

THE NAUGHTIEST LIST



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
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
Iggy, Yugo and Sam and the Gelatinous Mass from Outer Space
Christmas: Boss Battle

THE NAUGHTIEST LIST

In which Iggy punches with kindness,
Yugo goes into suit mode with limited success, and
Sam worries aloud about December 22nd.

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

Also, Nutmeg brings cookies.

“And the elves. You know what elves are, originally? Count yourself lucky. Take it from me, somebody who hangs around with elves is not the sort of person you’d want to have unrestricted access to your home at the dead of night, particularly if you have children.”

- Tom Holt, *The Management Style of Supreme Beings*

“Santa Claus is watching, and you know you did the crime
We’re going to turn you round one lump of coal at a time.”

- Grace Potter, *Naughty Naughty Children*

“I can’t help it I was born like this
A permanent spot on the naughty list
I never get a present, Santa's scratchin’ his head
How'd a little fella get so misled?”

- J.D. McPherson, *Bad Kid*

“Boy, you’ve made the list.
I checked it twice and you’re still on it!

- The Killers, *I Feel it in My Bones*

DEAR SANTA,
THIS YEAR, PLEASE BEAR IN
MIND THAT I SHOULD BE PRESUMED
INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN
GUILTY.

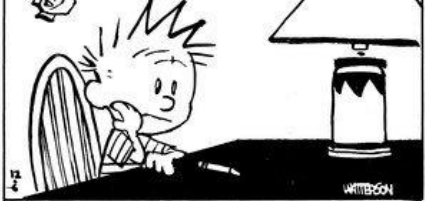


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ALSO, I WOULD ENCOURAGE
YOU TO INTERPRET "REASONABLE
DOUBT" AS BROADLY AS
POSSIBLE.



THAT'S PROBABLY A
BAD WAY TO START.



A Tale of 'Citement and Ventures

THE NAUGHTIEST LIST

IF AR, FAR AWAY FROM WHERE YOU ARE SITTING RIGHT NOW reading this little story there sits a little village that sparkles, even in the darkest winter night. It is a village filled with little gingerbread cottages and candy cobbled streets, all of which lead to rows of tidy workshops filled with elves, whistling and singing while they make toys for Christmas.

Overseeing it all is the Santa Claus himself, dressed entirely in red and white velvet, even on his day off. He was working this day, thumbing through one of a dozen enormous books on his desk.

This was the Nice List, with the name of every good little boy and good little girl in the world who could expect a visit from Santa Claus himself on Christmas. Santa Claus took a sip from the tumbler of hot cocoa at his side. He gave a low whistle. His hot cocoa had a good helping of elf brandy mixed in. Santa Claus took another long sip and went back to work.

He whistled while he studies the list, occasionally making little notes in the margin. “Yes,” he murmured to himself. “Ethan was mostly a good boy. And Emmett, too.” He carefully scribed a check mark beside those names and continued down the list.

On the shelf behind him was a single slim volume. This was the Naughty List. Now, the Naughty List is not as long as you might think, because most people, especially children, are nice most of the time.

There was an even smaller book beside the Naughty List. This is the Naughtier List, where the names of the really bad ones are kept. This is a list of particularly nasty folks and fills a good-sized notepad.

Then, there is the Naughtiest List, which is reserved the worst of them all. The Naughtiest List is kept on a single recipe card and has only one name written on it:

John, Stocky



T WAS A ROUGH PLACE FILLED WITH ROUGH MEN. A particularly rough one sat alone at a small table in the corner, stewing over his stew.

He was a hard man, this rough fellow. As hard as a brick wall, made from diamond bricks stuck together with diamond cement. He stood more than six and a half feet tall and was better than half as wide as that. His chest was as wide as a chest of drawers. Indeed, the expression a 'chest of drawers' may very well be named for this very chest.

His arms were thick and twisted like bridge cables. His legs were thick and twisted like even thicker and twistier bridge cables. His hands were the size of his and hers toasters.

He was dressed in an old tattered fur coat, covered in unspeakable stains. Since they are so dreadful and unspeakable, they will not be spoken of here. A tattered velvet top hat rested on the table at his elbow, which was red and swollen and poked out of a hole in his sleeve.

His face was hard, too. Much like the wall of diamond bricks discussed earlier. His eyes were dark and cold and framed by a pair of dark eyebrows that were perpetually pointed down in a dark and sinister "V". He had such a deeply furrowed brow that had been furrowed so long it had stuck that way. What teeth he had were sharp and yellow. His breath smelled like a new caught smelt that had been left out on the counter for too long.

In every respect, he was the most unpleasant man you could hope to never meet.

But, as it turned out, he was only the second most unpleasant man in the place. It was, after all, a rough place filled with rough men and there was another man, even rougher, even harder and even more unpleasant than the first at the very next table.

"Nice hat," said the even more unpleasant fellow. He tipped his grizzled head at the tattered top hat at the corner of the table. "I had me one like that once. But I lost it. Maybe you ought ter give me yers."

The first fellow laid a protective fist beside his hat. "This were me pappy's hat and yer can't have it."

"Yer pappy would a wanted me to have it, I expect."

"I don't expect so," said the first fellow. He rolled his sleeves up over his massive forearms, which bore tattoos of Starlight Glimmer and Twilight Sparkle from My Little Pony.

The second fellow rose from his stool and stepped into the dim light in the center of the room. He was a rough one all right. Rougher than burlap in a sandpaper factory. And not only rough, but grizzled. Grizzlier than a mama grizzly.

