

# Excerpt terms and conditions



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

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

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 reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

*Just in  
the Nick of Time!  
(a Detective Red Mistletoe mystery)*



*Comedy by Linda Daugherty*

# *Just in the Nick of Time!* (a Detective Red Mistletoe mystery)

Comedy. By Linda Daugherty. Cast: 3m., 2w., 15+ either gender. In this Christmas whodunit, ace detective Red Mistletoe is retained by the citizens of the North Pole to find Santa Claus, who has disappeared at the height of the season. If losing Santa wasn't enough, the heretofore colorful citizens are losing their Christmas spirit and their holiday hues. As Christmas draws near, the elves, rather than carefree in color, are glum in gray; Doctor Green, no longer sporting green, is bitten by a reindeer; Purple Gumdrops not purple anymore! And the costumed children, rehearsing for Mrs. Claus' annual "Santa Send-off Celebration," begin to look like they're in an old black and white movie. It's up to Detective Red Mistletoe, now in shades of gray, to get some answers in black and white. Could the three suspicious new arrivals, Bob Humbug, Fruitcake (Humbug's sidekick) and Holly Wreath (Santa's new red-headed secretary) know anything about Santa's whereabouts? Do they really hail from the South Pole as they claim or will their caper be uncovered by Red—helped by a now-repentant and soft-hearted Holly Wreath? Can Red save Santa in time to bring a colorful Christmas to the children of the world and even find a little romance along the way? Of course he can—*Just in the Nick of Time!* With easily accomplished costume changes, turning characters from colorful to colorless and back again, lots of parts for children and teens, a mystery to solve, a comedy with witty dialogue, plenty of holiday warmth—and Santa Claus to boot—this show is perfect holiday fare for kids and families. Premiered at the Dallas Children's Theater. Area staging. Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: J44.

Cover photo: Dallas Children's Theater production. (l-r) Brent Black, Colin Malone, Ada Lynn, Jordan Brooks and Karl Schaeffer.  
Photo: Linda Blase. Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel

ISBN-10 1-58342-588-8  
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-588-6



*Dramatic Publishing*  
311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
ph: 800-448-7469

[www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com)



Printed on recycled paper

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

**JUST IN THE NICK  
OF TIME!**  
**(a Detective Red Mistletoe mystery)**

By  
LINDA DAUGHERTY



**Dramatic Publishing**  
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

\*\*\* 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 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. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our Web site: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock IL 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.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMVIII by  
LINDA DAUGHERTY  
Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*

(JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME! (a Detective Red Mistletoe mystery)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-588-6

This play is dedicated  
to  
Ada Lynn  
wife, mother, grandmother, actress, comedian,  
vaudevillian and friend

## **IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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

*Just in the Nick of Time!* premiered at the Dallas Children's Theater (Robyn Flatt, Executive Artistic Director) on December 1, 1994, directed by Andre du Broc.

### **ORIGINAL CAST**

Red Mistletoe	Karl Schaeffer
Fruitcake	Eric B. Knapp
Mrs. Claus	Ada Lynn*
Doc Green	Gavin Perry
Holly	Brigitte Bavousett
Mr. Claus	As Himself

### **GOLD CAST**

Elves: Captain	Morgan Feldman	<b>SILVER CAST</b> Melissa Box
	Brent Black	Pete Camp
	Colin Malone	Jeffrey Miller
	Dru Ransom	Sandy Park
Gumdrops: Green	Danielle Davenport	Kawana Anderson
Red	Karra Black	Danielle Sherwood
Purple	Jordan Brooks	Sally Rodgers
Toy Testers	John Harden	Jake Speck
	Robert Harden	Jon Greer
Snowflakes	Dara Ransom	Elizabeth Kusin
	Claire Jordan	Joy Camp
Candy Cane	Emily Vardell	Marti Ethridge
Christmas Tree	Jeff Fijolek	Caroline Kusin

### **ORIGINAL PRODUCTION STAFF**

Light Design	Zak Herring
Set Design	Yoichi and Katie Aoki
Costume Design	Mary Therese D'Avignon
Props Design	David Fisher
Sound Design	Andre du Broc
Production Manager	Darren Brannon
Production Sponsor	The Rosewood Corporation

\*Member Actors' Equity Association.



