

**From the Casebook of Elliot Brick:
The Case of The Santa Sham Scam**

An interactive musical-comedy murder mystery

by Butch Maxwell & Bert Furioli

At a Glance

Genre: Interactive Musical Comedy Murder Mystery

Running Time: Approximately two hours, including dinner/intermission

Cast: 2W, 3M, plus six volunteer audience participants

Setting: Brick's office, city streets, and the North Pole, just before Christmas.

Audience Participation: Extensive

Music: Musical parodies performed by the cast, with recorded accompaniment and offstage caroling

Technical Requirements: Minimal

Ideal Venues:

- Dinner theatres
- Community theatres
- Fundraisers
- Civic organizations

The Mystery Theatre Experience

An evening with Mystery Theatre Unlimited begins before the first scene. Upon arrival, guests are seated and receive a program, Detective Card, pen, and one Character Fun Fact Card at their place setting. As the cast mingles in character, guests are encouraged to read their Fun Fact aloud, exchange cards with other tables, and meet the suspects before the mystery officially begins.

The Evening's Format

A typical performance follows this sequence:

- **Guest Arrival & Character Mingling** – Characters circulate, meet the audience, and establish relationships before the mystery begins.
- **Act One** – The characters, conflicts, and initial crime are introduced.
- **Dinner / Intermission** – Characters remain available for informal interaction as appropriate.
- **Act Two** – The investigation develops and additional clues emerge.
- **Question & Answer Period** – Audience members question the suspects directly.
- **Guessing Break** – Guests complete Detective Cards identifying the killer, motive, and other requested deductions.
- **Act Three** – The solution is revealed, followed by recognition of successful detectives.

Audience Participants

Six audience members are invited to play small but memorable roles in the mystery. Elliot Brick selects these volunteers during the pre-show mingle, provides their costume pieces and props, and privately coaches them on their lines and actions. No advance preparation or theatrical experience is required.

The audience roles are:

- Mrs. Claus – Santa’s wife, on vacation in the Bahamas
- Jose – Mrs. Claus’s companion in the Bahamas.
- Three Fingers – A newsstand operator.
- Apple Annie – A street vendor.
- Blinkie the Stoolie – One of Brick’s underworld informants.
- Lt. Cleftjaw – Brick’s police nemesis.

Audience participation should always be voluntary. Cast members should choose enthusiastic guests and create moments that allow them to succeed, keeping the emphasis on inclusion and laughter rather than embarrassment. Any theatrical firearm used by an audience participant must be handled according to the producer’s established safety procedures.

The entire audience also participates by questioning the suspects after Act Two and completing Detective Cards before the solution is revealed.

Characters

The cast consists of five principal characters.

Santa Claus — He is under extraordinary stress leading up to Christmas. What else is new? The elves are sick and he has had to hire replacements.

Elfish Prezley — Santa's chief of staff, who keeps the North Pole going while Santa falls apart. It's one of those holiday traditions.

Manny Claus — Santa Claus's wayward brother, who left the North Pole to make his living in Las Vegas. Santa has kept him permanently on the "naughty" list for abandoning the family business.

Holly Daize/"Twinkle" the Elf — Fabulously wealthy but notorious for her poor taste in men, Holly is Manny Claus's ex-wife. Manny stole one million dollars from her to pay his gambling debts. Her alter ego, Twinkle, is a new hire at the North Pole.

Private Detective Elliot Brick — Having accidentally solved several earlier Mystery Theatre cases, Brick gets into the holiday spirit by drinking lots of holiday spirits.

Character Fun Facts

Before the performance begins, each guest receives a program, a Detective Card, a pen, and **one Character Fun Fact Card** at their place setting.

Character Fun Fact Cards serve two purposes: They introduce the suspects before the mystery begins, and they encourage conversation among guests while performers mingle in character.

Each card contains an amusing bit of background about one of the suspects. Guests are encouraged to read their Fun Fact aloud, exchange cards with other tables, and collect additional Fun Facts before the mystery begins.

Performers should be familiar with all of the Fun Facts, as they often become natural topics of conversation during pre-show interaction.

Santa Claus: Since Mrs. Claus has been away for six months, he has become a little testy.

