

DIED HARD

AN HOMAGE¹

¹ It's not stealing if it is an homage.

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
Iggy, Yugo and Sam Explain Everything
Died Hard

In which Iggy holds on tight,
Yugo has an idea, and
Sam cuts his feet something fierce.

And in which Iggy, Yugo and Sam each save Christmas.

I'm sorry, but this one gets a little rough. Because it gets a little rough, this story has been rated:



The story concerns a violent hostage incident that occurs at Christmas. There is quite a bit of shooting and, I am afraid to say it, rather a large number of explosions. While these are generally denoted with a distracting cartoon symbol, they are nonetheless real explosions. colourful designs to distract from the violence which is taking place.

In addition, to make matters worse, you will also find:

- A darn good thumping,
- Quite a bit of broken glass,
- A pair of badly cut feet,
- A painful fall down some stairs, and
- A punch in the jaw.

Sorry about all that. Merry Christmas.

“Christmas, Christmas time is here,
Time for joy – No! Time for fear!”

- Samantha Crain, *BloodNog*

“Come on, it’s Christmas, the North Pole, who you gonna call?”

- The 12th Doctor, *Last Christmas*

“Jingle bell, straight to hell,
Yes my friends, you’re on the naughty list again!”

Rock Candy, *Don’t Stop the Santa Man*




**THERE ARE TWO TYPES
OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD**

**THOSE WHO THINK DIE HARD IS A
CHRISTMAS MOVIE AND THOSE WHO ARE WRONG**

A Tale of 'Citement and 'Ventures

DIEd HARD

OMEWHERE, THE SUN SET AS A JUMBO JET TOUCHED DOWN, its tires greeting the runway with a puff of smoke. The airplane braked hard and rolled to a stop. A perfect landing.

Somewhere, the sun set and a plane landed. It does not really matter where. It did not happen at the North Pole. The sun never sets at the North Pole in December.

There is no airfield at the North Pole to view the sunset, either. No one ever thought to build one. There are, after all, only two things that can fly at the North Pole, and neither one of them should be able to.

The first is a sleigh, pulled by eight tiny reindeer and piloted by Santa Claus himself. Now, it is more correct to say that it is the reindeer and not the sleigh that does the actual flying, but reindeer have no more business flying than a sleigh does. And reindeer have no more need for a runway than a sleigh might. If a sleigh could fly, which it can not.

The second thing at the North Pole that should never be able fly is a snowmobile. At the same time that an airplane was gliding before a bronze sky to a perfect landing somewhere else, this snowmobile sped across a snow covered road towards a glass covered skyscraper.

This snowmobile is different than other snowmobiles you may have seen, perhaps on your television or at a used snowmobile lot. None of those snowmobiles have a heated interior cabin. They can't travel at the speed of sound or dive deep into the ocean. And none of those snowmobiles can fly.

Now, this particular snowmobile was not flying, although it could with the flip of a yellow switch or the turn of a blue dial. No, this snowmobile is dashing through the snow, because sometimes it does the sort of thing every other snowmobile can do.

A peculiar snowmobile usually has peculiar passengers, and this peculiar snowmobile is no exception to that peculiar rule. There were three of them in there and all of them elves. At the North Pole at Christmas time, it is more common than you think to see elves in a snowmobile.

Yugo drove the snowmobile, which was only right since he had built it. He was a stocky elf, with nimble hands and a thick black moustache. Iggy sat beside him in the passenger seat. Iggy was slim and tall, for an elf, which is to say he was not particularly tall at all. He had a pointed nose and pointed ears and sharp black hair that seemed to point in all directions. In the back sat Sam. Sam was a rotund elf, whose round face was framed by a mess of curly brown hair. He was usually in a bad mood. On this Christmas evening, as the snowmobile raced onward, his mood was darker than usual.

It did not help matters when Yugo slowed down to let an indecision² of puffins waddle slowly across the street in front of them.

"Hurry up, Yugo," said Sam. "We're going to be late."

Iggy looked at his watch. It had candy canes for hands. "We'll be there soon. What's the big rush?"

"I've got Nutmeg troubles," he said, shaking his head. Nutmeg was Sam's occasional girlfriend. On this particular occasion, which happened to be Christmas night, she was still his girlfriend, but he never knew where he stood from one occasion to the next. "She's in charge of organizing the big party this year. If I don't show up on time, I'm in for it."

Iggy nodded. Sam was always having Nutmeg troubles. It had been even worse over the last six months. Nutmeg had taken a promotion and moved into a big corner office in Santa Claus' office tower at the North Pole. She had

² The collective noun for a group of puffins is an "indecision". Group names for birds are all like that. The true love in the *Twelve Days of Christmas* gave a covey of partridges, a dule of turtledoves, a brood of French hens, an unkindness of calling birds, a wedge of swans and a gaggle of geese.

wanted Sam to take a job as her assistant and work in the next office, but he had declined. He had told her he liked working in the toy factory.

That was not entirely true. He did not really like working in the toy factory very much at all. But he liked the idea of working in an office as Nutmeg's assistant even less.

Sam looked out the window. "Let's just get there on time. Once this party is a big success, Nutmeg will see that she doesn't need an assistant."

A speaker on the snowmobile's dashboard crackled and a voice said, "approaching the Santa Claus Tower in three minutes."

"Thanks, Argyle," said Yugo.

"Who's Argyle?" asked Iggy.

Yugo turned to him and grinned. "I've made a few modifications to the snowmobile," he said. Making modifications to the snowmobile was Yugo's hobby. There were too many modifications to the snowmobile to count.³ Over the years he had installed radar detectors and satellite radios and even a waffle maker.

"You made a modification named Argyle?"

"Argyle is the name of the new autopilot system. Self-driving is the very latest thing in snowmobile technology. I just tell Argyle where I want to go and he does the rest. I can even text while I drive." As if to prove his point, Yugo pulled out his phone and texted Iggy from the driver's seat.

"What sort of a name is Argyle?" said Sam. "It sounds like a kind of socks."

"I think it's cool," said Iggy.

"Thank you, sir," said Argyle.

"It wasn't my decision," said Yugo. "Argyle picked his own name. He has a mind of his own."

"The mind of his own seems to have a thing for socks," said Sam.

The snowmobile pulled up in front of a tall building. This was the Santa Claus Tower, the head office of all of Santa Claus' worldwide operations. A gleaming tower of glass and steel that rose out of the snow right at the North Pole. It had been a landmark for as long as Iggy, Yugo and Sam could remember and

³ This is an example of hyperbole or exaggeration. It is possible to count all of the modifications to the snowmobile, provided that you can count as high as 16, 304.

that was a long time indeed. Elves are so long lived that they buy calendars by the decade, not the year.

