

CHRISTMAS: BOSS BATTLE



An Iggy, Yugo and Sam Adventure





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
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The Treasure of the Claus
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What Are You Waiting For ... Christmas?
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Iggy, Yugo and Sam in the War on Christmas
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Died Hard
Sam Alone and Other Christmas Crackers
Iggy, Yugo and Sam and the Gelatinous Mass from Outer Space
Christmas: Boss Battle

In which Iggy goes first,
Yugo summons his snowmobile by remote control,
Sam stops for a sandwich or two, and
Nutmeg gets elfnapped.

And in which Iggy, Yugo and Sam save Christmas
(With a little help from Nutmeg).

“He’s got a long white beard and chubby cheeks, you know
He’s got a team of reindeer with coats glistening with snow,
He’s got a belly that hangs to the ground,
He’s the jolliest elf around ...”

- The Red Nosed Ramblers, *I’m Gonna Meet Him Tonight*

“Socks (knee high)
Santa how could you let me down?
It doesn’t slip or slide or spring or make a sound that rocks
Hey, why’d you stuff my stocking with a lousy pair of socks?”

- Socks, *J.D. McPherson*

“He's Penguin, James Penguin
That dapper little guy
Like a well-dressed duck in a three piece tux
He's Santa's secret spy”

- Brad Paisley, *Penguin, James Penguin*

“Socks (tube socks)
This is the worst gift I ever got,
It doesn’t beep or buzz or bop or rattle in the box
Why’d you waste the paper on a lousy pair of socks?”

- Socks, *J.D. McPherson*

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE!



SANTA

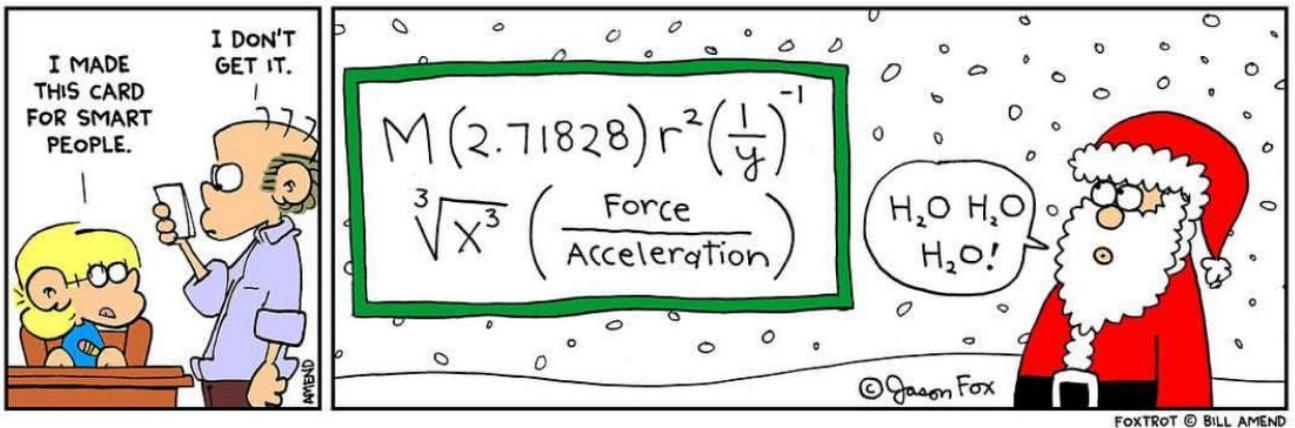


SATAN



SANTANA

Nobody said there would be math ...



(The solution to Jason's math problem is found on p. 25)

ALL OF THE ELVES AT THE NORTH POLE LIKED CHRISTMAS A LOT. Of course, they did, for they were Christmas elves and elves and Christmas go together like turkey legs and cranberry sauce.

It was scarcely three weeks until Christmas and the North Pole was abuzz with activity. There were buzzes everywhere. There were buzzing telephones and buzzing electrical cables and buzzing buzz saws. Even the buzziest of bee hives did not buzz as much as the North Pole at Christmas time.

There were no bees abuzz at the North Pole. Bees prefer a warmer climate with flowers in abundance. The North Pole has toys in abundance, but flowers are hard to find.¹ There are only two seasons at the North Pole. There is winter, which starts when the sun sets in late September and leaves everything in frozen darkness. In April, the sun comes up. This is the second season at the North Pole, which the elves call “also winter, but sunny.”

The buzz persisted in the cold dark winter night, bee-less though it was. And the buzz was loudest at the little workshop at the corner of Mistletoe Road and Sugar Plum Lane. Iggy and Yugo were at their usual spots, sawing and sanding and welding and soldering when Sam arrived, late as usual.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam were elves. The sort of elves you would find in a workshop at the North Pole. They were dressed in red and green velvet, with bells on the toes of their pointed red and green shoes. Iggy was the one on the left. Not that left, the other side. He was the one with the pointy nose and the pointy chin and the dark black hair that points in all directions. His eyes are dark, but they do not seem that way, for they always twinkle brightly. Yugo was the one in the middle, with the thick black moustache that covered most of his face, though

¹ One species of bee, *bombus polaris*, better known as the Arctic Bumblebee, can sometimes be found as far north as the Arctic Circle. But once you get past that, it is only elves and the occasional puffin.

not his brown eyes. They twinkled too, for that is the elf way. Yugo flipped over the electric train he had built and quickly engraved an elegant letter 'Y' on the bottom. His fingers were nimble and quick; he drew it freehand in but a moment.

And then there was Sam, who had dawdled over lunch, for lunch was his favourite hobby. Sam could be charitably described as "big-boned", though his bones were no bigger than the next elf's. But those bones had to hold a lot of elf together, for Sam was by far the biggest elf at the North Pole. He tipped the scales at nearly a hundred kilos, which is a lot of kilos when you are scarcely a meter tall. Sam had a round belly and a round face which sat atop two or three round chins. He had curly brown hair and a perpetual scowl, though scowling was not the elf way at all.

Sam landed in his usual chair with a loud huff.

"Huff," huffed Sam.