Elfish Prezley: Has been Santa's protégée and heir apparent for the past 157 years, but Santa refuses to retire, much to her aggravation. Look at her. Would you want to aggravate her?

Mrs. Claus: Went on vacation to the Bahamas in July, and never came back.

Holly Daize: Is she really a master assassin sent to kill Manny Claus? If so, why would she hire a dolt like Elliot Brick to find him?

Manny Claus: Owes one million dollars to some unsavory types in Las Vegas.

Elliot Brick: While not a particularly sharp private detective, he is actually a very lucky Monopoly player. He has been unable to parlay that into a decent living.

Act One

Offstage: The sound of Christmas Carolers [provided by two or three offstage actors.]

BRICK enters.

BRICK

It was the night before Christmas and all through the joint not a creature was stirring, except those darned Christmas Carolers with their songs of holiday cheer.

He pulls out his gun and shoots at the door.

Offstage singing ends suddenly.

There's your humbug. The holiday season was never a time for frivolity. People were lulled into a sense of false complacency by the tinsel, the blinking lights and the allure of gift-giving. I preferred my reality straight up, with a generous portion of gin. I'm Elliot Brick, private dick. Reality is my middle name. Well, actually, it isn't. But it beats Aloysius.

It was a story you probably already know. A story you read about in the evening newspaper long ago. A story that could have only happened – on Christmas Eve. I was about to pour a glass of holiday cheer – something my secretary usually did for me, until she disappeared with my partner and all the office furniture.

He goes to a bottle and a shot glass and begins to open and pour it as he talks.

Now I had to hire a new secretary with interior decorating experience. I had placed an ad in the help wanted but hadn't received a single response. Hmmm. Maybe that's because they took the phone, too.

He pours the bottle into the glass – the bottle is obviously empty.

No wonder I have to drink –

[Realizing.]

Doh! They even took my booze!

When out on the street there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my feet to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up.

Sorry. I mean – suddenly, a delectable dish danced
into my office. She had legs that went all the way up to
her hips.

HOLLY enters.

HOLLY

Excuse me, I didn't know you were talking with
someone.

BRICK

Just the audience, sweetheart. The name is Brick.
Elliot Brick. Private eye, ear, nose and throat. I take it
you are here for the assistant's position.

HOLLY

I've been in many positions, Mr. Brick, but I can
assure you I've never needed assistance.

BRICK

What can I do for you, then, sugar?

HOLLY

Mr. Brick, I want you to find this man for me: Manny
Claus. He is my ex-husband, and he has robbed me
blind.

BRICK

I hate people who pick on the handicapped. Why did
you come to me?

HOLLY

Because frankly, Mr. Brick, although I am quite a
wealthy woman, I do not have the money to pay you in
advance. Not until you find Manny. But I knew you
would be stupid enough – I mean, astute enough – to
take the case based on –

[Seductively]

– other benefits.

BRICK

[To audience.]

I was having a deva ju.

HOLLY

I can tell that you are a man of character, a long, hard paragon of virtue, a throbbing, pulsating star on the flag of moral fiber, a burning beacon of righteousness.

BRICK

[To audience.]

She was definitely talking to my second brain now.

HOLLY

[To audience.]

As if he had a first one.

BRICK

[To audience.]

I had to admit, she was a doll.... The moon on her breast like a new-fallen pro gave the lustre of mischief to her objects below.

HOLLY

[Pulls out some money.]

Mr. Brick, I can give you a small down payment.

BRICK

Wait a minute! This is Monopoly money!

HOLLY

Consider it a deposit, Mr. Brick. I understand you are quite the Monopoly player.

BRICK

Well, I do roll a pretty mean set of dice. But this won't pay my rent, sweetheart.

HOLLY

[Pulls a Monopoly property deed out of her cleavage.]

How about if I throw in Boardwalk?

BRICK

You have a deal.

HOLLY

Thank you, Mr. Brick. Please find Manny and I'll see to it that your stocking is filled with all kinds of goodies.

She blows a kiss and exits.

BRICK

Oh, goody, goody. Now all I needed was a lead. I headed out to the street and who should I see but the newsboy, Three Fingers? What's the scoop, Three Fingers?