But with his expanding worldwide operations, Santa Claus had determined to add another six floors to the top of his eponymous⁴ building. And so he did. He maintained his luxurious office on the 24th floor, but now there were six floors above that, all in a varying state of completion. On some of the floors, interior walls had been installed, along with a lot of glass partitions. On others, for no apparent reason, there were a large number of empty metal barrels or chains hanging from the ceiling.

Yugo looked up from his phone. “What’s the forecast, Argyle?”

“Dark with a one hundred percent chance of snow,” replied Argyle. The weather forecast in December at the North Pole never changed.

“Better take us into the underground parking garage, then,” said Yugo. The snowmobile’s big engines rumbled and it rolled gently down the concrete ramp that led under the building. Argyle guided the snowmobile precisely into a stall marked with a sign:



The engine shut down and doors on either side of the snowmobile opened on their smooth hydraulics.

“Thanks, Argyle,” said Yugo. “Keep an eye on the snowmobile. We’ll let you know if we need you.”

“Enjoy the party, sir,” said Argyle. “And Master Sam, I’m sure that when Miss Nutmeg sees you, she’ll run right into your arms and you’ll live happily ever after.”

⁴ That’s a heck of a word isn’t it? It describes a thing that is named after another thing, usually a person. Who knew there was a word that described that very thing. But there is. It is “eponymous.”

Sam raised an eyebrow. “You’re all right, Argyle.”

IGGY, YUGO AND SAM WALKED THROUGH THE LOBBY of the Santa Claus Tower and stopped at the security desk. An elf in a grey uniform pointed to the elevators. “Everyone is at the party on the new 25th floor. Take the express elevator.”

Every year on Christmas night, Santa Claus hosts a party to celebrate his worldwide journey, the trip he makes each Christmas Eve to deliver presents to all of the children on his Nice List. There are millions of names on that list. Iggy has seen it, and he would tell you that it is a ponderous list indeed. The 25th floor had only just been completed, so that was where this year’s party was to be held. Iggy wondered about the wisdom of hosting a party on a floor with brand new carpets, but he was just an elf, so his wonderings did not really figure into things.

The elevator doors opened onto a big room decorated in red and green with Christmas trees lining each wall. Iggy, Yugo and Sam stepped into the room as a string quartet played *Last Christmas*.

Sam sighed. Last Christmas he had given Nutmeg his heart. And now, she had taken up a new job and thrown it away. He scooped a handful of canapés from the tray of a passing waiter and gobbled them up as they made their way through the crowd of elves, all of whom were making rather merry. One elf stumbled into Iggy, then kissed him on the cheek and shouted “merry Christmas!” Iggy wiped his cheek and smiled.

Sam popped another canapé into his mouth and swiveled his head left and right, looking for Nutmeg. “We’re too late,” he muttered.

“It’s never too late,” said Iggy. He meant it, too. Iggy was eternally optimistic and he believed that everything would always work out for the best. If you asked Iggy if a glass was half empty or half full, he would tell you that it was completely full, even if half of it was only filled with air.

“Iggy’s right,” said Yugo and pointed to his watch. There was no time displayed. “If we head to the south side of the room, we’ll be early.”⁵

⁵ People who live at the North Pole do this all the time. Since all time zones converge at the North Pole, people sitting in the very same room, or even at the very same table, may be in three or four or more time zones. It is said that people at the North Pole are always early and always late.

Sam looked around. Every direction was south. “Which south side do you mean?”⁶

“Nutmeg is probably in her office. Follow me,” said Iggy. He led Yugo and Sam south, then turned a corner and kept walking south. At the end of the hall they turned south again and finally reached an open door on the south wall with gleaming brass plaque on it that said:



They walked in and looked around. “This is a really big office,” said Iggy.

“It even has its own bathroom,” said Yugo.

“That’s not the best part,” said Sam. He peeled off his pointy toed shoes and tugged off his graying socks. Then he pressed his feet down onto the carpet. “You guys have to try this.”

“What are you doing?” asked Iggy.

“Making fists with my toes. Some guy I met on an airplane told me to do this whenever I’m walking on a really good carpet.”

Yugo stared at Sam, who seemed to be in heaven. “When were you on an airplane?”

Sam closed his eyes as his toes curled into Nutmeg’s carpet. “I’ve been places.”

Yugo looked at Iggy who looked at Yugo who looked back at Iggy. The only places Sam ever went were to the kitchen to make himself a sandwich and then to the washroom and then back to the kitchen when it was time for a new sandwich.

Sam stood up, pulled off his red velvet jacket and walked around in his undershirt, digging his toes into the broadloom. “Seriously guys, this is heaven.”

Cough.

Somebody had coughed. Iggy, Yugo and Sam looked up from Sam’s toes. Nutmeg stood in the doorway, her round face framed by her curly brown hair. She crossed her arms. “I can see you’re making yourself at home,” she said.

⁶ While Sam’s comment makes no sense anywhere else in the world, at the North Pole it is a perfectly proper inquiry. From the perspective of anyone situated precisely at the North Pole, every direction is south. This makes GPS navigational systems rather useless at the North Pole.

Sam unclenched his toes. “Hey Nutmeg,” he said, trying to act nonchalant. He came off as completely chalant.

Iggy winced.

“I’m glad you finally made it,” said Nutmeg. Her tone suggested that she was far from glad.

“We’re exactly on time,” said Sam. “Just ask Yugo.”

Yugo began to explain the business about the time zones, but Nutmeg stared at him frostily. Frosty things are supposed to bring cheer at Christmas time, but this stare just felt cold, so Yugo stopped his explanation right before the part about Einstein and relativity.

“You know this party meant a lot to me,” said Nutmeg.

Sam lowered his head and gripped the carpet a little tighter with his toes.

“But I’m glad you’re finally here.” Nutmeg walked over to Sam and kissed him on the cheek.

Iggy looked back at Yugo who looked back at Iggy. You never can tell with elves, Iggy’s look said. Especially girl elves, said Yugo’s look. They nodded to each other.

“You wait here,” said Nutmeg. “I have to go give a speech now. I’ll be right back.” She skipped out of the office and closed the door behind her.

Sam looked up at Iggy, his face red. Iggy looked back at Sam, then over to Yugo, who nodded and looked at Sam then looked at Iggy. It was not perfect, but things were going about as well as Argyle could have hoped.



HINGS WERE NOT GOING WELL AT ALL.

Twenty five stories below them, a cube van wheeled up in front of the Santa Claus Tower and then pulled into the underground parking garage. It drove past the snowmobile, but Argyle did not pay any attention to it. He was chilling inside his control box and listening to *Merry Margarita*.⁷ He did not notice as the van pulled up to the parking lot elevators and a group of very

⁷ This is a great Christmas song. You should go listen to it [now](#) and come back. We’ll wait.

unsavoury looking elves stepped out. A single glance told you that every one of the group had a spot on the naughty list.