He was a hand taller than the first one and we are talking about really big hands here, hands with fingers that looked like a bunch of ripe bananas. The grizzled

man was even taller than he looked at first, because no one who looked at him expected to see a man that tall. His shoulders were as wide as the grill of a semi and framed a chest that was big, square and hard. His barrel chest was like, well, a barrel.

The muscles of his arms were thick and lumpy, like a knee sock stuffed with watermelons. They rippled when he moved, just like a sock full of watermelons could not.

His eyes were dark and cold, his face frozen in a perpetual sneer. His head was topped with a shock of bright red hair, as brilliant and fiery as the flames of Hell itself.

“Easy now, big fella’. I don’t want any trouble,” said the first man. He stepped slowly backwards. It was later said of him that if he did not want any trouble, that perhaps he should just have given his pappy’s hat to Stocky John.

It would not be fair to describe what happened next as a fight. A fight suggests that the other fellow might have held his own for more than a moment or two. As it was, he barely had time to raise his fists before Stocky John unleashed a swift flurry of punches and then finished him with a good, old fashioned haymaker,¹ leaving him bent over a heap of broken barstools.

Stocky John collected the tattered top hat from the edge of the table and set it on his own table beside his own bowl of stew. “Elves,” he muttered, as he chewed on a fragment of underdone potato. He knew he should not chew on underdone potatoes. They only made him more miserable than he was already. And Stocky John was always miserable. Especially at Christmas time.

“It’s the most miserable time of the year,” he muttered, as he dabbed his crumb of cheese with a blot of mustard.

There were a lot of other folks who held a contrary view. Elves, for example. For them, Christmas was the most wonderful time of the year. The hap-happiest season of all.

“Don’t get me started about elves,” he grumbled to himself. If there was one thing that Stocky John hated even more than Christmas, it was elves. For it was elves that had cost him his own top hat the previous Christmas, when they pushed him into the path of a steam powered locomotive, breaking most every bone in his body and blasting his hat into pieces.

It was one thing to bash a man to bits with a train and then leave him in a heap on a hill of broken icicles but busting up his fine black hat was a line that should never have been crossed. After all, that was his own pappy’s hat once.

¹ The expression “haymaker” means a powerful punch and derives from the process of harvesting hay in the days of the scythe. It takes a lot of muscle to wield a scythe, and a farmhand who could do it well was known as a ‘haymaker’. By dint of his profession, a haymaker was also a man who could deliver a fearsome punch, using the same big, powerful swing used to harvest hay.

“I’ll get those elves once I finally put an end to Christmas,” he said. “All I need is a new scheme. Then those elves will get what they’ve got comin’.

Stocky John had thousands of schemes. He once had the idea of putting an end to Christmas by cutting down every pine tree in the world. He figured that if there were no Christmas trees, there would be no place for Santa Claus to leave the presents and presto bingo no Christmas. He made a good start of it, too. He spent an afternoon knocking down a dozen pine trees near his hovel in the woods. Then he looked around and reckoned he had at least another hundred billion or so trees to chop down and gave it all up as another really dumb idea.

Most of Stocky John’s thousands of schemes fell into the category of really dumb ideas. He spent one long dark winter night trying to punch the Christmas star out of the sky without any appreciable success. Likewise, his scheme to brick up all the world’s chimneys one cold Christmas Eve ended with a bad case of frostbite and only seven chimneys blocked before sunrise.²

There is no question that Stocky John was a deranged lunatic with a sadistic streak a mile long and half as wide again.

And as he sat there, choking down his fragments of underdone potato, he realized that his Christmas destroying schemes were all just a little too ambitious. What if he thought a little bit smaller? And what is smaller at Christmas than an elf?

Stocky John grinned an awful stocky grin. It was simplicity itself. He could solve his Christmas problem and his elf problem at the same time. To stop Christmas all he had to do was to bash the Christmas out of a few elves. And he knew just the elves that were long past due for a good bashing.

Yes, this Christmas would be the one. Those elves would get what they had coming for sure this Christmas.

AND WHAT OF THOSE ELVES WHO MADE STOCKY JOHN GLOWER SO? For it was a ponderous glower indeed, replete with wrinkled forehead, downward pointing eyebrows and a most angry stare. They were, at that very moment, making rather merry.

² Worry not about those seven houses with bricked up chimneys. Please be assured that Santa Claus was able to effect entry in each and every house without too much trouble. He went through an unlocked front door twice, an unguarded window three times, one back door and had to dig his way into the cellar of the last house. That was a tough one.

It was a jolly place, filled with jolly folk. Iggy, Yugo and Sam had gathered at the usual table at the back of the *Walrus and Ulu*, the most popular tavern at the North Pole. It was three days before Christmas and Iggy, Yugo and Sam were unwinding after pulling another double overtime shift. Iggy had a diet dragon fruit juice, Yugo his usual unsweetened water and Sam had just ordered another Elfläger.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam were Christmas elves, who lived a few blocks south³ of the North Pole and passed their days with elfly pursuits like roasting chestnuts and building toys. Iggy was the tallest of the three, though he could not be described as 'tall'. He was, after all, an elf. He had a pointed nose, pointed ears, and dark unkept hair that pointed in all directions.

Yugo was a sturdy fellow with a big moustache and bright eyes. He was a crafty elf, with nimble hands who had invented most of the toys that the other elves built. Sam was the biggest of the three, when measured from side to side. He had a round belly and a round face surrounded by a mass of brown curly hair. He was usually frowning and, in fact, was frowning just then.

