On, Jean-Paul! On, Cupere!
On, Demaque and Devince!

To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! Dash Away! Dash away, y’all.
As dry moss before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, a wild duck in the sky,
So up to the housetop, the coursers they flew
(Mais Oui, they were flying fish!)
With a pirogue full of toys, and Papa Noel, too.
And then in a twinkling I heard on our tin
The prancing and flapping of each little fin.
As I drew in my head and was turning around,
Down the chimney Papa Noel came upside down.
He was dressed all in deerskin from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all covered with moss and green gook.
A bundle of toys he put at his feet,
And for a minute he reminded me of that scoundrel Lafitte.
He had a broad smile and a beard just as wide,
And when he asked me for my razor, boy, did I hide!
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old geezer,
That made me wonder if he stole that cracklin from my freezer.
A smell of his breath and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know he had stole my shrimp instead.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings, then called me a jerk,
And laying his hands on a well-placed rope,
With a flash he was gone for good, I hope.
He sprang to his pirogue, to his team gave each a shrimp
And away they all flew like a swift hot air blimp,
But I heard him exclaim as he flew away:
“Merry Christmas, y'all and enjoy your etoufee !!!"