

WHO KILLED SANTA?

A film noir comedy whodunit

by Claire Linda Demmer

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WHO KILLED SANTA?

A film noir comedy whodunit

Cast:

Detective Hardboiled – a film noir style detective

Blondie: A dumb blonde bombshell. Feminine, voluptuous, think 'Jessica Rabbit'

Alf: An elf. New York accent/any colloquial

Mrs Claus: Mrs Claus

Rudolph: A reindeer. Red nose. British accent

Kid: Could be played by an adult dressed as a child. Or a child. Eight years old. Precocious.

Cop called Henry: Came with the detective. Young, polite. Name of Henry.

Santa's spirit: HO HO HO.

Detective Hardboiled:

The time: Christmas Eve

The Place: Downtown

The Crime: Murder. A crime most foul and fatal. Somebody killed Santa. The real one.

Who did it? Well, that, ladies and gentlemen, is what we're here to find out. I have my suspicions and to be honest, I doubt it was a stranger. Nine times out of ten it's always somebody the victim knows. Personally. And so we've brought these people here tonight. Each and every one of these people had either the means, motive or opportunity to commit this hideous crime. But only one of them had all three. The only question is....who?

Lights up to show a room with a number of suspects gathered together, and the behind and boots of Santa lying dead on the floor upstage. Alternatively a chalk outline drawn up in the shape of Santa carrying a sack of toys can be used.

The Name's Hardboiled. Detective Hardboiled. I work with the police. But I'm only brought in for the specialist stuff. You know the ones? Crimes too dreadful to... but let me say no more. You know what I mean. Take this crime tonight. Bad news travels fast and so, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to get this over and done with quickly. If possible. Thank you, everyone for coming down here tonight. You're all going to be a big help. By now you already know the bad news. Santa is dead. *(Dramatic music)* Ladies and Gentlemen, I put it to you: Someone here, one of you, had the motive, means and opportunity to commit this atrocity. *(Collective gasps)* And now, by a series of deductions, we will sort out the riff from the raff. And once we have seen who had all three, we will know who did it.

Blondie: Who did what? Pardon?

Rudolph: What, killing Santa?

Detective H: No. Worse. The most hideous crime of all. Ruining Christmas. *(Dramatic music)*
(Mrs Claus Weeps)

Blondie: Ruining Christmas? But -

Alf: Aw, Dollface, you must realise that with Santa gone, Christmas is pretty much kaput. *(He sits behind a table or on a sofa with fake legs so as to give the impression of being short. When he walks he can walk on his knees with legs behind him.)*

Detective H: And you are?

Alf: Alf. I work for Santa.

Detective H: In what capacity?

Alf: I work in da shop, you know and then on Christmas Eve, I sometimes do da delivery run as well.

Detective H: So, you're an elf.

Alf: Not an Elf. Alf.

Detective H: But you are an elf?

Alf: Technically, yes.

Detective: Alf the Elf. I see. And, ma'am, I beg your pardon (*To Blondie*), may I have your name, please?

Blondie: You can call me Blondie.

Detective: And how do you two know each other?

Alf: We both work for Santa.

Detective: Doing what this year?

Blondie: Toy run. (*Appears depressed*)

Alf: You know, delivering presents.

Blondie: Yeah. Cause we're both elves.

Detective: I see. (*Looks Blondie up and down. Blondie looks nothing like an elf*) Henry, make a note. Blondie is an elf.

Cop: Right. (*Jots something down*)

Detective: Can you tell me anything about the events of this evening?

Alf: Look, you all know that Santa can't do the chimneys no more. Not with his little weight problem. (*Wiggles/taps his belly*) I know he's on a diet and everything, but these things take time. Like a couple of hundred years (*Him and Blondie laugh*)... anyway. So, we kinda got to helpin' him do his work, like. So me and Jimmy, we do the chimneys and lets Santa in the front door. Sometimes if there's a rush, me and Jimmy do the Chimneys and the presents as well. Depends on the day.

Detective H: Depends on the day...Hang on. Isn't it always Christmas Eve?

Alf: Technically, yes.

Detective H: Henry – please make a note. The presents are normally delivered in Christmas Eve. (*Henry scribbles in his notepad furiously*) So on December 24th, what were the events that led up to the time of the murder?