"I've got a bad feeling," said Sam. Sam said that a lot. His was the eternal pessimist.

"Why would you be feeling bad?" asked Iggy. Iggy never had bad feelings. Sometimes he had feelings that were less good than at other times, but not the sort of feelings he would call bad. He was not sure who knew what a bad feeling felt like.

"Iggy's right," said Yugo. "We are way ahead of schedule this year. The new line of Tickle Me Transformer playsets is going to be the biggest thing to hit Christmas morning in years."

"And the North Pole Line is running on time again," added Iggy. This was the little locomotive that brought supplies north all year and which had been derailed for a while.

"It's just that it's three days until Christmas and something bad always goes down three days before Christmas. We've been attacked by robbers and terrorists and blobs of ooze. And don't forget that big red-haired maniac last year. I've still got bruises from that one. And it's always three days before Christmas.

"Not every year," said Iggy.

"Sometimes it's the day before Christmas," said Yugo.

³ Every block around the North Pole is south of the North Pole. If you ever visit Iggy, Yugo and Sam's place, just keep walking North and you will be at the North Pole in no time. To get back, just turn south. No, not that south, another one.

“That’s right. That’s when the terrorists took over our office tower. And the blob was two days before Christmas.”

“Three days before Christmas. That’s when it always starts,” said Sam.

IT WAS THREE DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS, and Stocky John was headed north at the back of a sled pulled by a team of unhappy hound dogs.

Stocky John wiped away a booger that trailed across his cheek. “Cor, it be a cold one.” As far north as Stocky John had come, it could only have been a cold one. But he knew that just as every road from the North Pole leads south, every road that leads north will take one to the North Pole, eventually.

He reached back and cracked a long whip on the backs of his even unhappier dogs. “Now Digger, now Boner,” he called. “Now Snotty and Wrapper. On Vomit, on Stupid, on Rashy and Crapper!”⁴

The first people to reach the North Pole⁵ arrived there by dog sled over one hundred years ago. If it was good enough for them, it was good enough for Stocky John. He crossed the polar sea and paused for a moment to note the westward drift of the ice floes there, then pressed on further north. “Not much further,” he panted. “Come on Crapper, git a move on! Mush!” He cracked his whip again.

Stocky John was dressed in his tattered morning coat and top hat. He did not need furs to stay warm, he had layers of muscles for that. He did not stop to eat or rest. “Eating and resting is for wimps,” Stocky John might have said, if there was anyone nearby to listen, aside from Digger and Crapper.

The rattling sled skidded up a snowy knoll and that was when he finally saw it. The North Pole. A towering black glass building surrounded by cottages and workshops. He could smell chestnuts roasting on open fires and hear the refrains of Christmas carols in the distance. Stocky John grumbled. “It’s enough to make yer puke.”

⁴ Stocky John had another dog named Rudolph (or Rudy, for short). Rudy could not make the trip as he had come down with a very bad cold. It made his nose so red, you would almost say it glowed.

⁵ Robert Peary was long credited for being the first explorer to reach the North Pole, though Frederick Cook claimed to have arrived there the previous year. Both claims are questioned today. Mr. Cook famously described the westward drift of ice on the polar sea, but recorded no observations of any toy workshops or other elfish buildings, all of which would be obvious to anyone who had actually reached the North Pole.

Stocky John was no boy scout. He had never been a boy scout. Perhaps if he had been a scout, he would have done a better job tying the rigging for his sled team to his sleigh. Boner gave an excited tug and the whole thing broke free. With a sharp “Yip!” the ragged group of huskies turned and ran south as fast as their doggy legs would go.

Stocky John could only stand in shock as they disappeared in a cloud of snow. He shook his enormous fist over his head. “Git on then, ye ungrateful curs! More chestnuts for me!” He turned back and whispered to himself. “I hate chestnuts.” He pulled his coat tight against the Arctic breeze and walked down the hill towards the unsuspecting Christmas village down below.

WHAT IS THE DEAL WITH THIS GUY, ANYWAY? Why does Stocky John hate elves so much?

One supposes it would be hard to let go of the whole being run over by a train on account of elves thing. That might be an issue.

But why would anyone hate Christmas so much? Christmas is a time of peppermint cocoa and holy wreathes and brown paper packages tied up with string.⁶

Stocky John had not started out bad. He started out horrible and only got worse from there. When he was a kid, he used to pull the wings off flies and the whiskers off of kittens.⁷

Back in those days, John had a big head of bright red hair that sprayed in all directions like the branches of a palm tree. He had an imaginary friend named Zeke, a juvenile delinquent who encouraged him to participate in excessive misbehavior of all sorts.⁸ Together they set fires, stole candy from the store and crossed the street without looking both ways.

⁶ This is a reference to the song *My Favourite Things* from the hit Broadway musical *The Sound of Music*. Barbra Streisand did it first in 1968, but since then, dozens of artists have included this track on their Christmas albums. While this is a fine song, it does not have anything to do with Christmas in the show and the only remote connection it has to the Christmas season is the phrase “brown paper packages tied up with string” which is distinctly not Christmassy. Christmas packages are decorated with colourful paper, bright red ribbons and, if you are especially lucky, a bell. *My Favourite Things* is absolutely and profoundly not a Christmas song.

⁷ Apparently ‘whiskers on kittens’ was not one of Stocky John’s favorite things.





⁸ This sentence is a ‘pangram’. A pangram is a sentence which uses each letter of the alphabet at least once.