# **JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME!**

## **(a Detective Red Mistletoe mystery)**

A Play in Two Acts  
For 3m., 2w., 2 m. or w., 13+ children/teens

### **CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)**

- RED MISTLETOE . . . . . Hard-boiled Bogart/Columbo-type detective. Wears a red trench coat and hat.
- GIRL ELVES #1, #2 and #3 . . . . . Teenagers. Energetic, enthusiastic, boy crazy.
- TOY TESTER ELVES #1, #2 and #3 . . . . . Tough, athletic, girls or boys.
- ELDER ELVES #1 and #2 . . . . . The older generation, children or teens
- FRUITCAKE (VENDOR) (m or w) . . . . . Humbug's sidekick. Not too bright.
- DOCTOR GREEN (m or w) . . . . . Doctor at North Pole (for people and animals). Wears a green coat.
- MRS. CLAUS . . . Santa's wife. Kind, sweet, a bit disorganized.
- ORANGE GUMDROP . . . . . Child, 5 to 10 years old.
- PURPLE GUMDROP . . . . . Child, 5 to 10 years old.
- SNOWFLAKE . . . . . Girl, 8 to 12 years old.
- CANDY CANE. . . . . Child, 8 to 12 years old.
- TREE . . . . . Child or Teenager.

BOB HUMBUG . . . Nasty and ill-humored. Dressed as Scrooge  
in nightshirt and cap.

HOLLY WREATH. . . Humbug's attractive assistant. A redhead  
in green dress with large round wreath-like collar.

SANTA CLAUS. . . . . Himself.

NOTES: Additional roles for children and teens may be added: Snow-  
flakes, Candy Canes, Elves, Trees and various colored Gumdrops.

This play contains a special effect by which all or selected sets, cos-  
tumes and actors are transformed from their normal full color to the  
tones of a black-and-white movie. The effect is produced by changing  
costumes, actors' makeup and sets to black, white and shades of gray  
and lighting without gels. After Santa Claus disappears shortly before  
the end of Act I, there are hints of what is to come in the form of  
Holly's black lipstick, Doctor Green's fading costume and Orange and  
Purple Gumdrops' total transformation into black and white. Act II  
opens totally in black and white and returns to color upon Santa  
Claus' reappearance at the end of the play. The following characters  
are transformed into black and white:

- Red Mistletoe
- Mrs. Claus
- Humbug
- Holly
- Fruitcake
- Elder Elf #1
- Elder Elf #2
- Doctor Green
- Orange Gumdrop
- Purple Gumdrop
- Snowflake
- Tree
- Candy Cane

# ACT I

*(A spotlight shines down in the darkness. Detective RED MISTLETOE, dressed in a red hat and red trench coat with turned-up collar, walks into the light.)*

RED. It was cold that Christmas. I was frozen to the bone. My feet—blocks of ice. My teeth—chattering an S.O.S. It was as cold a Christmas as I could remember. How cold was it? It was so cold the icicles had icicles. *It was cold!* But that's the way we like it up north, up where Santa lives. It's a quiet town—the North Pole—most of the year. Except those few weeks before Christmas. Hey, I don't have to tell you that. But I'm getting ahead of myself, putting the sleigh before the reindeer. I'm Red Mistletoe, detective. It's my job to make sure everything runs smoothly up at the North Pole. Our story begins way back in September—way before the Christmas rush. But, of course, at the North Pole, it's always snowing and those colorful Christmas decorations are up year 'round. So September looks *exactly* like December. Just quieter, slower. It was the middle of September—a nice, quiet, average Tuesday—not the kind of day you'd expect a mystery to begin.