But Argyle did not give them a single glance. He just skipped ahead to the next carol on Yugo's playlist. "Not another version of Last Christmas," Argyle thought and he skipped ahead again. In the end, he skipped through three more versions of Last Christmas before he came upon *Baby Rudolph*, which was pretty catchy, and he settled in to listen to that on a loop for a while.

Things were rather less jolly in the lobby when the six unsavoury elves arrived at the security desk. The elf in the gray jacket at the security desk did not look up. He pointed towards the express elevator with his pen and said "twenty fifth floor."

The unsavoury group muttered to each other, confused. The plan had been to kill the security guard and then take his place. They had not expected to be waved in like invited guests, which they most assuredly were not.

A brief whispered conversation followed. One of the unsavoury characters was supposed to replace the dead security guard and had even brought along his own gray jacket for that purpose. Now his role in the plot seemed entirely unnecessary. But, there was nothing else for him to do, so they decided to give the pen waving security guard a darn good thumping instead.

Which is what they did.

Unsavoury character number six pulled on his own gray jacket and assumed his spot behind the security desk, in place of the well thumped security guard who had been bundled up with duct tape and stuffed behind one of the Christmas trees lining the lobby. Unsavoury character numbers one through five made their way to the express elevator.

The most unsavoury character of the bunch was a short fellow with a neatly trimmed beard named Hans Booger. He looked a bit like Professor Snape from the Harry Potter movies, but with better hair and, as mentioned, a neatly trimmed beard. He was dressed in a perfectly pressed three piece crushed velvet red suit with a silk green tie. Hans could talk about industrialization and men's fashion all day long. Even bad elves have a certain sense of style.

The express elevator arrived at the twenty fifth floor. Hans and the other four unsavoury characters slipped into the party entirely unnoticed, except for the elf who planted a fat kiss on Hans' cheek and wished him a merry Christmas.

Hans thought about it for a moment and then decided not to kill him. He considered it one of the benefits of a classical education.

Unsavory characters four and five worked their way down the south hall (which is to say, the other south hall from the one we recently travelled down) and slipped into an office on the south side of the floor. Granted, this is getting to be a bit complicated, but this south stairwell was on the other south side of the floor. Once inside, unsavory character number four logged into the desktop computer while unsavory character number five beat on the computer with a bat.

Between them, they were able to shut down the telephone and wi-fi connections. Across the floor, on the south side of the building (the other south side – do try to keep up), Yugo was suddenly unable to play Salami Smash on his phone. He flipped through his menu and saw that Argyle was offline. He shook his head and stuffed his phone back into his pocket.

On the other side of the floor, which is to say, the south side, Hans and the rest of his unsavory characters kicked over the punch bowl and made an announcement.

Hans announced that they were a group of especially unsavory characters and that they had gym bags full of guns and bombs and grenades and assorted other ordnance. Then they shot a few rounds into the ceiling tiles just to prove their point.

It goes without saying, though it will be said here nonetheless, that the point was taken. All of the partygoers huddled at one side of the room while Hans and his unsavory company glared at them and discharged the occasional round into the ceiling. Nutmeg cringed with every shot. Every one of those ceiling tiles had cost a pile.

Hans Booger pulled out a thin black notebook, flipped to a page in the middle and then asked to speak to Mr. S. Claus.

Now, there is no mistaking Mr. S. Claus in any room he might happen to be in. He is the fellow with the broad face and little round belly. Chubby and plump. Beard white as snow. Eyes (twinkly), dimples (merry), cheeks (like roses), and nose (like a cherry). In all respects, his appearance is entirely unique and unforgettable.

He was also the host of this party and he stood in the middle of the crowd when Hans Booger looked about for him. A number of elves tried to shield him from Booger's glare, but there is no mistaking Santa Claus (or Mr. S Claus for that matter). He pushed those elves aside, stepped forward and said, "Hans Booger. Why are you treating my friends so shamefully?"

Hans blinked.

He never expected Santa Claus to recognize him. He was just a bad little elf from the right side of town who went wrong. He should have known that Santa Claus recognizes everybody. And he knows which list they are on.

Hans Booger was definitely on the Naughty List.

Hans recognized Santa Claus, but then, how could he not? Santa Claus is the most famous person on the planet (and a few other planets besides). Hans nodded at unsavoury characters two through four and they marched up to Santa Claus and dragged him down the south hall. Hans looked out over the shocked party goers and said, "pardon for the interruption."

Hans, along with unsavoury characters two through four, accompanied Santa Claus into the closest boardroom. They pushed Santa down into a chair and then Hans stared into those wondrous twinkling eyes.

Hans blinked, turned away and shook his head. He pulled some sunglasses from his pocket, put them on and then dared to look at Santa Claus.

It was only a little more comfortable. Those twinkling eyes are something else.

"We need the code keys," said Hans.

"And which code keys would those be?" replied Santa Claus, eyes twinkling and dimples, merry

"The code keys for the vault," said Hans.

Santa Claus leaned back in his chair and laughed. "Ho ho ho." He ho ho hoed for quite a while, caught his breath, ho ho hoed some more and then asked Hans, with wheezing breath, why he needed the code keys so badly.

Of course, Santa Claus knew exactly what Hans was after. He was just stalling for time until Iggy, Yugo and Sam could get it together and save Christmas like they usually did.

There was no sign of any particular Christmas saving elves rushing to the rescue, however.

Santa Claus held his ground. It is a little understood fact that Santa Claus through his various holding companies controlled a number of toy patents and licensing agreements which collectively paid the Santa Claus Corporation, LLC, many billions of dollars each year. Granted, Santa Claus gives away millions of toys each year, but that was really just a loss leader. The resulting royalties numbered in the billions. In a good year, maybe even a trillion. Once you get into the trillions of dollars, you are talking about some real money. Santa

Claus is not only the most generous man in the world, he is also one of its richest.

And this was what Hans Booger and his five unsavoury companions were after. The patents and licensing agreements that sent billions of dollars (and occasionally a trillion) to the North Pole every year. If they could get their hands on those papers, they would be the richest unsavoury elves in the world.

Santa Claus looked Hans Booger in the eye, neither of which were twinkling and laughed.

“Ho ho ho.”

Hans Booger cringed at Santa’s laugh and said “listen old man, if you don’t tell us the key codes it’s curtains for you.”

Santa Claus just shook his head, ho ho hoed a bit more, then twinkled his eyes and said, “you’ll just have to give me those curtains then.”

And they did.



WHILE THIS UNFORTUNATE BUSINESS WAS GOING ON, Iggy, Yugo and Sam were still in Nutmeg’s office, watching with ever increasing fascination as Sam gripped the thick pile of Nutmeg’s carpet with his toes.

