

**IGGY, YUGO AND SAM AND THE  
GELATINOUS MASS FROM  
OUTER SPACE**

**A TERRIBLE PARABLE**

## **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*  
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*Sam Alone and Other Christmas Crackers*  
*Iggy, Yugo and Sam and the Gelatinous Mass from Outer Space*

In which Iggy sings Christmas songs,  
Yugo has a surprise, and  
Sam bites off more than he can chew.

And in which Iggy, Yugo and Sam save Christmas.

“Christmas comes, have you forgotten,  
Let’s take a look, your clothes are rotten.  
This blouse is wrong, it’s so Thanksgiving,  
I wish I could be more forgiving.”

- Hans Toupee, *Lights, Camera, Christmas*

“So, I’m not very good with children. Does that make me a  
bad Santa?”

- Steve, *Arthur Christmas*

“It can’t be cool, you want to get hot,  
There’s work to do, there’s quite a lot.  
To start a fire, you’ll need a log,  
So, toast those buns and egg your nog.”

- Hans Toupee, *Lights, Camera, Christmas*

***In the News ...***

**Mail**Online

**“I CONSIDER MYSELF TRANS-SPECIES”: MAN SPENDS MORE THAN £25,000 ON PLASTIC SURGERY TO TRANSFORM HIMSELF INTO AN ELF**

A fantasy fanatic has spent more than £25,000 on plastic surgery as he wants to become a real-life elf. Luis Padron, 25, from Buenos Aires, Argentina, became obsessed with the world of elves and became determined to look like his favourite otherworldly characters.

He has undergone multiple surgeries including liposuction on his jaw, a nose job, full body hair removal and operations to change his eye colour. He spends a further £4,000-a-month applying specialist creams, dyes, treatment and SPF 100 sunscreen.

Mr Padron gets unusual looks but says he doesn't care what people think and said he won't stop until he has fully 'transformed' into an elf.

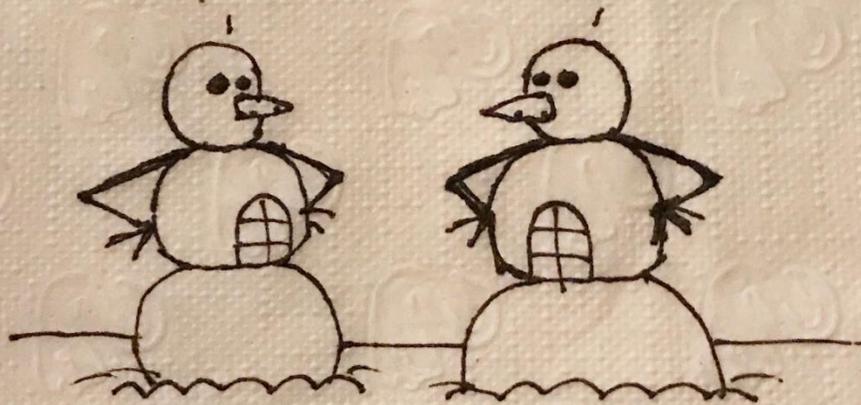
He is planning surgery to make his ears pointed, hair implants for a heart-shaped hairline and a limb lengthening operation to make him 6ft 5in tall.

“I didn't care for how much it hurts, because it allows me to get one step closer to my dream of what I want to become.”



NICE SIX-  
PACK, BRAH!

YOU TOO,  
BRAH!



ABDOMINAL SNOWMEN

A Tale of 'Citement and 'Ventures

# IGGY, YUGO AND SAM AND THE GELATINOUS MASS FROM OUTER SPACE

**T**HE NORTH POLE SITS ATOP A GREEN AND BLUE PLANET that spins around a star somewhere in the vast emptiness and empty vastness of space. Outer space is, indeed, vast and, for the most part, empty. If it was full, it would not be called 'space', it would be called 'stuff'.

Still, even though space is, by definition, mostly made up of space, everything else in the universe; everything else that there is, is scattered about it. It is all out there, somewhere in space.

Everything else in the universe includes everything else that there can possibly be. The universe is so impossibly huge, that if you can imagine something, it is out there someplace. Somewhere in the universe there is a planet covered with nothing but grand pianos wrapped up in balloons. There is another planet where

the ducks have tusks like walruses and the walruses have feet like ducks. In one far off galaxy, there is a pirate ship manned entirely by chickens.<sup>1</sup>

Only in a place so vast and interesting as the universe could there exist a polar toy distribution operation overseen by a bearded man in a red suit with a giant toy factory manned by elves.<sup>2</sup>

A universe that is big enough for Santa Claus is big enough for anything. It is even big enough for a gelatinous mass to be out there somewhere, adrift alone about the cosmos.

Now, a gelatinous mass is really nothing more than a big blob of goo. But this big blob of goo was different than most big blobs of goo, because this blob of goo had thoughts and feelings.

One of the things that the gelatinous mass thought about a lot was how lonely it felt, drifting through the vast emptiness of the universe with no one to talk to. Of course, the gelatinous mass could not talk even if it wanted to; it was just a big blob of goo after all. But it would be nice, thought the gelatinous mass, to have a little company for a change.

The gelatinous mass met a wormhole in space once, but the wormhole did not speak and did not seem to notice the gelatinous mass as it slipped through to another part of the universe entirely.

Nobody knew where the gelatinous mass had come from or how long it had drifted alone through space. The gelatinous mass itself could not remember where it had come from. It could not remember if there was once a mother gelatinous mass or a father gelatinous mass. As far as the gelatinous mass could tell, it had always been drifting alone through space, perhaps for as long as there had been space to drift about in.