*(RED walks out of spotlight. Lights rise on the North Pole—a charming, snowy village. A snow cone VENDOR pushes colorful cart down the street. Several cones of various flavors are displayed.)*

VENDOR. Snow cones! Snow cones!

*(ELF GIRLS #1, #2 and #3 enter, talking and giggling together.)*

ELF GIRL #1. Oh, those gorgeous blue eyes of his! Tell us! What did he say?!

ELF GIRL #2. Tell us! You've got to tell us!

ELF GIRL #3 *(dramatically)*. He looked at me with those big *blue* eyes of his—

*(ELF GIRLS squeal with delight.)*

ELF GIRL #3 *(cont'd)*. And he said—he said—he's going to ask for a transfer—from radio-controlled toys!

ELF GIRL #2. What?!

ELF GIRL #1. You're kidding?!

ELF GIRL #3. He wants to transfer to—*Legos!*

*(ELF GIRLS scream “Legos!!!” together in excitement.)*

ELF GIRL #1. Do you know what this means? Blue eyes is crazy for you!

ELF GIRL #2. Oh, you're so lucky! All day long you'll be making Legos together and looking into his large, mysterious *baby-blue* eyes.

*(They all sigh. VENDOR approaches.)*

VENDOR. How about a snow cone?

ELF GIRL #1. No, thanks.

ELF GIRL #2. Not me.

ELF GIRL #3. Sure, I'll take one.

VENDOR. What flavor?

ELF GIRL #3 *(dreamily)*. Blue-berry.

*(ELF GIRLS scream and exit. TOY TESTER ELVES #1 and #2 enter. TOY TESTER ELF #1 is riding a skateboard and TOY TESTER ELF #2, bouncing on a pogo stick. [Popular seasonal toys may be substituted.]*

TOY TESTER ELF #2 *(counting bounces)*. 5,621, 5,622, 5,623...

TOY TESTER ELF #1 *(coming to a sudden stop and indicating skateboard)*. Do you like this DayGlo orange color or should we stick with red?

TOY TESTER ELF #2 *(still bouncing)*. 5,630, 5,631, 5,632...

TOY TESTER ELF #1. Will you take a break?! That pogo stick is indestructible!

*(TOY TESTER ELF #2 stops jumping as TOY TESTER ELF #3 enters riding a scooter, circles the OTHERS and stops.)*

TOY TESTER ELF #3. Great turns, excellent handling, good traction, two-wheel disk brakes, classy interior, great color.

TOY TESTER ELF #2. Nice scooter.

TOY TESTER #1. These toys are great. Come on. Let's go try out some new board games.

TOY TESTER #3. I love this job. Toy testing is so much fun. And to think I used to work in wrapping paper!

*(TOY TESTER ELVES exit, rolling and bouncing. ELDER ELVES #1 and #2 enter with lunch boxes.)*

ELDER ELF #1. Batteries, batteries, batteries. That's all they want. Electrified, motorized, flashing, whirring, beeping, buzzing. That's what these kids want today.

ELDER ELF #2. Maybe you and I are too old-fashioned.

ELDER ELF #1. Whatever happened to the wooden boat, the rubber-band racing car, the wind-up toy?

ELDER ELF #2. We've got to change with the times.

ELDER ELF #1. I remember a time when an orange or a peppermint was a special gift, a new pair of socks, a treat! Ah, those were the good old days. Who remembers?

ELDER ELF #2. The point's not the presents. The point is we still remember *Christmas*. Times change. People are rich or poor. But they still find a way to remember and celebrate Christmas.

ELDER ELF #1 *(change of heart)*. Oh, you're right, you're right. It's the *spirit* of the season that matters. *(He rubs his back.)*

ELDER ELF #2. Your lumbago acting up?

ELDER ELF #1. A bit. I should retire.

ELDER ELF #2. What? You'll be putting those video games together when you're 230!

*(DOCTOR GREEN enters in a hurry, carrying medical bag.)*

ELDER ELF #2. Hey, Doctor Green, what's the hurry?