"How was lunch," Iggy asked, cheerfully. Cheerfully was the elf way, and Iggy was more cheerful than most. Iggy had a resting happy face and his optimism was optimal, for an elf. If someone gave Iggy a glass filled precisely half way with water and then asked him if the glass were half full or half empty, Iggy would say, "wow! A glass of water!" and drink it down on the spot.

Sam shrugged. "About average, I suppose."

"You ate that much?" asked Yugo. An average lunch for Sam was the same as three or four average lunches for anyone else. "No wonder you're late."

Sam scowled. "I was hungry." He set his satchel down beside his usual stool. Then he reached into it and pulled out a large, feisty black and white bird. The bird called out unhappily and kicked a pair of angry flippers as Sam plopped it down in a damp puddle on the work bench.

"What is that?" asked Iggy. The angry bird turned to Iggy and hissed at him.

"That's James," said Sam. "He's my emotional support penguin."

Yugo raised a large black eyebrow. "You have an emotional support penguin, now?"

"Nutmeg felt a support animal might help me connect with my 'Inner Sam'," said Sam, blushing a little. Nutmeg was Sam's occasional girlfriend, in that she would occasionally go on a date with him. "She thinks I need this penguin."

Yugo raised a bushy eyebrow.

“What was I supposed to say? You know Nutmeg is way out of my league.”²
Yugo nodded and lowered his eyebrow.

James the penguin cawed loudly and flapped his stubby flippers. “He’s certainly an emotional penguin,” said Iggy.

“I know,” said Sam. “So far, all he has done is squawk and leave penguin droppings all over the apartment.”

Iggy winced. He shared that apartment with Sam and knew that he would be the one to sweep up penguin droppings once his shift ended.

“Yugo leaned back into his ergonomic stool. “James seems pretty excitable. Are you sure that he is a support penguin?”

“What do you mean?” asked Sam, with an unelfly scowl.

Yugo paused and then looked back at Sam. “Are you sure that you are not his emotional support elf?”

James squawked loudly and his orange beak bobbed up and down.

Sam’s face darkened and he scowled at Yugo an even more unelfly way. “Those are fighting words,” he said and rolled one of his green velvet sleeves up past his elbow as he clenched his fist.

James squawked again. Sam rolled his sleeve back down and laid his hand on the back of the grubby damp bird. “There, there, little prince,” he said.

Iggy and Yugo exchanged a sideways look. “Enough of this luncy chatter,” said Iggy. “It’s time to get to work.”

Yugo rolled up his own green velvet shirt sleeves and reached for his utility hammer. It was his own invention – a hammer, but like a pocket knife that had a dozen other tools folded into it. Yugo’s hammer had over five hundred functions. It had a fold out screwdriver, magnifying glass and even a bayonet. It even connected to wi-fi, so that Yugo could keep up with the latest news and sports scores. He even ran his twitter account, @yugoshammer from one of the implements that fit into the handle.

² She certainly was.

And with that, Iggy, Yugo, and Sam, together with the dozens of other elves around them and a slightly flustered support penguin, set to work, sawing and sanding and shaping toys for Christmas.



ANY A WISE MAN (AND MANY WISE WOMEN, for that matter) have long pondered

the question: where do all the toys come from at Christmas time? Of course, we all know that they come from a winter workshop, like the one where Iggy, Yugo and Sam were even then buzzing away making toys.

But where do the toys come from? Toys are made of wood and springs and other things. The only things in abundance at the North Pole are snow and icy and icy snow. Wood and springs and other things like are not to be found at all. Every toy in Santa Claus' big red sack ultimately comes from somewhere else. Every one of those toys comes to the North Pole on the old N.P.L.: The North Pole Line.

The North Pole Line is the train that brings all the things that make Christmas happen. It is a hundred cars long and drawn by an old steam locomotive that is as red as Santa Claus' nose. Every day the North Pole Line steams up the twin railroad tracks to the North Pole from points south, with each of its hundred cars filled with bright copper kettles and warm woollen mittens and everything else elves might need to keep their workshop busily buzzing away.

There it is now, the lamp at the front casting a beam of light on the drifts piled high along the side of the tracks. A horn blasts merrily to announce its arrival and dozens of elves greet it at the big station just south of the North Pole, and begin their day's work unloading all of the door bells and sleigh bells and other bells and wares stacked to the top of every one of the hundred carriages. Soon a row of carts will file into each of the workshops piled high with blocks and clocks and balls and dolls for the elves to build for Christmas.

The North Pole Line. That is where the toys come from.

NOT EVERYONE IS AN ELF, AND NOT EVERYONE LIKED Christmas a lot. Some unhappy folks do not like Christmas even a little.

At that very moment, one of those unhappy folks paced in a twisted, broken shack high atop a mountain of snow and ice, just south of the North Pole.³ The owner of that tilted and uneven shack was a most unhappy fellow indeed. He strode up to his broken window and glowered down as the North Pole Line brought another load of goodies to the happy little elves below.

The glowering man was certainly no elf. He stood nearly seven-foot tall, with broad beefy shoulders half as wide as that. The muscles in his long arms bulged in odd places like a nylon stocking filled with pumpkins. Each of his enormous hands was the size of a Christmas ham. His tattered plaid shirt stretched tightly around a heavily muscled chest as big as a piece of office furniture. His waist was narrow, for such a large man, but his massive legs were thick and hard like rolls of carpet.

His long beard was braided and hung half way down his great breast. His beard, like the mop of natty hair atop his head was flaming red, as brilliant and eerie as the flames of Hell itself.

He poked his big head through his broken window and cursed at the little steam engine as it puffed its way through a mid December snowstorm. And such awful curses they were. The pot of beet and onion stew that was warming on his fire curdled into hard lumps at the sound.

But his voice, deep and loud as it was, was drowned out by the wind and the cheerful ‘toot’ the little train sounded as it chugged into the warm lighted windows of the North Pole Station.

He pulled his head back through the window and slammed the shutters closed. He glanced over at the curdled stew in his pot and cursed some more, which only made the lumps of stew creep further into the deepest, darkest reaches of the pot.

It was beginning to look a lot like Christmas and Stocky John hated Christmas.

