

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

TEN MINUTES TILL CHRISTMAS

A One-Act Christmas Play

by

ROGER CLARK



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

© Dramatic Publishing

***** NOTICE *****

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

"Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois"

©MCMXLV by
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(TEN MINUTES TILL CHRISTMAS)

Cover design by Susan Carle

ISBN 0-87129-706-X

TEN MINUTES TILL CHRISTMAS

A Comedy in One Act
For Nine Children and Extras

CHARACTERS

SANTA himself
FIRST ELF
SECOND ELF
THIRD ELF
FOURTH ELF his helpers
FIFTH ELF
SIXTH ELF
SEVENTH ELF
MARY ANN who believed in him
EXTRAS more helpers

PLACE: The back room of Santa's workshop.

TIME: Ten minutes till Christmas.

TEN MINUTES TILL CHRISTMAS

SCENE: *The back room of Santa's workshop. There is an entrance to the room at L. At R is a window. In front of the window is a worktable, with two small stools in front of it. There are two more worktables upstage, with stools in front of them. At C is a table, with a large armchair right of it and a stool left of it. At DL is another stool. The workshop is neat and orderly. All the presents have been made and packed, and now only a few odds and ends of toys and some tools are about. On the table at C is a huge book, resembling a ledger.*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *SANTA is dozing in the chair right of the table C, his stomach rising and falling with amazing regularity. His hat and coat are hanging over the back of the chair. SANTA's nose now twitches, and he brushes his hand against it, without awakening. Then, the FIRST, SECOND, THIRD and FOURTH ELVES open the door L, cautiously. They peek through the door first, before entering, and then speak in whispers as they huddle in a group by the door.*

FIRST *(to the one behind him).* Shhhh!

SECOND. Do you think we should wake him?

THIRD. We don't dare.

FOURTH. But we've got to.

FIRST. Yes, but you know how Santa is about insubordination...

FOURTH (*nodding*). Candy rations cut in half!

SECOND. But it's almost time, and he's still sleeping.

THIRD. How close is it?

FIRST (*taking out a big watch, studying it a moment, and then speaking in alarm*). Ten minutes till Christmas!

(*The ELVES gasp.*)

FOURTH. Ten minutes!

THIRD. In only ten minutes—

SECOND. It'll be Christmas.

FOURTH. And Santa not even started yet.

FIRST (*clutching his head*). Ten minutes till Christmas and Santa still at the North Pole.

SECOND. There's no help for it.

THIRD. You're right. We've got to wake him.

(*The ELVES now slowly tiptoe toward the table at C.*)

FOURTH. If we don't, they'll miss Christmas this year.

SECOND (*thoughtfully*). Of course, if we missed Christmas *this* year, we wouldn't have to make toys for *next* year. We could use the old ones.

FIRST. We've *never* passed off last year's toys.

SECOND (*in too loud a voice*). But it sure would be an easy year.

FOURTH. Shhh!

SECOND. I'm sorry. (*He puts his hand over his mouth.*)

FIRST (*taking out his big watch again*). Only *nine* minutes till Christmas.

FOURTH. We'll have to wake him.

THIRD. Yes, but which one of us?

SECOND. *I'll do it. I'm not afraid.*

THIRD. Well, hurry. He has a long way to go.

(The SECOND ELF moves back of the table and over to right of SANTA. He plucks at SANTA's sleeve.)

SECOND *(cautiously)*. Oh, Santa—Santa—*(He draws away quickly.)*

(The ELVES all step back. Nothing happens.)

FIRST. Go ahead—hurry!

SECOND *(crossing closer to him)*. Santa! *(He gives a courageous shout.)* Santa!

(The ELVES jump at this and run back to the door L. Then they stop and peer back. Nothing happens. They cross back toward SANTA.)

FOURTH. He can't wait much longer.

FIRST. Let me try. *(He crosses above the table to right of SANTA and shakes his arm.)* See here, Santa—this is no way to act—come, come, now—

SANTA *(groaning)*. Go away—go away!

FIRST. We can't go away. It's less than nine minutes till Christmas! Santa—you're not doing your duty.

SANTA *(sitting up sharply at this)*. Not doing my duty! How dare you talk that way?

