

IGGY, YUGO AND SAM IN
THE WAR ON CHRISTMAS

IGGY, YUGO AND SAM ADVENTURES

A Christmas Caroline

A Christmas Time Tale

Everyone Needs A Little Space at Christmas

A Christmas Mystery

Raiders of the Lost Christmas Cavern

The Last of the Snow Wolves

The Return of Leviticus Swyne

A Fairy Merry Christmas Tale

What's Past is Present

A Feast of Fools

Lucretia Alopeesha Takes a Vacation

Elves in Toyland

CD25: Christmas Day

The Treasure of the Claus

The Man in Sandy Clothes

Maggot, Lice and Worm

A Winter of Discontent

Ghosts of Christmas Future

Nightmare on Elf Street

The Fright Before Christmas

North Pole Stud

Here There Be Monsters

A Tale of Two Kidneys

What Are You Waiting For ... Christmas?

Freaky Christmasday

ELFolution

South to Alaska

Boys Will Be Boys

Murder at the North Pole

Christmas Night of the Evil Walking Living Dead

Iggy, Yugo and Sam in the War on Christmas

In which Iggy rises at dawn,
Yugo wakes up even earlier, and
Sam calls in sick.

In the news ...

CANADA SPENDS \$620,000 ON “STEALTH SNOWMOBILE

The Canadian military is testing a “stealth snowmobile” worth \$620,000 Canadian dollars to achieve eventual Arctic domination.

The Canadian Press reports that the quiet, hybrid-electric snowmobile was commissioned in 2011 to help conduct “winter operations” on a variety of terrains and to operate more quietly than other models on the market.

This new snowmobile is seen as critical in bolstering Canada’s territorial claims in the high Arctic. A number of other nations have asserted dubious claims to the region around the North Pole, including Russia, the United States, Denmark/Greenland and Norway.

As a result, Canada requires a new and better snowmobile to assert its sovereignty to the Arctic.

In other words, the North Pole is part of Canada. And Canada is using high tech snowmobiles to make sure everyone else knows it.

That’s right. Iggy, Yugo, Sam and even Santa Claus himself are Canadian.

But if Canada really needed a high tech snowmobile to look after the North Pole, it really only needed to ask Yugo ...

This story is rated:



According to the ERSB (whatever that is), a story with an E10+ rating is suitable for ages 10 and up. Such stories may contain cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language and/or minimal suggestive themes

Personally, I think we could have got away with an E rating for this one:



An E rating means a story is for Everyone. It might still have minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language.

Apparently, the things that put this one over the top include, but were not limited to:

- Many, many, many violent acts, but primarily directed towards nasty goblins,
- The consumption of several pints of Elflager,
- A good many explosions,
- An elf who feigns an illness (apparently young children might copy such irresponsible behavior).

Sorry about all of that.

It's come to this ...

SCHOOL BANS CHRISTMAS TREES, COLOURS RED AND GREEN

December 05, 2013 An elementary school in Frisco, Texas has banned Christmas trees and the colors red and green from an upcoming “winter” party.

Boys and girls who attend the Nichols Elementary School “Winter Party” will not be able to make any reference to Christmas or any other religious holiday. Christmas trees are also banned – along with the colors red and green.

The rules were sent to parents in an email from the school’s PTA.

After receiving a raft of complaints, the school district sent out its own e-mail that said: “The school was unaware of this and it was not an official PTA correspondence either. There have never been any limitations on what students wear, what they bring to share with their classmates on party days ... what greetings people exchange with each other.”

This led to a meeting between the principal and the PTA, after which the school decided to keep the new rules in place.

“The principal said they didn’t want to offend any families and since some families are ridiculously sensitive to perceived insults of all kinds that this is the best policy.”

Texas state representative Wilbur Jones said he was shocked at the number of calls his office has received from nervous teachers and principals – wondering what they could and could not do.

“One teacher wanted to do ‘Elf on a Shelf’ and she thought she would get in trouble,” Jones said. He added, “I’ll tell you what. It’s a war on Christmas is what it is.”

“I see green guacamole, red salsa for my chips,

The salt looks like snowflakes, sticking to the frosty rim,

My waiter’s name is Jesus, his momma’s name’s Marie,

The more I think about it,

Looks like Christmas time to me.”

-Jeff Maddox, *Merry Margarita*

“Just keep on doing what you do,

They’ll be no missiles crashing down on you,

There’s no need to worry, at least not tonight”

- Brainpool, *The Last Christmas*

“Put down your cutlass, raise up your tankard,

No time to fight, it’s Christmas day.”

- Tom Mason and the Blue Buccaneers, *It’s Christmas Day*

A Tale of 'Citement and 'Ventures



IT HAPPENS EVERY YEAR. Some storekeeper puts up a sign that says “**Seasons Greetings**” or a town council erects a “holiday tree” in a public square. Within minutes, some insufferable old scold gets on television or twitter to complain that there is a “war on Christmas” and something ought to be done about it.

It is silly, really. Nobody has ever signed a declaration of war on Christmas. There are no soldiers shooting each other from trenches or foxholes. No bombs have fallen and no grenades have ever been launched. There have never been any casualties, not even a blister, in this war. But every year it is the same, nonetheless.

General Rufus P. Beeflips, Supreme Commander of the Allied Goblin Armies took a noisy slurp of coffee while he leafed through his morning paper. The lead editorial on page three was titled “War on Christmas?” and told the story of a school district that had banned the colours red and green from their “winter pageant”. This, the editorial warned, was but the first shot in the war on Christmas.

General Beeflips set down his newspaper and took another long and noisy slurp from his coffee cup. He wiped his bushy red moustache with the back of his hand. "A war on Christmas," he thought. "Now, there's an idea."

IGGY, YUGO AND SAM IN **THE WAR ON CHRISTMAS**

RED AND GREEN ARE THE COLOURS OF CHRISTMAS. Why red and green, you ask? Because of the paradise tree, that is why.

What is a paradise tree you ask?

My, you have a lot of questions. The paradise tree is the main prop in a play which was once performed on the feast day of Adam and Eve, which happens to fall on Christmas Eve. The paradise tree was typically a fir tree (all other trees having shed their leaves at that time of year) which was hung with red apples to represent the fruit of knowledge. In the play, Eve takes one of the apples and troubles ensue.

In time, people started placing green paradise trees in their homes on Christmas Eve, occasionally replacing the apples with other colourful fruits and vegetables, including oranges, lemons and pickles.

And so, red and green became the colours of Christmas. For most of the world, anyway. But at the North Pole, the only colour at Christmastime is the darkest colour on the spectrum. At the North Pole, Christmas is as black as coal. By Christmas Eve, the sun has set for many weeks and will not rise again until spring. There is only blackness everywhere.

Black was also the colour of the heart of General Beeflips. That is not to say that General Beeflips' heart was literally black. In fact, like your heart and mine, it was as red as the apple on a paradise tree. But the evil idea that formed as he finished his coffee that chilly December morning figuratively blackened his heart as dark as Christmas Eve at the North Pole.

The high Arctic is a cold, dark and forbidding place. Despite the coldness, darkness and forbiddingness, a great many things live and thrive in this bleak environment. There are Christmas elves, of course. There are also polar bears and musk ox and puffins and walruses. And goblins.

It is an unpleasant truth that of all of the things that live at or near the North Pole, goblins are the last becoming. They are a despicable bunch, all things considered. They are short and lumpy, with rubbery yellow skin that hangs in loose folds like an oversized suit. Their large, round heads bob atop skinny, crooked necks and feature wide mouths and bulging eyes that often point in different directions.

It is also an unpleasant truth that General Beeflips was even uglier than most of his kind. He was covered in bumps and boils and had a most disagreeable demeanor. The only hair on his big round head was an uneven red moustache and the hairs that bristled out from the flared nostrils of his bulbous nose. His round, watery eyes blinked rapidly as he read his newspaper.

Because he was a general, Rufus Beeflips wore a green wool uniform with a dozen medals pinned across the chest and heavy brown boots that left muddy footprints everywhere he walked. He sat in the squalid mess hall of the goblin barracks which stood at the edge of the grubby goblin village.

The goblin village was blanketed in darkness during the second week of December. It is not at the North Pole, for that is the home of the Christmas elves. But if you were to walk a few miles south from there, in your warmest coat, you would find it.

Of course, from the North Pole, every direction is south, which makes finding things like the goblin village a little tricky. When every way is south, two elves could both walk south from the pole, while travelling in entirely opposite directions. So, to get to the goblin village, one has to head south in the right direction. And also a little bit west.

Unlike the ugly and unpleasant goblins, the elves of the North Pole are a handsome group, with bright eyes, pointed ears and a sunny disposition that belies their winter home. Perhaps this is because the elves work for Christmas, the happiest day of the year.

The goblins, by contrast, have devoted their lives and their culture to Bean Day.

And what is Bean Day, you ask.

Again with the questions. But, it is funny that you would ask that, since not many have. In point of fact, you are the very first person to have asked that question. Apparently you are one of a kind, or perhaps a little more bored than most.

But, whatever the reason, here are some things you have to know to make sense of the things which are to follow.

Bean Day happens on January 6 every year. If you look it up you will see that no one knows why there is a Bean Day, why it happens on January 6 or what it all means.¹

The thing you need to know about Bean Day is that it is the most important day of the year to the goblins. That is the day that Grumble Paws, an old, rotund and grizzled goblin, delivers tins of Arctic beans to all of the good little boys and girls of the world. He rides in an old pickup truck which is dragged across the sky by eight giant hogs. Who can forget the lines of that celebrated poem where Grumble Paws' truck bangs down the street as he hollers, "Now Snouter! now Pouter! Now Oinker, now Boinker and Perry. On Vomit, On Putrid, on Gobber and Jerry!"

Perhaps a better question would be who can remember that line, or any other line, from the poem "*The Night Before Bean Day*". That fact is, almost nobody celebrates Bean Day or even knows much of anything about it.

This is a source of great unhappiness among the goblins. Every year they fill Grumble Paws' old truck with beans and every year he circles the world looking for those houses which have hung their bean buckets by the chimney with care. And every year old Grumble Paws returns, his truck still filled with beans.

Bean Day decorations are rare and there are only a few Bean Day carols.² Hardly anyone ever writes to Grumble Paws at his wintery cannery with entreaties for beans.