But things were about to change for the gelatinous mass. It had been through the wormhole and was in a part of the universe it had never seen before. A part of the universe with a green and blue planet with a toy factory on top. The gelatinous mass turned toward the green and blue planet. At last it would have company. At last the gelatinous mass would not be alone anymore.

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<sup>1</sup> Proper usage suggests that this particular pirate ship was chickened by chickens.

<sup>2</sup> Again, proper usage suggests that this particular toy factory was elved by elves.



TEN THOUSAND MILES AWAY, Sam laid a slice of bread on top of his ham, turkey, corned beef, pastrami, roast chicken, tomato, avocado, mustard and pickle sandwich and wished he could be alone. Many people consider the North Pole to be one of the loneliest places on the planet, but Sam was not one of them. And not only because he was an elf. Sam had lived at the North Pole for over 400 years and he had never felt alone, not even once.

Sam was never alone because he was one of thousands of elves who lived at the North Pole and worked in its massive toy factories. Thousands more elves worked in administration, planning the logistics of Santa Claus' annual global journey or maintaining the Naughty and Nice List. It takes a lot of elves to make Christmas happen every year and Sam was only one of them.

Another one of them was Sam's friend Iggy. Iggy was tall and slim, with a pointed nose, a pointed chin and untidy black hair that pointed in all directions from under his green velvet cap. Iggy worked two seats down from Sam at Work Bench Omega 6, in a big toy factory due south of the North Pole.

Of course, all twelve of the toy factories at Santa Claus' massive work shop were due south of the North Pole, for at the North Pole, every way is due south. The toy factory where Sam sat at Work Bench Omega 6 was west of the nearest toy factory, which was also due south of the North Pole, as was the other toy factory to the east.<sup>3</sup>

The seat next to Iggy at Work Bench Omega 6 was occupied by Yugo, who was a little shorter than Iggy (Iggy was tall, for an elf). Yugo also had dark hair, dark eyes and an enormous dark moustache. Yugo was a clever elf with clever hands. He had invented almost every toy in Santa Claus' vast catalogue. He had invented a dollhouse with working elevators and air conditioning. He had invented a toy helicopter that could really fly and even collect the mail.

Not every one of his inventions was a hit. His frictionless shoelaces were something of a dud because they were too slippery to stay tied. He kept those in his failed invention closet next to the ViewFuture™, which was a device designed to see into the future, but all it ever did was spoil the ending of movies. Sam

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<sup>3</sup> It is usually pointless to ask for directions at the North Pole. If you were to walk up to some helpful elf on the street and asked for the way to Chubby's Cupcake Shoppe, that helpful elf would tell you to "just head south a bit, you can't miss it." But you will miss it, more likely than not, if you head the wrong way south.

had never forgiven him for giving away the twist from *Wizard Duels in Space IV: The Revenging Part II*.

Yugo did not just invent toys. He had also invented a most clever snowmobile, which was parked in a reserved spot near the front door. Yugo's snowmobile had actually parked itself and was ready to go and fetch a coffee if needed. It really is a clever snowmobile.

Sam was shorter still than Yugo, but rounder than Iggy and Yugo combined. He had an enormous belly that would have shaken when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly, but Sam never laughed. His face always wore a frown and his eyes were always angry eyes.

"Aren't you finished yet?" asked Iggy, looking at Sam's quadruple decker sandwich. "Lunch time is almost over."

"Lunch is the best part of the day," replied Sam. "Lunch time should never be rushed."

"But Sam, we are already behind schedule and Christmas is only three days away," said Yugo.

"Christmas is going to have to wait then," said Sam. "I can't rush this sandwich, it's bad for my digestion."

"That's the fourth sandwich you've had this morning!" said Iggy.

Sam scowled. "I'm not going to argue with you. Arguing is also bad for my digestion." With that, Sam tore into the enormous sandwich and swallowed it all in three bites.

"I thought that rushing was bad for your digestion," said Yugo, raising one side of his tremendous moustache with a smile.

Sam looked blankly at Yugo. "I wasn't rushing."

Just then, a horn blew and the elves turned back to their work benches, raised their little hammers and screw drivers and began the work of Christmas, building little trains and trucks and dolls and games that would all find their way beneath an evergreen tree branch in only three days' time.

So long as a gelatinous mass from outer space did not come along and ruin everything.

**A**S IT APPROACHED THE EARTH, THE GELATINOUS MASS turned to face the Sun.<sup>4</sup> It was warm here. Warmer than the gelatinous mass had been for a long, long time. It had been warm a hundred thousand years before when it drifted through the Nebula of Yool-Tyed, which had been formed from the debris of three exploding stars.

This was a different kind of warmth. It was gentle. Nothing like the angry heat of three exploded stars. It was the kind of warmth that invited you to come in and stay a while. At least that was how the gelatinous mass felt. It spun in the warmth of the sun and spread its gelatinous self as wide as it could. The sun reflected off the shiny surface of the mass as it drifted closer to the Earth. The gelatinous mass sensed coloured lights far below. It sensed something that felt like excitement.

**O**GGY, YUGO AND SAM HAD JUST FINISHED their double shift and were headed down Peppermint Lane to their cozy apartment in Elves Barracks B the first time they saw the gelatinous mass. They did not know what it was when they looked up into the dark December sky. Of course, the sky is always dark at the North Pole in December, even in the middle of the day. The sun only rises once a year there and that would not happen for another three months.

A billion stars twinkled in the clear black December sky, but high above the North Pole, one twinkled more than any other.

Sam pointed into cold night. “What is that?” he asked.

“It’s a Christmas miracle,” said Iggy.