Alf: Well, we was at Holly Street, no 24. The chimney was tiny, more like a pipe than a real one, so I went in and then opened the front door for Santa. He went into the house.

Detective H: What happened next?

Alf: I dunno. I went back to the sleigh to get the next load of presents for no 26. Next door.

Detective H: Did you deliver those presents to no 26?

Alf: I did. Santa was taking his sweet time, so I thought I would speed things up a bit. When I came back, he still hadn't returned, and so I entered the premises.

Detective H: Of no 24?

Alf: That's correct. And that's when I found him.

Detective H: And what did you see?

Alf: He was lying in the corner there by the fireplace (*Points*), a carrot in his mouth and footprints all over him. Dead. (*Dramatic music*).

Detective: Dead? (*Dramatic Music*)

Alf: Technically, well.. er..yes.

Detective H: I see. And what did you do, then?

Alf: I called you. The po - lice. And the wife, of course. Thought she would like to know.

Detective H: Ah, yes, Mrs Claus.

Mrs Claus: Look, detective...

DetectiveH : Hardboiled, ma'am, Hardboiled. Like the egg.

Mrs Claus; You mean that you have a hard exterior, but inside you're soft, squishy and delicious?

Detective: That would be soft boiled, ma'am.

Mrs Claus: I see....Look, Detective er, Hardboiled, I just wanted to say that you must realise I had nothing to do with this! I was back home in the North Pole when....when....
(*weeps, comforted by Blondie*)

Detective H: I appreciate you coming all this way, ma'am, I do. But if you want to save Christmas, we need to get to the bottom of this tonight. There's more than one little boy and girl out there whose hearts will beat a little slower knowing that Santa never came.

Rudolph: My thoughts exactly. But, don't you think that this is just wasting precious time? I don't mean any disrespect, Hardboiled, but Christmas comes but once a year and if Santa isn't around any more, somebody has to do it.

Detective H: Do what?

Rudolph: Deliver the presents.

Detective H: And is that something you would be willing to take on tonight, Mr ?..

Rudolph: Rudolph. Naturally – I mean we simply cannot keep all those poor children waiting for nothing, can we? And time is passing. And unfortunately the longer you keep us here, the less time we at the North Pole have to do anything about it.

Detective H: So, are you suggesting that we leave the investigation one more day, maybe two. Put Santa on ice, have an autopsy done? Confirm the cause of death. And when Christmas is over, we'll let the fat man sing?

Rudolph: It's what Santa would have wanted.

Mrs Claus: I agree. More than anything, he would not have wanted those little kids to miss out on their presents, bless their little hearts!

Alf: Agreed.

Blondie: Yes, yes, sure. What are we talking about again?

Alf: Santa, dollface. And the presents. (*Blondie makes an 'Oh' with her lips*). So, are we all in agreement then? We go now? Deliver the presents? I'm sure Detective Hardboiled will understand. (*They all start to rise and move towards their coats*)

Detective H: Hmmm. No, I don't think so. I am sure you'll agree that no kid wants a present from the person who killed Santa, do they? (*Indignant mutterings*) Yes, I'm sure of it. (*Dramatic Music*) One of you did it and by the end of this evening, I'm going to find out who it was and why they did it. So tell me, Rudolph, were you with Santa on that fateful night?

Rudolph : Oh, dear me, no. Although I feature in one popular tune, the sleigh is led by the eight, as the legend states, not by me. No, sorry, sir, I was nowhere near Santa when he met his unfortunate demise.

Detective H: But answer me this? Isn't it true that you wouldn't be averse to doing Santa's job?

Rudolph: Well..... I won't deny that it does hold a certain appeal for me...the fame...the fortune.... Having more than one song...but I didn't kill him.

Detective H: I see... You should all know that I don't make any deductions until I've received all the facts, sir, so right now I'm just waiting for all the facts. Henry?

Cop: Sir?

Detective H: Did you get that? Only one song.

Cop: Sir! (*writing*)

Detective H: Good. And so we move on, To you! (*Points at the kid.*) Would you mind telling me what you are doing here?

Kid: I live here.

Detective H: I see. And in your own words, can you go through the events of this evening?

Blondie: Detective, he's just a child. Also, the words you are using might be a little big for him? Aren't they, sweetie?

Kid: Lady, I'm eight years old. Not four. Okay.

Detective H: So you understood what I asked?