It was inevitable that all this misbehavior would result in trouble, and for Stocky John that trouble arrived on Christmas when he was only 6 years old. There were no presents for him that year. Just a lump of coal in his stocking. Stocky John was on the Naughty List.

Stocky John did not care for Christmas much after that. But he kept that lump of coal under his pillow. Every night, when he went to sleep, cursing Christmas, he would squeeze that lump of coal. More Christmases came and went, and more lumps of coal found their way under Stocky John's pillow. His hands and his arms grew bigger and stronger from squeezing down on all that coal.

Every day, Stocky John went out, stealing from widows and yelling at orphans. And every night, he went to sleep squeezing coal.

Then one morning, he woke up and opened his fist. There was no lump of coal to be seen. Just a little shiny jewel. Stocky John had grown so big and so strong and squeezed his lump of coal for so long he had crushed it down into a diamond.

Stocky John could have taken his diamond (), and all of the other diamonds (  ) he would soon crush out of all of his other lumps of coal and started a new life. He could have bought a proper suit and given the rest to charity. But that was not Stocky John's style. He used his first diamond to buy a hard-oak baseball bat and a set of brass knuckles. Then he used that to bash his way into jewellery stores to gather even more diamonds. None of those went to charity either.

It was around that time that Stocky John found himself on the Naughtier List. Santa Claus stopped giving him coal then. All he found in his stocking that year was a plain old rock. When Stocky John squeezed that all he got was a fist full of gravel.

He went on a bit of a rampage then and smashed most of his town into rubble. Finally, the townsfolk got together and chased him away with the usual torches and pitchforks used everywhere to get rid of undesirable monsters.

He did not stay away long, though. Later that night, Stocky John returned with two heavy baseball bats milled from the finest hardest hickory and bashed the rest of the town into rubble. Then he did the same thing to the next town over and the one after that. Before long, there were no towns left in that valley. So Stocky John moved on to the next valley and bashed all those towns too.

That was how Stocky John ended up on the Naughtiest List. Once he got on that list, dogs barked, and babies spontaneously cried whenever he walked past. Stocky John did not care. He liked it that way. To him, dogs and babies are just nuisances to be bashed.

Like elves and Christmas.

IT WAS A QUARTER PAST TWO WHEN STOCKY JOHN reached the edge of the little Christmas Village. Whether it was a little after two in the afternoon or the early morning, he could not say. It all looked the same at the North Pole. The moon was high overhead but otherwise, the sky was completely black.

He skulked past the Jolly Club Ballroom, and then turned left once he reached the Twinkle Brite Tree Mill. That was where he encountered his first elf, an unfortunate fellow named Bumpy who was on his way home to walk his pet muskox before returning for his late shift on the checkerboard assembly line.

Bumpy was in such a rush he did not even notice Stocky John until the big man had picked him up by his velvet collar and thrown him across the street and into the back lot of the Yummy Gummy Gumdrops Factory. Bumpy landed with a very hard bump, indeed. He bumped across the pavement and slid to a rest against a chain link fence. "My elbows!" he called. Stocky John just smiled.

It went on like that as he walked down the block, thumping one elf after another as if he were playing a giant carnival game called Whack-An-Elf. He gave the back of his hand to Twisty Willowknees, who spun across the street like a top. There was a note of irony in this, as Twisty had been assigned to workshop C building tops that very morning. If only Twisty could build a top that spun so well as he did that moment, he thought, before spinning into a brick wall where he stopped thinking about anything for a time.

He caught up to the twins, Slappy and Soupy in the next block. He grabbed them by their pointy ears and cracked their heads together so hard that Slappy fell to the ground and could see nothing but stars, while Soupy lay on his back transfixed by little cartoon birds circling around his head.⁹

Stocky John crossed a street paved with peppermint cobblestones, the road behind him was also paved with peppermint cobblestones and littered with crumpled elves. "Those ones won't be makin' any Christmas fer a while," said Stocky John with a cold chuckle. It was a chuckle so cold, that even at the North Pole, snowballs spontaneously formed in the air beside him and fell to the cobblestones with a loud crack.

"Stop right there!" a voice called.

Stocky John looked up. Then he looked down and saw that the way ahead was blocked by three elves dressed in red and green. There was a tall one. For and elf. A chubby one and a third with a big black moustache. He looked clever, that one. Still, they would not pose any trouble for Stocky John.

"What did I tell you," said the chubby one. "It always happens three days before Christmas."

"You shall not pass!" shouted the third elf. The clever looking one with the big moustache.

⁹ They might have been turtle doves or maybe they were calling birds. It is hard to say.

Stocky John just snorted. Were these the three elves who had run him over with a train the Christmas before? It sure looked like it. He had made short work of them last time. It was not a fair fight. Until they brought that train into it.

Stocky John looked around nervously. There was no train about. There were not even any train tracks to be seen. “This is gonna be fun,” Stocky John thought and he cracked his knuckles. It made a sound like a dresser rolling down a flight of stairs.

“You shall not pass!” the elves shouted together.

ROUND ONE

IGGY LED THE ATTACK. It was not pretty, and it gives me no joy to describe it.

He knew that he was no match for Stocky John’s size and strength, so he decided to come in low and catch the big man by surprise. The only thing that surprised Stocky John was that Iggy tried anything at all.

Iggy sprinted at Stocky John, then slid along the icy street in the hopes of tripping him up. Stocky John would be no taller than an elf if he was on the ground.

Iggy slid into Stocky John’s ankle. It was like sliding into a flagpole. Stocky John did not budge. Not an inch. Not even a yoctometer.¹⁰ Iggy wrapped around Stocky John’s leg and stopped.