Stocky John hated the whole Christmas season. He hated it from the moment his little transistor radio started playing Christmas Carols in October until the

³ Of course, every mountain of snow and ice which is *near* the North Pole, is also south of the North Pole. From the North Pole, every mountain, near and far, is south.

mall doors closed after the last Boxing Day Sale was finished. Stocky John hated the whole lot of it.

No one knew why, though it had always been so. Maybe it was the constant draughts that blew through his horrid little house. Maybe it was the holes in his socks or too much beet and onion stew. But whatever the reason, the draughts or his socks or his stew, he paced his cabin, glowering and cursing the North Pole, flying reindeer and Santa Claus. But most of all, he cursed the little elves who made all the toys.

He knew what those elves were doing that very moment. While Stocky John paced to and fro in his tilted shack and glowered at his stew, the elves down below were hanging mistletoe and wreathes and stockings by the chimney with care. They were mixing up cocoa (sometimes with a little nip of rum or some of Grannie's special North Pole brew) and singing carols and planning their Christmas feast.

There would be no beets or onions in the elves' Christmas feast. There would be sweets and puddings and pies with mince. Mince was something that Stocky John could not stand in the least.⁴

Stocky John paced and glowered at the beets and onions in his larder and pondered about how he could do away with this whole Christmas thing. For over fifty years he had watched from his stoop as Santa Claus flew away south,⁵ his sleigh filled to bursting with teddy bears and roller skates, wooden soldiers and video games. It would have made his blood boil if he was not always so cold.

Stocky John stopped in the tracks he had made in the snow that had blown in through his broken window. He grinned a wide stocky smile, his broken yellow teeth gleaming beneath his straggly red moustache. "I know just what to do."

He laughed an awful, stocky laugh. His size 18 feet felt light as he skipped past his stew pot and into the next little room, with visions of unhappy elves dancing in his head.

⁴ Mince is a spicy preserve, comprised of a mixture of dried fruit, apple, candied fruit and spices steeped in rum or brandy. Stocky John does not know what he is missing. It is delicious.

⁵ As noted, the only direction Santa Claus can fly is south. When he wants to return home, all Santa Claus needs to do is to head north and keep flying north until he starts heading south again.

NUTMEG DANCED THROUGH THE WORKSHOP. Her light feet skipped across the concrete floor with a grace that was unexpected from one whose legs were so short. Nutmeg was short all over, however, like all elves. She had bright green eyes and red hair that gleamed in the workshop lights. She wore a green, crushed velvet dress with green and white striped stockings.

Sam thought that Nutmeg was the prettiest elf at the North Pole, and not many other elves disagreed with him. She picked up an order sheet and skipped back to her work bench. She winked at Iggy as she passed by and he blushed, his face turning as red as his velvet cap.

She leaned over Sam's shoulder. "How are you and James getting along?"

Sam was so startled he tossed his screwdriver into the air.

"We are getting along just fine," he said as his screwdriver fell back down and stabbed into the work bench right in front of him.

"You really should be more careful with your tools," said Yugo.

Sam just scowled.

Nutmeg flipped up her order sheet. "Oh no," she said.

"What is it?" asked Iggy.

"An order for 200 'Elf on a Shelves'⁶", she said. "I hate those things."

"Really?" asked Yugo. Yugo liked building everything. When he built an 'Elf on a Shelf', he even built the shelf.

"It objectifies us as elves," said Nutmeg. "I mean just look at it. The elf is, literally, an object."

"All toys are objects," said Iggy.

"It gets worse," said Nutmeg. Sam started to roll his eyes, but then stopped when Nutmeg glared at him. "The elf on the shelf is a little sneak. It hides and spies

⁶ There is no universally accepted way to pluralize the popular children's toy 'Elf on a Shelf'. Some grammarians suggest the correct pluralization is 'Elves on a Shelf.' Others insist that 'Elf on Shelves' is the preferred usage. We have adopted the approach recommended by a team of scholars from the universities of Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge who studied this problem for over six months and eventually wrote a 600 page treatise on the subject.

on the children and then it tattles on them to Santa Claus. Real elves are nothing like that.”

“It’s just a toy,” Yugo began, but Nutmeg silenced him with an elfly “shush.”

“The whole thing is just so speciest,” she said.

Sam nodded thoughtfully in order to avoid being on the receiving end of another one of Nutmeg’s ‘shushes’.

She leaned over Sam’s shoulder and twirled a strand of her auburn hair about her little finger. “Meet you at the Walrus, later?” she asked. The Walrus was the *Walrus and Ulu*, the biggest and busiest elf pub at the North Pole.

“I’ll be there as soon as my shift is over,” said Sam.

“Probably a few minutes before his shift is over,” added Iggy with a smile.

“Shush,” shushed Sam.

“See you later then,” said Nutmeg. Sam stared as she skipped off to her work bench to build elf objects.

“She’s going to break your heart, you know,” said Yugo.

“Not a problem,” said Sam. “She can’t hurt my feelings, because I don’t have any feelings.”

Iggy shook his head. Sam could put up a brave front if he wanted, but Iggy knew that it Sam would need a whole waddle of emotional support penguins⁷ if Nutmeg ever broke his heart.

Yugo just smiled and got back to inserting miniature spare tires into the miniature trunks of miniature metal cars. It was delicate work.

⁷ A group of penguins is called a ‘waddle’. A group of puffins is a ‘burrow’ or an ‘improbability’.

“**T**HE FIRST THING I’LL NEED,” hissed Stocky John, although there was nobody in his draughty shack to listen to him, “is me coat and me hat. I can’t go about wreckin’ Christmas in these old rags.”

He dug through his closet until he found his old black morning coat⁸ (size 68, extra long) and his shabby top hat with the torn brim. He tugged the coat on over his broad shoulders. It was a rather tight pinch, small in the shoulders and too narrow to do up the one remaining button in the front. Stocky John set his hat atop his wiry red hair and then finished the look with an old black shoe lace that he knotted around his neck as a tie.