Most sensible people would attribute their utter disinterest in Bean Day to the fact that the climate of the high Arctic is not conducive to agricultural pursuits of any kind and the beans that are grown there are thin, wrinkled and tough. About the only thing an Arctic bean is good for is stirring coffee, and even then it leaves a bad taste behind. Those few people who have heard of Bean Day wish that it never happened and everyone else just ignores it entirely.

¹ Don't believe me? I learned about Bean Day from this place, and they do not know what it means, either: <http://www.holidayinsights.com/other/beanday.htm>

² You may have heard of one of them. It begins, "Beans, beans, the musical fruit ..." There is also the "Twelve Days of Bean Day". The words are fairly easy to learn, because on each day my true love brings to me some beans.

But, goblins are neither sensible nor people. To them, there is only one reason why no one cares about Bean Day and that reason is Christmas.

Every year, just before Bean Day comes around, a jolly old elf soars right over their heads, bringing wonderful presents to all the children of the world. And really, how can any other holiday, let alone something as dire and miserable as Bean Day compete with that?

These are things that General Rufus P. Beeflips was thinking about as he slurped his coffee and read an editorial about a winter pageant with a colour code and the war on Christmas.

SAM LEANED BACK IN HIS BIG GREEN EASY CHAIR AND pointed his remote control at his 80 inch flat screen television. He flipped through channels 117 through 333 so quickly that he created a seamless moving picture combining cooking shows, sporting events and crime dramas in a way that could have won a prize at a foreign film festival. He reached into the cooler beside his chair for another can of cherry soda. His chubby fingers stirred through some melting ice cubes but came up empty.

“Hey Iggy,” Sam hollered to the kitchen. “Can you fetch me another cherry pop?”

Iggy stepped out of the kitchen with a gleaming red can in his hand. Iggy was a skinny elf, with a pointed nose, pointed ears and dark hair that pointed in all directions. He was tall, for an elf, with long arms and legs. In saying this it should still be understood that Iggy was not tall at all. Just tall, for an elf.

Sam was short and stout, even by elf standards. He had a round face with a round nose, puffy cheeks and small dark eyes all topped by a curly mop of red hair. He swept up the can greedily with one big, pudgy hand, popped the tab and gulped down a quarter of its contents in a single smooth motion.

Sam was naturally paranoid, convinced that everyone and every elf was out to get him. He claimed that this condition had served him well in the past and was not inclined to change. Iggy was exactly the opposite. He suffered from pronoia, the certain conviction that everyone and every elf in the world at large was out to help him. He was sure that he had only benefited from this condition, and was not inclined to change, either.

Sam burped loudly and asked, “where’s Yugo?” Yugo was the third elf who shared their little apartment in Elves Barracks B. He was a sturdy elf with bright eyes and an enormous black moustache. Yugo was the craftiest of all of Santa’s elves; his quick mind and nimble hands created the most clever delightful toys.

“He’s already left for work,” said Iggy. Yugo was always the first elf to pull up his seat at the work bench in the big toyshop at the North Pole. “You should turn that thing off. You’re going to be late.”

Sam yawned and then burped again. “I’m not going today. I already called in sick.”

“You’re not sick,” said Iggy.

“Yes I am,” said Sam. “I’m sick of making toys.”

Iggy sighed, put on his red velvet overcoat with the green velvet lining with mittens that hung on strings from each sleeve and headed out the door. Sam slouched a little deeper into his big green easy chair and reached for the remote control. He was completely comfortable, but he did have one regret. He wished that he had asked Iggy to bring him another cherry soda.

WHILE SAM SLEPT THROUGH THE SIXTH HOUR of the *Elves Gone Wild!* marathon on channel 334, General Rufus P. Beeflips stepped into the cluttered office of Grumble Paws. He saluted smartly then spread a large white map across Grumble Paws’ weathered desk. He stabbed his knobbly index finger down on to the center of the map.

“My armies are ready sir,” he said. “This is where we will attack.”

Grumble Paws stood up stiffly and leaned over the map. He was the oldest and wisest of the goblins, though that is a bit like describing your grandmother’s bookcase as the oldest and wisest of bookcases.

Grumble Paws squinted at the spot in the center of the map. “The North Pole.”

“It’s the center of the whole Christmas operation, sir,” said General Beeflips. “They have toy factories and reindeer stables and jaunty little cottages, but our

intelligence³ informs us that there is no standing army, no air force and no defences of any kind. If we strike now, we can wipe the whole thing out. And once we do, there will be no more Christmas.”

Grumble Paws smiled. “Only Bean Day.”

“The beaniest day of the year, sir,” said General Beeflips.

Grumble Paws grunted. “And the happiest, General. Bean day is both beany and happy.”

“Of course, sir.”

“And jolly. Bean day is beany and happy and jolly,” said Grumble Paws.

“The jolliest, sir.”

“And the beaniest, General. Never forget that.”

“I won’t, sir,” said General Beeflips.

“You know that beans are the finest fruit there is, General,” said Grumble Paws.

“I do indeed, sir,” said General Beeflips.

“Consider the kidney bean,” said Grumble Paws. “A most elegant bean. Softspoken in manner, with a gentle, light texture, and yet a rich, filling palette. Then there is the pinto bean, of course. Speckled like a leopard and just as wily. And never forget about the lima bean. Mild, yet tart. Tangy on the tongue. Did you realize, General, that the lima bean originally came from Peru?”

General Beeflips sighed. Once Grumble Paws started talking about beans, there was no stopping him. It was best to just let him finish.

After waxing on about wax beans some while longer, Grumble Paws lifted his puffy goblin head and asked, “so, when do we attack?”

“As soon as you give the order sir,” said General Beeflips. “I took the liberty of preparing this.” He unrolled a short scroll and laid it on the table over top of the map.

Grumble Paws traced his dirty fingernail across the text as he read it. His thin lips formed the last words and then drew into a sly smile. “That will do nicely,”

³ “Goblin Intelligence” is an oxymoron, which is an expression that includes two seemingly contradictory terms, like jumbo shrimp, living dead, or, for many folks, Christmas vacation.

he said. Grumble Paws drew a crayon from a drawer, then bent over and signed the parchment in his uneven and childish scrawl. This is what it said:

Declaration of War

WHEREAS IN THE COURSE OF GOBLINISH EVENTS IT BECOMES NECESSARY TO ACT IN ORDER THAT WE MIGHT PROTECT THAT INSTITUTION THAT WE HOLD MOST DEAR, TO WIT: BEAN DAY;

AND WHEREAS THE IMPERIAL OPPRESSORS OF THE NORTH POLE HAVE PRESIDED OVER AN ANNUAL CELEBRATION MOST UNBEANLY;

THEREFORE BE IT FORMALLY DECLARED THAT A STATE OF WAR EXISTS BETWEEN THE ALL OF GOBLINKIND AND THOSE UNCOMELY ELVISH SORTS THAT NOW OCCUPY ALL LANDS AND VESTMENTS OF THE IMMEDIATE NORTHERN POLAR REGION AND THAT THE ALLIED ARMIES OF THE GOBLINS ARE HEREBY EMPOWERED AND INSTRUCTED TO FORTHWITH AND WITH AS MUCH VIOLENCE AS MAY BE REQUIRED AND THEN SOME TO VANQUISH, OVERCOME AND ERADICATE THAT MOST UNBEANLY CUSTOM OF CHRISTMAS.

AND IN PURSUIT OF SUCH NOBLE AND BEANLY GOAL, LET THIS DECLARATION OF WAR ON CHRISTMAS BE YOUR ABSOLUTE AND UNQUESTIONED AUTHORITY.

SO IT IS WRITTEN AND SO IT SHALL BE DONE,

SIGNED THIS 18 DAY OF DECEMBER,

PER: **Grumble Paws**

GRUMBLE PAWS, ESQ.

Then he leaned back in his rickety goblin throne and smiled. “It is good. There shall be war on Christmas. And it shall be good. And it shall be beany.”

“It certainly will, sir,” said General Beeflips, as he retrieved the scroll and rolled it up. “Most beany indeed.”

“And jolly,” said Grumble Paws, wagging a gnarled finger. “Make it jolly.”

General Beeflips pursed his blubbery, lumpy goblin lips while he considered the logistics of waging a jolly war.⁴

“But mostly make it beany,” said Grumble Paws.

“Oh yes, sir. It will be most beany indeed,” said General Beeflips. He tucked the signed scroll under his arm and saluted. Then he spun on the heel of his polished boot and marched out of the room.

Bean Day was coming and he had a war to wage.

TOYMAKING IS HARD WORK. When the horn sounded the end of their shift, Iggy and Yugo and most of the other elves headed over to the *Walrus and Ulu*.

The *Walrus and Ulu* is the best elf pub at the North Pole. It is a low brick building with big wooden beams on the corner of Candy Cane Lane and Peppermint Road. This is where the elves often go after work for one of Mrs. Chubby’s pies and perhaps a pint of Chubby’s Finest Elflägër. It is the kind of place with shelves of old books on the wall and a canoe hanging from the ceiling. The front doorway is filled with a big statue of a walrus built entirely of Lego. The jukebox plays Christmas songs like *Merry Xmas (Says Your Text Message)*⁵ by Dragonette and there always a few elves dancing in their velvet pointy toed boots.

Iggy and Yugo made their way to their usual table, which was wedged in between the bar and the rest room, but found that it was already occupied by Sam and Nutmeg, his occasional girlfriend.

“I thought you were sick,” said Iggy.

“I’m feeling much better now,” said Sam, and he raised a foaming pint of Elflägër to his lips.

“We missed you on the train line,” said Yugo.

“I didn’t miss it a bit,” replied Sam. Toy trains were one of the toys Sam hated to make. Other toys that Sam did not like to build included dolls, puzzles,

⁴ Another oxymoron just there in case you missed it.

⁵ What a great tune. Seriously.

trucks, action figures, blocks, crayons, green army men, mp3 players, teddy bears, dinosaurs, chemistry sets, baseballs, remote control cars, videogames, plasticene, roller skates, board games and yo-yos.

Iggy shook his head. "Sam, there's only a week until Christmas. We need you at the workshop."

"I'll be back as soon as I'm well," said Sam. He took another pull from his Elflägër.

"You must be feeling better, the way you are going through that Elflägër," said Yugo.

Sam set his empty mug on the edge of the table and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "I only drink it for its medicinal properties," said Sam. "Elflägër is good for you. It's full of minerals. Like copper. And zinc."