Stocky John kicked Iggy loose and the brave elf flipped over once or twice, but then got right back up and came at Stocky John again. Since going low had not worked, Iggy decided to go in high this time. Of course, ‘coming in high’ for an elf is not really that high. Iggy leapt into the air feet first, hoping to kick Stocky John in the chin. Unfortunately, he only reached up to Stocky John’s naval.

Stocky John’s belly was as hard as a wall made of bricks. A brick wall, if you will. Iggy heard something crack in his foot as he bounced off Stocky John and landed on the cobblestones with a disappointed thud.

¹⁰ A yoctometer is the smallest unit of measurement in the metric system. It is one septillionth of a meter, or 0.000000000000000000000001 of a meter. It is impossible to measure anything in yoctometers because no one has invented a ruler that small.

Stocky John reached down and picked Iggy up by his collar. Iggy gasped for air and kicked furiously as Stocky John raised him to eye level. “Elves,” muttered Stocky John. “I hate elves.”

Iggy winced. Stocky John spat as he talked and now Iggy was covered in the stuff. It was unpleasant. Exceedingly unpleasant; like a drizzling shower of sour turpentine and cumquat juice.¹¹ He tried to twist free of Stocky John’s grip, but it was impossible. He was just too strong.

To his credit, Iggy did throw a punch at Stocky John. It was not much of a punch as Iggy threw it with kindness, because that is the only way Iggy could punch anything. With kindness.

It is perhaps unnecessary to note that punches thrown with kindness are scarcely punches at all.

That was when Stocky John drew back a fist the size of a toaster oven and then he punched Iggy, not once, not twice, not thrice, but many more times than that. More than Iggy could have counted, even if he still knew how to count once Stocky John was finished with him.

Iggy fell to the ground and collapsed into a small elf shaped puddle.

Stocky John sneered at the puddle of Iggy and then sneered at Yugo and Sam. “Who’s next?”

ROUND TWO

YUGO SHOOK HIS HEAD. He wished that Iggy had not rushed in like that. He should have been first. After all, he was the only elf with a snowmobile. And not just any snowmobile: Yugo’s snowmobile was unlike any other snowmobile in the world. It had a heated cabin for passengers, and a top speed of several hundred kilometers per hour, whether it was travelling over snow and ice or through the air on silver wings that extended from each side.

Most important, it had a weapons array that would make a battleship blush with envy. It had machine guns and laser beams and even a rocket launcher. “He should have waited,” said Yugo as he pulled a little square box with a red button from his pocket. He pressed the button with his thumb. In the distance he could hear the rumble of the two lithium fusion engines that powered the snowmobile.

¹¹ That is another pangram just there.

In another moment it crested the ridge at the edge of town and then sped down and stopped suddenly at Yugo's side.

Stocky John just smiled his awful yellow smile. "You gonna run me over with that thing, boy? It's a lot smaller than a train."

Yugo pressed a button on the side of the snowmobile and the door lifted open on smooth hydraulics. "I'm not going to run you down, Stocky," said Yugo. "But I have made a few modifications. He pressed on a blue button above a label that read "suit mode."

Sam always thought that button was to help Yugo get ready for formal events. Sam was mistaken.

As soon as Yugo pressed the button, the front of the snowmobile split apart. The bumpers and side panels shifted and rotated as the snowmobile reformed around Yugo, encasing him in a suit of mechanical red armour.

"Suit mode," said Yugo.

"Just like Iron Man!" squealed Sam.

"It's nothing like Iron Man," said Yugo. "Nobody uses iron at the North Pole because of the magnetic field. This baby is titanium through and through."

Yugo approached Stocky John, his titanium boots melting the snow with each step. Stocky John just smiled and said, "bring it."

Yugo brought it. He threw a roundhouse, the force of his punch assisted by little rocket boosters. He caught Stocky John in the jaw and spun him around. Stocky John just rubbed his jaw and spat out a loosened tooth before unleashing a roundhouse of his own.

Stocky John's punch knocked the armour from in front of Yugo's face, sending it spinning off into a snowbank. Yugo came back with another rocket assisted roundhouse from the left side. He knocked another tooth loose, but Stocky John was still standing. His next punch knocked a piece of snowmobile armour off Yugo's shoulder.

They traded punches like this for a time, with Yugo loosening teeth and Stocky John loosening red titanium armour.

"Time to bring out the big guns," Yugo said with a grunt. He pressed a blue button on his wrist and a very big gun extended out from the armour on his shoulder.

"Yes!" said Sam, pumping his fist in the air. "Rocket launcher! You're finished now!"

Stocky John did not even pause. He reached out, as quick as a wink (even quicker than a jiffy) and slapped the rocket launcher from Yugo's shoulder. It spun away, skittering past Sam before it came to a rest beside a candy cane lamp post.

“Oh crap,” said Yugo.

Stocky John moved in closer, slapping and punching Yugo’s armour. Bits of the snowmobile flipped away. Warning sounds buzzed in Yugo’s ear as the snowmobile began shutting down.

Yugo tried to fight back, but without full power, he could barely lift his armoured fist, let alone throw a punch. Stocky John just punched away, each blow sounding sirens in Yugo’s earpiece until with one devastating right hook, the last piece of Yugo’s armour fell away and the warning tones went quiet.

“Should have sent a train instead of a snowmobile,” said Stocky John. He gave Yugo a backhanded flick of his wrist and the clever elf dropped to his knees. Then Stocky John swung his elbow at Yugo’s ear, and he fell to the ground, forming a Yugo shaped puddle beside Iggy.