When Hans announced his arrival with a hail of gunfire into the ceiling, Iggy, Yugo and Sam opened the door and looked down the south hall where they could see that Hans had arrived with bad intentions.

“We have to do something,” said Iggy.

Yugo made his way to the door, opened it a crack and peered outside. “What do you have in mind?”

Sam looked at Yugo and then at Iggy.

“I don’t know. Something,” said Iggy.

Yugo turned away from the crack in the door and looked at Sam. Sam nodded and then looked over to Iggy. Iggy nodded and then turned to Yugo, who nodded. Yugo looked to Sam, who nodded and then looked to Iggy, who nodded and then looked at Yugo.

This looking and nodding business went on for rather a while, until Iggy nodded, then turned to Yugo, who also nodded, and then said, “if we pull one of the fire alarms, it will dispatch the fire department.”

It was not much of a plan, but it was better than just nodding to each other. The elves slipped out into the hall, but the way to the fire alarm was blocked by a couple of unsavoury characters.

“Up the stairs,” whispered Yugo. The elves slipped into the south stairwell.

Meanwhile, two of Hans Booger’s unsavoury companions had made their way into the other south stairwell. They carried rolls of cable and a bag of tools. They also carried a whole lot of plastic explosives.

But all of that was going on in the other south stairwell.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam stepped out onto the new 26th floor. It was still under construction, so there were no walls and carpeting in place like on the lower floors, only bare concrete and a few unfinished partitioning walls. There was a newly installed red fire alarm box near the stair door and Yugo pulled on it triumphantly.

A bell rang on the 26th floor. Iggy and Sam exchanged high fives and then walked over to the window to wait for a convoy of emergency vehicles to arrive.

And they waited.

And then they waited a little more.

“This plan does not seem to be working out that well,” said Sam.

Yugo looked at the alarm and slapped his forehead with his palm. “Of course it didn’t work. All of the communications in the building have been knocked out. That includes the emergency communications.”

There was a noise from the south stairwell.

“Uh oh,” said Iggy. “I think we’ve got company.”

“We’re going to need another plan,” said Sam.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam scrambled behind a stack of drywall as a unsavoury looking blonde elf stepped into the room. He was dressed in a gray sweatshirt and carried a black bag over his shoulder. He also carried a machine gun.

“Hello,” he said. “Is there anybody up here? Come on out. I promise I won’t hurt you.”

“Do you think we should go out?” asked Iggy.

“He’s got a machine gun,” said Yugo.

“He did promise not to hurt us,” said Sam.

“Never believe a promise made by a man with a machine gun,” said Yugo. “I read that in a book somewhere.”⁸

Suddenly the air rang out with the sound of machine gun fire. Sam scrambled to get under the other two elves and out of the line of fire.

“Hey!” shouted Iggy. “Stop shoving!”

The blond haired elf turned and walked purposefully towards them. The purpose of this walk was not a noble purpose by any means. The purpose of this walk was to find some elves and shoot them up.

“He’s coming this way,” whispered Yugo. Sam squirmed to get even further under the other two.

“Did your book say anything about how to deal with a man with a machine gun?” asked Iggy.

“Yes,” said Yugo. “It recommended using a machine gun of your own.”

“We don’t have one of those.”

“Then we better get one,” said Yugo. He shouted, “Geronimo!” and he leapt out from behind the drywall. Iggy shrugged and leapt out behind him. Sam looked around for other cover.

The thing about people with machine guns is that they never expect to be jumped by an unarmed elf, let alone two of them. Iggy and Yugo both landed on the blond elf’s back and held on. He spun around, shooting his machine gun in all directions.

A few bullets stabbed into the drywall near Sam, who now realized that the safest place to be around an elf with a machine gun is clinging tightly to his back.

As the blond elf struggled to shake Iggy and Yugo from his back, he did not notice the open stairwell door. At least, he did not notice it until he after had stepped through it and the three of them tumbled down the concrete stairs. Iggy and Yugo, being the lightest of the three, did most of their tumbling on top of the blond elf, who reached the bottom of the stairs in a twisted heap.

⁸ Yugo read it in the bestselling self-help book, *Promises and Machine Guns*, by Dr. Bruno Heffingerger. Ironically, Dr. Heffingerger failed to follow his own best-selling advice and perished in a hail of machine gun fire after the shooter had promised him his gun was not loaded.

Iggy and Yugo stood up slowly. The blond elf did not move. Yugo looked at him closely. “He’s out cold.”

The shadow of another stout figure appeared in the doorway. It was Sam, who was always ready to lend a hand once a crisis had passed.

“Do you guys need a hand?” he asked.

DOWN ON THE TWENTIETH FLOOR, Hans had his hands full of problems. Santa Claus refused to reveal the key codes, no matter how tightly they bound him up in the office curtains. And now Rudy had disappeared. It was just like Rudy, to disappear in the middle of a job. Hans wondered, and not for the first time, whether he should not start associating himself with a more savoury class of people.

If Santa Claus would not give up the key codes, then Hans and his current unsavoury associates would just have to figure them out. Hans had just the man for the job; an unsavoury fellow named Theo. Theo had connected a laptop computer to the key pad at the vault and had already worked out the first of the key codes.

“Excellent,” said Hans. “Let’s collect the papers and get out of here.”

Theo cleared his throat. “There are six more key codes we need before the vault will open.”

Hans slapped Theo a few times and sneered, “Just get on with it.” Then he turned and looked out the window. “There is something going on I don’t like.”

At that moment, the elevator on the 25th floor pinged and then its doors slowly opened. The unconscious Rudy was propped up inside, wearing a green elf hat. Someone had written on his gray sweatshirt in a childish scrawl:

Now We Have a Machine Gun

Ho Ho Ho

Hans screamed in fury and slapped Theo a couple of more times. Then he realized that slapping Theo was only keeping him from unlocking the vault, so he decided to slap Rudy a few times instead. Rudy was unconscious anyway, so he never noticed that now he had a matching set of black eyes.

Hans barked at two of his other unsavoury companions. “Get up there and sort this out. I don’t want any uppity elves saving Christmas on my watch.”

The two unsavoury companions pulled out their own machine guns. “Let’s go elf hunting.”

“‘**N**OW WE HAVE A MACHINE GUN?’ I’m not sure that was a good idea, Sam,” said Iggy.

Sam just shrugged and then pulled back the chamber of his new machine gun. Iggy and Yugo both ducked as he accidentally shot off about 50 rounds.

Sam eventually got the machine gun under control and stopped shooting. He caught his breath and said, “locked and loaded. Let’s roll.”

Yugo shook his head. “Everyone in the building knows that we have a machine gun now.”

Sam accidentally shot off another 30 rounds. “Sorry, guys,” he said.

“I have an idea,” said Yugo.

“What’s your idea?” asked Iggy.