VENDOR. How about a snow cone?

DOCTOR GREEN. No time!

ELDER ELF #1. Hey, Doctor, I've got this crick in the back.

DOCTOR GREEN. Sorry. Later. I've got a reindeer with a condition.

ELDER ELF #1. Cough?

ELDER ELF #2. Cold?

DOCTOR GREEN. No, motherhood!

*(DOCTOR GREEN exits and rushes past the entering RED MISTLETOE.)*

RED. Wow, Doctor Green's in a hurry. Anything amiss?

ELDER ELF #2. A blessed event at the reindeer barn.

*(ELDER ELVES #1 and #2 exit.)*

RED. Ah, well, that calls for a celebration. Give me a snow cone.

VENDOR. What flavor?

RED. Cherry.

*(MRS. CLAUS enters, surrounded by SNOWFLAKE, CANDY CANE, TREE and PURPLE and ORANGE GUMDROPS. VENDOR gives snow cone to RED.)*

SNOWFLAKE. May I have a grape snow cone, Mrs. Claus?

MRS. CLAUS. We can't have a purple Snowflake, dear. You may all have one after rehearsal. Come on, everyone. Stay together... Snowflake, Tree, Candy Cane. Come along!

RED. Hello, Mrs. Claus. How's rehearsal going?

MRS. CLAUS. Oh, Detective Mistletoe. I don't know. It's the dancing Tree I'm worried about. He [She] can't see where he's [she's] going in his [her] costume. And Santa always forgets rehearsal. Making lists and trying new toys. I wonder if this Christmas show was such a good idea.

RED. I'm sure it will be wonderful.

MRS. CLAUS. You'll come, won't you? It's going to be very colorful.

RED. Wouldn't miss it.

MRS. CLAUS. December 24th, six p.m. sharp.

RED. I'll be there.

MRS. CLAUS (*herding CHILDREN*). This way, everyone. Do we have the Gumdrops?

PURPLE & ORANGE GUMDROPS. Present!

(*MRS. CLAUS and CHILDREN exit.*)

RED (*to VENDOR*). You're new around these parts, aren't you?

VENDOR. Yeah, yeah—I'm new. I, uh, used to live, uh, uh, just north of the South Pole, but the weather, you know, too cold. I just relocated to, uh...just south of the North Pole.



RED. Just south of the North Pole? Interesting... Just one more thing. See many polar bears down south?

VENDOR. Polar bears?

RED. Yeah, polar bears. See many of those? Down south at the South Pole?

VENDOR. Uh...yeah, yeah, lots of polar bears at the South Pole. Always scaring off the customers.

RED. Hmm...well, see you around. (*RED exits, balancing his snow cone and writing in small notebook.*)

VENDOR. Yeah. See you around. (*VENDOR looks around, sees the coast is clear, picks up one of the snow cones and talks into it.*) Hello, boss? (*Tries another snow cone.*) Hello, boss? (*Tries another.*) Hello, boss?!

(*VENDOR puts snow cone to ear. Lights up on HUMBUG's house.*)

HUMBUG (*shouting into phone*). Fruitcake, where have you been?!

VENDOR (*who is FRUITCAKE in disguise, talks into snow cone.*). Sorry, boss, but business has been booming. Who'd have thought anyone would want a snow cone at the North Pole?

HUMBUG. Have you seen him, Fruitcake?

VENDOR (FRUITCAKE). Him?

HUMBUG. Santa!

VENDOR (FRUITCAKE). No, no, not yet. But I will, boss, I will. Oh, and boss, Santa's looking for a secretary. I saw the notice on the bulletin board at the Cranberry Coffee Shop.

HUMBUG. Secretary? Interesting. Now find Santa and tail him.

VENDOR (FRUITCAKE). Tail Santa?

HUMBUG. *Follow him, Fruitcake!*

VENDOR (FRUITCAKE). Oh, yeah, boss, yeah. You can count on me.