Stocky John turned to Sam. “I guess it’s your turn now. Any last words?”

Sam just gulped.

ROUND THREE

SAM GULPED AND THEN HE REACHED DOWN and picked up the rocket launcher from beside the candy cane lamp post. He pumped back on the chamber. “Locked and loaded,” he said to himself. Then he pointed the rocket launcher at Stocky John and pulled back on the trigger.

Perhaps Sam should have paid more attention when Yugo was explaining how the rocket launchers in the snowmobile worked. But, he was enjoying a particularly tasty pastrami and roast beef sandwich with extra olives and cucumbers at the time and who could blame him if his mind had wandered just a little.

Even so, he really should have known the back of a rocket launcher from the front, for when he pulled back on the trigger, a Mark XVI missile rocketed over his shoulder, through the window of the Toasty Gingerbread Bakery behind him which exploded in cloud of orange and yellow fire.

Stocky John was blinded for a moment from the brilliant explosion, as well as the rocket smoke that Sam had sprayed in his direction. Sam saw an opportunity and threw the rocket launcher at Stocky John, opening a gash on his right cheek.

Stocky John dabbed at it with his thumb and said, “all of that for a drop of blood.”

Sam scrambled through the broken bits of snowmobile that were scattered around him. He picked up a black box and pressed a yellow button. A disco version of *Frosty the Snowman* rang out in brilliant icosaphonic sound.

Sam tossed the black box aside. It bounced across the street with a thumpity thump thump and fell silent. At least Stocky John was blind *and* deaf now for the time being.

Sam picked up another spare part. He pointed it at Stocky John and then pulled on a green lever. Green bubbles came out the end and floated harmlessly into the black Arctic night.

There are moments in life when there are simply no words. For Sam, this was one of those moments.

He cast aside the bubble maker and picked up a circular object. There was no obvious front or back, so he just threw it like a frisbee at Stocky John. Sparks spun out the side. It hit Stocky John and opened a gash on his other cheek.

Stocky John dabbed his cheek with his thumb. “All of that for another drop of blood,” he said.

Sam felt unusually optimistic. This is a feeling which was entirely foreign to him. But he reckoned that Stocky John probably had something less than a million drops of blood in him, so if he kept throwing snowmobile parts at him, he might just be able to pull this off. And wouldn't that be something.

Sam's feelings of optimism were short lived. He threw a triangular bit at Stocky John, but all it did was announce the weather as it bounced harmlessly off of his shoulder. The next gizmo he chucked was quieter, but plopped off Stocky John's other shoulder just as ineffectively.¹²

Stocky John had had enough. He had picked up a few bruises from Sam's barrage and lost two drops of blood. He did not take that sort of treatment from anyone, let alone an elf.

“It's payback time, little man,” said Stocky John. He flexed his biceps, ripping his jacket in the process.

Sam gulped and picked up a of oddly shaped plastic assembly with a blue toggle switch on it. He flipped the toggle switch and a steaming cup of hot chocolate rose from the middle of the assembly. Sam threw the hot chocolate at Stocky John and then flipped the rest of the contraption at him for good measure.

¹² Another pangram.

The hot chocolate left a brown smear on Stocky John's shoulder. The rest of the gadget missed him entirely.

Sam cast about for something else he might be able to use. That was when Stocky John caught up to him and picked Sam up by the front of his velveteen tunic. Sam squirmed out of his shirt and dropped to the ground, naked from the waist up. Despite the chill in the air, he did not feel cold. Sam's body was insulated by a thick layer of elf blubber. It was that blubber which kept his ribs from caving in when Stocky John gave him a quick jab to the solar plexus. His blubber also protected him from Stocky John's next eleven jabs to the solar plexus.

But even Sam's blubber, prodigious as it was, was no match for the onslaught of Stocky John's fists. Sam staggered backwards and finally collapsed in the snow, forming a Sam shaped puddle beside Iggy and Yugo.

Stocky John rubbed the palms of his hands together triumphantly. "That should just about be the end of Christmas this year."

"Don't be so sure about that."

A shadow fell across Stocky John's path. He looked up to see Santa Claus himself standing on the cobblestones before him. "Stocky John. The naughtiest boy in the whole wide world. Well, Johnny, if you want to stop Christmas, you are going to have to go through me."

FINAL ROUND: BOSS FIGHT

SANTA CLAUS ROLLED UP HIS RED FUR SLEEVES. There was a tattoo of a mermaid on one forearm and a tattoo of a lizard biting its own tail encircled the other.

He raised his hands into a boxing stance as Stocky John moved in. He let Stocky John throw the first punch, which he dodged easily. Then he laid a left hook on Stocky John that knocked the rest of his yellow teeth loose.

Stocky John rubbed his jaw and said, "you're gonna pay for that, fat man."

"Who are you calling fat?" said Santa Claus. He pulled off his red coat with the white trim. His chest rippled like the rising tide.

It has been said of Santa that he has a belly like a bowlful of jelly. This is fake news. Santa Claus has a belly like a case full of beer. That is right, Santa Claus has a twelve pack. You would too, if you had done two hundred and fifty crunches every morning for the last 600 years. His chest is fifty five inches across and as hard as a plank. A plank made of steel. A steel plank.

After all, one has to be in tremendous physical shape to steer a team of reindeer around the world each Christmas Eve and climb up and down millions of chimneys. Santa Claus works out six hours a day in his private yule themed gym. Hip hop versions of Christmas carols play while he puts in his daily 15 kilometers on the treadmill. Santa Claus may be a big man, but he is also four hundred and fifty pounds of solid muscle wrapped in red.