High above them, the gelatinous mass spun and stretched in the glow of the sun, and reflected down onto the elves like the brightest star in the sky. Bigger and brighter than any star the elves or anyone else had seen for two thousand years or more.

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<sup>4</sup> It is a little hard to picture how this might have looked as the gelatinous mass had no face, but do your best.

Dozens of elves gathered beside Iggy, Yugo and Sam and stared up in wonder at the new star.

Yugo reached into his tool bag with his left hand and rooted around. He always seemed to have exactly what he needed in his tool bag, and it was no different this time. His nimble hand found and pulled out a small extendable spyglass. He pulled it to his eye and looked up into the night.

“I do not know what that is, but I do not think that is a star,” he said. “It looks like some sort of a ... mass.”

But Iggy and the other elves did not care what Yugo had to say. They oohed and aahed as the new star twinkled and danced in the black sky.

This was a new feeling for the gelatinous mass. It was warm and, for the first time in its long existence, it felt welcomed. It decided to drift a little closer to the top of the little green planet.

And that was when the gelatinous mass learned about law of gravity.<sup>5</sup> It felt itself within the irresistible grip of the Earth’s gravitational field and was pulled down at an alarming speed. Alarming for the gelatinous mass, anyway, which had never felt anything like the attraction of the Earth’s gravity.

Alarming too, for all of the elves on the ground below who saw the miraculous Christmas star suddenly become a miraculous Christmas shooting star. It shot across the sky with a long glowing streak.

“Oooooooh!” ooooohed Iggy.

“Aaaaaaah!” aaaaahed Sam.

Yugo followed the trail of the star as it plummeted towards the ground. It disappeared over the rooftop of the Tumbley Rumbley Laundromat and the Very Very Last Chance Saloon. Yugo snapped his spyglass shut and said, “I think I know where it landed. We must go there at once.”

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<sup>5</sup>The “law of gravity” is more properly called “Newton's law of universal gravitation” and was conceived by Sir Isaac Newton in 1686. Newton’s law states that a particle attracts every other particle in the universe using a force that is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between their centers. In other words, and without the math, every object in the universe attracts every other object to it. The closer two objects are, the stronger the attraction. And the larger of the two objects will have a much stronger gravitational force.

Iggy and Sam looked at each other and then turned back to Yugo. “Okay let’s go,” said Iggy.

“Just make sure we get back before eight,” said Sam. “My show’s on tonight.”

**T**HINGS SUDDENLY GOT A LOT WARMER for the gelatinous mass as it sped through the Earth’s upper atmosphere. It caught on fire once, for a moment or two, and then it crashed into the snowy ground at the edge of Santa Claus’ village at the top of the world with an unmiraculous sounding . It lay flat in a steaming puddle of melting snow and struggled to get its bearings.

For once, it was not adrift in space. It was on the ground of ... something. Something hard and cold. And, the gelatinous mass discovered as it absorbed some of the surrounding snow and ice into itself, something tasty. The gelatinous mass soaked up some of the snow and ice that surrounded it. It felt cool and nice.

You may be wondering, if you are at all curious, just how much mass there was in the gelatinous mass. When this story began, seven pages and millennia ago, the gelatinous mass had considerably more mass. Perhaps as much mass as a good sized house. Something sensible for a young family, with three bedrooms, a pair of bathrooms and a basement yet to be developed. A sensible and practical sized mass, in other words.

But, the heat occasioned by the mass’ entry into the Earth’s atmosphere had, sadly for the gelatinous mass, steamed away a good amount of that mass. By the time it had crashed into the Arctic snow, the gelatinous mass was scarcely bigger than a camper van. Hardly enough to accommodate a young family and only a fraction of the mass it had been before.

The gelatinous mass spread out a little further and bumped up against something a little firmer. It was one of the peppermint cobblestones that served as paving stones of every road at the North Pole. Of course, at the North Pole, peppermint cobblestones are made with real peppermint.

The gelatinous mass paused for a moment and absorbed the peppermint into its, well, gelatinous, mass. Now that was very tasty indeed. The gelatinous mass

had never tasted peppermint before. It was peppery and minty all at once. It was delicious.

The gelatinous mass reached out for another peppermint cobblestone and then another and soaked them up. The gelatinous mass was shrunken and had not eaten in millions of years. It was *famished*.

**O**GGY, YUGO AND SAM ARRIVED A FEW MINUTES LATER in Yugo's clever red snowmobile. It was not like other snowmobiles one was likely to encounter. It was fast, faster than anything else on land or snow. It was faster than anything else in the air, too. It could fly when Yugo extended the shiny silver wings from either side. With the punch of a red button, it could even fly into space. It had a heated passenger cabin with comfortable crushed velvet chairs, dodecaphonic stereo sound and an onboard waffle maker.

They pulled up alongside the gelatinous mass just as the mass absorbed a candy cane light pole into its growing mass. The doors to the snowmobile slid open on smooth hydraulics. Iggy jumped out first.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It seems to be a mass of some sort," said Yugo. "A gelatinous mass, perhaps."

"Where did it come from?" asked Sam.

Yugo looked up into the dark Arctic sky. "Somewhere out there," he said. "You never can tell with masses, particularly gelatinous ones."

"What is it doing here?" asked Iggy.

The mass soaked up another candy cane light pole and a cherry drop fire hydrant. "Eating it looks like," said Sam. He could hear his own stomach grumbling.

Yugo twirled one end of his enormous moustache thoughtfully. "Maybe it was not a good idea to build a Christmas village entirely out of candy," he said.

"It's too late for that," said Iggy.

The gelatinous mass crept slowly down Holly Berry Avenue, and slurped up another two cobblestones as it passed. It was now the size of big recreational vehicle; the kind with a little room that extends out of the side and can comfortably sleep a family of five with a couple of dogs, too.