He wandered over to his grimy mirror and gave himself a good look. His coat was soiled and patched in places. He gave his top hat a rakish tilt and grinned his awful, stocky grin and said, “Perfect. With this coat and this hat, I’ll ruin Christmas in style.”

Now, Stocky John was not new at villainy. Villainy was his middle name, which only went to show that his parents were peculiar, yet had incredible foresight.

He sat on his wobbly two-legged stool, pressed his long, calloused fingers together and pondered an evil stocky ponder. “I must stop Christmas from coming, but how?” he said, to no one in particular, for there was no one else to hear him in his decrepit little hovel.

His first notion was to break into every house in the world and pinch the presents from under each tree: He would take the pop guns, the bicycles, the roller skates and drums. Why, he would do even better than that, he would take the dinner feast, the popcorn, the plums and all the rest. He would pull down the stockings until there was nothing left on the walls but hooks and some wire.

Stocky John grinned with an evil leer. Then he slowly frowned as he realized that his plan was completely impractical. Nobody could get into every house in the world in one night. It was impossible. He counted on his gnarled fingers as he did the math in his head. There were a hundred million or more houses to

⁸ A ‘morning coat’ is a formal item of clothing in every English gentleman’s wardrobe. It is a single-breasted jacket with knee length tails that curve in the back, to permit the wearer to easily ride a horse. It is considered formal wear for the daytime and is not to be worn after 6:00 PM.

rob. Even if he traveled from east to west and gained a few hours, he would have to steal from almost a thousand houses a second.

Not only that, he would have to travel several hundred miles a second, just to complete the trip. The air resistance would be formidable. Anyone who even attempted such a feat would surely immediately burst into flames before he reached his first stop. And how would he carry all of the presents he stole? They must weigh a million tons or more.

No, the whole enterprise was completely impossible. He wondered how Santa Claus was able to pull it off every year.

If Stocky John was going to ruin Christmas, he was going to have to get ahead of the whole Christmas thing. Just then, his thoughts were interrupted by a happy toot in the distance. Stocky John raced to his window and threw open the sash. He peered out into the gloomy Arctic night and grinned a sour stocky grin. He had an idea. A wonderful, awful idea.

“The North Pole Line,” he said, again to no one in particular, “that’ll be the trick.”

Stocky John’s new plan was simplicity itself. All he had to do was to stop the North Pole Line. If there was no North Pole Line, there would be no toys and if there were no toys, there could be no Christmas.

Now, Stocky John knew in his foul villainous heart, as all foul villains do, that the only sure way to stop a steam locomotive in its tracks, was to tie a damsel to them. The tracks, that is. “All I need is a damsel ...” Stocky John went back to his grimy window and looked around. Damsels were scarce at the North Pole and there was none to be found.

“If I can’t find a damsel,” Stocky John sneered, “I’ll use an elf instead. There are plenty of those at the North Pole. I just need to find me a pretty one.”

With that, Stocky John cackled a villainous cackle and started down the icy slope to the sleepy little Christmas village below.

STOCKY JOHN SLITHERED AND SLUNK BETWEEN THE LITTLE COTTAGES where the elves lay snoozing on their little elf beds. They dreamt sweet dreams without care, little realizing the nightmare that crept about outside. Stocky John peered through their dark windows, looking for the prettiest elf he could find. Stocky John peered through a great many dark windows at a great many elves, a most unpleasant smile on his weathered and blistered face the whole while.

At last he reached a tidy cottage at the end of the peppermint cobblestone road, with pink window frames and pink shutters. He silently tore open the shutters and peered inside. He drew back, with a lustful grin, then turned to peer through the window a second time. “This is the one,” the old devil hissed.

He looked around for a way inside, but the window was locked and so was the front door. He puzzled for a bit and then looked up at the thin plume of smoke wafting from the little chimney. “Of course,” he whispered to himself. “If Santa Claus can do it, then why not old Stocky John?” And he climbed up onto the roof and shuffled to the chimney. He took a deep breath and then scrambled into the fireplace flue.

He inched cautiously down the narrow passageway, feeling for the bottom with his toes. He got stuck once, for a moment or two, and then he fell to the bottom with a bone rattling thud.

Nutmeg awoke with a start. She called out, “Sam, is that you?” Sam was known to arrive with an unannounced thud from time to time. Suddenly a large shadow filled her little door frame.

“You’re not Sam,” said Nutmeg, drawing her covers around her.

The shadowy figure stepped into the room, removed his top hat and leaned forward in an exaggerated bow. “Please allow me to introduce myself,” Stocky John was too large to fit comfortably in the little elf cottage and remained bowed over. He smiled and his yellow teeth gleamed in the light from the hallway. “My name is John. But my friends call me Stocky John.”⁹

“What are you doing here?” asked Nutmeg. A reasonable question, to be sure.

Stocky John smiled more broadly and placed his top hat back atop his bowed head. “Why I am here to ruin Christmas. But I’m gonna need yer help to do it.”

⁹ This was a lie. Stocky John did not have any friends.

Nutmeg glared at Stocky John in disgust. “Well, you can’t have my help. Now, get out of my house!”

“You misunderstand me,” purred Stocky John. What Stocky John considered a purr sounded like the creak and hiss of old and broken plumbing. “I’m not lookin’ fer volunteers. Consider this a kidnapping.”¹⁰ Stocky John took a long step forward and reached out to nab Nutmeg.

Nutmeg did not scream or try to hide. Instead, she grabbed the small perfume bottle on her night stand and sprayed the works into Stocky John’s face. Stocky John staggered backwards and howled in pain. He brought his gigantic fist down on Nutmeg’s little chest of drawers and shattered it into toothpicks. His other hand scraped the perfume from his eyes as Nutmeg leapt from her bed and delivered a roundhouse kick right into Stocky John’s solar plexus.

Stocky John was more surprised than hurt by Nutmeg’s kick. He blinked his eyes open and then grabbed Nutmeg by the waist before she could kick him again.

In the next moment, Nutmeg found herself thrown over Stocky John’s broad back. He turned and shuffled through the door.

Nutmeg pounded on Stocky John’s back with her fists. It was like punching a cement wall and was just as effective. “Stop that,” said Stocky John. He made his way back to Nutmeg’s fireplace. He pulled her off his back and made ready to stuff her up the chimney.