Stocky John threw another punch. Santa Claus blocked it easily. He countered with a judo chop that numbed Stocky John's left arm. It turns out that Santa Claus is a master of all of the martial arts. He mixes his martial arts like a blender. He floats like a red balloon and stings like a four foot broad sword.

Of course, Stocky John was no slouch himself (even though he did slouch a lot. His posture was terrible). Santa came at him, but Stocky John wove to the side like a fox and zipped a quick jab into his ribcage.¹³ Santa Claus scarcely felt it.

For a fleeting moment, Stocky John thought that he might have met his match. But he knew that Santa Claus would always fight by the rules¹⁴ and Stocky John was not one to fight fair. He spun and then delivered a frightful blow to Santa right in the mistletoe and berries. Straight to the rum balls. Right in the Christmas cracker.

Santa Claus bent over in agony. Stocky John immediately seized the advantage and delivered a knee to his throat and followed that up with a quick boxing of the ears.¹⁵

Santa Claus fell to his knees. He had grappled with some pretty tough fellows over the years. He once went over a hundred rounds in a bare-knuckle boxing match against old Jimmy Figg.¹⁶ He had beat the abominable snowman down

¹³ Pangram.

¹⁴ Santa Claus was the one who taught the Marquess of Queensbury the Marquess of Queensbury Rules.

¹⁵ Yup. Pangram.

¹⁶ James Figg was the greatest bare-knuckle fighter of his age. His age was 1684-1734. Over a twenty-year period, he only lost one match in the 270 fights he fought. He only lost once to a large man who went by the name of 'Ned Sutton'. Of course, an anagram of 'Ned Sutton' is Dent Snout, which is the name Santa Claus went by during a difficult

the road two out of three times in an arm wrestling competition in the early 1500's. But this very naughty Stocky John character was one tough fellow. Probably the toughest combatant he had faced since Jeremiah Jones and the Yule log frenzy of 1612.

Santa Claus took a deep breath and then bent over again. He was experiencing rather a lot of discomfort in the south pole region.

He took another deep breath and Stocky John punched him right in his nose like a cherry, which became more of a nose like a plum right then. Santa Claus fell back onto the cobblestones.

Iggy had watched these latest developments with dismay. Despite all of his broken bones, he pulled himself out of his little puddle, just a little ways, and said, "come on, Santa. We need you. The children need you. It's up to you to save Christmas this time."

Santa Claus took another deep breath. If Christmas needed saving, he was the one who should do it. Stocky John stood over him, ready to deliver a crippling punch to the back of his neck. But Santa Claus got his punch in first. Right in the jellied ham and candied beets.

Stocky John was lifted three feet in the air and landed hard on his backside. The wind had been knocked out of him. That was not all that was about to be knocked out of him, for Santa Claus came at him before he could get back to his feet and there followed a flurry of punches that are generally recognized by flurry experts as the greatest flurry ever recorded. They are recorded thusly: Santa Claus threw a ferocious left. And then a right. This was followed by a left. And then another right. Two quick lefts in a row and then right again. Another right. Left. Left. Right. Left and then right. Left. Left. Left. Two quick rights and then a left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Left. Right. Right. Left. Right and then a head fake followed by a left. Right. Another head fake with a corresponding left. Right. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. (this went on for a while) and then a left followed by a right and a left and then all that was left of Stocky John was a Stocky John shaped puddle spread out on the cobblestones of Mistletoe Road.

Santa Claus stood over Stocky John and said, "when you take on me, you take on Christmas. And that's a force that is bigger than either one of us. Think about that, Johnny, while you are getting well again. You can never beat me and you can never beat Christmas."

period in his life where his belief in Christmas wavered and he fought a lot. But that is a story for another day.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN INTENSIVE CARE. Nobody wants to spend Christmas Day in intensive care, though it is better by far than spending Christmas Day in the morgue. So, all things considered, Iggy, Yugo and Sam were happy to spend Christmas Day in intensive care, rather than the alternative.

Christmas happened, of course, like it always does. Iggy, Yugo and Sam had played their part, but this time Santa Claus himself had saved Christmas. Perhaps that is how it should be.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam were in the same room, in three little beds side by side. Iggy could finally remember his own name and Yugo was eating solid food. Sam was taking his Elfläger intravenously.

An elf in a nurse's cap swept into the room. "Merry Christmas," she said, cheerfully. "I have good news for you, Iggy. Your x-rays came back negative and all of our equipment shows you will be jazz dancing again in no time."¹⁷ Iggy did not feel like jazz dancing. Mostly because he could not feel his legs.

"Your eggnog levels are a little low, however. You know what they say, Iggy. Every elf need his egg nog. Six cups a day, every day. No exceptions. I've written up an order for egg nog supplements for you."

Iggy groaned little. Egg nog went straight to his hips. But then he smiled. Since he could not feel his hips, there was nothing to worry about. There is always a silver lining, even in a pitcher of egg nog.

Yugo was morose, a word which here means having a sullen and gloomy disposition. His snowmobile was lying in pieces on the edge of their little village. It was going to take months for him to put it back together, and he would not be able to start until he had been put back together himself. He looked over at his night stand. His little remote control was sitting there. He reached over and pressed the red button to summon the snowmobile.