“We can probably get a phone signal from the roof. If we can get up there, we can call for help.”

“But we have a machine gun,” said Sam. “We don’t need any help.”

Iggy and Yugo both stared at him. Sam sighed and slung his machine gun over his shoulder. “Fine then. Let’s go to the roof.”

The elves went into the south stairwell and climbed to the roof of the building. There were plans to install a rooftop patio there to take advantage of future global warming,⁹ but for now the roof was just bare concrete with a light dusting of snow.

⁹ The highest temperature ever recorded at the North Pole is 13° Celsius, which is actually patio weather, if you are an elf. It will be quite a while before global warming makes a rooftop patio comfortable for anyone who is not an elf.

Yugo pulled out his cell phone. It was one of his own design, with features that the Apple Corporation would not even think of for another 50 years. He punched in the number for the NPPD.¹⁰

Yugo stared at his phone with a puzzled expression on his face. “Still no signal,” he said. “Maybe I can get some help if I route the call through Argyle.” Yugo looked up and smiled. “It’s ringing.”

The voice of Argyle the snowmobile came on the line. “How can I help you sir?” Sam grabbed the phone out of Yugo’s hands. “Argyle, old buddy, a bunch of terrorists have seized control of the building. Call the cops. Call the fire department. Call the national guard!”

“There is no national guard at the North Pole, sir,” said Argyle.

“Just make the call, Argyle,” yelled Sam.

“As you wish.” There was a series of clicks and a buzz and then the phone rang again.

“North Pole Police Emergency.”

Sam jabbered into the phone. “Have we ever got an emergency for you. Terrorists have taken control of the North Pole Tower. There are dozens of elves held hostage. We need the police and lots of them. And the national guard.”

“Sir, there is no national guard at the North Pole.”

“Just send everything you’ve got! This is an emergency.”

“Sir, Christmas is not a time for tricks and japes.”

Sam yelled at the phone. “This isn’t a trick!”

“Or a jape,” added Iggy.

“Sir, this line is reserved for emergencies only. Nobody would ever try and take over the Santa Claus Tower. Please get off the line.”

“I’ll show you an emergency,” Sam muttered. He set the phone on the ground and shot another 50 rounds into the air from his machine gun. Several seconds later, the bullets came back down and clattered onto the rooftop around them. “How’s that for an emergency?”

¹⁰ North Pole Police Department. There was once a television series called NPPD Blue, but it never found an audience south of the Arctic Circle and was cancelled after only one season.

“We’ll send someone around,” said the operator.

“That’s a little more like it.” Sam blew the smoke from the nozzle of his machine gun and said, “there’s just one problem.”

What’s that?” asked Iggy.

“We’re out of bullets.”

ZERO BULLETS WAS EXACTLY THE WRONG NUMBER of bullets that the elves needed at that moment. One hundred bullets might have been an adequate supply, but zero bullets was profoundly less than that.

The reason the elves needed more than zero bullets was marching up the south stairwell towards the future roof top patio. Hans and his unsavoury gang realized where the elves were the minute Sam emptied his clip and even now two of them had reached the roof, intent on emptying some clips of their own.



. A series of shots rang out and considerably more than zero bullets flew over the roof top patio. Iggy, Yugo and Sam ran for cover as clouds of dust and snow burst from the ground at their feet.

“Outamyway!” yelled Sam, as he ran past Iggy and Yugo. Sam was surprisingly quick on his feet when he was being shot at. The elves scampered across the roof top until they reached the railing at the edge. They slid to a stop and looked down. In the distance they saw a single police car making its way towards them.

“One police car?” said Sam. “I asked for the national guard!”

“There is no national guard at the North Pole,” said Iggy.

“We can’t go this way,” said Yugo looking down over the edge. A few more shots cracked in the distance and several more than zero bullets buzzed over their heads. They turned and ran along the railing until they reached the south corner of the building, then turned and headed south.

“They are blocking the stairwells,” said Iggy.

“We’ll have to take the elevator down then,” said Yugo. They ran to the unfinished elevator lobby. There was a black opening where the elevator doors were supposed to be.

Sam stuck his head through the opening and looked down. It was a black and empty elevator shaft lit only by the open doorways on each floor all the way down to the bottom. “I don’t think the elevators come up to this floor yet.”

A few more bullets stabbed into the concrete wall beside them.

“We’re going to have to jump,” said Iggy.

“Are you crazy,” said Sam.

“We just have to reach one of the openings to the lower floors,” said Yugo. He pulled Sam’s machine gun from his shoulder and quickly removed the strap. He extended it as far as it could go and wedged one end into the hole where the call buttons were to be installed. He grabbed the other end of the strap and lowered himself down into the shaft.

Iggy and Sam followed right behind him. Yugo rappelled down the elevator wall until he reached the next floor down and then swung in. Iggy did likewise, but just as Sam was about to swing to safety, the strap came free from its mooring.

Iggy screamed. “Sam!”

Sam fell past the opening the way a feather would not. At the last moment he flung out his arm and grabbed the bottom lip of the opening with his right hand and jerked to a sudden and painful stop.

Iggy and Yugo ran over to the edge and helped Sam back up. The three of them sat back on the floor beside the opening and panted heavily.

“I can’t believe they only sent one police car,” said Iggy.

“They don’t believe there is a problem,” said Yugo.

“That was the least helpful emergency operator I’ve ever spoken to,” said Sam.

Iggy blinked. “How many times have you spoken to emergency operators?”

“I’ve been places,” said Sam.

“We need to show them that we’ve got a real problem here,” said Yugo.

“How can we do that?” said Sam. “Now that we are off the roof we can’t make a call.”

Yugo looked around the empty concrete room. The walls were still unfinished and uninstalled doors and appliances were stacked against the windows. "Follow me," he said.

The elves followed Yugo over to the stack of boxes. He looked through a couple and then smiled. "This will do." He reached into the box. "Iggy, open that window."

Iggy went over to the nearest window and opened it. He looked out. Far below them, a single elf police officer walked around his police car, then climbed back in and turned off the flashing red and blue lights.

Yugo grunted as he lifted something out of the box and shuffled to the window. Sam helped him push the heavy object out the window. "That should get their attention."

It is not every Christmas that a toilet is thrown from a 30th story window and lands with a porcelain explosion on the hood of a police car. But that was exactly what happened this Christmas. The police car backed up quickly, its lights and sirens flashing and spraying broken bits of toilet all around.

"Welcome to the party, pal," Sam shouted at the retreating police car.

"I think he just left the party," said Iggy.

Sam yelled out the window, "come back to the party, pal!"

There was a ping from inside the bag which Sam still carried over his shoulder.

"What was that?" asked Iggy.

"It was a ping," said Yugo. "From inside that bag."

"What's in that bag anyway?" asked Iggy.

