

SAM

ALONE

AND OTHER CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

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
Sam Alone and Other Christmas Crackers

In which Iggy goes to Paris,
Yugo takes a selfie, and
Sam eats some figgy pudding

And, it goes without saying, but Christmas gets saved.
Maybe more than once.

“All I wanted was one perfect Christmas,
All I got was coal and some switches.”

- Liz Phair, *Ho Ho Ho*

“It looks like Christmas, Christmas at the airport
I took a set of X-rays and they came out very well”

- Nick Lowe, *Christmas at the Airport*

“Good boys and girls get presents under the tree,
They had to try real hard ‘cause nothing comes for free
And all you bad, bad kids won’t let Dad unwind,
We’re gonna turn you ‘round one lump of coal at a time.”

- Grace Potter, *Naughty Naughty Children*

Actual Police Artist Sketch of a Man Wanted in a Series of Daring
Christmas Eve Break Ins ...¹



¹ I swear that I am not making this up.

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Tales of 'Citement and 'Ventures

SAM ALONE

AND OTHER CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

It was neither the best of times, nor was it the worst of times. It was just one of those times among many other of those times, some of which were better than others and some of which were worse.

It certainly was one of those times, however.

If you looked out the window, you would have thought that it was the middle of the night, for it was dark outside, the black sky filled with scattered and sparkling stars. But this window was at the North Pole, and in the winter the black sky is filled with twinkling stars every hour of the day.

However, on this occasion, you would have been right. It was the middle of the night. And not just any night, but Christmas Eve. And on Christmas Eve, elves gathered together to do what they have done for hundreds of years; wait for Santa Claus to return from his long sleigh ride around the world.

And while they wait, they tell stories. Once upon a time they told stories around a fire. Now they gather in warmer surroundings. Iggy, Yugo and Sam had gathered at their usual table at the *Walrus and Ulu*, the North Pole's busiest watering hole. That sat at their usual table, near the end of the bar, and close to the men's lavatory, for Sam was a frequent visitor to the washroom on nights like these.

Iggy sat in his usual spot, with a glass of diet water before him. Yugo was beside him, sipping from a small cup of eggnog and Sam sat beside Yugo (and also beside Iggy, for the table was small and round) and nursed his third Elfläger.

And while they waited for Santa Claus to return, they told stories.

Iggy went first.

The Gifts of the Mad Guys

IT IS NEVER EASY TO SHOP FOR ELVES AT CHRISTMAS. Elves are simple folk with simple needs. Most everything they ever want, they just make for themselves in their workshop. To make things even more difficult, toymaking is not a job that pays well and elves do not have much money to spend.

One dollar and eighty-seven cents was all the money that Yugo had in the world that Christmas. Everything else he had spent on making improvements and modifications to his snowmobile.

And what a snowmobile it was. The fastest in the world. And the only one that could float, or with the flip of an orange switch or a yellow dial, fly through the air like a big red metal eagle.

It was not flying now. It was parked in Yugo's hangar at the North Pole. Something wiggled on the dashboard. It was the little wooden hula girl that Yugo had won in a tinkering contest on a Hawaiian vacation. It was the only time that he had ever won at anything and nothing made him prouder. So he kept it on the dashboard of his snowmobile where he could see it always.

He gave the little hula girl a tap as he sat in the front seat of his snowmobile and thought about his dilemma. His Christmas shopping was nearly finished. He had but one gift left to get, something for his great friend Sam. And all that he had left was one dollar and eighty-seven cents. Only \$1.87 to buy a gift for Sam.

Sam had won a contest himself once. He entered a chicken wing eating contest on a dare from Iggy. He not only won it, he set a record that has never been beaten. Chicken everywhere shiver when Sam walks near.

For a prize, he received a golden bone bucket. A trophy he could fill any time he filled himself with wings or ribs. It was his greatest treasure, and he kept it

with him always, setting it in the middle of the table whenever the elves sat down for dinner.

Yugo thought to himself. “Why, if Sam had a fine golden chain to match his bucket, he could wear it around his neck and take it with him always. Indeed, with the golden bone bucket just below his chin, Sam could eat more and faster than ever!”

Yugo looked at the change in his hand. Four quarters, 6 dimes, 3 nickels and 12 pennies. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. Then he looked up at the little hula girl wobbling on the dashboard. He nodded grimly and snatched the little hula girl from the dashboard and stuffed her into his tool belt. He climbed out of the snowmobile and made his way out of the hangar.

He locked the hangar behind him and made his way down the peppermint cobblestone street. He passed the Licorice Works and turned south² at the Ugly Sweater Shoppe. Before long he had reached his destination; Wheezy Will’s Curiosity Shop. It was where elves found most of their curiosities.

The shop was cramped inside, with curiosities stacked on shelves and tables and in the hallways between them. Yugo admired the curiosities, which were curious indeed. There was a small running shoe in a bottle and a set of three matching nail files made for juggling. But Yugo was looking for a more particular curiosity, and he found it beside a jar made of rubber rhubarb leaves with rubber rhubarb stalks inside.

He picked it up and held it to the light. Surely it had been made for Sam and no other. A golden bone bucket chain, simply made. It twinkled merrily in the dim light of the shop. It was perfect.

Yugo took the chain to the counter where Wheezy Will himself sat, reading an old copy of the New York Sun. Yugo set the golden bone bucket chain on the counter.

“How much for this?” he asked.

Wheezy Will lifted the chain in his long pale fingers. He was a young elf, with a full head of lustrous hair that fell to his shoulders like a stream of brown

² Every direction at the North Pole is south. When Yugo reached the Ugly Sweater Shoppe, he could have gone in three different directions, all of which were south. In the end, he turned south.

water. He wore a thick pair of rimless spectacles and drew the chain close. He set it on the counter.

“If you have to ask, you can’t afford it,” he said.

“I have \$1.87,” said Yugo.

Wheezy Will laughed. Then he started to cough. It was a long lung jarring coughing fit that made Yugo clutch at his own throat.