“It is going to eat the whole North Pole if we do not do something,” said Yugo.

“No way,” said Sam. He tucked a large napkin under his chin and pulled a spoon from his pocket. “No blob of Jell-O™ is going to eat my town. Not on my watch.” Sam was always hungry<sup>6</sup> and watching the gelatinous mass eat up the street had only made Sam even hungrier. And really, the gelatinous mass did not look much different than the gelatin deserts in the Elves’ Mess, just a lot bigger and no one had yet cut it up into little cubes.

“Sam, don’t!” yelled Iggy, but it was too late. Sam leapt at the gelatinous mass, spoon first and dug a big scoop from the side. The mass did not seem to notice and continued creeping down the street.

Sam gulped down a big spoonful of gelatinous mass and then another. He turned to Iggy and Yugo. “It’s quite tasty, you know. Kind of like candy canes and jelly.” Iggy looked away as Sam took another bite.

“Sam, you can not possibly eat this entire gelatinous mass,” said Yugo.

“Just watch me,” said Sam, between bites. It sounded something like “Jud wab bee.” He shoveled down a few more globs of the mass and swallowed them greedily.

Then, Sam staggered backwards and dropped his spoon. A small blob of the mass splashed across the peppermint cobblestones. Sam fell onto his knees.

“What’s happening?” asked Iggy, his brow furrowed as much as an elf’s brow could ever furrow.

“I think the mass is getting to him,” said Yugo.

Indeed, the mass had gotten to Sam. It had started slowly, the feeling of being adrift and alone. At first, Sam could ignore it, because the gelatinous mass was

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<sup>6</sup> It has been speculated that Sam might suffer from hyperphagia, a medical condition that results in excessive hunger and abnormally large intake of food and drink. Sam disputes this. He claims he does not *suffer* from hyperphagia; he *revels* in his hyperphagia.

just so tasty. But it got worse with every bite and finally it was too much for even Sam to bear. His eyes opened wide.

“My God. It’s full of stars!” It sounded something like “By bov, ib foo ub bards.”

And then Sam burped and collapsed face forward onto the cobblestones.



GENTLE PING MADE SAM SLOWLY OPEN HIS EYES. Iggy looked down on him, his face scarcely six inches from Sam’s nose.

Sam closed his eyes again.

“Where am I?” he groaned.

“You’re at the Snowy Hills Hospital,” said Iggy, from directly above Sam’s face.

Sam turned away.

“Doctor Bogglywog says you are going to live,” said Yugo.

“I don’t want to,” said Sam.

“How are you feeling?” asked Iggy.

Sam sat up carefully and looked at his surroundings. He was surrounded by the usual trappings of a hospital room. There were sterile white walls, a sterile sheet across his legs and a sterile needle dripping something sterile into a vein in his right arm. Sam burped. “I feel strange.”

“But strange is a good way, right?” asked Iggy. Iggy was always optimistic about things. If he ever wound up at Death’s Door, with Death himself on the other side, Iggy would invite him in for cookies. So, Iggy was fairly sure in his heart that if Sam felt strange, it would be a good kind of strange.

“I feel strange in a strange way,” said Sam. “I feel like I’m a million years old and that I’ve been from one side of the universe to the other. I’ve seen pirate ships with chickens and grand pianos with balloons. And I feel lonely. A peppermint kind of lonely. None of it makes sense.”

“It is the gelatinous mass,” said Yugo. “It’s still inside you. Doc Bollywog tried to pump your stomach but it did not work.”

“He said your stomach actually refused to be pumped,” said Iggy. “He’s never seen a stomach like it.”

Sam patted his belly proudly.

“You must have absorbed the memories and experiences of the mass when you ate it,” said Yugo.

“That is strange,” said Iggy. “But a good kind of strange, right?”

“The gelatinous mass is still out there,” said Yugo.

“I can’t eat any more of that mass,” said Sam.

“You won’t have to,” said Yugo. “You know what it is thinking. Where it came from. What it is doing here.”

Sam stared into the distance. “It came from far away,” he said. “Farther than anyone can know. It’s been headed this way for almost forever.”

“What does it want?” asked Iggy.

“I think it just wants to eat,” said Sam. “But that might not be the mass. That might just be me.”

“It will eat the whole North Pole if we do not stop it,” said Yugo.

“It will eat up Christmas if we don’t stop it,” said Iggy.

“I don’t think there is anything that can stop it,” said Sam. “It’s been around for millions and millions of years.”

“Well, we have to try,” said Iggy.

“Maybe we can send it back out into space,” said Yugo. “We could tow it into orbit with the snowmobile and send it on its way.”

Sam nodded. “But maybe pack it some peppermint. It really likes peppermint.”

Iggy and Yugo headed out of the hospital room. “Hang on,” said Sam. “I’m coming with you.” He climbed out of his hospital bed and immediately felt a tug on his arm. He realized that he was still attached to the very sterile IV needle. He grimaced. “This is gonna hurt,” he said and pulled the needle out of his arm.

Iggy and Yugo turned back when Sam started to howl.

“Are you okay?” asked Iggy. His forehead attempted to furrow again.

Sam looked down as a single drop of blood traced its way down his forearm. “Oh my,” he said and collapsed once again.

Doctor Bollywog happened to be passing by as Sam’s IV tower fell to the floor. It arose such a clatter, that Doctor Bollywog sprang into the room to see what was the matter. He found Sam lying on the floor in a drop of blood.

He glared at Iggy and Yugo. “What have you done to my patient?”

Yugo shook his head. “Oh, he’s fine. He just hates the sight of blood.”