FIRST. I was just trying to waken you.

SECOND. The time's getting short.

THIRD. You'll miss Christmas.

FOURTH. It'd be terrible!

FIRST (*taking out his watch and showing it to SANTA, speaking severely*). Eight and a half minutes till Christmas.

SANTA (*stifling a yawn*). So it is—so it is. (*He settles back again in his chair.*)

FIRST. But, Santa! (*He holds out the watch again.*)

SANTA. I'm tired. I'm going back to sleep.

THIRD. But you can't—

SANTA (*resting back in the chair, contentedly*). Oh, can't I?

FOURTH. But what about Christmas?

SANTA (*mumbling*). What about it? (*His eyes are closed, and he begins to breathe heavily.*)

FOURTH. Aren't we going to have it this year?

SANTA. No. (*He goes back to sleep.*)

FOURTH. No Christmas!

THIRD. He can't mean it!

FIRST. But we've *always* had Christmas.

FOURTH (*back of SANTA's chair, trying to rouse him*).
Santa! Santa!

SANTA. I'm trying to sleep.

FOURTH. But you mustn't sleep.

THIRD. What about your work?

FIRST. Don't you care what people say?

SANTA (*sitting up*). Certainly I care what people say! I hear them! I know what they say—after bringing them presents and toys and candy, and doing everything to make them happy. Here's what they say: "Santa's a fake. There is no Santa."

SECOND. They *don't!*

THIRD. They wouldn't!

FIRST. *You*, a fake?

SANTA. Yes—*me!* They eat up all the candy and goodies I bring them, and then they call me a fake.

FOURTH. But they don't mean it.

SECOND. They're only fooling.

SANTA. That's what I *used* to say—at first. But every year now it gets worse and worse.

FIRST. But every year we send them better and nicer toys. How *could* they think that?

SANTA. That's hard for me to understand. How could I understand ingratitude like that?

SECOND. Ingratitude? What does that mean?

SANTA. That's what we're getting from the children now—that's what it is. And it makes me so darn mad!

FIRST (*pulling out his big watch again*). Santa!

SANTA. What now?

FIRST. Only seven minutes!

SANTA. Till what?

ELVES (*together*). Till Christmas!

SANTA (*glancing at his own watch*). So it is—so it is. (*He stifles another yawn and starts to settle back.*)

THIRD. But aren't you going to do *anything*?

SANTA. Yes—I'm going to get a little sleep Christmas Eve—for the first time in close to two thousand years. (*He closes his eyes and relaxes gratefully.*)

SECOND (*a wail*). Oh, Santa!

THIRD. You shouldn't!

FOURTH. *Really*, you shouldn't!

SANTA (*stretching himself*). Ahhhh—this feels good.

FIRST. But what about the children? Not all the children think you're a fake. It isn't fair.

SANTA (*still in his relaxed position*). All of them feel that way. I hear them talking. They all think they're so smart. Well, all right. Let them wake up tomorrow morning and find nothing in their stockings.

SECOND. Not anything?

SANTA. Not a single thing.

THIRD. Not even a piece of chocolate?

FOURTH. Or just an orange down in the toe?

SANTA. Not even a chocolate.

THIRD. No—

SANTA. Not even an orange down in the toe!

FOURTH. Santa!

SANTA. Maybe this will teach them a lesson.

SECOND. It's too cruel!

FIRST (*to the FOURTH ELF*). I never thought Santa would do a thing like that.

SANTA. Silence!

FIRST. Yes, Santa—sir.

SANTA. I've explained my position. I have nothing further to say. The subject is closed. We'll talk about the children again—say, along in July sometime. We'll think it over then for next year.

(The ELVES sigh, SANTA settles back to sleep. The SECOND and THIRD ELVES join the other two at RC, and they go into a huddle.)

SECOND (*in a whisper*). It's no use.

THIRD. We tried, anyway. We did all we could.

FOURTH. What a sad day tomorrow!

FIRST (*shaking his head sadly as he consults his watch again*). Only six more minutes.

SANTA (*mumbling*). Quiet! You're disturbing me.

FIRST (*nodding again*). Yes, Santa—sir.