Finally, Wheezy Will stopped coughing. He wiped a tear from the corner of his eye and wheezed. “I’m afraid I will need a little something more than that,”

Yugo reached into his pocket and drew out the little hula girl. “I also have this.”

Wheezy Will lifted the little statue delicately and brought it close to his eye. Then he set it down quickly before he started coughing again.

“Yes,” he said finally. He took in a long, wheezing gulp of air. “This and the \$1.87.”

Yugo placed his coins on the counter beside the little hula girl. Wheezy Will wrapped the golden bone bucket chain in a brown paper package and tied it up with string. He passed it to Yugo.

“Merry Christmas,” said Wheezy Will.

“Merry Christmas,” replied Yugo.

Yugo made his way quickly to the modest apartment that he shared with Iggy and Sam in Elves Barracks B. He set the plain brown package beneath their little Christmas tree and waited.

It was just like Sam to be late. He arrived after dinner with a scowl on his face. In his arm, he held a brown paper package of his own. He smiled a little and passed it to Yugo.

Yugo turned the parcel in his hands. Then he pulled at the string and the paper fell away. Inside was a small crystal display case. Upon the base was a small brass plaque with a simple inscription:

Yugo Best Tinkerer

“It’s for the little hula girl,” Sam said, though he scarcely needed to explain it. Yugo shook his head and set the little display case on the table. He bent down and picked up his package from under the tree and gave it to Sam.

“What is it?” said Sam, tearing away the paper excitedly. The golden bone bucket chain spilled into his hand. “Well, I’ll be,” and he set the chain on the table beside the empty display case.

“It’s for the bone bucket,” said Yugo. “So you can hang it around your neck. You’ll never miss a bone again!”

Sam sighed. “It’s far too nice to use. Maybe we can just keep it on the mantel piece for now. You see, I sold the bone bucket to get the money for your display case.”

“But I sold the little hula girl to get the money to buy your chain!” said Yugo.

Sam laughed. “Well isn’t that something,” said Sam.

Yugo laughed too. “I suppose we could put the bone bucket chain in the display case.”

Sam stopped laughing. “I’ve got a better idea. Let’s both go down to Wheezy Will’s and get our stuff back.”

And so they did.

It was the magi who brought the first Christmas gifts. Unlike Yugo and Sam, they were wise men. Still, aside from the gold, their gifts were kind of dumb, too.

YES VIRGIL, THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS

 UGO WAS ONCE APPROACHED BY A SMALL BOY named Virgil at an elf convention who said, “Mr. Yugo, I am 8 years old. Some of my friends say there is no Santa Claus. Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?”

Yugo considered his answer carefully. He could suggest that young Virgil pose his question in a letter to the editor of the New York Sun. It was once said that if you see it in the Sun, it’s so. And the act of writing a letter would teach young Virgil patience, penmanship and punctuation, three skills that would surely serve him well in later life.

Unfortunately, the New York Sun had ceased publication in 1950, so this was not really an option.

In the end, Yugo just said, “Yes, Virgil, there is a Santa Claus. Your little friends are wrong, and I can prove it”

He pulled out his cell phone and showed Virgil a bunch of pictures of Santa Claus. Santa Claus holding a toy train in the work shop, Santa Claus throwing a snowball and a selfie of Yugo and Santa Claus standing beside a red and white striped pole surrounded by snow.

Virgil smiled and clapped his hands with joy.

“Thank you, Yugo,” he said, and ran off to tell his friends what he had seen.

A Christmas Limerick

There are three elves from far north of here
Who save Christmas each and every year
Iggy is so kind
Yugo has a great mind,
But Sam would rather stay home and drink beer.

The Long Noel

ONE CHRISTMAS, IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN LAST CHRISTMAS or maybe it was a hundred Christmases ago. Elves live a long time and you never can tell with elves. But one Christmas, Iggy, Yugo and Sam set out to find the greatest Christmas joke ever.

It is well known at the North Pole that Gub Gub McGee was the funniest elf who ever lived. His comedic plays, *Go Go Eskimo* and *Go Go Eskimo 2: Eskimo Boogaloo* are performed every Christmas at theaters all across the Arctic.

Legend has it that Gub Gub McGee created the greatest Christmas joke there ever was. A joke so clever and sublime that it it needed to be hidden away for its own safety and the safety of any elf who might come across it. Legend further had it, that the joke was buried deep beneath Mount Badaboom in the southern reaches of the North Pole.³ Generations of elves had searched in vain for the lost Christmas joke of Gub Gub McGee, but no one had ever found it.

So it was that one Christmas, maybe last Christmas or another Christmas entirely, after Santa Claus had finished his long night's work and all of the elves had the whole day off, that Iggy, Yugo and Sam set out to Mount Badadoom to find the greatest Christmas joke of them all.

Sam did not really want to go. He wanted to stay in and have egg nog and figgy pudding. "Who can blame me? Figgy pudding is awesome. I could eat it all day."

"You have been eating it all day," said Iggy.

"Pack some for the road," said Yugo. "We'll be back in no time." This assurance later proved to be completely and utterly wrong.

Sam sighed, and grumbled and then he grumbled and he sighed once more. But he packed as much figgy pudding as he could fit into his case.

"That is enough figgy pudding to last for a year," said Iggy, when he saw the case Sam had packed. This proved to be a good thing, as later events made clear.

³ This is not very precise. Since every direction from the North Pole is south, the "southern reaches of the North Pole" essentially describes every location on Earth.

They travelled to Mount Badaboom in Yugo's snowmobile. Yugo's snowmobile is the most unique conveyance in the world. A trip in Yugo's snowmobile often involves a journey through the air, under the sea or even through time. But this time, since they were only headed to the southern reaches of the North Pole, they made an entirely unremarkable trip over snow and ice, just like they would in any other, regular snowmobile. The seats in Yugo's snowmobile were, however, much more comfortable.