Iggy nodded his head. “He hates the sight of all of the body fluids, really. But blood most of all.”

Yugo went over to Sam and pinched his cheek. Sam sat straight up right. “I’m okay,” he said.

Iggy helped Sam to his feet. Doctor Bollywog crossed his arms. “I guess if he says he is okay, there is no reason to keep him in the hospital.”

“No reason at all,” said Iggy cheerfully. He led Sam out of the room and out to the hospital lobby.

Yugo looked back over his shoulder. “I am not sure that was a proper medical diagnosis,” he said.

“I’m fine. Really,” said Sam. Then he burped again and pounded his chest with the back of his fist. “That gelatinous mass sure repeats on a fellow, though.”



WHILE SAM WAS RECUPERATING, the gelatinous mass was having the best day in millennia, or even an eon or two. There was so much to take in and it was all so delicious. And so many little people! The gelatinous mass could not remember ever seeing so many people. It did not feel so lonely with so many people running around, waving their arms in the air and screaming.

And the gelatinous mass was learning so many new things. Like how tasty these cobblestones were and how the lampposts tickled inside, just a little. And when it soaked up the Christmas Stocking Shoppe it discovered some things it never knew before. One thing it discovered is that woollen stockings itch a bit when they go down. The other thing it discovered was that all of these little people fill those stockings every year at Christmas time. And that made the gelatinous mass even more curious about what this Christmas time was all about. So it shifted across the street and swallowed up the wrapping paper press owned by old Jubbly Guttenbuggin. It would have swallowed up old Jubbly Guttenbuggin himself, but he ran off, waving his arms in the air and screaming.

Everything that the gelatinous mass consumed taught it so much. The cobblestones and light posts had memories of their own. And now they were memories of the gelatinous mass, as well. Memories of a thing they called Christmas. A season of family and giving and brown paper packages wrapped up in string. The gelatinous mass decided that he liked this Christmas. It wanted to learn more of it, so it slid over and absorbed the Glass Ornament Factory next door.

It was very tasty, although a little bit prickly.

The gelatinous mass did not mind. It had just learned about pine trees decorated with blinking lights and tinsel with presents down below. The gelatinous mass had witnessed the birth of galaxies and the death of stars, but in the millions of years the gelatinous mass had slipped away across the universe it had never seen anything like Christmas. It had to know more.

So, it consumed the Happy Time Turkey Farm next door. Farmer Gobbly Gobbers ran away, waving his arms in the air and screaming. The gelatinous mass soaked up his farm with barely a gobble.

A feast! The gelatinous mass had feasted on Christmas but now, it saw, that feasts were a part of Christmas, too. Feasts much bigger and better than the peppermints and candy canes the gelatinous mass had consumed so far. Turkeys and geese stuffed with geese and turkeys. Potatoes and yams and oranges and cranberries and corn and gravy and the gelatinous mass kept going back to the oranges because it really liked those.

There was still something missing. When the gelatinous mass had floated past the moons of Arcturus it knew that one of those moons had been disintegrated in a feud between space bandits. The gelatinous mass felt this way now. This Christmas it had discovered was a marvel without peer in the universe. But the

gelatinous mass still did not know who or what was responsible for this Christmas thing.

It was about to find out. For standing before it, at the intersection of Candy Cane Lane and Reindeer Road was a stout man with a long white beard dressed in a red robe with white fur trim. The stout man held a walking stick shaped like a candy cane in his fist. He stabbed it down on the peppermint cobblestones and shouted, “you shall not pass!”

Now this was interesting to the gelatinous mass. What creature has a beard that’s long and white? Who wears boots and a suit of red with a long cap on his head? The gelatinous mass oozed closer to the man in red.

Once again, the man in red slammed his walking stick on the cobblestones and shouted, “you shall not pass!”

Santa Claus raised his walking stick over his head and shouted, “you shall not pa ... .” And then the gelatinous mass gobbled him up.

“**W**ERE IS THE PLAN,” said Yugo as he turned up Reindeer Road. “I’ll pull up beside the mass and deploy the rear parachute. We will scoop up the mass in that and then head straight up.” He pointed at the roof of the snowmobile.

Iggy and Sam looked up, but all they saw was the roof of a snowmobile.

“Straight up where?” asked Sam.

“Straight into space. Once we are free of Earth’s orbit, we will release the mass back into space,” Yugo explained. “It is the only way to be sure.”

“Do you really think the parachute will be big enough to hold the gelatinous mass?” asked Iggy.

Yugo nodded. “I installed a new one last month. The cables are all braided tungsten and the silk has been reinforced with Kevlar mesh. It is strong enough to tow almost anything.

They reached the intersection of Candy Cane Lane and Yugo slowed down. The gelatinous mass was the size of a small apartment building now. One that is

about four stories tall with twenty or so sensible two and three-bedroom apartments. Perfect for twenty or so small families.

“I remember when this part of town was snow for as far as the eye could see,” said Iggy, as he stepped out of the snowmobile.

“Right now, it is gelatinous mass as far as the eye can see,” said Yugo.

“We’re going to need a bigger snowmobile,” said Sam.

The gelatinous mass had absorbed several blocks of the Christmas village, including the Globe Theatre, the Mistletoe Farm and the Old Penguin Retirement Home.

And now, the gelatinous mass was also absorbing Santa Claus himself into its gelatinous mass.

“Oh no you don’t,” said Iggy as he ran from the snowmobile and wrapped his hands around one of Santa’s black leather boots as it was sucked into the mass. Yugo and Sam were soon at his side, pulling as hard as they could.

Iggy grunted as he tugged at Santa’s leg.

“He’s really heavy,” said Yugo. He grunted, too.