In the distance he could hear the rumble of two lithium fusion engine struggling to start up. He could almost feel them kicking and jerking as they struggled to boot up. Then he heard an old familiar hum as at least a part of the snowmobile sprung back into life. He twisted the little red button. He looked out the window. Some of the pieces of the snowmobile had lumped together and rolled over the ridge outside. Maybe it would not take months to put the snowmobile back together. Maybe it would only take weeks.

Yugo smiled. He would make suit mode even better than before. Better. Stronger. Faster.

¹⁷ P A N G R A M

Sam was also feeling morose, although for Sam, morose was how he felt on a good day. There was a knock at the door and then Nutmeg slipped in, a tray of cookies in her hand.

Nutmeg was Sam's occasional girlfriend. A term which here means that for Sam, Nutmeg was his girlfriend, but for Nutmeg, Sam was her occasional boyfriend.

"Hello boys," she said. "I heard you saved Christmas again this year."

"Sure did," said Sam. "I did most of the saving. As usual."

Iggy and Yugo both coughed and sneezed at the same time.

"I heard that Santa Claus might have had something to do with it," said Nutmeg.

"Oh sure," said Sam. "Santa finished him off. But me and the guys softened him up first. By the time Santa got involved, it was basically a clean up operation."

Iggy and Yugo both sneezed at the same time. It was either that or start laughing and laughing was still too painful.

Sam scooped some cookies off of Nutmeg's plate with his good hand. The one with casts on only three fingers. "Don't listen to them. They're both very negative people."

Nutmeg shook her head. She did not need to read the last 18 pages of this story to have a pretty good idea of how things had played out at the Battle on Holly Bough Road, which was what it would later be called in the *Encyclopedia Christmanica*, which every little elf would one day learn about at good old N.P.E.S. – North Pole Elementay School. In fact, Nutmeg had spent an internship editing the *Encyclopdia Christmanica*.

Nutmeg poured a large glass of egg nog and passed it to Iggy. "I heard you were a quart low."

Iggy just smiled. For a fleeting moment, he thought of his hips, and then he thought about how good egg nog was and then he thought that things were good.

And for three elves who had to spend Christmas Day in intensive care, things were good. They were all of them spending Christmas with their best friends. And there is no better way to spend Christmas than that.

The End

(For Another Year, Anyway)

No elves were harmed in the writing of this story.

That is not entirely so. Several elves were harmed, starting with poor Bumpy way back on page 9. Bumpy has recovered from all of his broken bones, but his elbows still ache in cold weather. Which is a problem. As Bumpy lives at the North Pole, his elbows always ache.

Twisty Willowknees eventually regained consciousness, but still suffers from extreme vertigo and avoids any contact with merry go rounds or carousels.

Slappy and Soupy still experience some symptoms of post concussion disorder.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam have healed up nicely and are each doing just fine.

Iggy struggles to drink six egg nogs a day, but he is working earnestly on it. Yugo reports that repairs to the snowmobile are coming along nicely. When asked, Sam said he was on a date and we should leave him alone if we knew what was good for us.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam Will Return In:

Boss Battle III: The Third Boss Battle

or

Dent Snout: A Story for Another Day

or

The Encyclopdia Christmanica

or

The Chess Match on Holly Bough Road

or

Jeremiah Jones and the Yule Log Frenzy of 1612

or

Something Else Entirely



What is the deal with this guy??

He seems very angry.

THREE DOORS DOWN IN THE NORTH POLE INTENSIVE CARE WARD, Stocky John finally regained consciousness. He had been dreaming of a sunny Christmas morning at the top of a snowy hill with a brand-new toboggan he had unwrapped that very morning. In his dreams, he slipped and swerved past trees and rocks and reached the bottom of the hill, covered in snow. In his dreams he laughed and laughed.

And then he woke up, in intensive care, his arms and legs encased in plaster and needles stuck in him everywhere.

“It’s elves that done this,” he muttered through the feeding tube that went down his throat and into gosh knows where. “Elves and the fat man.”

He slurped on his feeding tube.

A nurse came into the room, pushing a clattering cart in front of her. “Happy Christmas, sir,” she said.

Stocky John just grunted.

“Someone left a package for you,” said the nurse. She passed a brightly wrapped box to her patient. Stocky John fumbled at the paper with his one unbroken finger and then passed it back to the nurse. She unwrapped it for him.

“Oh, how lovely,” she said. “Look how it shines.” She set it down on the little table beside his bed.

Stocky John leaned over to have a look. It was a gleaming lump of coal. Stocky John reached over and gripped it in his bandaged fist.

“It’ll be different next time,” he mumbled, as he squeezed and crushed his gift. “I’ll get those elves next time. And then I’m a gonna get that fat man in charge of the whole show. Yessir, that’s what I’m a gonna do. I’m a gonna sort the whole lot of ‘em. Elves and fat men alike. That’s what I’m a gonna do.

“It’ll be different next Christmas. You’ll see.

“Next Christmas.”



www.iggyugoandsam.com



As they say, whoever "they" are, you can never keep a bad man down.

Once again, Stocky John is stalking the North Pole, determined to end Christmas once and for all.

Can three diminutive elves turn back this massive menace and save Christmas again? Honestly, it does not look good.

Advance praise for

THE NAUGHTIEST LIST

• *This story is naughtier than a drawer full of naughty underthings*

- Mother Mary Ignatius (dec'd)

• *Things that are awesome: This story and dental surgery without anesthetic*

- A Sarcastic Fan

• *It's a bit of a retread to be honest. Aside from suit mode (which was wicked cool, btw) it's the same old same old*

- Dr. James Redcliffe, PhD., age 21

• *The sequel nobody asked for has arrived.*

- A Concerned Reader