The elves reached the base of the mountain and looked up. Way, way up. Mount Badaboom is not, strictly speaking, a mountain at all. There are no mountains at the North Pole. At least none made of stone or rock. All there is at the North Pole is ice and snow and that is what Mount Badaboom is; a 5,000 meter tall cone of ice. Like most tall mountains, it has snow piled at its peak. Unlike most mountains, it has snow piled all around the bottom as well.

"Now what?" asked Iggy.

Yugo pulled a weathered scroll from the toolbelt he always wore. "I found this in the rare books section of the North Pole Library"

"It doesn't look like a rare book to me," said Sam.

"It's a map!" said Iggy as he unrolled the scroll.

"Exactly. And see what it says here." Yugo read from the yellowed parchment:

*Descend the stairs, too many to count
And you will find it deep beneath the Mount,
You'll know at once, that you've been played
By the Greatest Joke I ever made.
- G. G. McG.*

"I authenticated the signature," said Yugo. "That is none other than Gub Gub McGee himself."

"The funniest elf there ever was," said Iggy in awe.

Sam nodded. "Go Go Eskimo 3: The Revenge of Dirty Bob is a classic."

"Do you really think so?" asked Iggy. "That one was a little dark for my taste." Of course, Iggy never had much appreciation for the dark humour epitomized

by Gub Gub McGee's classic play of murder and revenge and the scene where Dirty Bob buries his enemies alive is not without controversy. It was not to Iggy's tastes, anyway. He favoured entertainments of a more uplifting nature, which, it might be said, accorded with his own uplifting nature. Iggy was such an optimist that if he were asked whether a glass was half full or half empty, he would answer that someone would be along to fill it before long.

"What we know is that the greatest joke is at the bottom of a long staircase," said Yugo.

"Stairs too many to count, apparently," said Sam.

"And this map shows the way to the staircase," said Iggy.

"And the joke at the bottom," said Yugo.

"The bottom of stairs too many to count," repeated Sam.

"Let's get going," said Iggy.

"Right, if we start now, we'll be back in time for supper," said Yugo. Yugo is always precisely correct about everything. On this particular occasion, he was precisely incorrect.

"Hang on a minute," said Sam. He reached into the back of the snowmobile and pulled out his enormous case of figgy pudding. "If we're not getting back until suppertime, I am going to bring along a snack."

"That's an awful lot of figgy pudding for a snack," said Iggy, who would later be grateful to have a lot of figgy pudding on hand.

And so, with Yugo's map as a guide, they made their way around the base of Mount Badaboom. Yugo led the way, with Iggy at his side. Sam trailed some ways behind, dragging his case of figgy pudding and stopping for the occasional snack.

There was a secret entrance on the south⁴ side of the mountain. It was a secret to the elves who had come before, but not to Yugo, for it was clearly marked "*Secret Entrance*" on the map.

⁴ As Mount Badaboom was some ways from the North Pole, the usual rules respecting directions of things apply here. Mount Badaboom has a north and south side. The

They had to dig in the snow for a few minutes before they uncovered a small wooden door bolted into the ice. It swung open easily once the surrounding snow had been cleared away and they stepped into the gloomy passageway beyond. Yugo pulled out a flashlight from his toolbelt and illuminated the path ahead. The icy walls sparkled and twinkled.

Yugo looked down at his map. "This way," he said. The hall turned right and then left and then right again. Then it carried on straight for a while, before they reached another left turn, another right, more straight, left, left, right, straight again, left and then straight until they reached a small room with two doors.

The first door had a single word on it: UP. Sure enough, it opened into an icy staircase that led upward. Yugo shone his flashlight up the stairwell. It went up a short ways to an opening in the side of the mountain. Stars twinkled above.

"It's a short cut to get out of the mountain," said Iggy.

"This is not the right way," said Yugo. Once again, for an elf who is always right, Yugo was dead wrong.

"I guess this is the way, then," said Iggy. He pulled open the second door, which was marked simply DOWN. Indeed, the door opened into a staircase that wound down and down into the mountain.

"This must be the stairs from the map," said Yugo.

"Too many stairs to count," said Sam.

It turned out there were a great many stairs, though not too many to count. There were 1,015 stairs in all, for Sam counted every one of them as they worked their way down.

The stairway opened into a small, dark room. In the middle of the room stood a low stone table. There was a small, curled slip of paper on the table top. Iggy raced over to it and picked it up.

"This must be it!" he said.

"The greatest Christmas joke ever," said Yugo.

elves had made their way to the south side (which was also the side of the mountain furthest from the North Pole.

“Let’s hear it then and see what all the fuss is about,” said Sam.

So Iggy read the words on the little slip of paper. This is what it said:

Why was the elf so unhappy?

He had low elf esteem.

Yugo smiled a polite smile. It was the most he could do, for the joke was not funny at all.

Sam did not smile. He harrumphed. And then he said, “that’s the *stupidest* Christmas joke ever if you ask me. Let’s get out of here.”

Iggy nodded and set the paper back down on the table. As soon as his hand touched the table, the elves heard a low rumbling noise in the distance.

“What is that?” asked Yugo, waving the flashlight around the room. The rumbling grew louder and then it grew even louder still.

“It’s a trap!” shouted Sam.

It truly was. As soon as Iggy touched the tabletop the second time it triggered a cunning series of hidden pulleys and weights that released an old wooden barricade high up on the mountainside. As the barricade fell open, ten billion tons of snow swept down the side of Mount Badaboom, tumbled through the opening on the mountainside, then poured into the little staircase marked UP and then down the long winding stairwell with too many stairs to count (although there are actually 1,015) and stopped only once it had piled up at the base of the little table.

This was Gub Gub McGee’s masterpiece. The greatest Christmas joke ever played. A jape that would have all of the elves of the North Pole laughing for years. For Iggy, Yugo and Sam were trapped at the bottom of a snow filled stairwell far beneath a frozen mountain of ice. There was no way to call for help and no one could ever have found them anyway.