"True fact," said Nutmeg. Then she reeled off seven text messages on her elfPhone and updated her Elfbook page twice.

Sam looked at her and smiled. She smiled back and then she and Sam began winking at each other and making kissing noises.

"Now I'm not feeling so well," said Iggy.

"Maybe you should try some Elflägër," said Yugo.

"It's got minerals," said Sam. He waved to the little elfin waitress to bring him another round. Yugo ordered a hot chocky and Iggy picked a tall diet glacier water.

Iggy and Yugo continued trading small talk while Sam and Nutmeg traded kissy faces. Eventually Chubby rang the bell that announced last call and the elves headed out onto Peppermint Road towards Elves Barracks B.

"I'm glad to see you're feeling better," said Iggy. "We start on Barbie campers tomorrow."

Sam did not care for making Barbie campers. They were pink and had a lot of small parts (most of which were also pink). He gave an exaggerated cough. "I think I might be having a relapse," he said. Then he coughed again once more for emphasis.

IGGY WOKE UP AT DAWN EVERY DAY, even in December when there is no dawn at the North Pole. But it was dawn somewhere, and that was when Iggy woke up. Yugo was up even earlier than Iggy, and in the toyshop by dawn. A different, earlier dawn than Iggy woke up to.

It is hard to say just how early Iggy and Yugo got to work. All time zones converge at the North Pole, so no one ever knows what time it really is. Please understand, however, that Iggy and Yugo were in their places at their workbench very early indeed.

Sam was not. Sam woke much later. Although it was still dark outside when Sam woke up, it was much, much later.

He lifted his head from the pillow and slowly opened one eye. He noticed that he had left the bathroom light on and he found looking at it to be extremely painful, so he slowly closed his eye and lowered his head to the pillow.

“I really am sick this time” he thought. This thought brought him mixed feelings. On the one hand, he did not have to go to work so he got the day off. On the other hand, he was sick, so he could not even enjoy his day off.

If he had a third hand, he might also have wondered whether all the Elfläggers he drank the night before might have had something to do with how he was feeling. Since he did not have a third hand, this thought did not occur to him. All he knew was that if he was too sick to lift his head from his pillow or open even one eye, then he was far too sick to build any Barbie campers.

“I could sleep for years,” he thought. “I couldn’t get out of bed if a bomb went off.”

That was when a bomb went off.

Sam leapt out of bed and ran to the window. He was ready to tear open the shutters and throw up the sash, but he did not need to. There was an enormous hole in the wall where his bedroom window used to be.

Snow blew through the hole in the wall where his window once was. Sam wrapped himself in a wool blanket and carefully peered through the hole. He saw a light glowing to the south. As he watched it, the light grew bigger. There was a screaming noise that grew louder and louder until the bright object crashed into the wall beside him and made an even louder boom.

Sam was thrown backwards by the explosion. He rose carefully from the floor. As the dust settled, he saw that he had a second hole in his wall, right beside the first one.

It was not a big room and Sam thought that if a third hole were to appear in his wall, there would wall left at all. He decided not to wait to find out how that would look. He ran out of the room, pausing only to grab a sandwich from the refrigerator before he headed out the door.

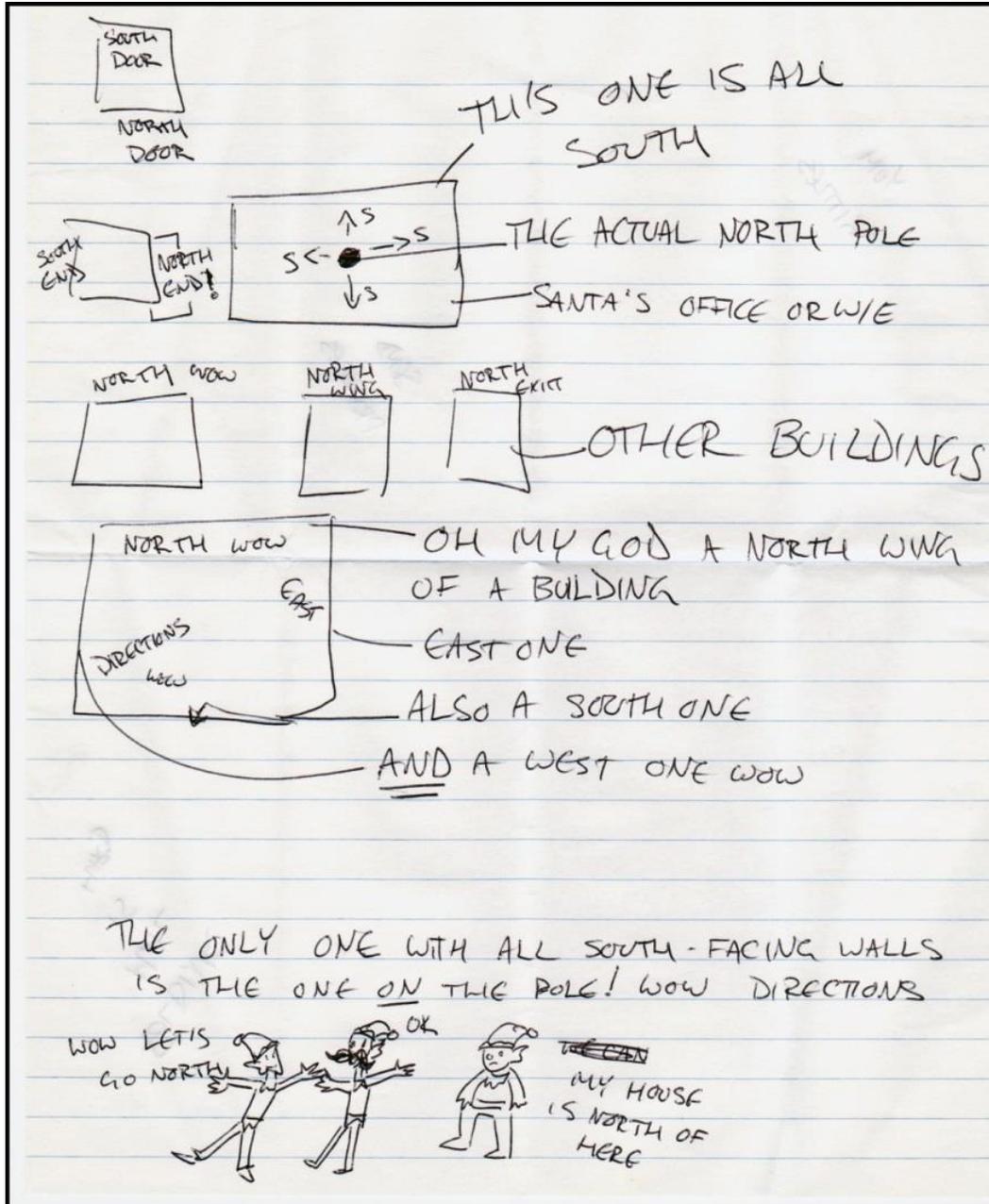
It was only once he got outside that he realized he was still wearing his pajamas. Sam took a bite of his sandwich and kept running. It must have been quite a sight, an elf running down the snowy street in his pajamas while eating a sandwich, but it was pitch dark outside so nobody saw him.

All of the Elves Barracks were empty, since every available elf was in the workshop filling last minute Christmas orders. The streets were dark and quiet as Sam shambled ahead. He turned north on Mistletoe Road and headed towards the workshop to find Iggy and Yugo.

It has previously been mentioned that at the North Pole, every direction is south. You may wonder, then, how Sam could run north towards the workshop.

You really do ask rather a lot of questions.

It is true that every direction at the North Pole is south, but Sam was not exactly at the North Pole when he left his apartment. Elves Barracks B is about a half mile south of the North Pole and the usual rules about directions apply to that particular patch of snow and ice. This principal may be illustrated thusly:



Sam turned at the Gum Drop Shop, paused to take another bite from his sandwich and started running again. Sam is not a fast runner so the trip took much longer than it should have, especially with the frequent sandwich breaks along the way. Indeed, the difference between Sam's running pace and his regular walking pace can only be detected with a radar gun that measures speed to three decimal points.

He reached the end of his sandwich at the same time that he reached the doors to the workshop. His pajamas were soaked with sweat despite the frigid temperature. He was panting heavily and was too exhausted to turn the door

knob, so he just leaned his considerable bulk against the door until it gave way and swung open.

Sam flopped into the workshop, gasping for air. "There were some bombs," he croaked. "Lots of bombs." His face dropped to the floor.

Iggy turned to Yugo. "What did he say?"

"I think he said he was bombed," replied Yugo.

"I'm not surprised, considering all the Elfläggers he had last night." Iggy turned to the Barbie camper on his workbench and quickly bolted on a pair of oversized wheels.

Sam struggled to lift his head from the floor. He sucked in air in great wheezing gulps. "Real bombs," he said, his voice barely more than a whisper.

Iggy called over his shoulder. "Yes, we know you're really bombed, Sam. Maybe you should go back to bed."

Yugo just shook his head and started to carefully apply pink decals onto the pink doors of his pink Barbie camper.

Sam crawled across the floor with his elbows until he reached a shelf filled with toys. He found a plastic megaphone on the bottom shelf and dragged it to his mouth. He turned it on. There was a squeal of static and then Sam hoarsely whispered into the loudspeaker. "Listen up guys. Someone is shooting bombs at us. It's an invasion."

Iggy set down his little screwdriver. "An invasion? Who would invade the North Pole?"

"The only thing that's bombed is you, Sam," said Yugo.

Iggy chuckled. Then a huge explosion shook the workshop. Toys tumbled from the shelves and cascaded across the floor.

"What was that?" Iggy shouted.

"That was a bomb," said Yugo. "It's an invasion!"

JUST AS EVERY DIRECTION FROM THE NORTH POLE is south, all routes to the North Pole go north. General Rufus P. Beeflips led his goblin armies north. He was dressed in green camouflage fatigues that matched the colour and blemishes of his skin, with all of his medals spread across his chest. He rode in at the front of a row of tanks which were equipped to drive through the thick snow drifts that led to the North Pole.

As the line of tanks crept forward, General Beeflips noticed a light in the window of one of the dark little buildings clustered around the North Pole.

“Could be a sentry,” said General Beeflips. “Take it out, Private.”

Private Slackjaw McGee saluted and loaded a heavy shell into the tank’s big gun. He looked through the scope beside the big gun and slowly brought the lit window into his cross hairs. He pulled back on the trigger and the shell rocketed from the tank, glowing brightly as it arced out over the snow banks. It smashed into the wall of the lit up building with a tremendous boom.