“He’s just big boned,” said Sam.

As hard as they pulled, the gelatinous mass pulled harder.

“On three,” said Yugo. “Give it everything you have got.”

Yugo counted to three and the elves pulled on Santa Claus’ legs as hard as they could. They gave it everything they had. It would have seemed hopeless to anyone else, but Iggy never lost hope and just kept pulling harder. Finally, when it felt like they could pull no longer, Santa Claus burst free from the mass with a loud  **POW!**

Iggy, Yugo and Sam all fell over backwards with Santa Claus on top of them. He was covered in goop.

“Those are really big bones,” grunted Yugo.

Santa Claus stood up in a gooey daze. “It’s full of stars,” he said.

“I know, right?” said Sam.

“It boggles the mind,” said Santa Claus.

“I know, right?” said Sam. “It’s mind boggling.”

“I’ve never felt so boggled,” said Santa.

“I know, right?” said Sam.

“What are we going to do now?” asked Iggy. “That mass is massive.”

Yugo stroked his massive moustache. “I have an idea.”

“What’s your idea?” asked Iggy.

“Follow me,” said Yugo. He led the elves and Santa Claus back to the snowmobile. It was a pretty tight fit and he got stuck once for a minute or two, but finally Santa Claus found himself crammed into the back seat beside Sam.

“Ho Ho Ho,” Santa Claus chuckled. Sam just squirmed and tried to make himself comfortable. Santa had very big bones indeed.

They peeled out of Reindeer Road. The gelatinous mass quivered and then soaked up the Happy Gnome Pub and the Sugar Mountain Lodge.

“We need to do something. At this rate that blob is going to eat up Christmas!” said Santa Claus.

Yugo shifted the snowmobile into third gear. Since it had a fourteen-speed transmission, he was only just getting started. “That blob is not going to eat Christmas. I have an idea”

**T**

HE GELATINOUS MASS HAD IDEAS OF ITS OWN. It had soaked up so many new things. When it swallowed the coffee shop it had learned all about peppermint spice latte. It was tasty in a tingly, spicy way.

There was so much more to know. For a few brief moments the gelatinous mass had tasted the man in red with the beard of white. He felt wise. He had lived a long while. Not nearly so long as the gelatinous mass, but a long while by the standards of these little folk who keep running and hollering with their arms waving in the air.

And in the moments that the man in red had been part of the gelatinous mass' mass, it had learned so much. It had learned of improbable trips around this entire world on a sled pulled by flying reindeer. It had learned about how to get down a chimney in the winter. And of the importance of cookies and carrots set by the fireplace. Which, the gelatinous mass understood, are more important than you know.

The man in red tasted like gingerbread cookies, thought the gelatinous mass, now that it knew what gingerbread was. And his eyes twinkled like distant stars.<sup>7</sup> His cheeks, the gelatinous mass now realized, were like roses and his nose like a cherry. He shook when he laughed like a bowl full of, well, gelatinous mass. What a wonder, thought the gelatinous mass, as it sucked up another sugar plum tree.

It oozed around the corner of Gum Drop Avenue and slid slowly up to the biggest building it had found yet. It was bright yellow and covered in sparkling Christmas lights. The gelatinous mass had never encountered a toy factory in all of the years it had drifted in space and was eager to learn all about it. It extended a long tendril up the front steps and then absorbed the front door.

Dozens of elves ran out of the back door of the toy factory, screaming and waving their arms in the air. Inside, toy making machines buzzed and rattled and conveyor belts with toy horses and trains still rolled along. Christmas songs played over speakers set in the ceiling. Apparently, all the singer wanted for Christmas was you, which the gelatinous mass found very flattering indeed.

“Oh my,” thought the gelatinous mass as it studied the rows of shelves filled with dolls and sling shots. “This is going to be fun.”



UGO LED IGGY AND SAM INTO THE HANGAR where he kept his snowmobile. It was a wide space with tools laid out on every surface. Yugo had every kind of tool you might imagine in his collection. He had framminsators and grammerragers. And not the cheap grammerragers you might get at a discount store. These were

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<sup>7</sup> The sight of stars twinkling was a new experience for the gelatinous mass. In space, stars shine with a steady light. However, when viewed from the surface of the Earth, turbulence and particles in the atmosphere give stars the appearance of twinkling. The gelatinous mass rather liked it.

ther good grammerragers, the kind with the titanium bits and the thirteen speed rotor. All of the framminstators and grammerragers were lined up in neat rows, from largest to smallest. The larger ones Yugo used to build the rocket engines on the snowmobile. The smaller ones were good for more delicate work, like attaching an eyelash to a miniature crystal pony.

In the middle of the hanger was the hydraulic lift where Yugo's snowmobile could often be found, Yugo pattering beneath it, installing some new modification or another. Only last week he had installed new fans to the undercarriage, for clearing away sand in the event he ever drove the snowmobile in the desert.

But on this day, the lift was down and Iggy and Sam could see two large lumps in the back of the hangar which were each covered with red and green velvet tarpaulins. Yugo strode purposefully to the lumps and said, "I was saving these for Christmas, but Christmas can not wait."

Then he pulled the tarps away with the flourish of a magician, revealing two gleaming new snowmobiles, one green and one blue.

Iggy gasped.

Sam burped queasily.

"Merry Christmas," said Yugo.

Iggy rushed to the green one. He pressed a button on the side and the door slid up on smooth hydraulics. "It's beautiful!" The inside of Iggy's snowmobile was decorated with garlands of tinsel and mistletoe. It had that new snowmobile smell – which is the same as the smell of freshly baked shortbread. He pressed a flashing green button on the dashboard and a cheerful voice chirped out. "Good morning, Iggy. Have a great day!" Iggy grinned a little and pressed the next button. The first of ten thousand Christmas songs stored on the internal hard drive played out in crystal clear icosaphonic<sup>8</sup> sound. Iggy sang along with a little less crystal clarity.