It took them until next Christmas, perhaps it was this Christmas, or perhaps another Christmas long past, to dig their way out.

It was a good thing that they had a lot of figgy pudding.

A Sonnet of Christmas

-By Guest Author, William Shakespeare, Esq.

CHRISTMASTIME MEANS NAUGHT but trouble for elves,
 Their lot is but to save the Yule from woes.
 No moment for joy, or time for themselves,
 Nor any for goose and mashed potatoes.
 For ev'ry year when the nights grow so long,
 Three elves alone are called upon to go,
 They leave their hearth and the mirth and the songs
 And venture forth on a mobile of snow.
 Then they battle brigands, blackguards and rogues,
 Pirates and thieves and other ne'er do wells.
 And with a style that is no longer in vogue,
 They spare Christmas and they sing Jingle Bells.

So, think ye well and think ye hard and deep
 When you reach for a gift this Christmas morn,
 That in the darkness, ere you were asleep
 That elves were about, snowmobile borne.
 Fair Iggy, wise Yugo and Sam are they
 Those elves three who have saved your Christmas Day

Make Christmas Great Again

IT HAPPENS EVERY CHRISTMAS. Okay, not *every* Christmas, but it happens more often than you might think.

It usually goes like this: Early Christmas morning a concerned parent will call 911 to report that their house has been broken into in the night. Nothing has been taken but some cookies and maybe a glass of milk, but the fireplace was disturbed and there are sooty footprints on the carpet.

Sometimes they can even describe the intruder. He is a heavysset bearded man, dressed all in red. If pressed, they will usually add that his eyes twinkled, his dimples were merry, his cheeks were like roses and his nose like a strawberry. Or maybe a cherry.

The investigating officers take it all down. Usually they have heard it all before. And then, the next year, they will set up a stake out and try and catch the "Christmas Bandit". These traps usually fail, for the Christmas Bandit is lively and quick, but once in a while, and in fact, more Christmasses than not, they will get him.

Once captured, the Christmas Bandit will be taken downtown to be booked and given his one phone call. He always calls the same number, and the same telephone rings on a little table in Elves Barracks B. Iggy usually answers it, though sometimes Yugo beats him to it. Sam never gets there first. By the time it rings he is sound asleep in his easy chair with an unfinished sandwich on his lap.

The Christmas Bandit travels in a sleigh pulled by eight tiny reindeer. Once he is apprehended, the sleigh remains up on a rooftop, where it landed. The reindeer wait patiently. They have all been through it before.

The elves know what to do once they get the call. They race to the little hangar where Yugo keeps his snowmobile. He pulls off the custom fitted red and green velvet cover and presses a green button on the side. The doors lift open on smooth hydraulics and the three elves clamber inside. Then Yugo presses a red button and flips a green lever to fire up the lithium fusion engines and they speed out of the hangar and soar into the sky, headed for Keokuk, Iowa or Turku, Finland or Calgary, Alberta or wherever it is this time.

Once they arrive, they fill out all the usual forms and then wait for the Christmas Bandit's case to be called. If you have ever waited for a bail hearing in the middle of the night, you would know that this could take some time.

Finally they will find themselves in front of a judge. Yugo usually does the talking, because he is the most clever of the three. Once the presiding judge is persuaded that the Christmas Bandit is none other than Santa Claus, he is immediately released and sent on his way.

Of course, by this time many hours have passed. This is a problem. You see, while Santa Claus is free to go about his business, his business is the business of delivering presents around the world every Christmas. Santa Claus has so many cities to visit and so many presents to deliver that his schedule is always planned right down to the second. If he is delayed for any reason, such as spending a few hours in prison, he can never catch up.

He is Santa Claus and he does the best he can. But if he spends a few hours in prison, unfortunately some houses will be missed. If Santa Claus ever missed your house, it was probably because you were naughty. But if you were nice, and Santa Claus missed your house anyway, take comfort in the fact that he was probably in jail when he could have been leaving presents under your tree.

Now, when you see an intruder in your house late on Christmas Eve there is a pretty good chance that he is jacking your stuff and you should call the cops at once.

But take a moment and see if his eyes are twinkling or his dimples are merry. See if he is dressed all in red from his head to his foot. If his beard is as white as the snow, he might just be Santa Claus and all he is apt to take from you are a cookie or two and a sip of eggnog. Then he will leave some nice things beneath your tree before he sets his finger aside his nose and exits up the chimney.

Do not be like those suspicious folks in Keokuk or Turku. Give Santa Claus a chance to work his Christmas magic before you call the police. He has a lot of places to go in a very short time. Let him do what he does best. And then, together, we can all make Christmas great again.

A CHRISTMAS HAIKU

Three elves at Christmas

Hopeful, inventive and glum.

Iggy, Yugo, Sam.

DIED HARD 2: DIED HARDER

IT WAS COLD AND DARK THAT LATE DECEMBER NIGHT when Iggy, Yugo and Sam arrived at the airport. They had come to pick up Nutmeg, Sam's occasional girlfriend, who was returning home from a mid winter vacation on a tiny island in Central America.

Of course, her flight was late, and was soon delayed even further. For just before Nutmeg's flight left the ground, another plane took off. This one carried a single passenger: General Carmine Esperanto, the former President for Life who had been deposed in a coup a few weeks earlier. The new President for Life, General Bob Bayou⁵ had sent his predecessor into exile as far away as he could. Which just happened to be the North Pole.

But General Esperanto had other ideas. He had a team of crack mercenaries waiting for him at the North Pole International Airport and they were ready to help him escape when he landed. You might wonder why he had not arranged for some crack mercenaries to help keep him off the plane in the first place. Go ahead and wonder about that. You be you.