General Beeflips stared through his low light binoculars. “Light’s still on,” he said. “Fire again.”

Private McGee reloaded the big gun and launched another shell at the little building. There was a second explosion that punched another hole in the wall of the building.

“Better hit it again to be sure,” said General Beeflips. Private McGee launched another three shells into Elves Barracks B before it finally collapsed into a heap of broken bricks. Fortunately for Sam, he was well clear of the building by then, sandwich in hand.

General Beeflips lowered his binoculars and smiled. The lights were out and the sentry post had been demolished. His war on Christmas had begun.

General Beeflips barked to his troops. “Good work men! Now let’s clear out some of these other buildings to make room for our tanks.

More shells were launched and Elves Barracks A, C and D collapsed into the snowy ground. The goblin tanks rolled over the broken rubble that used to be the homes of dozens of happy, jolly Christmas elves. A parade of soldiers marched behind, their heavy boots crunching over the crushed wreckage the tanks left in their wake.

They reached the corner of Mistletoe Road and Candy Cane Lane. The Gum Drop Shop was still closed, but General Beeflips decided to level it anyway. He sent a team of goblin sappers to take care of it. It exploded with a great orange

fireball, spraying coloured gum drops in all directions. One of them stuck to General Beeflips' cheek. He pulled it off and popped it into his mouth.

"A little burnt, but tasty," he thought as he gulped it down.

The tanks turned up Candy Cane Lane. They rolled past the *Walrus and Ulu* and then stopped. There was a low pointy roofed building at the end of the street. It was brightly lit up with Christmas lights twinkling from the eaves and around every window. General Beeflips was sure that he heard singing from inside. Something about holly, jolly Christmases.

"Grumble Paws wanted a jolly war, and this is certainly the jolliest building we've come across," said General Beeflips. "Let's take it down men!"

Private Slackjaw McGee loaded his big tank gun and sent a shell through one of the colourfully lit windows. It exploded with a huge boom, shaking the workshop and sending toys cascading from their shelves.

Somewhere inside someone shouted, "it's an invasion!"

"You're darn right it is," said General Beeflips with a sneer. Then he turned to his troops and bellowed, "fire at will men! Fire at will!"

NORTH POLE TOYMAKING FACILITIES ARE SO WELL ENGINEERED that they are among the sturdiest and safest buildings in the world. When the first bomb came through the window of the workshop, all of the elves immediately headed for the well marked and easily accessible exits. Iggy and Yugo picked up Sam and together they dragged him outside. The only injuries were to a number of Little Annie Alligator dolls that had been stacked at the end of one of the workbenches.

The main workshop at the North Pole was built to withstand a barrage of bombs. So when the goblin army launched exactly one (1) barrage of bombs at the workshop, it shivered and shook and shimmied but it did not fall.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam looked back at the workshop. The explosions that flashed through the windows lit the place up like, well, a Christmas tree.

"What are we going to do?" said Iggy. "The North Pole is under attack!"

"There's only one thing we can do," said Yugo. He pointed down the road.

“The *Walrus*?” said Sam. “I suppose I could stand a pint of Chubby’s Finest after all of that excitement.”

“Not the *Walrus and Ulu*, Sam,” said Iggy. Sam looked again and his happiness gave way to disappointment. Yugo was pointing to the round metal building just down the block from the *Walrus and Ulu*. He was pointing at the hangar that held his snowmobile.

“Exactly,” said Yugo. He lowered his arm and marched quickly down Peppermint Road. He led Iggy and Sam past the *Walrus and Ulu* and stopped at the door to his little hangar. He removed his green wool mitten and pressed his hand on a security plate. The hangar door shot open with an audible “whoosh”. Iggy, Yugo and Sam stepped inside.

A gleaming red snowmobile was parked in the middle of the room. But Yugo’s snowmobile was not like any other snowmobile at the North Pole. It was not like any other snowmobile in the world, for that matter. For the comfort of its passengers during trips across the chilly Arctic snow, it had an enclosed heated passenger cabin. This also serves to keep passengers safe and comfortable when, with the flick of a red switch or the press of a blue button, the snowmobile flies into the air or shoots across the ocean. It is powered by a small lithium fusion reactor and controlled through a powerful computer that runs everything from the laser cannons to the onboard waffle maker.

Sam was terrified of the thing. “I’m not getting in there,” he said.

“Yes you are,” said Iggy.

“I need you to run the tail guns,” said Yugo.

“No way,” said Sam. “Every time I get in that thing, something terrible happens.”

“Sam, something terrible is happening,” said Iggy.

“And this is the only way to stop it,” said Yugo. He pressed a button and the passenger doors slid open on their smooth hydraulics. “Now, get inside.”

Sam grumbled some more, but he climbed into his usual seat in the back. Iggy slid in beside Yugo, who sat at the steering wheel. He pressed a flashing orange button and the powerful engines roared. He revved the engine a couple of times and then put the snowmobile into gear. It rolled slowly forward and out onto the street.

“Let’s go get them,” said Yugo. He shoved the gear stick forward and the snowmobile shot down the street. Iggy cheered. Sam just frowned and held on tightly to his safety handle.

There was a phalanx of goblins standing at attention in the middle of the road. As the snowmobile sped towards them, they raised their firearms and started shooting. Their bullets bounced harmlessly off the snowmobile’s windows.

Yugo flipped a blue switch and then turned the volume switch on the dodecaphonic high fidelity sound system all the way to ten. He did not go to eleven. That might have been fatal. Even at ten, the cacophonous boom that echoed from the front of the snowmobile knocked the goblin troops to the ground.

“What was that?” asked Iggy.

Yugo smiled. “I rerouted the music to the front speakers and hit them with a solid wave of sound. The air pressure coming out of those speakers was so strong they didn’t stand a chance.”

Yugo drove past the scattered goblins, all of which were holding their hands to their ears and shouting.

“Their hearing will come back in a week or two,” said Yugo. “But they won’t be taking any more orders before then.”

They scooted down Frostbite Alley. They turned right when they reached the Warehouse of Extremely Dangerous Toys. There were signs outside the building that warned of extremely extreme danger to any elf who might enter.

Before long, the snowmobile reached a group of three tanks that were pushing north. Yugo hit a yellow button and two small gun barrels rose out of the hood of the snowmobile. He pressed two red buttons on his steering wheel with his thumbs and a beam of red light shot out at the first tank. A nasty looking string of black spots appeared on the side of the tank. It ground slowly to a halt. Then its gun turret rotated towards the snowmobile. But before it could find its target, Yugo launched another laser blast. The tank glowed bright green for a moment and then just fell apart.

“Why does this snowmobile even have laser cannons?” asked Iggy.

“You never know when you might need them,” said Yugo. “They are also handy for opening jars.”

The other two tanks turned and bore down on the snowmobile.

“Now we’re done for,” said Sam.

“I don’t think so,” said Yugo. “Let’s see if they can catch us in the air.” He flipped a black toggle switch and stubby silver wings extended from either side of the snowmobile. He pulled back on the steering wheel and the snowmobile rose into the air.

“Whichever side controls the skies wins the war,” said Yugo.

“This is the part I hate the most,” said Sam, reaching for the air sickness bag on the seat back pocket in front of him.

Yugo soared up over the tanks and then banked sharply. The snowmobile turned and dove towards the second tank. Yugo engaged his laser cannons again. The tank glowed brightly for a few moments and then it, too, fell into pieces.

“Two down,” said Yugo. He lifted the snowmobile back up into the air and turned to make a pass at the last tank. But the third tank was ready for him and launched a missile into the air before Yugo could get it into his sights.

The missile hit the snowmobile dead center and exploded. Iggy, Yugo and Sam bounced around the cabin as the snowmobile shook from the explosion. The snowmobile’s big engine stuttered and smoke poured from under the front hood. All across the dashboard red lights started flashing.

“Oh dear,” said Yugo. He punched buttons quickly, but the more buttons he pressed the more warning lights came on. Yugo wrenched the steering wheel back and the snowmobile lurched upwards for a moment. Then the engines stopped grumbling and the front of the snowmobile pitched down.

Sam reached for a second bag while the ground spun around below them. Yugo frantically flipped switches and dials, but the snowmobile finally stalled and dove back to the ground.

“Only one thing left to do,” said Yugo.

“I knew you had a back up plan,” said Iggy. “What is it?”

“Abandon ship,” said Yugo. He slammed a big red button with the palm of his hand. The roof of the snowmobile flipped open and the three passenger seats blasted into the sky. They arced high above the snowmobile and then fell to the ground.

Sam gripped his armrest and shouted through his gritted teeth, “it is not a good day to die.”

Just then, parachutes deployed from the back of each seat, braking their fall.

They swung gently in their chairs as floated down. In the distance, they saw the smoking snowmobile tumble across the sky and then crash into a big ice field to the south.

From their vantage point high above the North Pole, Iggy, Yugo and Sam could see dozens of tanks and hundreds of goblin soldiers converge on the office tower at the North Pole. This was where Santa Claus worked, in a big office on the top floor.

The elves glided past the silver windows of the building and Sam said, “we’re going to need a bigger snowmobile.”

GENERAL RUFUS P. BEEFLIPS DID NOT WASTE ANY TIME attacking the workshop. He only had so many barrages in his arsenal and was not prepared to waste a second one on this stubbornly sturdy building. “Let’s move on,” he barked to his troops.

He turned his army due north and marched them straight to the Pole itself. Many years ago, Santa Claus built a 24 story glass office building exactly on the North Pole. A worldwide toy distribution business requires a lot of administration and this is where that work takes place. There are floors devoted to sorting and answering mail, managing elf resources and dealing with all of Santa Claus’ trademarks and licenses. Santa Claus himself occupies the largest office of all on the top floor. On the heavy wooden doors that lead into his office there is a brass plate that reads:

Santa Claus
Chief Executive Officer

This was where General Beeflips and his goblin armies headed now. The elves had been routed out of the workshop and were on the run. All that stood between the goblins and victory in the war on Christmas was a single office building.

General Beeflips drove his tank right up the front steps and stopped before the main door. He slowly climbed down from the tank and walked up to the door. He pulled on the handle, but it was locked. There was a small intercom beside the door. General Beeflips pressed on the red button below the speaker box.

A voice buzzed out of the speaker. "Security."