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<sup>8</sup> A stereophonic sound system splits the sound between two speakers. A quadrophonic sound system uses four. This icosaphonic system had twenty speakers scattered about the inside of the snowmobile, each with their own tweeters, woofers, sub woofers and sub-sub-woofers. There was a whole lot of tweeting and woofing going on in Iggy's snowmobile while he played any of the 500 different versions of *Last Christmas* on his hard drive.

Sam stepped over to his snowmobile a little more carefully. He lifted the old-fashioned latch on the door and it swung open easily on its well greased hinge. The front seat was extra wide, with large cup holders on either side. He sat down gently and pressed a flashing blue button on the dashboard. An atomic powered waffle maker slid out on a small shelf to his left. Sam smiled and pressed the next button. A pancake maker slid out on a little shelf to his right. Sam whistled softly. He could not help but be impressed. He knew well that the physics and chemistry of the pancake are much more complex than those of the waffle. He would never want for breakfast again.

Sam had always been scared of Yugo's snowmobile. But this one, with its big chair and instant breakfast just felt right somehow.

Yugo slid into his old familiar snowmobile, with its narrow comfortable chair and dodecaphonic<sup>9</sup> speakers. He flipped a gray toggle switch and leaned into his dashboard microphone. "Let's fire them up," he said over intercom speakers hidden in the head rest of each snowmobile.

Iggy pressed the red ignition switch of his snowmobile and it started up with a cheerful roar. Sam turned his starter knob and his snowmobile came to life with a comfortable belch.

Yugo stuck a candy cane between his teeth and bit down. He punched his own ignition button and the engines of his snowmobile fired up with an angry growl. "Let's jingle some bells, lads," he said and slipped his snowmobile into gear.

A trio of snowmobiles sped out of Yugo's hangar and scooted three abreast down Candy Cane Lane. Iggy smiled as he shifted his snowmobile into sixth gear.

"Hey guys, slow down," said Sam, but the other two snowmobiles maintained their furious pace. Sam grimaced and reluctantly put his little blue snowmobile into sixth gear as well.

Yugo's voiced buzzed out of the hidden intercom speakers. "It is going to take all three of us to capture the mass and then pull it into orbit. Be ready to deploy your parachutes on my mark."

Sam looked around in panic. "I can't even keep up with you guys. How do I deploy the parachute?"

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<sup>9</sup> Only twelve.

“It’s the green button,” said Yugo.

Sam looked down at the control panel on his dashboard. There were at least twelve buttons all in a row of various shades of green ranging from brunswick to evergreen.

“It’s the chartreuse one, next to the lime coloured one,” said Iggy, helpfully.

“It says parachute,” added Yugo.

Sam peered down at the buttons. Sure enough, the chartreuse button had the word “parachute” written on it in barely visible lime green type. The lime coloured button next to it said “eject” in scarcely legible chartreuse type.

“Found it,” said Sam. He placed a blob of chewing gum on the parachute button so that he could find it later, as he found Yugo’s labels to be singularly unhelpful.

The three snowmobiles made a tight turn onto Mistletoe Road. They were only three blocks from the toy factory ...

...  HERE THE GELATINOUS MASS had just reached in and swept up all of the little toy trains and little toy tracks off of the little toy trains and little toy tracks shelves respectively. The gelatinous mass found them to be a little greasy, but it absorbed them all anyway. Then it reached for the next shelf, the one with the little toy trucks.

“It has reached the toy factory,” Yugo said over the intercom as they drew closer to the gelatinous mass. “Get ready to deploy your parachutes.” He stuck another candy cane between his teeth.

“Iggy, you go left. Sam, you take it from the right,” said Yugo.

Iggy turned left and said, “what about you, Yugo?”

“I’m going over the top,” said Yugo, and pulled back on his steering column.

Sam pulled to the right and in a moment the three elves had surrounded the gelatinous mass.

“Deploy your parachutes ... now!” shouted Yugo.

Iggy pressed a green button and a big parachute tumbled out of the back of his little green snowmobile. He pulled up close to the gelatinous mass and swept up the left flank.

Yugo released his parachute, which wrapped up the middle section of the gelatinous mass.

Sam stabbed at the bubble gum which marked the parachute button on his control panel.

And he was immediately ejected from his snowmobile. He had placed the bubble gum on the wrong button.

Sam screamed as his large chair with the dual cupholders shot into the sky.

Yugo frowned and pulled hard on his steering column. Together he and Iggy had pulled two thirds of the gelatinous mass away from the toy factory.

“Give it all you’ve got,” said Yugo.

The wheels of Iggy’s snowmobile spun on the icy cobblestones. “This is all I’ve got,” said Iggy. “We need another elf.”

The other elf soared three hundred feet above them. The intercom in his headrest buzzed. “How are you doing up there, Sam?” asked Yugo.

Sam just screamed in reply.

“We really need you down here,” said Iggy. As he spoke those words, Sam’s big comfortable chair rotated slowly and started to come down. Sam had just caught his breath, but now the terror overtook him once more and he started screaming again.

“Stop your hollering, Sam,” said Yugo. “You will be fine.” He tapped a few commands into his onboard computer.

A pair of small retro rockets fired from the bottom of Sam’s chair, slowing his descent. His snowmobile, now travelling on auto pilot, oriented itself under him and his big comfortable chair dropped through the sun roof and slotted neatly back into place.

Sam just blinked. He had not expected to be living at this point and had no idea what to do with himself.