THREE FINGERS

[An audience member.]

What do I look like, Baskin Robbins? Its gonna cost ya, Brick, just like anyone else.

BRICK

You better talk or I'll sing.

THREE FINGERS

Torture won't work on me, Brick. Who do you think you are, Dick Cheney?

SFX: Music – "Silver Bells"

BRICK

[Talk-singing]

Christmas make you think irrational
While darker thoughts are not yet fashionable
Whatever happens or whatever may be
This is what Christmas means to me

City sidewalks, busy sidewalks
Decked in decadent style
In the air there's a feeling of danger
Engines gassing, cops harassing
Walking mile after mile
And on ev'ry street corner you'll sneer

Danger dwells, something smells
its Christmas crime in the city.

[To Three Fingers]

Ding-a-ling, ya better sing
Soon it will be time to pay

Strings of street fights
It just seems right
Drinking cream and caffeine
As the hookers rush
home to their Johnnies
Hear the snow crunch
See the hoods bunch
It's a snooper's big scene
And above all this hustle you sneer
Danger dwells, no one tells
It's Christmas crime in the city

[To Three Fingers]
Ding-a-ling, ya better sing
Soon it will be time to pay

THREE FINGERS
I give up, Brick! Stop singing! I don't know nothin'.
You gotta go see Blinkie the Stoolie.

BRICK
You could have said that before I started singing. But
before I could catch up with Blinkie I ran straight into
Apple Annie.

APPLE ANNIE
[An audience member.]
How about a Christmas mackintosh, Brick?

BRICK
I don't know anything about computers, Annie. But I
do need a secretary. Can you use a typewriter?

APPLE ANNIE
Thanks, but I already have one.

BRICK
How are you at dictation?

APPLE ANNIE
How are you at washing your mouth out with soap?

BRICK
Hmm. Well, can you answer the phone?

APPLE ANNIE

Why? Is it ringing?

BRICK

You're hired. Hold all my calls. I could see that this was going to be a 24/7 job. I was going to need a lot of H₂O, or I'd be in for a 911.. I went to my favorite watering hole on 10th and 37th, where I ran into Blinkie the Stoolie. He might give me the 411 on Manny Claus.

Blinkie:

[An audience member.]

The only numbers I want out of you are attached to dollar signs, Brick.

BRICK

Don't make me give you the third, Blinkie. And there's no taking the Fifth.

BLINKIE

You wanna bet, Brick?

BRICK

So, you're not just a snitch, but a bookie now, too?

BLINKIE

What do you mean "just" a snitch? I run a valuable information exchange service. I am a professional consultant.

BRICK

You and Three Fingers are two of a kind. Or is that... four of a kind? Anyway, all you guys want is the cash. You sell your friends out to the highest bidder.

BLINKIE

Good thing you're not my friend then, eh, Brick? Without me, you wouldn't have a clue.

BRICK

Oh yeah?

[Grabbing Blinkie, ready to hit him.]

Well guess what? I already don't have a clue.

[Releasing him.]
So there.

BLINKIE
What are you looking for, Brick?

BRICK
Ever hear of a guy named Manny Claus?

BLINKIE
No.

He covers his eyes and puts out his hand. Brick stuffs a bill into his hand. Blinkie looks at it.

Maybe.

He covers his eyes as Brick stuffs another bill into his hand. Blinkie looks at it.

Yeah, I think I do remember that guy. Almost.

He covers his eyes. Brick stuffs a bill into his hand. Blinkie looks at it and takes the money

Yeah, he's in for about a million bucks to some casino in out in Vegas. I hear Big Al put a hit out on him.

BRICK
That's a good memory, Blinkie. Do you have any idea where he is?

BLINKIE
That's all I remember.

He covers his eyes and puts out his hand. Brick stuffs another bill into his hand. Blinkie looks at it.

This does not help my memory.

He covers his eyes as Brick stuffs another bill into his hand. Blinkie looks at it.

Things still look awfully fuzzy.

He covers his eyes. Brick stuffs a bill into his hand. Blinkie looks at it, and takes the money.

Yeah. Word is he's hiding out with his big brother at the North Pole.

BRICK

Thanks, Blinkie. And don't spend the Monopoly money all in one place.