(Then, all of a sudden, there is a loud banging on the door L. They all start. SANTA sits up again.)

SANTA. What's that?

SECOND. I don't know.

(There is another loud banging on the door L.)

SANTA. Well, open it—someone.

(The SECOND ELF goes to the door L and opens it. In comes the FIFTH ELF, carrying a big doll, almost as big as himself.)

FIFTH *(rushing over to SANTA and setting the doll down in front of him, breathing hard)*. I finished—*(Pant, pant!)*—it—*(Pant!)*—in time! *(And he takes more quick breaths.)*

SANTA. Well, there was no need to hurry.

FIFTH. Oh, yes, there was! I was afraid I wouldn't get it finished on time.

SANTA. I'm not taking it.

FIFTH *(looking at the doll)*. Is there anything wrong with it? I was very careful—

SANTA. Yes, I know, but—

FIFTH. And I cleaned up all the mess I made.

SANTA. Of course you did. You're a very reliable Elf. But, I'm not going this year.

FIFTH. But I worked so hard—

SECOND *(who has remained left of the table at C after opening the door)*. He did!

THIRD. We all did.

FIRST. All year without any time off—not even the Fourth of July.

SANTA *(wavering slightly)*. Of course—that's true.

FIFTH. I made this for that Mary Ann girl.

SANTA *(getting up to examine the doll)*. Mary Ann, eh—well, you certainly did a nice job.

THIRD. And it's a shame not to deliver it.

SANTA (*crossing to the window at R*). Mary Ann... (*He looks out the window.*) Isn't she the one that was *hinting* all the time?

FIFTH (*climbing up on the stool left of the table C and opening the big record book*). I'll check the record. (*He starts to leaf through the book.*)

SANTA. I think she was the one that was hinting all last year. I even think she's started hinting what she wants for *next* Christmas.

SECOND. Oh, no!

THIRD. She wouldn't do that!

FIFTH (*looking in the book*). Mary Lou—Mary Jane—Here it is! Mary Ann...yes, sir—hinting already for two dolls and toy dishes for *next* Christmas. (*He perches on top of the table.*)

SANTA. Just as I thought. (*He comes back to his chair.*)

FIRST. But, Santa, most children do a little hinting.

SECOND. They can't help it.

THIRD. It's only natural to hint a little.

SANTA. I don't object to a little hinting—that's quite all right. We don't want to send the wrong toys. It's very helpful. But what I don't like—what makes me so *darn* mad—is *who* they hint to.

FOURTH. Who do they hint to?

SANTA. Their parents! (*He sits again.*) As though their parents were the ones that come down from the roof with all the presents. They never hint to *me* anymore. They don't even write letters like they used to. Years ago, I got *lots* of letters.

FOURTH. If they only knew, they'd write.

SANTA. Well, after tomorrow they'll know. When they wake up and run down to look in their stockings, then they'll be

sorry that they stopped believing in Santa. Then they'll be sorry that they laughed.

THIRD. But no Christmas at all for anyone?

FIRST. That's serious.

(All the other ELVES sit on stools, utterly dejected and saddened. The FIFTH ELF remains perched on the table.)

SANTA *(after a pause, during which he looks about at the ELVES)*. Of course it's serious! But how do you think I feel! No one cares about me anymore. Merry Christmas! I feel miserable! *(He puts his head in his hands and stares at the floor.)*

SECOND. Santa—we feel miserable, too.

THIRD. It's a terrible situation.

FOURTH. I'm going to cry! *(He takes out a big handkerchief and blows loudly into it.)*

FIRST *(taking out his watch again)*. Only three more minutes—only three more minutes...*(He shakes his head and puts his watch away slowly.)*

SANTA. And now that you know my wishes, if you'll excuse me, I'll go back to sleep. Call me around July sometime, and we'll take another look at the children then.

FIFTH *(jumping down from the table, picking up the doll, sorrowfully)*. After all the work I did.

SANTA. Cheer up! We can give it to someone next year.

(Outside, off L, a jingling is heard, and the sound of animals stamping about.)

SANTA. What's that? What's going on now? *(He shouts toward the door L.)* Come in here! What's going on?