Kid: Sure.

Blondie: (*To the person next to her mouthing*) I didn't. What did he mean? (*They mouth back, sssh!, she nods*) Okay!

Detective H: And you live here with?

Kid: My parents.

Detective H: No brothers or sisters?

Kid: No.

Detective H: And where are your parents?

Kid: Working.

Detective H: And they left you at home, all alone at the age of eight?

Cop: Is your name Kevin?

Kid: No. It's Jerry/Gerry. And besides, I'm not home alone. The police are here. Aren't you?

Detective H: So is the murderer.

Kid: I'm not afraid.

Blondie: That's very brave of you.

Kid: Whatever.

Detective H: So, as I was saying, can you please go through the events of this evening leading up to this most vicious crime.

Kid: So, you know that no kid is supposed to see Santa? Right?

Everyone: Right.

Kid: But this year I decided to stay up so that I could see him. I even laid a little trap, so that if I fell asleep, it would wake me up.

Detective H: Explain.

Kid: Well, it's quite simple really. Figuring that Santa was highly unlikely to fit down our chimney, I laid the trap by our front door. Nothing fancy, just a wire, that, once tripped over would break a circuit, set off an alarm and activate a small camera in my bedroom.

Detective H: And did Santa break the circuit?

Kid: Actually, no, he didn't. It was him. *(Points at Alf. Dramatic music)*

Alf: Me? *(Everyone gasps and looks at Alf)*

Detective H: No, that would make sense. Alf would have broken the circuit when he went to open the front door. That corroborates your story, Alf. *(Everyone heaves a sigh of relief)*

Alf: Oh? Er...good. I mean, thank goodness.

Detective H: What happened next? Did you come downstairs?

Kid: And scare Santa off? No way. Why should I? When I had my camera set up so I could watch remotely.

Blondie: Kids, these days, huh?

Detective H: You wouldn't happen to have the video footage, would you?

Kid: *(In a small voice)* No.

Detective H: Pity.

Kid: I would have, if I hadn't fallen down.

Detective H: Let me guess. You didn't tidy your bedroom.

Kid: Um... *(guilty)*

Detective H: Even though your mother had told you to.

Kid: No. But I left a path in the middle! (*guilty*) I swear!

Detective H: And when you woke up in the middle of the night because your little trip wire trick actually worked, you leapt out of bed, landing on.....let's see.....a fairy castle, no.... Ball, no..... sports equipment, no....aha – I know. A hand built lego truck complete with real wheels, the latest edition. Whereupon you were transported across the floor, falling down and pulling your fancy equipment down with you, rendering it useless?

Kid: You're good. You should be Santa.

Detective H: Not tonight, kid. Not tonight. Pity about the surveillance equipment, though.

Kid: You win some, you lose some.

Detective H: Henry – would you please check the video footage to see if by any chance we got lucky and it wasn't destroyed.

Henry: Sure thing. (*Exits*)

Detective H: But then again, how convenient for 'somebody' to have the evidence destroyed.

Mrs Claus: Are you saying, Detective Hardboiled, that someone knew about the hidden camera? And set a trap for the kid, putting stuff in his path to make him fall and break the recording device? And then let him take the fall for it?

Detective: That's exactly what I'm saying.

Blondie: Somebody set the poor kid up?

Detective H: That's correct.

Mrs Claus: But who would do such a thing?

Alf: And who could have known about the hidden camera?

Detective H: Yes, who...?

(*Henry comes back in*)

Cop: The memory card's gone from inside the camera, sir. And it's broken as well sir. Someone did a good job on it.

Detective H: The thot plickens.....

Blondie: No! Not Santa. Couldn't have been.

Detective H: Yes, it does seem unlikely (with his mobility issues) that he would quickly nip upstairs to lay down an obstacle in the passage for a small boy to trip over. And then steal the memory card from the camera too.

Alf: No way Santa coulda done that.

Blondie: He didn't even have a cell (mobile) phone. I mean, like who can't use one?

Cop: But who laid the trap then?

Detective H: Perhaps someone close to Santa. Someone in this very room. Think about it. Little boys and girls have been trying to catch Santa for years. And they never have. And why do you think that is? Who does the job of maintaining secrecy at all costs? Sees you when you're sleeping; knows when you're awake? Who else but Santa's staff and family, trusted with the task of keeping his existence a closely guarded secret? Poor kid just didn't watch out. Better luck next time, kid. Next time, you'll know the tune.