Rather than stage a rescue at the outset of his trip, General Esperanto had conceived a far more nuanced plan. First, his crack team of mercenaries would storm the tower and shut down all power at the North Pole International Airport. This would turn off the runway lights and prevent any other planes from landing. Then they would temporarily open a single runway and guide General Esperanto's plane to a safe landing. Finally, they would commandeer another plane and use that plane to escape to someplace much warmer. Perhaps a tiny Caribbean Island in need of a president for life. A plan so nuanced as that could not possibly fail.

Unfortunately, General Esperanto had not counted on Iggy, Yugo and Sam waiting at the airport. If he had known about that, perhaps he would have attempted a simpler getaway plan. But he did not know about that.

⁵ President for Life Bob Bayou's presidency did last for the rest of his life. Unfortunately, his life ended about two weeks later when he was overthrown in a coup engineered by the next President for Life, General Ramone Ramone III, who was in turn overthrown and executed by President for Life, General Ramone Ramone IV. President for Life is seldom a long-term position.

As the General's airplane approached, his crack team of mercenaries got cracking. First, they stormed the tower. They took control of it in minutes and shut down all the power at the North Pole International Airport. This darkened the main runway and prevented any other planes from landing. It also made things very dark in the arrival lounge, where Iggy, Yugo and Sam were waiting.

"What's going on?" said Iggy.

"I can't see a thing," said Yugo.

"It's probably mercenaries," said Sam. He had a much more suspicious nature than the other two. "I saw this in a movie once."

"I'm sure it's not mercenaries," said Iggy. He did not have a suspicious bone in his body. Iggy would not believe there were mercenaries in the airport if one walked up to him and said "Hi, I'm Steve. I'm a mercenary."

"Let's get a little light on the subject." Yugo pulled a headlamp from his toolbelt, secured it over his ears and turned it on.

"It's mercenaries for sure," said Sam. "Follow me."

They followed Sam in the light of Yugo's headlamp. "Where are we going?" asked Iggy.

"To the tower," said Sam. "Mercenaries always go for the tower first."

Yugo nodded, and the beam from the headlamp bounced up and down. The elves made their way swiftly across the concourse until they reached a sign that said:

Tower Entrance
Use of this Door is Strictly Forbidden

As if the sign were not forbidding enough, the door was guarded by a very large man in army fatigues who was carrying a machine gun. He had another gun tucked into a holster on his belt and the handle of a third gun was visible at the top of his boots.

"Excuse me," said Iggy. "But we need to go through here."

"I'm afraid not," said the heavily armed and fatigue clad man. "My name is Steve. I'm a mercenary."

“I don’t believe you,” said Iggy.

Steve pulled out the gun from his boot and fired three shots into the air. “Do you believe me now?”

The three elves scattered and hid behind a check in counter.

“I believe him,” said Yugo.

“Told you it was mercenaries,” said Sam.

And then there was a crackle and whistle and an uncomfortable screech before a voice spoke over the airport loudspeaker system. “I’m sorry about all of that racket. But I am not sorry that we have taken control of this airport. From now on, we make the rules. And the first rule is that no airplanes can land unless we say so. Only one plane will be allowed to land tonight and it is the plane carrying our glorious General Esperanto!” There was another screech of feedback and the announcement ended.

“What are we going to do?” asked Iggy.

“We can’t get to the tower,” said Yugo. “It’s full of mercenaries.”

“I hate those guys,” said Sam.

“We have something they don’t have, though,” said Iggy.

Yugo smiled. He knew what Iggy meant.

“No way,” said Sam. “The only thing I hate more than mercenaries is that contraption of yours.”

That contraption was, of course, Yugo’s snowmobile. His mechanical masterpiece. A snowmobile that did not need snow, for it could float on water or fly through the air.

“We have to do something,” said Iggy.

“Remember, Sam,” said Yugo. “Nutmeg’s flight can not land while the mercenaries are in control of the tower. It is too late for her to turn back and if she does not land soon, her plane will run out of fuel.”

Sam gulped. Nutmeg needed his help. He gritted his teeth and said, “let’s go get them.”

They raced out to the airport parking lot where the snowmobile was parked beside a meter that had expired. A rotund police elf was placing a ticket under the windshield wiper.

Yugo snatched the ticket and tossed it aside.

“Hey,” said the rotund elf. “I’ve got a quota to meet!”

Yugo responded by powering up the snowmobile which came to life with a deep and threatening roar. The rotund elf backed away and picked the ticket out of the snow. “You’ll hear from my supervisor!” he shouted, but Iggy, Yugo and Sam could not hear him over the rumble of the snowmobile’s lithium fusion engines.

They raced out of the parking lot, then looped around the terminal. They reached a chain link fence but Yugo just pushed a yellow button and a large spring deployed beneath the snowmobile and bounded them over it.

“That’s new,” said Iggy.

Yugo smiled. “I’ve made a few modifications.”

Sam reached for the air sickness bag which was located in a pocket on the back of Iggy’s chair.

The snowmobile sped across the frozen ground until it reached the runway. It was completely dark and still. On the next runway, the General’s plane had just landed and rolled to a stop. General Esperanto stepped out of the airplane and walked down a staircase that one of the mercenaries had rolled up to him. At the bottom of the staircase, six other mercenaries waited on a group of snowmobiles. The General joined them and they set off back towards the hangars.

“They’re getting away!” shouted Iggy.

“On snowmobiles?” said Yugo. “I don’t think so.” He stabbed a flashing blue button and engaged the rocket boosters. The snowmobile shot forward. Sam shot back into his seat and dropped his air sickness bag.

Yugo’s snowmobile roared past the mercenaries and kept on going. Iggy turned and looked at the mercenaries’ snowmobiles in the passenger side window. “I think we’ve passed them.”

Yugo grimaced and held the wheel tightly. “I can’t slow down until the rocket boosters have finished boosting.”

Sam just gurgled in the back seat and lowered his face into his bag again. Meanwhile, high above them, Nutmeg’s airplane kept circling, waiting for the main runway lights to come on.