“What are you doing?” Nutmeg shouted.

“We’re leavin’,” said Stocky John.

“I have a door, you know,” said Nutmeg.

Stocky John pulled her back from the chimney. “I know that.”

“Then why were you trying to shove me up the chimney?”

¹⁰ The word “kidnapping” derives from the old practice of snatching (“nabbing”) a child (“kid”) to provide cheap (“free”) labour. What Stocky John was describing was more correctly called an elf nabbing, or “elfnapping”.

Stocky John paused. He could not have her thinking that he was some sort of an imbecile.¹¹ So, he thought up a lie and he thought it up quick. “It was a test,” he said.

“A test to see whether I knew I had a door in my own house?”

“Yeah, that sort of a test.” With that, Stocky John threw Nutmeg back over his shoulder. He kicked open the front door and stamped out into the dark North Pole street.

“You’ll never get away with this,” said Nutmeg. “My boyfriend will come for me.”

Stocky John snorted. “Your elf boyfriend?”

“You’ll be sorry,” said Nutmeg. “He has clever friends.”

Stocky John snorted again and stomped through the deep snow towards the tracks of the North Pole Line. Nutmeg squirmed and punched him the whole while, but she was no more of a nuisance to Stocky John than a mosquito might have been. A mosquito which swore a lot, to be sure, but no more of a nuisance than that.

They continued in this fashion, Stocky John marching through the snow and huffing like the North Pole Line itself and Nutmeg swearing like a stevedore¹² the whole while.

Finally, they reached a bare line of track and Stocky John threw Nutmeg to the ground with a satisfied grunt. Nutmeg landed and let out a less than satisfied grunt.

Stocky John worked as quick as a flash. In less than a minute, he had Nutmeg wrapped in twine from her perky nose to her delicate toes. He laid her down roughly on the tracks and stepped back to admire his handiwork.

“You can’t win, you know!” Nutmeg shouted through the rope wrapped around her mouth.

¹¹ Nutmeg already thought that Stocky John was a bit dim, or at least a few slices short of a loaf.

¹² “Stevedore” is great word, isn’t it? A stevedore is the fellow who works at a dock loading and unloading cargo from ships. Apparently, they swear a lot. Fun fact: There are no stevedores within 2500 miles of the North Pole. Stevedores are as scarce as damsels up there.

“I already have!” Stocky John cackled and twirled his long red moustache.

Nutmeg rolled her eyes. ““That’s a little cliché, don’t you think?”

Stocky John stopped cackling and pouted angrily. His pout was so angry that it melted the snow nearby. “Yer a terrible damsel in distress, ya know.”

“I’m no damsel,” said Nutmeg.

Stocky John leaned forward. “I know. But yer all I got.”

Nutmeg turned away. “I know that Sam and his friends are on their way. They’ll stop you. They save Christmas. It’s just what they do.”

Stocky John chuckled a sort of ‘ho ho ho.’ It sounded like ‘whee hee hee.’ “Let ‘em come,” he said. “They’re just pathetic little elves. They can’t save ya and they sure as shootin’ can’t save Christmas.”

“We’ll see about that,” said Nutmeg. And for the first time since she heard that unannounced thud in her fireplace, she allowed herself a tiny smile.



GGY AWOKE TO A RAPPING ON HIS BEDROOM DOOR, which quickly changed to a vigorous thumping. Iggy rose to answer the door. Before he could get there, Sam burst through, his eyes wide and frantic. “Get up Iggy, we have to go!”

Iggy adjusted his night cap. “Go where? It is the middle of the night.”

“There’s no time to explain,” Sam shouted in Iggy’s face.

Iggy wiped his cheek with the back of his hand. Sam grabbed him by the other hand and pulled him out of the room. “Come on, we have to get Yugo. Yugo will know what to do.” Sam ran down the hall, towing Iggy in his wake. “Yugo! Get up! It’s an emergency.”

Yugo stepped out of his bedroom, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. “What is it this time, Sam. Did we run out of bologna again?”

“It’s worse than that! Nutmeg has been elfnapped!”

“Elfnapped?” asked Iggy.

“Like kidnapping, but with elves,” explained Yugo.

“Look at this,” Sam said. He frantically pulled out his elphone¹³, wiped a blob of mustard from the screen and then showed it to the others.



“She has been elfnapped, all right,” said Iggy. It says so right there.”

“I know what it says, Iggy,” said Sam.

Yugo was already pulling on his red velvet overalls. “We’d better get going.” He pulled his hammer down from a shelf and slipped the handle into the hammer loop¹⁴ on his left leg.

“Let me get a sandwich first,” said Sam.

“No Sam!” said Iggy. “Nutmeg needs our help!”

“And she did say no sandwiches. It says so right there,” said Yugo, pointing at the phone screen.

“I know what it says, Yugo,” said Sam. “But I won’t be a minute.”

Sam met them at the front door several minutes later, with a half-eaten pastrami and anchovy sandwich in his hand. “What are you guys waiting for? Let’s go! Nutmeg’s in trouble!”

Together, they marched out of Elves Barracks B. They stopped beneath a candy cane lamp on the corner.

“Nutmeg did not say where she was,” said Iggy. “How will we find her?”

¹³ Elphone. It is like an iphone. But for elves.

¹⁴ It is really called a “hammer loop.” You can look it up.

Yugo stroked his moustache thoughtfully. "Let's start at her little pink cottage on Mistletoe Road. That's where the elfnappers must have found her. Maybe they left some clues."

Sam pushed the last of his pastrami and anchovy sandwich into his mouth. "Maybe they left some more sandwiches, too," he said as he wiped his hands on his shirt.

Together, the three elves ran down Candy Cane Lane, then they turned left on Sugar Plum Drive. They carried on for another two blocks until they reached Gumdrop Alley, where they stopped to look left, then right and then left again before safely crossing the street. From there, they took a shortcut across Holly Bough Square and then turned left onto Mistletoe Road. They stopped, panting, in front of the last house on the street. It had pink windows covered with pink shutters.