BLINKIE

I'll get you for this, Brick! You'll never get Park Place outa me! Never! Do you hear me?

BRICK

I had to get to the North Pole. Pronto.

[Exiting.]

Taxi! North Pole and step on it!

SFX: Phone rings.

SANTA

[Offstage.]

Elfish! Answer the phone!

Phone continues ringing. SANTA enters.

Elfish! The phone! Ahhh! I've got to do everything myself.

[Answering the phone and imitating an operator.]

You've reached the North Pole. Santa can't take your call right now, but if you'd like to leave a message, please press one for naughty, or press two for nice.

MRS. CLAUS

[An audience member.]

It's me, dear, your loving wife, calling from the sunny Bahamas.

SANTA

Honey, I'm so glad you called. I need you to come home from your vacation. You've been gone for six months.

MRS. CLAUS

Has it been that long? Time flies when you're getting drunk. Can you wait a minute, dear? Oh, Jose, could you rub some lotion on my back? I'm starting to burn.

JOSE

[An audience member.]

Of course, my little snowblossom. My magic fingers are at your command.

SANTA

[To audience.]

Magic fingers? I'm going to fly down there and show him my magic fist.

[To Mrs. Claus.]

Who's this Jose anyway?

MRS. CLAUS

Oh, he's just a young man who likes to give back rubs...and side rubs...and front rubs...

SANTA

Well, he's rubbing me the wrong way. I want you to come home right now!

MRS. CLAUS

Oh, I can't, dear. Jose and I are in the limbo contest this afternoon. These back rubs are making me so flexible. Gotta go. Ta-Ta.

SANTA

What? Hello! Hello!

He hangs up.

I can't believe she's limboing with another man. Oh, I need a smoke.

He goes to a box for his pipe and tobacco, reaches in and pulls out a candy cane.

Oh, I forgot. I quit smoking.

He puffs on the candy cane like a pipe.

Ah, minty.

ELFISH enters.

ELFISH

Boss, we've got a big problem.

SANTA

I've got my own problems, Elfish. My wife's in a love web with a Spanish fly. Get me the Orkin man.

ELFISH

But, chief, this is important. Over half of our workers are sick.

SANTA

The elves are sick.

ELFISH

Please, Chief. Don't call us "elves." We prefer "little people."

SANTA

Really? I can't say that I care for them at all... What are they sick from? Mumps? Measles? Mange?

ELFISH

No. It's – Dutch Elves Disease.

SANTA

Darn! I knew I shouldn't have hired those elves from the Netherlands.

ELFISH

We've got to get some help, Santa. We're already way behind on those Harry Potter dolls.

SANTA

Harry Potter? Sounds like some dope-smoking hippie. Can't I have one Christmas that isn't a disaster? What else can go wrong?

MANNY enters.

MANNY

Hi ya, bro.

SANTA

Oh, for goodness sake! Manny! My long-lost brother.
Nice of you to drop in after all these years. Now, get
out of here, you prodigal bum.

MANNY

Chill out, bro.

[To Elfish.]

He always was high-strung, ever since we were kids.
You shoulda seen how he acted when I filled his
jockstrap with Ben Gay.

ELFISH

I know. He screamed like a girl when I did it.

[A beat.]

Uh, I mean, shame, shame, everybody knows your
name.

SANTA

Okay, so how much did you lose this time, Manny?

MANNY

Santa, you cut me to the quick.

SANTA

My pleasure. Elfish, get me a knife.

MANNY

Honest, Santa, I'm just here for some of your wife's
good home cooking.

SANTA

[Sarcastically.]

My wife's doing all her cooking in the Bahamas with
Jose.

MANNY

Marriage on the rocks, bro?

[Confidentially.]

You know, I could introduce you to a stripper I know.
She's really into tubby guys.

SANTA

I have to be tubby! It's part of the job. Nobody likes a
skinny Santa.

MANNY

That's why I left you the family business. You're built for the job. I'm built for a Speedo.

Elfish fails to stifle a laugh at the thought of Manny in a Speedo.

SANTA

Well, I'm sick of the family business. It's your turn to make crappy toys for those ungrateful brats...uh, I mean, quality toys for those precious darlings.