*(HUMBUG slams down phone. FRUITCAKE reacts. Lights out on FRUITCAKE at the North Pole.)*

HUMBUG. What a *fruitcake!*

*(HOLLY enters.)*

HOLLY. Here's the mail, boss. *(HOLLY hands catalogues to HUMBUG as she reads addressee's names.)* Humbug—Humbug—Mr. B. Humbug—Occupant—The Lady of the House—

HUMBUG *(grabbing rest of the mail)*. Give me those! Catalogues—nothing but catalogues! It's only September and they've started again with the Christmas catalogues. *(Pacing.)* I've got to do something...I've got to do something...

HOLLY. Why don't you start an exercise program?

HUMBUG. That's not what I mean, Holly. I've got to do something about Christmas.

HOLLY. No kidding? Only ninety-eight shopping days left. *(Cheerfully holding up catalogue.)* You know, you could just phone in an order.

HUMBUG. Why I keep you around is beyond me! I've got to do something to stop "Mr. Nicholas."

HOLLY. Stop Santa?!

HUMBUG. That's right. Stop that cheerful old man with the beard and the red suit. Stop the "ho, ho, ho," the

“Merry Christmas,” the colored lights, the good feelings, the cheer. Bah Humbug!

HOLLY. Huh. I kind of like Christmas.

HUMBUG. Knock it off! When I found you last December in the toy department at Macy’s, you were sick of Christmas!

HOLLY. Well, that’s true...

HUMBUG. First we’ll get rid of Santa and then we’ll go from there.

HOLLY. *Get rid of Santa?* Look. I don’t want to be part of a—a hostile takeover.

HUMBUG ( *pacing*). We’re just going to send him on a little vacation—until *January first!*

HOLLY ( *cheerfully*). Oh, okay, a vacation. Somewhere warm? Hawaii? Bora-Bora? Christmas Island?

HUMBUG. Somewhere close.

HOLLY. Greenland?

HUMBUG. We’re going to bring him *right here*.

HOLLY ( *shocked*). You mean, we’re going to keep Santa here against his will?! ( *HUMBUG nods.*) Put on your thinking cap, Mr. Humbug. Every law enforcement officer in the *world* would be after us if Santa’s missing.

HUMBUG. And that, Miss Holly Wreath, is where you come in.

HOLLY ( *suspicious*). Where do I come in?

HUMBUG. You go into Santa’s office and you take over. You screen his calls. You answer his letters. You make excuses.

HOLLY. I do? How do I do that?

HUMBUG. You become his *secretary*.

HOLLY. Santa’s secretary?

HUMBUG. You'll say, "I'm sorry. He's not in the office."

It'll take 'em months to figure out— *He ain't in the office!* And with Santa out of the way—

HOLLY. What? What?!

HUMBUG. You'll see.

*(Lights down on HUMBUG's house and up on the North Pole. MRS. CLAUS is rehearsing the TREE while CANDY CANE and ORANGE and PURPLE GUM-DROPS look on. FRUITCAKE, standing by snow cone cart, watches.)*

MRS. CLAUS. Now dear, you are a beautiful, green tree in the forest, longing for a home—ready to be decorated and loved. You want to look your best. Stand straight and tall! Reach your arms to the sky. Sway in the gentle wind. Beautiful! And then it begins to snow. *(MRS. CLAUS calls offstage when SNOWFLAKE does not enter.)* It begins to snow! *Snowflake!* You're on!

*(SNOWFLAKE skates on, racing across the stage and off.)*

MRS. CLAUS *(cont'd)*. Oh, dear, not like a blizzard. You must skate around the tree as if it's softly snowing.

*(SNOWFLAKE skates back on. MRS. CLAUS directs TREE and SNOWFLAKE apart as HOLLY, unnoticed, enters and goes to FRUITCAKE.)*

HOLLY. Have you seen him?

FRUITCAKE. Who?

HOLLY. Santa!