Sam shrugged and pulled the bag from his shoulder. He pulled open the zipper and looked inside. He gave a low whistle.

The bag was filled with bricks of plastic explosives, electronic detonators and a walkie talkie, which even then went "ping" once more.

Iggy retrieved the walkie talkie and pressed the orange button on the side. "Hello?"

"Hello, who is this?" said the voice of Hans Booger on the other end.

"Just a couple of elves up on the rooftop. Saving Christmas."

Yugo leaned in over Iggy's shoulder. "It's what we do."

“You are most troublesome,” said Hans. “And it appears you have my detonators.”

“Is that what’s in this bag?” piped up Sam.

“Do you really think you have a chance against us?” said Hans.

“Yippee kay yay,” said Sam and turned off the walkie talkie.

HANS BOOGER LEANED FORWARD ON HIS DESK on the 25th floor, glowering. Hans was one of the world’s great glowerers. When he glowered at you, you knew about it and felt glowered for the rest of the day.

The sound of sirens could be heard in the distance. “The police are on their way,” said one of his unsavoury companions, a particularly unsavoury fellow with long blonde hair named Karl.

“Police involvement was inevitable,” said Hans. “Everything is going according to my design.”

“Except they have the detonators,” said another unsavoury fellow with short blonde hair named Marco.

“Yes, we are going to need those,” said Hans. “Get up there and find them.”

“Find what? The elves or the detonators?” said Karl.

“Both,” said Hans. “And hurry back with my detonators. I’m going to make a little radio message to our policeman friends and then check on the explosives.”

“What about the elves? Should we bring them back too?” asked Marco.

“I don’t have any use for those troublemakers,” said Hans. “Just shoot them.”

FOUR FLOORS ABOVE THEM, THREE TROUBLEMAKERS tried to figure out how to stop Hans before anyone else got hurt.

Iggy looked out the window. The building was surrounded by police cars. Huge spotlights had been wheeled in and lit the upper floors of the building.

From between the two spotlights a small group of police elves in riot gear slowly approached the front door.

“There are only four of them and they are coming in the front door,” said Iggy.

“Only four? They need a bigger force than that,” said Yugo.

“I told them we needed the national guard,” said Sam.

“There is no national guard at the North Pole,” said Iggy.

“They won’t stand a chance against all of Hans’ machine guns,” said Yugo.

“They’ll be sitting ducks.”

“Better them than us,” said Sam.

“We have to do something,” said Iggy.

“I have an idea,” said Yugo.


Iggy turned to him. “What’s your idea?”

Yugo nodded at Sam. “We have a bag full of plastic explosives and plenty of detonators. If we drop that bag down the elevator shaft, we can detonate it when it reaches the lobby. That should back them off before Hans and his unsavoury goons can get to them.”

Sam grinned. “It should give Hans a good scare, too. He’ll need another pair of designer underpants once it goes off.”

The elves quickly connected one of the detonators to the plastic explosives in the bag. Dragged it over to the open elevator door and dropped in down the hole. Yugo counted silently then activated the detonator.



The bag exploded with a tremendous  just as it reached the lobby. It blew all of the windows out of the main floor of the building and sent the small group of police officers retreating to safety.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam were looking down the elevator shaft with pleased expressions on their faces when they realized that the explosion had also sent a plume of orange flames straight back up towards them.

The elves backpedaled desperately as the shock wave reached the 29th floor and sent them flying back across the floor.

They landed in a tangled heap thirty feet away from the elevator door. Sam sat up and rubbed his head. “This is the worst Christmas ever.”

The walkie talkie pinged again. Iggy reeached over for it and pressed the orange button on the side. But Hans was not talking to them this time. He had radioed the police gathered around the building to recount his list of demands. Hans' demands were succinct:

"You must destroy all copies of the naughty list. Once you have confirmed that that all children are nice, we will take our hostages to the roof of the building for you to collect by helicopter. Booger out."

"It doesn't make any sense," said Iggy. "If he is planning to release all of the hostages, why does he need the detonators?"

"And we already blew up all of the plastic explosives," said Sam.

Yugo sat thoughtfully, tapping his chin with one of his nimble fingers. "There must be more explosives somewhere, or he wouldn't need those detonators. Follow me." He set off purposefully towards the south stairwell.

HANS BOOGER WANDERED AROUND THE 30TH FLOOR with a flashlight. The beam of his flashlight followed the wiring to each of the rest of the plastic explosives that Karl and Marco had placed earlier in the evening. He just needed his detonators now to set the whole works off.

He nodded with approval, turned off his flashlight and turned around.

Right into Iggy, Yugo and Sam.

"Hi there," said Iggy.

Hans was caught and he knew it. But he could also see that Iggy, Yugo and Sam did not know that. They did not seem to recognize him at all. So, now he knew that they did not know that he was caught. Knowledge can be a powerful thing, especially when the thing you know is something the other guys do not.

Hans cowered against the wall. His cowering was almost as good as his glowering. "You're with them aren't you! Don't shoot me!"

Iggy, Yugo and Sam looked at each other blankly.

"I came up here to get away from them, don't shoot me," pleaded Hans.

"Relax, we're not going to hurt you," said Iggy.

"Our machine gun is out of bullets, anyway," said Sam.

Now Hans had even more knowledge than he did before. He pulled out a pistol from his belt and pointed it at the three elves. “My gun is most assuredly not out of bullets.”

“Run away!” yelled Sam, and he did, with Iggy and Yugo close behind him. They ran around a glass partition on the still unfinished floor. Hans’ first shot went through the glass partition, spraying pieces of broken glass everywhere.

“Ow, ow, ow,” shouted Sam. He was still barefoot and the concrete floor was covered in jagged pieces of glass.

Iggy turned to help him. “Hurry up, Sam!”

Iggy and Yugo dove behind a stack of office supplies. Sam ran gingerly across the broken glass and finally joined them, leaving a trail of bloody footprints behind them.

Hans fired off the rest of his bullets but only managed to break more windows. He looked down at his empty gun in disgust. However, just below his empty gun he saw the gym bag that Sam had dropped during his getaway. The detonators had spilled out of the open bag onto the bare concrete floor.

Hans stopped glowering for a moment and scooped the detonators into the bag. Then he reached into his pocket and pulled out a small grenade. He threw that in the direction the elves had escaped to, then turned and stalked back to the south stairwell, glowering once more.



THE GRENADE EXPLODED WITH A TREMENDOUS



, but all it did was

break even more glass.

Iggy stared at Sam’s feet. “We need to clean you up before that gets infected.” They limped off to the washroom, but when they got there, they found that none of the sinks had been installed.

It took Yugo only a minute or two to install a sink, with Sam whimpering the whole time. He installed two more while Iggy helped Sam pull pieces of broken glass out of his toes.