MANNY

No way, bro. I'm a free spirit. I'm like the wind.

SANTA

The wind from a reindeer's backside.

ELFISH

Santa, remember, Manny is family. You should be nice, even if he is a bum with the morals of a ten-cent hooker.

MANNY

Thanks, Elfish. I think.

SANTA

That's it, Manny. I'm going to go have my beauty snack, and when I get back, I want you gone. *[Exit.]*

ELFISH

Don't worry. His beauty snack usually lasts three days. *[Exit.]*

MANNY

Ah, family, the ties that bind...like a noose.

He picks up the phone and dials.

Hey, Vinny, it's Manny. Yeah, I made it. Nah, that dope doesn't have a clue why I'm here. I'll get the money offa him by tonight. Like taking a candy cane from a baby.

Elfish enters unseen by Manny.

What? Big Al sent a goon after me? Okay, don't worry.
I'll take care of it.

He hangs up, then notices Elfish.

Oh, Elfish, I didn't see you there, as hard as that is to believe.

ELFISH

Manny, what have you done this time? Did you lose a bundle betting on strip bingo again?

MANNY

How'd ya guess? B-24 did me in. I lost everything, including my Speedo.

Elfish grimaces at the image of Manny in a Speedo.

ELFISH

Please don't let Santa find out. Any more stress and he's going to start mooning the elves again.

MANNY

But I gotta get some money quick, or Big Al's goon is gonna aerate me with lead.

ELFISH

I think I can get you the money, since I do all the bookkeeping. I'll get it from the diaper fund.

MANNY

Diaper fund?

ELFISH

For the reindeer. We've has some mid-flight accidents. Just promise me you won't tell Santa. It'll be our little secret.

MANNY

It won't be that little. I owe Big Al a million dollars.

ELFISH

A million dollars? That's a lot of diapers.

MANNY

You'll still help me, won't ya? After all, I am family.

ELFISH

Addams Family, maybe.

SFX: Song – “There’s No Place Like Home for the Holidays”

MANNY

[Singing] Oh, there's no place like
Home for the holidays,
'Cause no matter how far away you roam
When you need a good hideout
In a friendly place
For a hideout you just can't beat
Home, sweet home.

I robbed a man who's really mad at me
Who wants my head and more, Got a mania
To hit both my beady eyes
He's got a mania to be beatin' down
And makin' me real sore
From Atlantic to Pacific, gee
The beatin' is terrific.

Oh, there's no place like
Home for the holidays,
'Cause no matter how far away you roam
When you need a good hideout
In a friendly place
For a hideout you just can't beat
Home, sweet home.

SFX: Song ends

Brick enters.

BRICK

The North Pole's colder than a witch's – bits. But I
can't be stopped by a little frostbite.

*He takes a step and starts walking around goofily, as
if his feet are asleep.*

I can't feel my feet! I knew I shouldn't have worn
Hush Puppies.

MANNY

[To Elfish.]

Who's the goof in the suit? Na-shnook of the North?

ELFISH

That must be the goon Big Al sent.

MANNY

You think so? He looks like Jerry Lewis on crack.

Brick finally notices Manny and Elfish. He freezes, then straightens up, recovering his dignity.

BRICK

Good evening.

He takes a step and his leg buckles briefly.

I'm Elliot Brick. I'm from the Publishers Clearing House.

ELFISH

Really? Do you know Dick Clark? I always wondered – how did he stay so young? Did he know the secret of longevity?

BRICK

No, he knew the secret of surgery.

MANNY

So why are ya here, Mr. Brick? Did Elfish win a subscription to *PlayElf*?

BRICK

Do you know where Manny Claus is?

MANNY

Shh! Lower your voice!

BRICK

[Deeply.]

Do you know where Manny Claus is? I'm pleased to announce that he may already be a winner.

MANNY

Did he win a million dollars?

BRICK

Uh, no, he won a set of steak knives. But he is in the semi-final runoff for – uh, lots of valuable stuff.

ELFISH

[Confidentially, to Manny.]

I think he's full of stuff.

MANNY

I'm sorry, Mr. Brick, but Manny isn't here right now. I think he's down at the stables watching the reindeer games.

BRICK

Thanks for the tip. So, what's your name?