Kid: What?

Detective H: You don't know the tune?

Kid: You just said that.

Alf: The tune that blackmails kids everywhere!

Rudolph: Into being good!

All: Sing: 'You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not shout, I'm telling you why. Santa Claus is coming to town.'

Kid: Oh, that tune.

Blondie: Except... he's not coming back, is he? (*Sniffs. Everyone looks solemn*)

Detective H: Which makes it all the more important to find the son of a gun that sent him on his way, don't you think? (*They all nod, albeit reluctantly*) Which bring us to the real question –

Alf: Who killed Santa?

Detective: Well, yes, but before we get to that one we must first find out who -

Blondie: Ruined Christmas?

Detective: That too, but to find that out we first need to find out -

Mrs Claus: Who did it?

Detective: We're going in circles here. We need a motive. Who here had a motive to do him in?

Blondie: I don't know about me, but Alf -

Alf: Hey, Blondie, whatya doin?

Blondie: I don't think you did it, Alf, but they'll find out anyways. So let them know now, okay?

Alf: About what?

Blondie: The list.

Alf: I'm sure... I don't know what you mean...

Blondie: Alf – were you on Santa's nice list? Be honest. We all know, anyway.

Alf: Fine! No. *(small voice)* No, I wasn't

Detective H: And why not?

Alf: Oh fine, fine. I know I like to come across as helpful, but sometimes.....

Detective H: Sometimes.....?

Alf: Okay, sometimes I referred to him as – 'That ol' lump of lard.' *(Collective gasps)*
Oh go on, judge me, all of ya. You're no different. And I only called him that because I hated doin' those chimneys.

Detective H: You hate doing the chimneys?

Alf: Who wouldn't? They're filthy and no new houses have proper chimneys. And with Santa being the size he was, there was no way he could do it. So we had to.

Detective H: Did Santa know how you felt?

Mrs Claus: Know how he felt? He heard Alf call him by that, that horrid name.

Alf: It's true. And after that it was straight onto the naughty list for me.

Detective H: So, you resented Santa?

Alf: Maybe a bit, okay, technically... yes, I resented Santa! But I didn't kill him him.

Detective H: I see. Just getting the facts, sir, just the facts.

Alf: There's a reason small kids ain't sent up chimneys no more. It's against the law. But sending elves down, hah! Where's the law against that?

Blondie: There isn't one.

Detective H: And you'd know that, Blondie, or shall I call you... Jimmy? *(Dramatic music)*

Blondie: Gasps. But, how did you know?

Detective H: It's quite simple. A small matter of deduction, really. I asked for everyone who saw Santa that night to be brought down here for a little chat. Now Alf here was constantly talking about someone called Jimmy, who worked with him and Santa. Correct?

Blondie: Correct.

Detective H: Since you were the only person in the room unaccounted for, I began to wonder if you were really Jimmy, moonlighting as Blondie. And, as it turns out, my suspicions were correct.

Blondie: You got me. My name's Jimmy, but as you can see, I'm a girl. But Santa – he was very specific about the elves that helped him being only male. But from the time I was a little elf, I dreamed of helping Santa with his sleigh.

Detective H: So you pretended to be a boy?

Blondie: Yup. And it was going really well, too until -

Detective H: Until tonight?

Blondie: Until tonight.

Detective H: What happened?

Blondie: He found out.

Detective H: Santa?

Blondie: Yes.

Detective H: How did he find out?

Blondie: It was my lipstick. It fell out of my pocket straight onto Santa's lap. (*Mimes the action of bending down to retrieve the lipstick in a way that nobody can believe Santa never noticed she was a girl*)

Detective H: And how did you dress when you were 'masquerading as Jimmy'?

Blondie: Like this. (*Hands towards body to indicate she dressed the way she is now*)

Detective H: Was Santa blind? (*Incredulous*)

Blondie: No, sir. Just dedicated. But once he knew... the way he looked at me. It was..terrible.

Detective H: And what happened then?

Blondie: He said I would have to go back to the workshop... *(weeps)* next year and never go on the sleigh... again.

Detective H: Were you upset?

Blondie: Of course I was upset! My dream, from the time I was a little girl, shattered. *(Pause)* But I didn't kill him.