General Beeflips cleared his throat. "This is General Rufus P. Beeflips, supreme commander of the allied goblin armies. I demand you let me in."

There was a long pause and then the speaker buzzed again. "I don't seem to have your name on my list, sir."

"Open this door this minute!" shouted the General.

"I'm afraid I can't do that if your name is not on my list. Do you have a pass card, sir?" buzzed the voice from the speaker.

"Harumph," harrumphed the General. "No I don't have a pass card."

"Well, if your name is not on the list and you don't have a pass card, then I can't let you in."

"Listen to me young man. Do you realize who I am?"

"Yes sir. As you have advised, you are General Rufus P. Beeflips, supreme commander of the allied goblin armies. But you are not on my list and you don't have a pass card. I'm afraid there is nothing I can do."

The General's lime green face turned blue. He shouted, "I demand that you let me speak to your commanding officer!"

"Just a minute, sir." There was another lengthy pause that extended beyond the minute that was requested and then a different tinny voice buzzed through the speaker. "Can I help you?"

"This is General Beeflips. I am leading a goblin invasion force and I demand entry to this facility!"

"I don't see your name on the list, sir. Do you have an appointment?"

"No I don't have an appointment! This is an invasion!"

"No list, no appointment, no pass card, my hands are tied here. Can you come back tomorrow?"

The General kicked the door several times, then limped back to his tank in a sour mood. Private Slackjaw McGee saluted as the General took his seat in the turret. "They won't let us in, Private," he said.

Private McGee cleared his throat and said, "sir, we have a tank. In fact, we have rather a lot of them. Tanks, I mean."

The General's black mood lifted at once. "Of course, Private. Of course. We have tanks. Lots of tanks."

“Yes sir. We have tanks in abundance. We await your orders sir,” said Private McGee. He saluted again, just to be sure.

The General stared at the little speaker box beside the locked door. “Blow these doors off, Private.”

“Aye, sir.” Ten tanks turned their big guns to the door and fired. Ten glowing shells struck the doors. The entire front entry way of the office tower exploded wide open.

It turns out that goblin grade military ordnance does not need an appointment or a pass card to get through a locked door.

General Beeflips climbed back down from his tank. The speaker box was lying on its side on the top of a pile of broken glass and rubble. It made a buzzing sound, but the General stomped on it with his good foot until it stopped. Then General Beeflips led his army into the lobby of the office tower.

There was a bit of difficulty at the security desk concerning passcards and the lack thereof, but Private McGee resolved it by waving a grenade launcher around and loudly shouting “passcards? We don’t need no stinking passcards.” In light of the whole grenade launcher business, the elves at the security desk agreed and let them pass.

The elevator also required a passcard, but Private McGee’s grenade launcher obviated that problem. In moments, the goblin vanguard⁶ reached the top floor, and General Beeflips led them down the hall to a pair of heavy carved oak doors. He kicked them, but they would not give. They were heavy doors made of oak after all and had they yielded to a single goblin kick, it would have led to a difficult conversation with the woodcarver.

The doors held under General Beeflips’ second kick. And they held under his next kick and the kick after that. And the many kicks that followed until his toe was too sore to kick again.

“Give it a kick, McGee, while I rest my toe,” said the General.

Private Slackjaw McGee gave a sharp salute and an “aye aye sir,” and then gave the heavy wooden door a firm kick.

It fell down with a thunderous thud.

⁶ The vanguard is the leading part of any advancing military formation. A synonym for “vanguard” is “the boys who died first.”

“I softened it up for you,” said General Beeflips, as he cradled his throbbing toes.

“Of course you did, sir.” Private McGee stepped through the open door.

It is said that one does not simply walk into Santa Claus’ office, and it was never more true than it was on this day.

Most days, if one were to tap on the door and politely request entry, one is likely to be greeted with a jolly “ho ho ho” and a “come on in, what can I do for you?” Conversely, were one to invade the North Pole, shout at and threaten the elves at the security desk who are, after all, just doing their jobs, and then march down the hall and kick down the door, the greeting one could reasonably expect to receive might be somewhat different.

And it was.

There was a sharp crack and Private McGee was struck in the face by a fungo.⁷ He stumbled back a couple of steps and then fell over, unconscious, and was never mentioned again in this story.

A bearded man in a red velvet suit raised a bat to his shoulder with one hand and gently tossed a fungo in the air with another. “Plenty more where those came from,” he said. “Which one of you goblins is next?”

General Beeflips nodded and Private Tusks “Steve” McInsquash realized he was next. He gulped with his exaggerated goblin esophagus and stepped forward.

There was a sharp crack as Santa Claus swung his bat and sent a screaming fungo into the meaty bit above the Private’s nose. He collapsed in agony and was not heard from again in this story.

General Beeflips looked and pointed. Private MacDanglybits shuffled into the doorway, received a fungo to the forehead, fell in a heap and was never mentioned again.

“I have a million of them,” Santa Claus shouted to the goblins in the doorway. He actually only had about twenty fungoes, but the goblins did not know that. There were also only about twenty goblins at the doorway, so all things considered, Santa Claus had a fair chance.

⁷ A fungo is a baseball used for fielding practice. As will be immediately apparent, Private Slackjaw McGee fielded this particular fungo poorly.

But war is not fair. The goblins had grenade launchers. Sure, they sent another ten privates into the room to be concussed by Santa's fungoes, but then they brought out the heavy artillery.

Corporal Stibbly "John" McBottom strode into Santa's office with his grenade launcher, shooting everything in sight.

He hit everything in sight except Santa Claus.

He blew up the big desk that looked vaguely like an aircraft carrier. He got the bookshelf with all the cookbooks full of gingerbread recipes. One shot took out the little table with pictures of Santa's kids.⁸

But with another crack, Santa sent a screaming fungo that no shortstop could have caught straight into Corporal McBottom's temple and that is the last we will hear of him.

General Beeflips pulled the grenade launcher from Corporal Mcbottom's shuddering hands and aimed it.

Santa Claus chuckled, "ho ho ho," and lobbed a fungo into the air. He swung his bat just as General Beeflips pulled the trigger on the grenade launcher.

The fungo rocketed past General Beeflips' ear, leaving a scar that he would brag about in later years. General Beeflips' grenade rocketed past Santa Claus' ear, with no resulting scar, but it shattered his bat into toothpicks.

Now that his bat was in pieces, the goblins charged. Santa Claus threw a fungo at the advancing horde, but it made no difference. Except to Private Montgomery MacPukin, who never saw out of that eye the same way again. But by the time Santa could draw another fungo from his drawer, the goblins were upon him.

Punches were thrown, beards were pulled and more than one goblin fell before the fists of the jolly old elf. But there were just too many goblins. Santa Claus only had two fists and not nearly enough fungoes. Before long, the goblins wrestled Santa Claus to the ground and held him there while General Beeflips marched up to what was left of Santa's desk. He reached down into the wreckage and pressed a button on the intercom. He growled. "The North Pole is ours. Please bring him in."

The goblins sitting atop Santa Claus shuffled nervously as two goblins escorted a hunched over old goblin into the office.

⁸ Santa Barbara, Santa Monica and George.

Grumble Paws shuffled up to General Beeflips and saluted slowly. "Well done General. A jolly invasion. Very jolly."

General Beeflips returned the salute smartly. "And beany sir? Was it beany enough?"

"Oh yes," said Grumble Paws, licking his lips with his thick grey tongue. "It was beany. Undeniably beany."

And then, with a little assistance from the General, Grumble Paws took the seat behind the wreckage of Santa Claus' desk and leaned forward. He chuckled gruffly. "My gentle goblins," he said. "Today we have seen the end of Christmas. From now on there will be only Bean Day. And it will be a day celebrated the world over in a manner most beany. Most beany indeed."

LET US LEAVE GRUMBLE PAWS CHORTLING ABOUT HIS VICTORY over Christmas, and cast our gaze a ways south, where Iggy, Yugo and Sam marched through the snow back towards the North Pole. As you may recall, from where Grumble Paws sat, every direction was south, so you may have to cast your eyes around quite a bit before you can find them. But there they are, just there. No, look a bit further south. There, you have it.

Some ways south of the North Pole, Iggy, Yugo and Sam marched back to the North Pole. The snow was deep and crisp and even. "What are we going to do," asked Iggy. His usual optimism was giving way to despair.

"I have a couple of ideas," said Yugo.

"Was one of them packing extra socks?" asked Sam. "Because that would have been a really good idea."

"Oh Sam, it's not so bad out here. Spring is just around the corner." Iggy had not given up entirely on his natural optimism.

Yugo wrapped his arms tightly around his chest to ward off the cold. "We just need to make it back to the Pole."

No chills were warded off for Sam, who was unable to wrap his arms around his wide chest. "And then what?" he asked. "Those goblins have tanks. Lots and lots of tanks. All we have is a snowmobile and we don't even have that anymore."

Yugo shivered at the mention of his snowmobile. Perhaps it was the cold. But it was probably at the mention of his snowmobile.

“We’ll figure something out, Sam,” said Iggy.

“I have a few ideas,” said Yugo.

“I can’t wait to hear them,” said Sam. In fact, he could wait to hear them. He could wait until long after he arrived at a warm fire, covered in blankets with an elfish coffee⁹ in his hand.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam climbed over a snow drift and saw softly glowing lights a short ways ahead of them. They marched on and soon found themselves in a small refugee camp, made up of a group of tents pitched in a circle around a small bonfire, just south of the North Pole.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam shambled into the little camp. There were elves running back and forth, moving supplies and tending to other wounded elves. Razzlebutton ran past them with a box of red velvet bandages. Chestnuts ran the other way with a box of chestnuts. He brought them to the bonfire in the middle of the camp and began roasting them.

Nutmeg broke through a crowd of huddled elves and ran up to them. She was dressed in a white velvet nurse uniform with red trim and, of course, jingle bells. “I’m so glad to see you guys. I was terribly worried.” She gave Sam a hug, but her short elfish arms barely reached his back.

“Have you heard?” she asked. “The workshop has been turned into some sort of a cannery. There are goblins in there packing beans in tins. It’s awful.” She wrapped a blanket around Sam’s shoulders. There are always blankets in troubled times.

“You wouldn’t have any elfish coffee, would you?” he asked.

Nutmeg shook her head.

“How about an Elflägër?”

Nutmeg shook her head again. “We don’t have anything like that here, Sam.”