MANNY

Why, don't you know me? I'm Santa Claus.

BRICK

You're Santa Claus? I thought he was – rounder.

MANNY

Ah, that bowl-full-a-jelly stuff is just P.R. for the kiddies. I'm just your average beer-swilling jamoak.

BRICK

You don't sound like Santa Claus.

MANNY

Sure I do. Listen --- Hey! Hey! Hey!

ELFISH

[Confidentially, to Manny.]

That's Ho! Ho! Ho! You sound like Fat Albert.

BRICK

[To audience.]

I've got a hunch these characters are hiding something. But they can't pull the wool over my private eye.

MANNY

[Walking Brick towards the exit.]

Let me show you the way to the stables, Mr. Brick. You can't miss Manny Claus. He's the one dressed like a big, juicy tomato.

Manny gives Elfish the thumbs-up as he and Brick exit.

ELFISH

I'm really conflicted. On the one hand –

Sticking out her hand.

– if I don't stop Manny, Santa's going to get killed. On the other hand –

Sticking out her other hand.

– if I do stop Manny, then he'll get killed. On the other hand –

Looking at her hands.

– I've run out of other hands.

SANTA

[Offstage.]

Elfish!

[Entering with candy cane in hand.]

Elfish! How many times have I told you to keep the elves out of my liquor cabinet? They're outside writing their names in the snow.

Puffing furiously on his candy cane.

That's it! I need tobacco.

ELFISH

Oh, no, boss, don't give up. Remember, tobacco is just a crutch.

SANTA

Then break my leg, 'cause I need a crutch.

ELFISH

Boss, have you tried the patch?

SANTA

Sure, but I couldn't see how looking like a pirate is supposed to help.

ELFISH

I wondered why you dyed your beard blue last week.

TWINKLE (played by the same actor as Holly)
enters.

TWINKLE

[To Elfish.]

Excuse me, sir. I'm looking for Santa Claus.

ELFISH

He's the oral-fixated guy over there.

TWINKLE

Oh, that can't be Santa Claus.

[To Santa.]

Why, Santa's a much older gentleman. You can't be a day over 300.

SANTA

[Beaming.]

Elfish, who is this delightful little pixie?

ELFISH

I don't know, boss. I thought I knew all the brown-nosers at the North Pole.

TWINKLE

My name is Twinkle.

ELFISH

Twinkle? I bet you got beat up a lot on the playground.

SANTA

Elfish, don't be so rude. I think Twinkle is a delightful name.

ELFISH

For a poodle, maybe.

TWINKLE

[To Santa.]

I've been sent from your South Pole branch to help out with the elf shortage.

ELFISH

I've been to the South Pole and I don't remember meeting any Twinkle.

TWINKLE

Who's Miss Hathaway over there?

SANTA

That's my head elf, Elfish. Soon to be ex-head elf, if she doesn't straighten up.

Elfish physically straightens up.

Nobody likes a smart elf.

TWINKLE

I can't tell you what a thrill it is to meet you, Mr. Claus. I'm a big fan. You're a big inspiration to me.

ELFISH

For what – overeating?

SANTA

Don't you have some elves to detox?

ELFISH

But, boss, I've got something important to tell you about Manny.

SANTA

I don't want to hear about Manny!

ELFISH

But –

SANTA

No buts!

ELFISH

It's a big but.

SANTA

I don't care about big buts.

ELFISH

Obviously.

SANTA

Get out.

ELFISH

[Exiting, to audience.]

I hope he gets shot in his big butt.

Elish exits.

TWINKLE

Oh, Santa, you're so forceful. I love it when a man takes a stand. And speaking of stands, is that a candy cane in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?

Santa reaches in his pants and pulls out a candy cane.

SANTA

It's a candy cane.

TWINKLE

Oh, too bad. You need to get rid of your stress.

SANTA

If I could get rid of Manny, I'd get rid of my stress.

Twinkle takes the candy cane from Santa and coquettishly rubs the cane along Santa's beard.

TWINKLE

I can help you with your stress.

SANTA

Uh, well, I don't know. I am a married man.

TWINKLE

I admire a man who can be faithful.

SANTA

Well, I'm not that married.