Yugo put in a shower while Iggy finished cleaning up Sam’s injuries. He took a quick shower to test it, then rejoined the other two.

“I’ve got it all cleaned up, but how are we going to get Sam across all this broken glass?”

Yugo smiled and held up a roll of duct tape. “Duct tape can fix anything.”

In another minute, Sam’s feet were bundled up in duct tape. Together, they headed out across the broken glass.

“What do you think Hans was up to?” asked Iggy.

“Nothing good, I am sure,” said Yugo. “We had better check it out.”

“Couldn’t we just go to a hospital instead?” asked Sam.

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE 25TH FLOOR, Hans stood over Theo’s shoulder while the little elf worked on cracking Santa Claus’ safe.

“How much longer?” asked Hans.

“Almost there,” said Theo. “There are seven locks in total. The first six require a key code, which I had to figure out by myself since Santa wasn’t talking.”

Santa Claus was still bundled up in curtains on the other side of the room. He tried glaring at Hans, but Santa is not very good at glaring. His eyes are just too twinkly.

“I’ve got the first six locks open, but the seventh one is a time lock. Even if I put in the right key code, it won’t open for another 24 hours.”

Hans grinned a sideways grin. It was an awful grin. “Leave that to me.”

“What are you going to do?” asked Theo.

“Nothing,” said Hans. His awful grin grew even awfuller as he explained. “The police will do it all for me. You see there are protocols for dealing with terrorist attacks. First, the police will make a direct attack, to try and end the situation quickly. If that does not work, and it did not, the next step is to cut the power to the building in order to starve us out. Even now, the police are browbeating some lowly electrical worker to turn off the electricity.”

As he spoke those very words, all of the lights on the 25th floor went out.

“You see,” said Hans. “And when the power goes off ...”

“The time lock will open!” said Theo, finishing Hans’ thought. Sure enough, the door to Santa Claus’ vault slowly swung open.

“Merry Christmas,” said Hans. He hummed Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* as Theo scrambled into the vault and piled all of the licences and patents he could get his hands on into a big black duffel bag.

Hans pulled out his radio and dialed into the police band.¹¹ “It is very dark and we surrender. We are taking the hostages to the rooftop. You can collect us all there by helicopter in five minutes.”

Hans shut off the radio and strode into the lobby where all of his hostages were gathered. “Time to go everyone,” he said. Marco waved his machine gun around and directed the hostages to the south stairwell. Nutmeg was at the front of the column, followed by Santa Claus, still bundled up in the office curtains.

Theo passed by the line of hostages pushing a cart loaded with patents and license documents.

Nutmeg stepped out of the line and glared at Hans. “After all of your speeches, it turns out you’re just a common thief.”

Hans leaned in close. “I think you will find that I am an exceptional thief.”

“Exceptional or not, you’re a very naughty person,” said Nutmeg.

Hans grimaced. Nobody likes to be told they are naughty at the North Pole.

“Get them out of here,” he growled. Marco waved his machine gun around and motioned for Nutmeg and the others to get into the south stairwell.

“Get those papers down to the getaway van,” Hans said to Theo. “We’ll join you in a few minutes. The police will never know what hit them.”

IGGY AND SAM STOOD ON THE 30TH FLOOR while Yugo pointed out all of the plastic explosives that had been wired to the ceiling earlier that evening by Hans’ unsavoury company. “The whole rooftop is wired to blow. That is why he needed the detonators.”

“That is extremely unsafe,” said Iggy. “What could Hans be up to?”

¹¹ There was a band called The Police which had a lot of hits in the 1980s. Hans was very fond of them, but this was not the police band he connected to. He was merely connecting to the radio frequency used by the NPPD.

Sam was about to speak, but he was interrupted when Karl crept up behind him and pressed the muzzle of a machine gun into his cheek.

“Ulmggmmumm,” said Sam.

Iggy knew what Ulmggmmumm meant and he did not hesitate. He spun and threw a punch at Karl. He missed, of course, but only because Yugo had tackled Karl from below and knocked him to the ground. Karl jumped to his feet, but then Sam pushed him back into a stack of empty metal barrels that crashed and bounced around them.¹² One of the barrels landed on Sam, which allowed Karl to get free.

Iggy approached carefully in a boxer’s stance. Karl was not much for boxing, he just started punching away. Iggy backed away under the flurry of Karl’s attack. Yugo tagged Iggy’s shoulder and jumped into the fray. The two combatants punched and kicked at each other, knocking more a than a couple of teeth looser and sending more barrels spinning around the room.

Sam climbed out from under his barrel and jumped onto Karl’s back. He wrapped his hands over the unsavoury villain’s eyes. Karl spun around as he tried to free himself from Sam’s grip.

That gave Yugo the chance he needed. There were three or four metal chains dangling from some moving equipment in the ceiling. He grabbed the longest of these and wrapped it around Karl as he spun to get away from Sam. The chain tightened around Karl’s waist and then lifted him into the air. It was a ponderous chain, indeed.

Karl howled and dropped Sam. Sam stood up and gave Karl a shove, that



made him swing into the cement wall with a

“Oof,” oofed Karl, and then hung limply from the chain.

“Come on,” said Iggy. “I can hear people coming up the stairs. We need to get them away from the bombs.”

Iggy and Yugo ran to the south stairwell. Sam hobbled behind on his duct taped and bloody feet. By the time they reached the stairwell, all of the hostages, including Nutmeg, were on the roof. Two police helicopters approached from the south.

¹² Why would there be a stack of empty metal barrels on the 30th floor of an unfinished building? That is a very good question.

“Hans is going to blow the whole thing up,” said Iggy.

“And then make his getaway in the confusion,” said Yugo.

“Not on my watch,” said Sam. He shuffled to the patio and yelled “everybody get downstairs! There’s a bomb.”

The hostage elves looked at Sam in confusion. He made quite a sight, limping around in a soiled undershirt on bloody and tattered feet.

Nutmeg sighed. She’d never seen him look more handsome.

“Sam says we have to get downstairs,” she shouted. She led the hostages back to the south stairwell.

Meanwhile, Hans and the remains of his unsavoury gang had made their way to the other south stairwell. Iggy, Yugo and Sam made after them, then skidded to a stop as a police helicopter dropped into their path.

“Put your hands up!” came a voice from the helicopter.

“But we’re the good guys!” shouted Iggy.

“Get down on your knees,” the helicopter said.

“We need to get out of here,” said Yugo. “The whole place is about to go up.”

“You have the right to remain silent,” said the helicopter.

“These are the worst police I’ve ever seen,” said Sam. “I knew we should have called in the national guard.”

“There is no national guard at the North Pole,” said the helicopter.

“We don’t have time for this,” said Iggy. “We have to get off this rooftop.”