The three elves looked about frantically. Then, Iggy grabbed Sam by the arm. "I think I found a clue." He pointed at a track of footprints left in the deep snow that meandered away from the little pink cottage until they disappeared over the black horizon.

Yugo studied the tracks in the snow. "These footprints were made by a size 18 boot. Maybe larger. And they are spaced at least two metres apart. Our elfnapper must be nearly seven feet tall. And judging by the depth of these impressions, he must weight nearly four hundred pounds. Whoever this elfnapper is, he is a ponderous fellow, indeed."

Sam snorted. "People say that I'm a ponderous fellow. But I'm just stocky."

"Then this is a very stocky elfnapper," said Iggy.

"I wonder where these tracks lead," said Yugo.

"I wonder if Nutmeg left any sandwiches in the fridge," said Sam, and he stepped into the little pink cottage to have a look around.

Iggy shook his head. Yugo jumped from boot print to boot print. Iggy followed. Sam joined them, after a few minutes, with a freshly made corned beef and pickle sandwich in his hand.

They leapt from boot print to boot print until they had left their little Christmas village behind.

“ SEE THEM!”

SHOUTED IGGY. He pointed at a pair of shadows on the horizon.

It was nearly dawn when they caught up to Stocky John. Or it would have been nearly dawn anywhere but the North Pole.

Yugo squinted. “Did he tie Nutmeg to the train tracks? What sort of a sicko ties someone to the train tracks?”

Sam dropped his sandwich. “That guy is huge.” If anything, Stocky John looked even larger and more ominous than usual in the dark North Pole dawn, dressed in his tattered top hat and tails. In a century or more of saving Christmas, this was by far the biggest foe they had ever faced. They had just met their own boss. If they were going to save Nutmeg, they were going to have to win a real boss battle.

“Now you’re going to get it!” shouted Nutmeg. Stocky John just smiled.

Iggy went first. He took three steps and then jumped leapt at Stocky John. Iggy could jump really high, for an elf. Still, he was only an elf, and his first blow only reached up to Stocky John’s belly. It was like punching a plank. Stocky John did not even seem to notice. He just reached down and grabbed Iggy by the waist and then flipped him casually to the side. Iggy landed in a heap in a snow bank. He pulled himself to his feet, dusted the snow from his tunic and charged again. This time Stocky John was ready and swatted Iggy with the back of his hand, which sent him tumbling back to his snow heap.

Yugo came at Stocky John now, bouncing from one toe to the other as he approached the giant villain in a traditional boxer’s stance. Stocky John never learned the Marquess of Queensbury Rules,¹⁵ but he did know how to punch. He drew back his big fist and then threw a wild haymaker at Yugo. Yugo felt like he had been punched by a house. He dropped to one knee and gave his head a shake. For a moment he was sure he could see little cartoon birds flying around his head. Then, he stood up and raised his fists. He gave Stocky John a head fake and then went straight for his solar plexus. He never made it. Stocky John was not fooled by Yugo’s feint and threw a second punch from with his other

¹⁵ The Marquess of Queensberry Rules are a code of twelve rules for the conduct of boxing matches which were first published in 1867. They received the name after earning the endorsement of John Sholto Douglas, the 9th Marquess of Queensberry. Fun fact: The current Marquess of Queensbury (the 12th) is a gentleman named David Harrington Angus Douglas.

hand that Yugo never saw coming. He flew backwards and landed in the snow heap next to Iggy.

It was Sam's turn to join the fight. Sam did not know the Marquess of Queensbury Rules, either. He was a lover,¹⁶ not a brawler. He approached cautiously, Stocky John's dark and beady eyes following his every move. Then he pulled up the satchel hung over his shoulder and opened the flap.

James the penguin shot out of Sam's bag, flapping his vestigial wings and furiously biting at everything in reach. A surprised Stocky John stepped back from James' manic attack. "I wasn't expecting a penguin," he muttered as James bit and kicked his legs.

"Nobody expects the penguin!" shouted Sam and he joined James in the attack. Stocky John now had two foes angrily kicking and biting his shins. He gave Sam a ferocious slap that made his head spin nearly all the way around. This gave James an opening to latch onto Stocky John's ankle with his bill. However, like all water fowl, James had no teeth and Stocky John easily wriggled out of his grip.

Sam saw an opening and bit down on Stocky John's ankle himself. Stocky John kicked out his leg, but Sam held on tightly. James squawked and clawed at Stocky John with his webbed feet. Finally, Stocky John bent down and flicked his thick fingers at James. The penguin slid across the snow and finally stopped at Iggy's feet.

Meanwhile, Stocky John was having some difficulty extracting his leg from Sam's teeth. Sam had spent years strengthening his jaw muscles with extra helpings of sandwiches, turkey legs and pie and he was clamped on like a chubby vice. But this time, Stocky John kicked at him with his other foot and Sam took the full measure of Stocky John's size 18 Wellingtons right in the cheek. Sam lost his grip on the ankle. Stocky John kicked him again, punting him heels over head¹⁷ onto the snow bank beside Yugo.

A horn sounded in the distance with a mournful toot. The North Pole Line was approaching.

¹⁶ A lover of sandwiches, if nothing else.

¹⁷ The expression "head over heels" never made much sense. One's head is typically over one's heels. But if one finds that one's heels are over one's head, one is surely in a troublesome spot.

While all of this was going on, Nutmeg had struggled to get loose. She always took great pride in her long, carefully manicured fingernails. They were not only for show, they were extraordinarily useful for untying knots. By the time Sam had released the penguin, Nutmeg had worked herself free. Now she came at Stocky John from behind, flashing her nails like a badger's claws. Stocky John turned and Nutmeg scraped her nails across his face, leaving four parallel red lines across his cheek.

"You really are the worst damsel, ever," said Stocky John. "Now get back on those tracks." Nutmeg shook her head and laid a second set of red streaks across Stocky John's other cheek. A thin drop of blood slowly slid down to his bearded chin. Stocky John wiped the blood away with the back of his hand and smiled.