Now Sam shook his head. It was all too much. His home had been destroyed. The North Pole was overrun by goblins and now this. No Elflägër. He hung his head and sobbed.

⁹ Elfish coffee is like Irish coffee, but with peppermint flavoured eggnog instead of whiskey. Sam usually substitutes whiskey for the flavoured eggnog when he makes elfish coffee, which makes it more or less indistinguishable from Irish coffee.

A hush fell over the camp as a ragged figure stumbled in. His red jacket was torn and stained. His rosy cheeks were barely visible under the bruises on his face and his long white beard looked as though it had been yanked on a few times.

It was Santa Claus himself. He shuffled into the center of the camp and warmed his hands by the fire. He coughed and then turned to face the elves who all watched him in silence. He coughed again and then he spoke.

It happens every year. There is some sort of a crisis and then Santa Claus makes an announcement. In the end, Iggy, Yugo and Sam always sort things out, but before then there has to be an announcement. It is silly, really. But every year it is the same.

“I’m afraid I have some bad news,” said Santa Claus. “As you know we have always been at peace with the goblins. They had their Bean Day and we had our Christmas. I will grant you that Bean Day was never much of a day. Nobody wants a tin of stringy goblin beans on the best of days and Bean Day is not nearly the best of days. But this day is the worst of days. This is a day which will live in infamy. The goblins have attacked the North Pole and seized our cozy cottages and our toy factories.”

Santa Claus coughed again and continued. “I’m afraid there is nothing we can do. We will have to cancel Christmas.”

There was a gasp from the gathered elves, but now Iggy shook his head. “He says that every year.”

Sam also shook his head. “Obviously we have to cancel Christmas. It’s time to face the facts. I for one welcome our new goblin overlords.”

“Knock it off Sam,” said Iggy. “All we need is a plan. Yugo, do you really have an idea?”

“A couple.” Yugo was always full of ideas. He was the smartest elf at the North Pole. He was quite likely the smartest anything in the entire world.

Sam shook his head again. He had resigned himself to packing beans in cans for the rest of his life and had accepted that. Whatever idea Yugo had was sure to put him in extraordinary danger and he did not particularly care for danger in any of its forms, especially the extraordinary ones. That kind of danger was the worst of all.

“What’s your idea?” asked Iggy.

Yugo stared out into space for a moment and then said, “do you think we can get into the Warehouse of Extremely Dangerous Toys?”

Every once in a while, an elf will design and build a toy that is tremendous fun to play with but which, for one reason or other, is unsafe. It might have tiny parts that small children will swallow or it might have a rocket launcher which shoots actual rockets. Yugo had certainly designed his share. He had a knack for lasers and small explosives. The legal department at the North Pole had declared that many of Yugo’s toys were just too dangerous for Santa Claus to place under the Christmas tree or stuff into stockings. Children could be hurt, but even worse, Santa Claus might be sued. Lawsuits were bad for business. And so, those toys which were found to be unfit to be left under the Christmas tree were stored at the Warehouse of Extremely Dangerous Toys.

Sam started. “What good are those misfit toys?”

“They are extremely dangerous,” said Iggy, cautiously.

“Exactly,” said Yugo. “These are the most dangerous toys ever developed at the North Pole.”

“But they’re just toys,” said Sam. “The goblins have tanks.”

“Yes they do,” said Yugo. “But these are goblin tanks. They’re mostly built with cardboard and spit. They pack a lot of firepower but they can’t take a punch. If you hit them in the right spot, they just fall into pieces.”

Iggy remembered how the snowmobile crumpled a couple of tanks before it was shot down. They did fall into pieces with the right shot. Still, he was skeptical. “Even if they are extremely dangerous, they are just toys.”

Yugo nodded and laid his chin on his fist. “Yes they are. But with a few modifications, they might be even more extremely dangerous than they are now.”

GRUMBLE PAWS LIKED IT AT THE NORTH POLE. He had a great big office, with thick carpet, a view and heat. Sure his desk was little more than a stack of kindling, but he was used to operating out of a hovel built with snow, dirt and sticks but mostly snow. This office on the executive floor of a high rise office tower was luxury beyond belief.

His first order of business was to install a new plaque on the large oak doors that led into his new office:



“This is beany,” Grumble Paws said aloud. He leaned back and put his feet up on his broken desk. This year, Bean Day would be a glorious triumph. Even now, goblins were toiling around the clock in his new canneries, packing beans for all of the children of the world. What joy and beaniness would fill their little hearts when they each awoke to a large can of beans in their bean buckets. With Christmas out of the way, it would surely be the best Bean Day ever.

Some ways south, a small group of elves had other ideas. They crawled through the snow towards the Warehouse of Extremely Dangerous Toys. Iggy crept to the top of the last drift and raised his night vision goggles¹⁰ to his eyes.

The Warehouse of Extremely Dangerous Toys was a low concrete building on the far south edge of the North Pole. There was a snow cone stand nearby, but it was closed for the winter.

A small goblin patrol marched past the Warehouse of Extremely Dangerous Toys. Their hobnailed boots clopped against the peppermint cobblestones of Frostbite Alley. They turned up Candy Cane Way and their clattering footsteps soon faded into the distance.

Iggy slid down the back side of the drift where Yugo and Sam were waiting. “There were some goblins out front, but they’ve moved on. I didn’t see any tanks.”

“Those goblins will be back soon,” said Yugo. “We’ll have to move quickly.”

¹⁰ Night vision goggles sound really cool, but if you live at the North Pole, where winter is 6 months long, you need night vision goggles just to get to the grocery store half of the time.

The three elves climbed to the top of the drift. There were no goblins to be seen. All was calm. All was bright.

Iggy led the charge over the top with Yugo and Sam close behind. They were armed only with toy machine guns that shot foam rubber darts. They scampered across Frostbite Alley and made for the door at the rear of the building.

There was a sign on the door that said:



“Maybe we should turn back,” said Sam.

“Don’t be silly, Sam. They’re just toys, remember?” said Iggy.

“Yeah, but they’re extremely dangerous ones,” said Sam.

Yugo tried the door, but it was locked. “Keep an eye out,” he said. “This is going to take a minute.” He reached into the toolbelt he always wore and pulled out a complicated looking screwdriver. He set to work on the doorknob.

A faint clattering noise broke the silence. It was the sound of hobnailed boots marching on peppermint cobblestones and it was getting closer.

Iggy turned to Yugo. “Better hurry with that lock. The goblins are coming back.”

Yugo shook his head. He holstered his complicated screwdriver and pulled out an even more complicated looking one. It had two handles and spinning parts.

The clattering footsteps drew closer. Sam raised his toy machine gun just as the goblin patrol rounded the corner of the building. He emptied his clip of foam rubber darts at the goblins.

Foam rubber darts are no match for goblins in full field armour, but Sam’s barrage distracted them just long enough for Yugo to finally jimmy the door. It popped open and Iggy, Yugo and Sam popped inside. Sam slammed the door behind them and bolted the lock.

The goblins on the other side pounded on the door, but it would not yield. After a few moments, the pounding stopped.

Iggy smiled. They were safe.

Then the door exploded off of its hinges and flew across the room, barely missing Yugo before it slammed against the opposite wall. A small group of heavily armed and angry looking goblins walked through the smoking doorway. The one in front paused to reload his rocket launcher.

Sam raised his arms and immediately offered his surrender. The first goblin ignored him and raised his rocket launcher. Yugo quickly pulled the most complicated looking gadget yet from his tool belt. It had three handles, dozens of spinning parts and a keypad with a small LED screen. Yugo flipped a switch beside the keyboard and pointed the device at the goblins.

The first goblin pulled the trigger on his rocket launcher.

Iggy and Sam ducked.

The rocket launched with an enormous bang. But it launched backwards, sending the goblins in the rear diving to either side for cover. The first goblin lowered his rocket launcher and turned to look at the heap of goblins stacked in two uneven piles behind him.

Iggy knocked the rocket launcher from his hands and Yugo tackled him to the ground. He tried to fight back, but a goblin without a rocket launcher is just a goblin and he went down without too much trouble. The other goblins were rounded up with even less trouble. They had been stunned by the rocket launch and before long had all been gathered and tied up in a row along the back wall. Iggy and Yugo retrieved the door from across the room and set it back on its hinges.

“What did you do, Yugo?” asked Sam.

Yugo held up the complicated looking gadget. “This is a universal remote control,” he explained. “I switched the rocket launcher to ‘reverse’.”

Iggy gave a low whistle.

Iggy flipped on the light switch and the elves got their first look at the Warehouse of Extremely Dangerous Toys. There were several rows of shelves, all filled with little toy guns, little toy tanks, little toy flame throwers and little toy armoured personnel carriers. There were even a few *Zombie Maniacs*[™] at the back of one of the shelves.

Sam pulled a toy tank from the shelf closest to him. As he turned it over in his hands, a small plastic disc spun out of the spring loaded cannon and bounced off of his cheek. Sam dropped the tank and grabbed his face.

“Ow! Be careful. These toys are extremely dangerous. I almost lost an eye just now.”

Iggy picked the tank up from the floor and it shot another plastic disc that skimmed past his ear. “Wow. These are dangerous toys.”

“Not dangerous enough,” said Yugo. “Plastic discs won’t put a dent in those tanks. We’re going to need more firepower.” He spread his exotic tools on a table in the middle of the room and then rubbed his hands together.

“Let’s get to work,” he said.

IGGY, YUGO AND SAM WORKED THE REST OF THAT NIGHT and most of the following morning. They had assembled a huge collection of battle ready toys. There were toy tanks and toy planes and a bunch of robots that could turn into toy tanks and toy planes. Spring loaded pellet guns were replaced with sonic percussion cannons, laser beams and fuel to air missiles.¹¹

The extremely dangerous toys had become outrageously dangerous toys. None of these modified toys could be safely handled by anyone younger than about 150 years of age. Fortunately, Iggy, Yugo and Sam were all quite a bit older than that.

Just before lunchtime, Iggy, Yugo and Sam led their colourful plastic army of little toy soldiers, tanks and battleships up Candy Cane Way to where it intersected with Santa Claus Lane. This is usually one of the busiest intersections in the world, with music playing and elves bustling to and fro between the Ice Breakers Lounge on the south side and the Gum Drop Shop on the other south side.¹²

¹¹ Also known as a thermobaric weapon, the fuel to air explosive is a nasty piece of work. It uses oxygen from the surrounding air create a powerful high temperature explosion. Since it uses all of the nearby air to generate the explosion, if the blast wave does not finish you off, you will probably suffocate.