Yugo looked around frantically. “I have an idea.” There was a metal shed nearby with an intimidating sign on the door that read:



Yugo yanked open the door. A large metal reel with a heavy canvas fire hose wound around it swung out. Yugo pulled on the hose as the helicopter’s voice ordered him to stop.

“Grab on,” he said to Iggy and Sam. They each took hold of the hose as Yugo ran to the edge of the roof.

“You’re not jumping off are you?” said Iggy.

“No I’m not,” said Yugo. “We all are.”

“Oh no I’m not,” said Sam. But Yugo had already jumped over the edge, pulling Iggy and Sam behind him. The fire hose spooled out of its reel.

They were barely over the edge when all of the bombs Hans and his unsavoury pals had planted exploded in a symphony of



The police helicopter spun high up in the air while Iggy, Yugo and Sam dropped down the edge of the building. They jerked to a stop once the fire hose had fully played out and then swung gently outside a 25th floor window.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam looked down and screamed. Then they looked up at the huge fireball blooming above them and screamed some more.

“Now what are we going to do?” asked Iggy.

“I have an idea,” said Yugo. He kicked the building and the three of them swung out and then back into the window. The explosion had weakened all of the windows and the glass cracked slightly.

“Again,” said Yugo.” They kicked away, a little harder this time, leaving Sam’s bloody footprints on the glass. They swung back into the window. It cracked a little more, but still held.

“One more time.” Once more they pushed back from the window and then crashed back into it. This time the window gave way and they tumbled into the building spraying shattered glass in front of them.

Sam squealed. “Not again,” as they kept on tumbling right through the shattered glass until they came to a stop in a tattered heap before a pair of loafer covered feet. The loafers were Italian, expensive and left no doubt as to whose feet they covered.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam looked up slowly. Hans Booger glowered down at them.

“That’s some glower,” said Sam.

Hans reached back and pulled Nutmeg to his side. “I believe that one of you troublemakers has been looking for this one.” He raised his expensive Italian pistol and waved it at the elves. “What was it you said before? Yippee kay yay?”

He grinned an awful grin and aimed his pistol.

“Yippee kay yay!” shouted Iggy, Yugo and Sam together and they charged at Hans.

Hans dropped his pistol and staggered backwards into a window. Weakened as it was by the explosion, it could not stand up to the impact of Hans and three troublesome elves. The glass gave way and Hans tumbled backwards out the window, flailing his arm and then grabbing Iggy by the wrist. Iggy stumbled through the broken window, but Yugo grabbed him by the wrist. Yugo, in turn, was saved only when Sam grabbed him by the wrist.

They hung out of the open window, Hans at the bottom of a chain of Christmas elves. Sam tried to pull them all back up, but it was too much for him. His grip weakened and Yugo slid out of his grasp. The whole group dropped a little further out the window. Sam lunged forward and grabbed Yugo again. Yugo jerked to a stop. Iggy likewise jerked to a stop. But Hans Booger, who was the biggest jerk of them all, lost his hold of Iggy and fell backwards to the ground 25 stories below.

Fortunately for Hans, there had been several feet of fresh snow fall that Christmas and his fall was eventually broken by a big snow drift at the base of the building. Unfortunately for Hans, most of his bones were also broken by the big snow drift at the base of the building. His dreams of someday being a professional ballet dancer were likely at an end.

THE REMAINS OF HANS’ UNSAVOURY GANG had reached the getaway van in the parking garage below the building. They loaded their ill gotten licenses and wrongly gained patents into the van and climbed inside.

But as they guided the van up the exit ramp they found the way blocked by a gleaming red snowmobile. As previously noted, this snowmobile is nothing at all like others in your experience and it was unlike any that Hans’ unsavoury henchmen had ever seen, either. For one thing, it was controlled an intelligent operating system named Argyle. For another, and this was of more immediate

importance to this group of most unsavoury gangsters, a pair of laser cannons protruded from either side of the snowmobile and were pointed at their van.

The unsavoury band of elves slowly pulled to a stop and stepped out of the van with their hands up. Argyle fired a couple of shots past their ears, anyway, just to scare them a little. Judging from the smell coming from Theo's sweatpants, Argyle had actually scared him quite a bit.



IGGY, YUGO, SAM AND NUTMEG made their way slowly out of the smoking building. Santa Claus followed close behind them. A couple of policemen ran up to him to help free him from the tight bundle of curtains that still encircled him like a wreath.

None of the policemen paid any attention to Iggy and the others. Their path was lit by flashing blue and red lights. Sam wrapped a blanket over Nutmeg's shoulders. Putting on a blanket is quite fashionable at any gathering of emergency response vehicles.

Everything seemed to have worked out in the end. The snow fell gently at the North Pole. Somewhere in the crowd, someone was singing a Christmas carol. Iggy, Yugo and Sam had saved Christmas again.

But then, the front door of the Santa Claus Tower burst open and Karl staggered out, covered in blood and bruises and laughing maniacally. He held his machine gun over his head and fired off a few rounds. The policemen scattered as Karl lowered his machine gun and pointed it at Sam.

Karl was about to squeeze the trigger when Nutmeg punched him in the face. He collapsed to the ground in a bloody, bruised heap.

Nutmeg blew on the knuckles of her punching hand. "Men. They can't take a punch."

Sam shivered. Nutmeg draped her blanket over his shoulders.

A red snowmobile pulled up and Sam and Nutmeg climbed slowly into the back seat.

Before Iggy and Yugo could join them, Argyle revved his powerful engines and sped off down the road.

“What do you think of that?” asked Yugo.

Inside the snowmobile, an electronic voice said, “merry Christmas, sir.”

Sam smiled. “Merry Christmas, Argyle.”

Iggy, Yugo and Sam Will Return In:

An Indecision of Puffins

or

One Elf, Two Elves, Red Elf, Blue Elf

or

The Elf Beneath the Shelf

or

The Littlest Caganer

or

Something Else Entirely

HAVE YOU BEEN
HOODS THIS YEAR

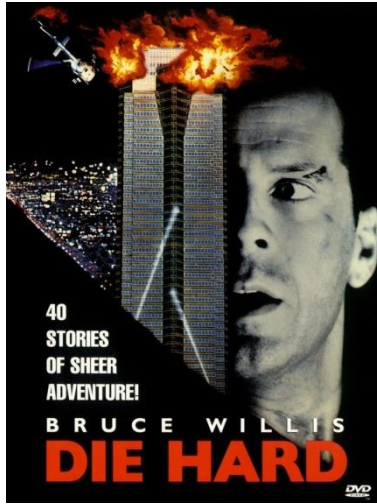


IF NOT
I'LL ~~KILL~~
YOU BE
SAD



I DK HOW
TO DRAW
KRAMPUS

HERE'S
A GOAT SHEEP
THING THOUGH



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