Detective H: Just getting the facts, miss. The facts. They're very important, those facts. Tell me Jimmy, just how long was Alf separated from you?

Blondie: Not more than a minute, sir. As he said, I stayed with the reindeer the whole time on the sleigh. You have to, otherwise they fly away. You don't know the number of times they've flown off, leaving me and Santa alone on a roof in Timbuktu... anyway because of this there's a new rule. No one leaves the reindeer. And tonight that person was me. Anyway, Alf here went into no 24 as he said, opened the door for Santa, left straight away and went to no 26.

Detective H: And how long was he in No 26?

Blondie H: About two minutes, sir.

Detective: And then?

Blondie: Well, Santa hadn't showed up so, Alf went back inside no 24. And that's when he found him. *(Weeps)*

Detective H: Jimmy, how long was he inside the second time?

Jimmy: Not more than thirty seconds, sir. Then he came running out.

Detective H: I see, thank you- miss, the facts are the facts, miss. That they are. Make a note of that, Henry.

Cop: Yessir. *(Scribbles on pad)*

Detective H: And Henry?

Cop: Yessir?

Detective H: You'll need to speak to the eight. Verify Jimmy's story here.

Cop: The eight, sir?

Detective H: You know the tune.

Cop: Er -

Detective H: Don't make me sing it!

Cop: I know the beginning, sir. To be honest, I never make it past Prancer.

Detective H: And here we go. Yet another song that nobody knows; just like the twelve days of Christmas. There's not a person in the world who knows more than '5 gold rings.' that song. Not one. And yet there is it, every Christmas, making fools out of all of us. Damn it, I hate that song. On the bright side, at least there's only one.

Blondie: One what, sir?

Detective H: One song that nobody in the world knows the words to.

Blondie: Actually you just mentioned the reindeer song, too sir.

Alf: What about Hotel California?

Mrs Claus: American Pie?

Cop: Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious?

Detective: Fine. Fine. Fine! I'm wrong about the song. Are you happy now?

Rudolph H: I could help him with their names, sir if you want?

Detective: No....Let the boy sweat, Rudolph. Good for him. (*Henry slides sadly offstage*) Builds character. Besides, I think it's your turn anyway. Mr Rudolph, can you please go over the events of this evening?

Rudolph: Of course.

Detective H: Can you tell me where you were?

Rudolph: Of course. After Santa left the North pole on his sleigh, I stopped at the local Polar Express shop for some quick groceries.

Detective H: What did you buy there?

Rudolph: Oh, some food for the elves and some last minute gifts, of course. Oh yes – also some rolled oats. My favourite. Ask for Mario – he'll confirm I was there.

(*Cop enters and opens mouth as if he is about to speak*)

Detective H: We'll be checking up on that. Henry – will you get onto that?

Cop: Of course, sir. (*Takes out his phone and exits the stage again, presumably to make another phone call*)

Detective: What did you do after that?

Rudolph: After that? Well, then I decided to stop back in at the North pole headquarters – I dropped in on the elves at the workshop. Ask any of them.

Detective: *(Cop enters again)* Henry, will you get on that, please?

Henry: Oh, certainly. *(Takes out phone again and exits)*

Alf: That was a quick phone call.

Detective: Yes. Henry is very efficient. But don't tell him that. Wouldn't want to spoil him.

(Cop enters again)

Cop: Confirmed, sir!

Detective: Would you mind getting me a coffee, Henry?

Cop: Yessir! What kind?

Detective: Soy Latte. Shaken, not stirred. *(They all look surprised)* Wife...cholesterol...

Cop: I'm on it! *(Exits)*

Detective H: And what happened next?

Rudolph: I got the phone call. The call about Santa. Naturally, I rushed straight over here. Poor man. To go like that. Shocking, simply shocking.

Detective H: Thank you, Mr Rudolph. Just getting the facts, sir, the facts. Just checking the facts.

Cop: *(Enters with latte)* Here you go, boss.

Detective H: Thank you, Henry. Would anyone else like a coffee? *(Everyone puts up their hands)*

Henry: I'm on it! *(exits)*

Detective H: I see. Thank-you, Jimmy. Just getting the facts, ma'am. Just the facts. The facts tell us everything that we need to know. But let's get back to the kid.