¹² When every direction is south, GPS navigation systems are all but useless.

Now, the Gum Drop Shop was just a heap of bricks. There were no Christmas carols playing and no elves bustling. There was only silence, punctuated by the sharp clack clack clack of goblins marching on peppermint cobblestones.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam walked on. “There are sure a lot of them,” said Iggy.

“We have a lot of extremely dangerous toys,” said Yugo.

“Outrageously dangerous toys,” added Sam.

Yugo had a row of assorted remote controls clipped to his tool belt. He pulled a pair free and passed them to Iggy and Sam. “All right, gentlemen, let’s take back Christmas,” he said. “Fire when ready.”

Iggy went first, powering up his remote control and sending fifty miniature plastic tanks rolling up the street. The goblins looked bemused as the little toy battalion rumbled up the street toward them.

Bemusement turned to laughter as the little caravan of tanks rolled by. A couple of goblin soldiers even fell over, holding their sides while they guffawed loudly.

Then Iggy pressed the red button on the right side of his remote control. His tanks stopped and their gun turrets spun and pointed at the goblin ranks. Iggy dropped his thumb and pressed the green button on his remote control again and again.

Little shells blasted out of the tanks’ guns and exploded, sending a shower of tiny metal pellets into the goblins. The goblins fell as one, clutching their knees and ankles in agony.

Iggy pulled back on his joystick and his little tanks dropped their cannons and shuddered as they reloaded. He mashed the red and green buttons again and sent another hail of shot into the goblin host. More goblins fell, clutching their shins and calling for help. Iggy pressed blue, red, blue, red, green, green, green and green. The tanks paused, shook and then they shot even more shot at the goblins.

A goblin in the back pulled out a satellite phone¹³ and started dialing. Unfortunately, the number of the goblin high command was 16 digits long and the third wave of tank fire struck him just below the knee. He dropped the phone onto the cobblestone road and it broke into pieces.

A second goblin gathered up another satellite phone and began dialing. He made a mistake at digit 14 and had to hang up and start over. Finally he

¹³ Cellular phone service at the North Pole is notoriously unreliable.

keyed in all 16 digits correctly. He raised the satellite phone to his ear and got a busy signal.

Iggy's thumbs danced over the remote control as he commanded his tanks to reload. But the goblins who were still standing began to mobilize. It took a minute or two, but they filled their standard issue goblin muskets with gunpowder and tamped it down. There was only one goblin officer still standing and he gave the order to fire.

There was a tremendous bang as dozens of muskets fired at once. Over thirty of Iggy's tanks were shattered into little bits of plastic on the first volley. It took the goblins several moments to reload, and once they did they were able to immobilize most of the remaining tanks.

Iggy pulled his remaining tanks back. Some of them would not respond to his controller and the rest were all in need of repair.

Yugo stepped up and twirled a dial on his remote control. He commanded a group of heavily armoured plastic robots that marched in tight formation towards the goblins. Before the muskets could be reloaded, the toy robots had each raised their right arms. Yugo mashed his green button and silly string sprayed out little nozzles on the wrist of each robot.

Silly string is generally no trouble at all, but this particular version was mixed with a powerful adhesive. Yugo's robots were not very tall and most of the silly string hit the goblins who were already rolling around in the snow clutching their knees and ankles from Iggy's attack. But some of the shots reached into the next tier of goblins and they found themselves tangled up in a bundle of stringy, unyielding blobs with their comrades.

Yugo's robots marched forward, spraying gluey string at whatever goblins were still standing.

The goblins had to reload their old fashioned muskets after every round. They took out a good number of robots every time they fired, but the little toys marched at them relentlessly, squirting glue with every step.

In the end, the goblins had more success batting the robots aside with the butt end of their muskets than they did by shooting bullets out of the business end of them. But by the time they had cleared out the last of the robots, a great number of their colleagues were stuck to the ground or each other.

Now Sam stepped up. He powered up his remote control and pushed the joystick forward. A group of ungainly military walkers that looked a bit like mechanical camels lurched ahead. It was eerily reminiscent of a scene from a

famous science fiction movie as they lumbered down the snowy street towards the goblin side, spitting red laser beams from their snouts.

The goblins packed more gunpowder into their antique muskets and got off another round before Sam's walkers were among them, spattering their laser fire left and right. Some of the goblins tried kicking the toys away, but only learned to their misfortune how terribly dangerous these modified toys were. Many a goblin fell that day with toes blistered by laser fire.

The walkers stomped forward, slowly and steadily, dividing the goblin ranks. They did not need to reload, at least not until their batteries ran down, so marched forward relentlessly through the goblin forces. Goblins rushed up from the rear to pass freshly loaded muskets to those at the front. Each shot tore a single walker to pieces, but Sam controlled so many walkers that the goblins were overwhelmed. Their shins and ankles were peppered with laser fire and finally they threw down their comparatively useless muskets and ran away in retreat.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam's toy army had scattered the goblin forces. Sam powered down his remote control and holstered it onto his belt.

They had broken through the goblins' front line. It was an important victory, but it was a small one. They had a long ways to go and the worst was yet to come.

GENERAL RUFUS P. BEEFLIPS PICKED UP HIS HEAVY SATELLITE PHONE on the third ring. Private Jabber McRib was on the line. He was the fourth goblin to attempt to make a satellite phone call to the General in the wake of the elves' counter offensive. Even satellite service can be a bit spotty at the North Pole.

"What is it," the General barked into the phone. Because he had a cigar between his lips, his answer sounded something like "Whath ish ith?"

At first, Private Jabber McRib did not understand the General's question. He wondered if he might be speaking in some other language, like gnome or troll.

The General barked again, "What is it?" (whath ish ith?)

He said it so loudly this time that the private immediately understood.

“Yes sir. Hail beans sir,” said Private McRib. He saluted uselessly. He was terrified of the General at the best of times, and this was not nearly the best of times. “Sir the elves have launched a counter attack. They’ve broken through our lines and are headed to your position.”

General Beeflips bit down hard on his cigar. “What are you talking about, Private. We had over a hundred goblins on that post.”

Yes I know sir,” said Private McRib. He gulped and continued. “They came at us with some heavy artillery.”

“What are you jabbering about, Private!” The General shouted into his large handset. “They don’t have any more of those fancy snowmobiles do they?”

“No sir,” said Private Jabber McRib. “They didn’t have snowmobiles.”

“Then what was it, private? Was it heavy battery cannons? Do they have cavalry? Was it nerve gas? What was it, Private? How did they breach our lines?”

Private Jabber McRib gulped. “They didn’t have any of that, sir.”

General Beeflips shouted into his satellite phone. “Then what was it, private? What have they got?”

“Toys, sir. They came at us with toys.”

“Toys?” General Beeflips bit through his cigar and accidentally swallowed the end. He coughed and choked for a while, then picked up the phone and shouted some more. “The elves attacked us with toys?”

“Yes, sir,” said Private McRib.

“Toys?” Private McRib felt the stink of the General’s cigar seeped breath through his satellite receiver. He turned away for a moment, took a deep breath and then returned to his phone receiver.

“They were extremely dangerous toys, sir. Private MacGuffin has blisters on all of his toes and Private McJagger has serious flesh wounds in both ankles.”

The General’s yellow face turned beet red and he bellowed into the phone, “I’ve heard enough, Private. You and your men are to destroy every toy you see. I want them broken down into splinters. Do you hear me, Private? Splinters. Every toy at the Pole is splinters. Do your duty, Private.”

Private Jabber McRib gulped. He only had three able goblins left to command. He was going to need some reinforcements if he was to turn those extremely

dangerous toys into splinters. He gulped again and saluted into his phone receiver. "Yes, sir."

THE GOBLINS HAD RENAMED THE BIG OFFICE TOWER that stood right at the North Pole the "Grumble Paws Beaniest Beanly Bean Center." That was where they assembled all of their forces to meet the elfish resistance. Several rows of goblin foot soldiers shuffled nervously in front of dozens of goblin tanks.

Private Lactose MacHine was stationed in the front row, right beside General Beeflips himself. Private MacHine was the first goblin to see the approaching toys. But, before he could shout out a warning to his comrades, Iggy mashed on the green button of his remote control. A group of small action figures leapt into the air and flung spinning ninja stars at the goblins. Private MacHine took one in the knee. It was remarkably painful.

And itchy. Iggy had carefully coated each of the little ninja stars with itching powder earlier that morning.

A second ninja star hit the Private in the privates. He fell to the snowy ground crying and scratching himself helplessly. No more was heard of him in this story.

General Beeflips spun and hollered to his soldiers. "Fire at will, men! Turn those toys into splinters!"

Private Jabber McRib, stationed on the other side of the General, raised his standard goblin issue musket and fired. His bullet took out one of the leaping action figures, but three more leapt into his place, throwing their tiny little ninja stars at them. One of them hit Private McRib in the ribs. It was small but tremendously painful. The Private dropped his musket, grabbed his chest and slumped to his knees.

General Beeflips decided that he might better command his men from somewhere further back. A place without nasty little ninja stars flying around all over the place. He stepped backwards as another Private dropped to the ground. Then he started running backwards.

He reached the tanks in the back row. The goblins who manned the tanks stood in their turrets and saluted as the General approached.

Foamy chunks of spit stuck to the General's moustache. "Stop that foolish saluting and get shooting!" The goblins in the tanks saluted once more and then crouched down inside.

The tanks raised their guns and sent a volley of shells arcing out over the goblin foot soldiers and into the rows of leaping and bounding action figures. The shells exploded and the action figures flew even higher. A few of them were able to lob one last round of ninja stars at the goblin lines. A few more Privates were nicked and jabbed before the action figures fell to the ground and shattered into splinters.

A cheer rose up from the goblin ranks. The goblins reloaded their muskets and took aim at the next wave of toys headed their way.

Yugo pulled a new remote control from his tool belt. He pushed his joystick forward and row after row of sleek black cars squealed around him and raced down the road. These cars were miniature versions of the ones driven by the main character in a popular series of spy movies. When Yugo pressed the red button on his remote control, the headlights flipped open and little machine guns poked out.

Yugo tapped the green button on his remote control and the machine guns rattled noisily. They shot round after round of tiny darts at the goblins. The goblins returned fire, but for every shot they could get off with their muskets, the little cars got off twenty. A few of the spy cars exploded into splinters, but more than a few goblins fell down with needle sharp darts sticking out of their shins and toes.