The rockets finally finished boosting and Yugo was able to turn the snowmobile around. But by this time, the mercenaries had loaded the General onto

another, even bigger plane, and had headed back out onto the runway themselves.

“This seems like an awfully convoluted plan,” said Iggy.

“We have to catch up to that plane,” said Yugo, and pulled the snowmobile in behind it. Then he drew back on a black lever and the snowmobile slowly rose into the air until it was flying alongside the taxiing airplane.

“Leave this to me,” said Sam. He pushed open the passenger door and then leapt out onto the airplane’s wing.

“What are you doing Sam?” shouted Iggy. “That’s very dangerous.”

Sam grunted. “Gotta save Nutmeg.” He took off his green velvet cap and jammed it into the aileron.⁶

“Clever,” said Yugo. “Now they can’t take off.”

“But Sam is still out on the wing of a speeding airplane!” said Iggy.

Suddenly the emergency door over the wing opened up and General Esperanto himself stepped out onto the wing of the plane. He angled steadily over to Sam and gave him a vicious kick. Sam immediately tumbled off the edge of the wing and rolled onto the snow covered runway.

“That’s gonna hurt in the morning,” Sam said as he slowly got to his feet. The General made his way to the edge of the wing and pulled Sam’s hat from out of the aileron. The flaps immediately started working again.

The General looked up and smiled.

And then he was hit in the face by a half full air sickness bag.

“Yippee kay yay,” shouted Iggy from the open passenger window of the snowmobile.

The General tottered along the edge of the wing as he desperately tried to wipe the slick goo from his face. Then he lost his footing and tumbled off the side of the wing himself. However, instead of following on a soft pile of snow as Sam had, he crashed into one of the unlit runway lights. He would spend the next six months in a North Pole Hospital under armed guard.

⁶ “Aileron” derives from the French word “aileron”, which means “little wing”. It refers to the flaps on the trailing edge of an aircraft wing. If some foolish elf were to stuff a piece of clothing into the aileron, it would prevent the safe operation of the aircraft. You should never, ever, stand on the wing of a moving airplane, and if you do, you must certainly never jam your cap into the aileron.

The mercenaries kept right and going and took off, never to be seen again. They were mercenaries after all.

“We should follow them,” said Iggy.

“We can’t,” said Yugo. He pointed above them where Nutmeg’s plane was still circling the airport. “They can’t have more than five minutes of fuel left. We have to get up there and guide them in.”

“How can we do that? All the runway lights are still out.”

“I have just the thing,” said Yugo and he steered the snowmobile up into the air and out in front of Nutmeg’s airplane. He flipped a switch on his dashboard and the rear lights of the snowmobile glowed bright red.

“Yugo those lights are so bright, you can guide Nutmeg’s plane in tonight,” said Iggy. And he did. The airplane followed Yugo’s bright red snowmobile down onto the ground and to safety.

The passengers piled out of the airplane and onto the snow-covered tarmac. Sam was the first one to reach them and grabbed Nutmeg in his arms.

“Oh Sam, I thought I’d never see you again,” said Nutmeg, and buried her head in his shoulder.

Sam turned and whispered softly into her ear. “You better have brought me a nice present.”

Meanwhile, on the other side of the runway, a half dozen police cars pulled up and circled the snowmobile. A certain rotund police officer of Yugo’s recent acquaintance walked over to them.

Yugo rolled down the window. The rotund police elf glared at him for a moment and then smiled. He pulled a snow covered parking ticket from his pocket and tore it in half.

“What the heck,” he said. “It’s Christmas.”

THE ELVES AND THE NUTCRACKER



ONCE UPON A CHRISTMAS PAST, not so very long past, but not so near either, Iggy, Yugo and Sam were walking down Peppermint Lane, which is just off Candy Cane Boulevard and a little way from Mistletoe Road. It is the roughest part of the North Pole, and elves seldom walk there after dark. And since it is dark there half of the year, elves seldom walk there at all.

But this Christmas morning, Iggy, Yugo and Sam walked down Peppermint Lane in the dark, for it is always dark at Christmas at the North Pole. They did not expect any trouble, for as has been noted, most sensible elves avoid Peppermint Lane in the dark.

Iggy carried a wooden nutcracker under his arm. It was a large nutcracker, made in the style of a Russian soldier, with a tall black hat, a neat blue jacket and red pants. The nutcracker had a white beard and piercing black eyes. Iggy had brought it to decorate the workshop for Christmas.

Along the way, they encountered four other elves. These were not sensible elves. These were elves from the south side. And not just any south side, although there are many south sides at the North Pole, but the south side of the Holiday Train tracks. These elves were from the wrong side of the North Pole.

They were big. They were surly. They were mean and they were looking for trouble. Which is to say, they were not looking for trouble for themselves. They were looking to make trouble for others. Like the three elves who had just walked their way, right down Peppermint Lane.

The biggest of the elves jabbed a thick threatening finger into Iggy's chest. "Where do yer think yer going?" he sneered. Iggy took a step back. Under his arm, the nutcracker remained as mute as a painted piece of wood.

The second elf stepped into Yugo's personal space. "What about you, princess," he said with a growl. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

Yugo's lip quivered, though no one could see it under his thick black moustache. Beneath Iggy's elbow, the nutcracker said nothing and remained as stiff as a little wooden statue.

Then a third elf stepped up and waved his fist under Sam's chin. "Maybe you'd like a pair of matching black eyes for Christmas." The three other south side elves snorted and laughed. And still the nutcracker was perfectly still.

But Sam had had enough of this bullying bluster. He grabbed the nutcracker from Iggy's arm. He stepped forward and swung it in a long underhanded arc and brought it up and struck the biggest and fattest of the bullies right in the sugar plums with a dull thud.

The biggest and fattest of the bullies gasped and tried to cry out, but no sound came. He clutched his midsection and then tipped over and fell to the ground, shaking. Tears streamed from his eyes and froze on his face. The other bullies turned and ran.