His other hand swept out and he grabbed Nutmeg by the throat. "I've got you now, my pretty." Nutmeg squirmed madly, but Stocky John just tightened his grip. Nutmeg started to see little cartoon birds of her own. Stocky John flipped her aside and she landed in a heap onto the heap of other elves on the snow heap. "You wait there while I get me rope. I'll be tying you up extra tight this time.

The elves heard another toot. It was not in the distance any more. The North Pole Line was getting closer.

Iggy got to his feet. "We are going to have to work together."

Yugo nodded. "It's the only way."

"But he's so big," said Sam. James the penguin just squawked.

Nutmeg had finally caught her breath. "Let's go then," she said. "Let's get him."

Stocky John was walking back to the snow heap when he heard a penguin squawk and Iggy shout "Elves attack!" Four elves and a penguin rushed at him in one final desperate charge. Stocky John dropped the rope. He grinned and raised his fists.



IVE HUNDRED METRES SOUTH, Old Dobber the engineer elf guided the North Pole Line into the final stretch of its journey. He checked his pocket watch. Ahead of schedule. Just the way he liked it. In a few more minutes he would reach the station and get the hot toddy he had been yearning for the last 300 miles.

Old Dobber had driven the North Pole Line for so long that he was known as Young Dobber when he started. Now he had a long white moustache that he waxed into looping curls. He wore red and green striped overalls and his white hair was covered with a green velvet engineer's cap. He was still as lively and quick as he was in Young Dobber's day.

The North Pole Line steamed over a little rise. That was when Old Dobber's twinkling eyes caught sight of some commotion ahead. He soon saw that it was more than a commotion. It was something of a hubbub, at the very least. It might have even been a kerfuffle. Whatever it was, it had no business near the railroad tracks.

Old Dobber gave the train's whistle a good pull and the North Pole Line tooted loudly. "Elves these days," muttered Old Dobber. "They used to have more sense than to play near the train tracks." He gave the horn another tug, but the kerfuffle did not disperse.

"Oh dear," said Old Dobber. He reached for the hand brake and hoped for the best.



T WAS A KERFUFFLE ALL RIGHT. Four elves and a penguin swarmed around Stocky John and unleashed a flurry of punches, kicks and penguin bites. The elves' barrage was relentless. When Stocky John swatted one of the elves aside, another elf appeared in its place. An elf or a very nasty penguin.

As determined as they were, the elves were simply outmatched. Stocky John was so big and so strong that he could knock down three elves at a time with his massive fists. Before long, all four elves lay in a heap at his feet.

Iggy got up first. “Come on guys. We’ve almost got him. One more.”

Yugo helped Sam and Nutmeg to their feet. “It’s hopeless,” said Sam.

“Maybe not,” shouted Yugo over the bellow of the train’s horn. “Let’s give it one more push. On my mark Go!”

The elves rushed again and gave Stocky John one final push.

It turned out that one more push was all they needed. Stocky John stumbled backwards onto the train tracks and right into the path of the oncoming

locomotive, which crashed into him with a sickening . It kept going, and

plowed through the snow pile with an horrific .

The North Pole Line, with Stocky John plastered to the front, skidded off the tracks and into large pile of snow which covered some very sharp pieces of ice.

Iggy, Yugo, Sam and Nutmeg got back onto their feet as the clouds of snow around them slowly settled back onto the ground.

“We did it!” said Iggy.

“Not so fast,” said Nutmeg. “The North Pole Line has been derailed, just like Stocky John wanted.”

Sam looked at the old steam engine, which had tipped onto its side and was deeply buried in the snow. There were a hundred other train carriages lined up on the tracks, filled with toy making supplies that were never going to reach the North Pole.

“It will take weeks to dig the train out of all that snow,” said Iggy.

“I have another idea,” said Yugo. He pulled a small black box from his pocket and pressed a flashing red button on the side. It could not have been more than a minute before Yugo’s bright red snowmobile sped through the snow drifts and stopped at his side.

Yugo’s snowmobile is not like any other machine in the world. It is powered by twin lithium nuclear reactors. It has a covered cabin big enough for at least four elves, with comfortable green and red plush seats, an icosaphonic sound system, air-conditioning, and an onboard waffle maker. The only things the snowmobile could not do were things Yugo had not thought of yet.

Yugo settled in to the driver's cabin of the snowmobile and logged into the onboard computer. The snowmobile had skis and winter tires for travelling around the North Pole, but Yugo tapped a few commands into his keyboard and then turned an orange dial.

The front skis retracted into the snowmobile and a set of metal rail wheels slid out in their place. Yugo guided the snowmobile up onto the tracks and then stepped out to connect the snowmobile's hitch to the hundred carriages of the North Pole Line. He stepped back to admire his work. "That should do it," he said.

Sam walked over to Yugo with his arms crossed. "So, you brought your snowmobile here just now by remote control?" said Sam.

"Yes," said Yugo. "Pretty cool, eh?"

"You had that remote control in your pocket this whole time."

"Yup."

"And your snowmobile has built in machine guns and laser beams and stuff like that doesn't it?" asked Sam.

"And a rocket launcher," said Yugo. "I've made a few modifications."

Sam nodded thoughtfully. He pushed a couple of loose teeth back in place with his tongue. "Rocket launcher, eh? Maybe, we should have led with that."

Old Dobber crawled out of the broken steam engine. His big white moustache was curled down. Nutmeg ran over to assist him, but he waved her away. He immediately regretted it. Young Dobber would never have turned away the prettiest elf at the North Pole that way.

Iggy and Sam peeled an unconscious Stocky John from the front of the steam engine and dragged him to the top of a pile of very sharp pieces of ice. "That's as far as I can go," said Sam. "He's too big."

Iggy had to agree. "But what should we do with him then?"

"He must have fifty broken bones or more," said Yugo. "Probably best to leave him on ice for a while."

Yugo pressed a blue button and the rear doors of the snowmobile rose open on smooth hydraulics. Iggy, Sam, Nutmeg and Old Dobber piled into the back seat. Yugo fired up the lithium fusion reactors and then threw the snowmobile into

gear. Sparks flew off the snowmobile's squealing wheels. But slowly, the snowmobile began to pull the thousands of tonnes of cargo in the hundred box cars of the North Pole Line. The North Pole Line would arrive a few minutes late, but Christmas was going to happen on time after all.