The tanks in the back row thundered again, splintering even more spy cars. But the first few cars had made it through the goblins' front lines and were bearing down on the tanks, sending streams of darts at their caterpillar tracks.¹⁴ Most of them bounced harmlessly off of the steel treads, but a few lodged between the metal plates.

Yugo tapped out a complicated series of commands on his remote. These can be summarized as $\uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \leftarrow \rightarrow \leftarrow \rightarrow$ **B** **A**.¹⁵ When he completed the sequence,

¹⁴ "Caterpillar tracks" are the name given to the conveyor belt style propulsion system used on most tanks. The caterpillar track was first conceived by an Englishman named Richard Edgeworth in 1770. So far as is known to history, neither Mr. Edgeworth nor any of his family were goblins.

¹⁵ This is the famous "Konami Code." It was first included in a home video game called *Gladius* by one of the game designers in order to provide bonus lives during

the darts embedded in the caterpillar tracks exploded. The tread peeled away from the metal wheels of one of the tanks. It listed slowly to the left, before it finally tumbled uselessly onto its side.

Yugo shook his head. "Goblin construction," he muttered to himself. The other tanks all trained their big guns on the remaining spy cars and fired. Bits of spy car were scattered everywhere. One tank was caught in the crossfire and it was also scattered everywhere.

"That's two tanks down," said Yugo. "Your turn Sam."

Sam unholstered his remote control, spun it in hand and then pressed the joystick forward. Dozens of plastic balls rolled down the road, each of them powered by a furry little mechanical hamster.

The goblins raised their muskets and fired. The first few balls broke into splinters, but that released the hamsters from their balls and they padded ahead, freed from their globular prisons and baring sharp metal teeth as they reached the goblins.

The goblins screamed as the cuddly hamsters bit and tore at their boots. The hamsters were too close to shoot at, though a few goblins tried and some of those lost toes as a result. Most of the goblins stomped frantically on the furry little demons that clawed and snapped at their ankles. Some of the hamsters were splintered beneath the heavy goblin boots, but many more goblins were bitten.

There were only a few goblins still standing and all of them had bleeding feet. Finally, Private "Mac" MacBlackjack called for his fellows to fall back. The goblins beat a hasty retreat, scattering in all directions.

But now the tanks rumbled ahead, crushing the remaining hamsters under their heavy steel caterpillar tracks. The tanks rolled up Santa Claus Lane where Iggy, Yugo and Sam stood alone in the middle of the road.

General Rufus P. Beeflips stood on top of the front tank as it crawled up the road. He pulled out a new even fatter cigar, bit off the end and stuck it between his teeth. "Your little toy army was impressive, elves. But you're all alone now. And as you can see, I've still got all of these tanks."

testing. When the game was released, the designers forgot to remove the Konami Code. It was eventually discovered by clever gamers and now most video games contain the Konami Code or some variation of it.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam looked at each other. The general was right. There were no more toys on the road for them to command. They had all been broken to splinters by the goblin tanks.

General Beeflips lit his cigar and took a long pull. He blew out a stinking cloud of smoke and said, "How about we discuss the terms of your surrender, now?"

NOW, THOSE LAST COUPLE OF PARAGRAPHS were a bit misleading. It is true that General Beeflips had a whole bunch of tanks at his command. And it is also true that there were no more toys *on the road* for Iggy, Yugo and Sam to command.

Because of that, you may have been misled just now into thinking that Iggy, Yugo and Sam had no toys at all to command.

I am sorry that you may have been led astray just now. It was only for dramatic purposes, I assure you.

As it turns out, there were still quite a few outrageously dangerous toys left. It is just that none of them were *on the road*.

And now, Iggy, Yugo and Sam each drew a last remote control from their pockets and started tapping quickly on the buttons.

A BUZZ FILLED THE AIR BEHIND GENERAL BEEFLIPS. He spun around and looked up.

His cigar fell from his mouth and into his tank. A moment later, two choking goblins scrambled around General Beeflips and out of the tank. They coughed and gasped for a moment and then they, too, turned and looked up to see what was buzzing above them.

A squadron of remote control airplanes, helicopters, spaceships and even a couple of balloons approached from the south. In moments they filled the sky, swarming over General Beeflips and his tanks.

“Bombs away,” said Yugo and the elves each mashed on the green buttons on their remote controls.

Small panels opened in the bottom of each of the flying toys. Tiny little balloons dropped from each opening and fell down on the tanks.

General Beeflips snorted. “Water balloons? Is that all you’ve got left, elves?” He shouted at his goblins. “Raise your guns, men. Clear the skies of these ridiculous toys.”

The guns of each tank turned straight up. But before they could fire, the first balloon landed. It exploded with a thunderous crash, blasting a goblin tank into pieces.

General Beeflips’ flabby jaw dropped as balloon after balloon fell onto his tanks. Iggy smiled. It had been delicate work filling up all of the water balloons with nitroglycerin and then carefully placing them into each of the flying toys. But now, when each nitroglycerin balloon landed, it blew up into a glowing orange fireball that tore the shabbily built goblin tanks apart.

The goblins leapt out of their broken tanks, then ran in all directions, covering their heads and trying to avoid the bombs that rained down on them from the sky.

“Whichever side controls the skies wins the war,” said Yugo.

Another wave of explosive balloons fell onto the goblin army. Yugo holstered his remote control and walked up the peppermint cobblestones as bomb after bomb fell from his extremely dangerous toys and shattered the goblin ranks. He was surrounded by orange fire and black smoke as the last balloon of the little toy air force dropped its payload.

It did not matter by that time. All of the tanks had been smashed into splinters and all of the goblin soldiers had fled.

All of the soldiers but one, that is. General Rufus P. Beeflips sat among the wreckage of his tanks, chewing on the end of his extinguished cigar and crying.

The elves walked up to him. Sam stamped out a little fire that was still burning near the General’s boot and said, “How about we discuss the terms of your surrender, now?”

IT TOOK THE REST OF THAT DAY FOR IGGY, YUGO, SAM and the other elves to round up all of the frightened and limping goblins. Then, his head hung low, General Rufus P. Bee flips led his hobbling troops down Frostbite Alley to their little ramshackle village south of the North Pole.

As the last of the goblin soldiers disappeared over the horizon, Santa Claus took Iggy, Yugo and Sam up to his 24th floor office. Grumble Paws was still sitting behind the ruins of Santa's desk, building a castle out of small tins of beans. He looked up to see Santa silently standing in front of him with his arms crossed.

"Oh dear," said Grumble Paws. "This does not look very beany to me."

"Cheer up, Grumble Paws," said Iggy.

"We bring you tidings of great joy," said Yugo.

"Christmas is back on again," said Sam.

"And I'm afraid I'm going to need that desk," said Santa Claus.

Grumble Paws muttered and stepped back from the desk. "No, this is not beany at all."

Santa Claus and Grumble Paws drew up a peace accord on the spot. Grumble Paws promised to keep Christmas in his heart all the year long and not to lead any more invasions. For his part, Santa Claus pledged to keep the outrageously dangerous toys away from the goblins and, in a generous act of diplomacy that was far more beany than Grumble Paws deserved, agreed to celebrate Bean Day every year on January 6.

They shook hands over the remains of Santa's desk and then the security team from the lobby led the grizzled old goblin out of Santa's office and into the elevator lobby. They waved their passcards in front of the call button and then pressed down.

As the elevator closed behind Grumble Paws and he dove out of sight, Sam said, "Ugh. We really have to eat beans?"

"It's a musical fruit," said Iggy.

OF COURSE, CHRISTMAS WAS NOT CANCELLED. The elves had to work pretty hard to restore the toy factories and get all of the toys built and wrapped before Santa Claus left on his big ride on Christmas Eve, but the sleigh and the eight tiny reindeer took off right on schedule.

With their work done, the elves gathered at the *Walrus and Ulu* to celebrate. The place was festooned in red and green for Christmas. Chubby even hung an abandoned goblin musket among the tinsel and other trappings that decorated the bar, to go along with the canoe that swung from the ceiling and the Lego walrus by the door.

The place was crowded and there were no seats to be had. Nobody seemed to mind. A group of elves danced in the back, where Jimmy and the Penguins sang twangy Christmas songs like *Christmas Time on the Bayou* and *Merry Margarita*.¹⁶

Iggy, Yugo and Sam were at their usual table, which stood conveniently between the bar and the men's room. Nutmeg joined them and they ordered another round: chilled glacier water for Iggy, chocolate buttermilk for Yugo and a pint of Chubby's finest Elflägër for Sam. Nutmeg sipped on a hot chocky while she checked her elfPhone for messages and played another round of Candy Cane Crush.¹⁷

"I'm glad that's over," said Iggy. Of course, he was always glad about something. But this time, he was particularly glad. The goblins were gone and Christmas had been saved again.

"Me too," said Yugo. "We used up all of the extremely dangerous toys."

"I hope so," said Sam. "Those toys are far too dangerous. It's a good thing they'll never make it under anyone's Christmas tree."

Iggy raised his glass of glacier water. "Merry Christmas, everyone."

Yugo and Sam raised their glasses, too. It was a merry Christmas after all.

¹⁶ What a pair of great Christmas songs. Seriously.

¹⁷ Candy Cane Crush is a ridiculously addictive video game played by many elves at the North Pole. Nutmeg is very good at it. She was on Level 382 at the time, but she made it all the way to level 412 by Bean Day. Unfortunately, the Konami Code does not work on Candy Cane Crush.

LATER THAT MORNING, IN A HOUSE NOT TOO FAR from yours, little Timmy Phillips unwrapped a colourfully wrapped package that revealed a toy remote controlled helicopter. “Explosive Bombing Action!” read the bright red type on the box.

Timmy tore open the box and pulled out his new helicopter. It gleamed an efficient military gray. He packed some fat balloons into the helicopter’s payload, tucked it under his arm and shouted to his parents that he was going outside to try it out

No elves were harmed in the writing of this story.

The goblins were not quite so lucky. On that side, there were blisters, flesh wounds and concussions aplenty.

But then, they are only goblins.

No elves were harmed in the writing of this story.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam Will Return In:

A Few Good Elves

or

Four Weddings and an Elf Picnic

or

The Desolation of Sam

or

*Iggy, Yugo and Sam Save Christmas For What Must be the
38th Time Now*

or

Something Else Entirely



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