Sam flipped the nutcracker in the air. There was a small crack on one of its painted legs. He passed the nutcracker back to Iggy, who nodded. Yugo patted him on the back and smiled, though that was not obvious because of his enormous moustache.

Then, Iggy, Yugo and Sam made their way down Peppermint Lane without any further disturbance.

MORAL: If you ever need some nuts cracked, call an elf.

O SNOWMOBILE

A Christmas Carol, sung to the melody of O Christmas Tree


 SNOWMOBILE, O SNOWMOBILE,
 Your oil never needs changing
 O snowmobile, O snowmobile,
 Your oil never needs changing
 You're powered by green energy,
 Nuclear rods are carbon free,
 O snowmobile, O snowmobile,
 Your oil never needs changing!

O snowmobile, O snowmobile,
 Your headlights shine so brightly.
 O snowmobile, O snowmobile,
 Your headlights shine so brightly.
 They are so bright, my eyeballs twitch
 Could you install a dimmer switch?
 O snowmobile, O snowmobile,
 Your headlights shine so brightly.

O snowmobile, O snowmobile,
 Your silver wings so shiny
 O snowmobile, O snowmobile,
 Your silver wings so shiny
 Let's take a trip to Mexico
 Yugo does not have to know,
 O snowmobile, O snowmobile,
 Your silver wings so shiny!

Iggy's 10 Commandments of Christmas

FROM THE **BOOK OF IGGY**, CHAPTER 6, VERSES 17 - 34

AND LO, IGGY STOOD UPON THE SLOPES OF MOUNT BADADOOM upon a Christmas Day.

And he looked out upon the midday moon and upon all of the stars that twinkled in the heavens. And it was good.

And Iggy had eaten naught but the pudding of figs for a year and a day, and visions came upon him.

And in his delirium, he pronounced these Commandments ten, which are Commandments for all elves and people of good cheer to observe upon Christmas Day.

And verily, those who fail to honour Iggy's Commandments of Christmas shall be cursed as humbugs unto the end of all days.

And Iggy spake his Ten Commandments of Christmas thusly:

1. Thy tree shall be naught but pine or fir and shalt have naught but wooden boughs. Thou shalt not raise a tree of plastic nor of any other petroleum byproduct. Tinsel is optional.
2. Thou shalt wrap thy presents with paper and there shall be a time to place a bow upon each of them. Thou shalt ne'er use a gift bag, no matter how convenient such sack may be.
3. Thou shalt adorn thyself only in garb of red and green or other festive hue. The display of snowflakes is neither garish nor gauche and is desirable in all things.
4. Upon Christmas, there shall be a feast and the plates and goblets shall be filled in abundance. Thy host shan't let any plate upon his table stand empty, nor shall any cup of nog run dry.

5. Thy abode shall be illuminated by lights placed upon thy eaves and gutters and these lights shalt twinkle merrily. Ornaments placed upon the lawn are to be encouraged in all ways.

6. *The Sound of Music* is not a Christmas film, nor is *My Favourite Things* a Christmas song. Thou shalt enjoy other more festive amusements of the yule upon the Christmas time.

7. Thou shalt wish upon thy friends, thy family and thy fellow travellers a “Merry Christmas.” Thou shalt ne’er spake the phrase: “Happy Holidays” nor shalt thou utter “Seasons Greetings” for these are abominations in all ways.

8. Thou shalt give neither socks nor underpants; save unto the naughty, and unto them thou shalt give naught but socks and underpants tenfold.

9. Christmas is a time for tricks and japes of all kinds. And knoweth well that when it comes to japes, ‘tis far better to give than to receive.

10. Thou shalt honour Christmas in thy heart and keep it all the days of the year.

And these are the ten Christmas Commandments of Iggy.

And so it is written.

SAM ALONE

SAM SLEPT LATE THE DAY THE OTHER ELVES WENT TO PARIS.

It was Christmas break and Iggy had organized a tour of the City of Light for the elves of barracks B. All twenty of them. Of course, since Christmas is the busiest time of the year, elves can never take a vacation at Christmas. For elves, Christmas break happens in the spring. And this springtime, the elves were going to Paris.

That was why Iggy and eighteen other elves were crowded around the entrance of elves barracks B, waiting for the bus that would take them to the airport. If it had been a smaller trip, they could have made the flight in Yugo's snowmobile, but it was not, so they could not.

Iggy was careful, too. He counted every elf as they boarded the bus, including himself, so he could be sure that no elf was left behind and missed the tour. Unfortunately, in his excitement, he also counted the bus driver, who was also an elf, himself. Twenty elves in all. But only 19 of them were going to Paris.

The bus was late arriving at the airport and they were delayed even more by a confused elf, who tried to get through security with change in his pocket and a tube of toothpaste in his carry-on luggage. The resulting alarm shut down the airport for nearly twenty minutes and the elves were lucky to make their flight at all. It was not until the airplane was soaring high above the Arctic Circle that Iggy realized there was one elf missing.

Sam had been left home alone.

When Sam finally woke up at a quarter past lunchtime, all was quiet in the little apartment he shared with Iggy and Yugo. He scowled as he carefully assembled a pastrami, corned beef, salami, ham and turnip sandwich loaded with onions and extra mustard.

It is known far and wide that Sam has the finest sandwich bar at the North Pole. Indeed, it is the finest sandwich bar at either of the poles and any place in between. Sam had been building and expanding it for years. It ran the length of the elves' kitchen and extended out into the dining room. Sunk into the gleaming stainless steel countertop were row upon row of tidy little plastic bins filled with all manner of sandwich fixings. Of course, there was the usual array of cold cuts and toppings, but Sam's selection of sandwich fare went far beyond that.

Virtually every creature on Earth was represented in Sam's sandwich bar. Haunches of beef lined up along shanks of ham. There were three different kinds of duck confit in a row behind three different kinds of pastrami. There was bin filled with Montreal smoked meat and beside it another bin filled with Dorval smoked meat. Slices, balls and loaves of meat arrayed in abundance.