OLD DOBBER FINALLY GOT HIS TODDY. Sam made sure of that. Once they had had safely delivered the North Pole Line to its final stop, he took Old Dobber directly to the *Walrus and Ulu*, the biggest and best elf pub at the North Pole. Sam's usual table, the one that was at the end of the bar and closest to the men's room, was reserved for him, as it always was. Sam ordered an Elfläger and a toddy and told the waitress to keep them coming.

Before long they were joined by Iggy, Yugo and Nutmeg. Iggy ordered his usual unsweetened water, Yugo got the hot chocolate with extra foam and Nutmeg ordered champagne on the rocks. Even at the North Pole, champagne could never be cold enough as far as Nutmeg was concerned.

Old Dobber drained two toddies in a hurry and ordered another two.

"How are you doing?" asked Nutmeg.

Old Dobber was still shaking. "Ma'am, I've run the North Pole Line for hundreds of years and I ain't never had a wreck till today. I'm just shattered is all. I dunno if I can steer that big old smoker anymore." Nutmeg placed her hand on his arm.

Sam drained the last of his third Elfläger and said, "have you ever considered getting an emotional support penguin?"

CHRISTMAS: BOSS BATTLE

A Tale of 'Citement and Ventures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Chantal asked for a Stocky John story in the summer. I only got around to it now.

The emotional support penguin was also her idea.

Otherwise, it was all me. Except for all the lines and gags that I ripped off from Dr. Seuss. I consider all of that to be an homage. It is not stealing if it is an homage.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam Will Return In:

Elves on Shelves

or

The Mysterious Affair at the North Pole

or

Yugo's Hammer

or

My Penguin Has No Teeth!

or

One of My Elves is Missing

or

Something Else Entirely

STILL
WATCHING



It was just another run down gin joint at the Arctic Circle. There are more of them at that latitude than you might think.

A large man with a braided beard sat at the bar. A twisted wooden cane rested against his seat. He was the biggest man in the room, the size of a refrigerator, with arms like bridge cables and red hair as bright as the flames of Hell itself. He finished his vodka and tequila cocktail and waved the bartender over. "I'll have another one," he said.

The bartender took away the empty glass and said, "don't you think you've had enough, sir?"

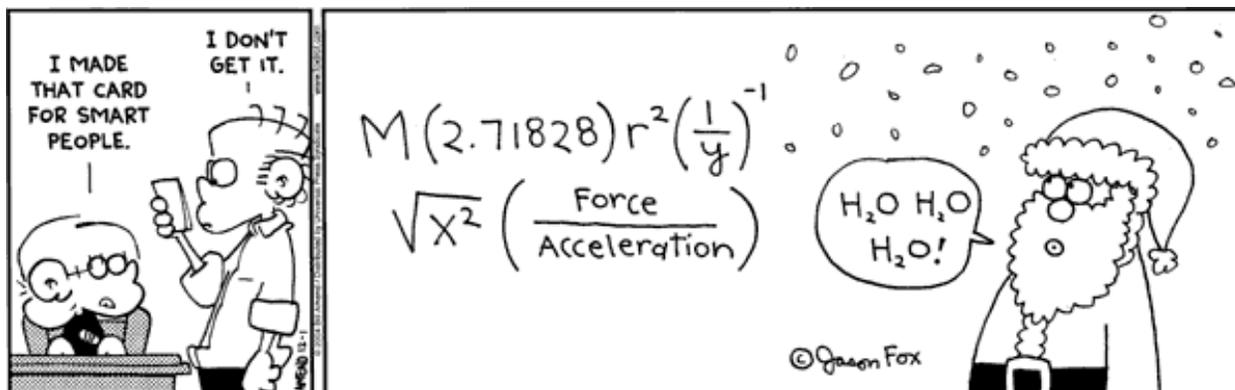
"The only thing I've had enough of is elves," said the big man. He banged his empty cup on the counter. "Fill it up."

"I hear you," said the bartender. "Elves can be a right nuisance sometimes." The bartender had never seen an elf. He was just making conversation. He refilled the big man's glass and slid it down the bar to him.

Stocky John took a long pull from his drink. "I'll get those elves next Christmas," he said. "Next Christmas will be different, you'll see." He grinned a dark and evil grin and took another drained the rest of his drink.

"Next Christmas," he said.

Jason's Math Problem explained:



- $M = M$.
- 2.17828 is a mathematical constant which is usually represented by the letter "e". It is used to calculate logarithms. Accordingly, $2.17828 = e$.
- $r^2 = r \times r$, which can also be represented as rr .
- $(1/y)^{-1} = y$. Where there is a negative exponent, it indicates to divide 1 by the number itself. In this case, $1 \div 1/y = y/1$ or simply y .
- $\sqrt{x^2} = x$. The square root of x squared is just x . The square root symbol and the exponent 2 cancel each other out.
- Force/acceleration = mass. Newton's second law of motion posits that the net force on an object is equal to the mass of the object multiplied by the acceleration of the object, that is, force equals mass times acceleration. Force divided by acceleration therefore equals mass.

That leaves us with $M e r r y \times \text{mass}$. Or Merry Christmas! $H_2O H_2O H_2O!$



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This is it. The ultimate Christmas throwdown. Iggy, Yugo and Sam take on their most determined and powerful foe ever in the **CHRISTMAS BOSS BATTLE**. The elves are going to need to use every trick in the book (every trick in this book, anyway) if they are going to have any hope of saving Christmas this time.

Advance praise for

CHRISTMAS: BOSS BATTLE

• *It is not an homage if it is stealing. And this is stealing.*

- Theodore Geisel (dec'd)

• *This story is stupendous! Tremendous! Fantastic! Excelsior!!*

- Stan Lee (dec'd)

• *You call this a Boss Battle? That guy only had 2 arms and no tentacles at all. The part with the train was wicked cool, I guess.*

- James Redcliffe, B.Sc., age 20

• *At least it is not another story about blobs from outer space.*

- A Concerned Reader