There were even vegetables, in a manner of speaking. Onions sliced and diced and tomatoes likewise. Leaves of lettuce, sprigs of parsley and whatever is that kale comes in.

And condiments. A cornucopia of condiments. Yellow mustard, gray mustard, green mustard and even blue mustard. Ketchup and catsup. Hot sauce, cold sauce and a variety of the more tepid sauces. Relish and chutney and jellied jam.

It was such a magnificent sandwich bar, that it was only a matter of time before it attracted the attention of Larry Slime and Harv Derkins, the infamous "Hungry Bandits." Larry and Harv were responsible for a string of burglaries across the North Pole. However, they never stole money or jewellery. Rather, they made their way directly to the kitchen, cleaning out iceboxes as quick as a flash and taking every speck of food from the cupboards. Any crumbs left behind (and there were few of those) were much too small for a mouse.

And now, with elves barracks B empty for the Christmas break, Larry and Harv set their sights on the biggest prize of all: Sam's sandwich bar.

"Think of the feast we'll have," said Harv, wiping a blob of drool from his chin.

"Such a feast!" said Larry with glee. "Lemons and turnips and pears!"

“Oh my!” said the equally gleeful Harv.

Larry and Harv had been casing out Sam’s place for weeks, waiting for the opportunity to strike. Now it had come. The Hungry Bandits watched with rising anticipation as the elves of Barracks B filed into the airport bus. They even counted twenty elves passing through the bus doors to be sure the place would be empty.

They waited until dark to make their move. By 4:30 in the afternoon, the sun had set⁷ and Larry and Harv crept through the deep spring snow to Iggy’s window. They did not have to break the lock on the window. In fact, there was no lock on the window. Iggy was such a trusting sort that it had never occurred to him that anyone would ever try to come through the window without asking for permission first.

Larry and Harv did not seek permission before they climbed through the unlocked window and into Iggy’s bedroom. It was immaculate. There was a place for everything, and everything was in its place. Books were neatly (and alphabetically) organized on tidy bookshelves. Iggy’s few possessions were laid out in straight rows on his clean desktop. Harv stepped across the crisply made bed, leaving large wet footprints on the bedspread. Larry followed right after, leaving even larger and wetter footprints.

They slunk across the freshly vacuumed carpet, leaving more large, wet footprints in their wake. They reached the door and then leaned out and listened carefully. Not a creature was stirring.

“Let’s go,” said Harv and he stepped out into the hall. His foot landed squarely on a small toy car. The car spun away from under him and he fell face first onto a small pile of Lego™. It has been said that there is nothing more painful than falling face first onto a pile of Lego™ and whoever said it was exactly right.

Harv screamed and pulled his head up from the Lego™ pile. A small yellow piece was lodged in his nose. Harv shook his head to try and work it loose, but it was stuck tight.

Larry was having problems of his own. He had followed close behind Harv and, while he avoided stepping on a little metal car, he did step on a rake, which

⁷ Sunset comes early at the North Pole in the springtime. But that changes quickly. In only a few weeks, Larry and Harv would have had to wait until after midnight to make their move. The North Pole is a strange place.

swung up in a flash and cracked him hard across the forehead. Dazed, Larry took a step backwards and stepped on another rake which cracked him hard across the back of the head.

Larry gasped in pain. “Why would anybody at the North Pole even have a rake?”

By this time, Harv had worked his way back to his feet. He stepped on a third rake, which slammed into his face. On the one hand, it knocked the Lego™ piece out of his nose, but on the other hand, his nose began bleeding so profusely he was forced to shove the Lego™ back into his nose to stop it.

Harv staggered over to Larry and grabbed his arm. “Come on,” he said and led Larry a few steps down the hall. Along the way, they passed a tall bookcase. The bookcase wobbled a bit because there was a golf ball positioned under a missing leg. Larry stepped around another little car and bumped into the bookcase, which immediately tipped over and crashed down on both of them.

It has been said, and rightly so, that having a bookcase fall down on you is nearly as painful as falling face first onto a pile of Lego™. Of course, having a bookcase fall down on you and crush you on top of a pile of Lego™ is quite painful indeed. It took several minutes for Larry and Marv to climb out from under the fallen bookcase and heaps of heavy books. They sat, side by side in the cluttered hall and fought to catch their breath.

“I’ve had enough of this baloney,” said Larry. “No sandwich bar is worth this trouble.”

“Let’s go to Denny’s,” said Harv. You always get a good meal at Denny’s.”

Larry and Harv stood up and made their way gingerly around various pointed objects scattered about the hall. However, Harv failed to notice the iron that was lying face up and turned to high. When he stepped on it, his boot sole melted and stuck fast. Harv was forced to leave that boot behind and hop one footed out of Iggy’s window and into the snow.

It turns out that none of the traps and obstacles had been planned or deliberately placed there by Sam to thwart the burglars. Unlike Iggy, Sam is just a slob. He could have put away all of those rakes, he just never got around to it.

A few hours later, Iggy and Yugo burst into the little apartment, panting from running all the way from the airport. They found Sam sleeping in his big easy chair with a half-eaten sandwich in his hand.

“Sam!” shouted Iggy. “Are you all right?”

“What happened here?” asked Yugo.

Sam slowly opened one eye. “Where have you two been all day? I think the bookcase fell over again.”

Iggy and Yugo stared at Sam. Not one to be outdone, Sam stared right back. Iggy said, “We’ve been in Paris, Sam. You missed the flight.”

“We came all the way back to make sure you were okay,” said Yugo. “It was a very long trip.”

“Was that today?” asked Sam. He took a bite and then asked, “can I make you guys a sandwich?”

The End

Merry Christmas

Iggy, Yugo and Sam Will Return In:

The Naughtier List

or

The Very Hungry Elf

or

I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus on Snapchat

or

Six Months in a Leaky Snowmobile

or

Something Else Entirely



www.iggyugoandsam.com