Fortunately, he had Yugo to give him directions. “Go right Sam, go right.” Sam popped his little blue snowmobile back into gear and went right, just as instructed.

He pulled up alongside Iggy and Yugo, who were slowly tugging the gelatinous mass away from the toy factory. For its part, the gelatinous mass had just slurped up a shelf of little furry toys that laughed when you poked them in the stomach. Now the gelatinous mass felt an irresistible urge to laugh itself, although, being a gelatinous mass, it could not.

“Okay, Sam, now that you are in position, you can deploy your parachute at any time,” said Yugo through the intercom.

Sam carefully reached forward and lightly pressed the chartreuse button without gum on it. His parachute spilled out of the rear of the snowmobile with a satisfying



Sam sped up and scooped up the last third of the mass in his parachute and together, Iggy, Yugo and Sam finally pulled it away from the toy factory. They sped down Mistletoe Road with the gelatinous mass bouncing behind them, wrapped up in Yugo’s Kevlar lined parachutes.

“Time to pull up,” said Yugo and the three elves each pulled back on their steering wheels. Three snowmobiles rose up into the air together, with the gelatinous mass in tow.

The North Pole shrank below them to a colourful dot in a sea of white. Iggy thought he could see his house. In minutes they approached the edge of the Earth’s atmosphere, where the black Arctic sky gave way to the blackness of space. It really was not that much different.

Suddenly, Sam started choking. He could barely breath.

“Don’t forget to close your sunroof, Sam,” said Yugo through the intercom. “It is the blue button.”

Sam searched in a panic at the array of blue buttons below the green ones which varied in shade from teal to indigo. He reached out in desperation for the nearest blue button, which was actually labelled “machine guns” in scarcely readable type.

“Never mind, I’ll do it remotely,” said Yugo and he tapped a few commands into his keyboard. Sam’s sunroof closed with a soft whisper. Sam took a deep breath. He had forgotten how much he hated space travel.

Yugo tapped a few more keys and all three snowmobiles fired up their afterburners in unison<sup>10</sup>. The elves sank deep into their seats as their snowmobiles surged out of Earth’s orbit and rocketed past the moon.

“Wow, we are really moving,” said Iggy with a smile. Sam just grimaced and remembered at last just how much he hated space travel.

They cruised further and further away from the Earth, which at this point looked like a little green and blue marble. Iggy could no longer see his house, though he knew it was down there somewhere.

“This should be far enough,” said Yugo. They were pretty far out at this point, and every thing Yugo had included in his lunch bag, including carrot sticks, celery sticks and fruit cups was floating about the cabin of his snowmobile. “Release your parachutes.”

Iggy and Yugo each pressed the red button that detached their parachutes from their snowmobiles. Sam fired off the laser cannons on the starboard side and also started cooking some pancakes before he hit the correct red button and then his parachute, too, disengaged.

Yugo bit down on another candy cane. “That is a wrap, boys.”

“Let’s go home,” said Iggy and the three elves turned their snowmobiles back towards the North Pole.

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<sup>10</sup> Technically, this would be a trison, or perhaps even a triumvirate, since there were three snowmobiles working together. That is not a thing that you see every day.

**R**E-ENTRY WAS COMPLICATED. Take it from me. I could not even begin to describe it.

So, I did not.

Suffice it to say, Iggy, Yugo and Sam all made it back safely to the North Pole.

**E**VERY ELF AT THE *WALRUS AND ULU* gave a tremendous cheer when Iggy, Yugo and Sam walked through the door and claimed their usual table at the end of the bar, which was also the one closest to the washroom.

The *Walrus and Ulu* is the most popular elf bar at the North Pole and it hosts two big celebrations every December. The first, of course, is on Christmas Eve, when the elves gather to celebrate while Santa Claus travels the world with the toys they had made.

The other one is, perhaps, a bigger celebration. It happens on that day each December when Iggy, Yugo and Sam save Christmas again. After four hundred years or more, it has become something of a tradition at the *Walrus and Ulu*. The usual table is reserved, and all the Elflägers Sam can drink are complimentary. This is a big commitment, as Sam can drink a great many Elflägers, especially when they are on the house.

The elves gathered about Iggy, Yugo and Sam as they walked through the double oak doors and past the giant walrus built entirely of Lego™. Iggy climbed onto the stool at their regular table and ordered his usual: unsweetened water with a slice of lime. Yugo had a hot chocolate. And Sam ordered an Elfläger and keep them coming.

There were puffin wings served in little wicker baskets, with dip of course. Sam would not accept anything less.

Nutmeg joined them, and wrapped her arms about Sam. As hard as she tried, her fingers could never quite touch. Sam appreciated the gesture regardless. He reflected that perhaps he should join a gym and spend his idle hours walking on a treadmill. And then he remembered that he had no idle hours, what with this

toy making business, his own private sandwich making business, watching Doctor Who reruns on his Elfbox™ and, of course, saving Christmas. Where did the time go?

Iggy raised his glass and then Yugo, Sam and all of the other elves joined him in a toast to Christmas.

Sam set his empty glass on the table and waved for another. It was going to be a long night.

**A**LONE AGAIN, THE GELATINOUS MASS SHRUGGED OFF the three parachutes and slowly drifted away. It did not mind being alone, it was the way it always was.

The gelatinous mass had learned so much in such a little while. It had seen stars being born, but it had never seen anything like this Christmas business. But now it was a mass that was filled with memories.

And such memories they were. Memories of pine trees. Memories of sugar plums and peppermint and tinsel and brown paper packages tied up with string.

Memories of songs. Songs about chestnuts roasting on open fires. Songs of clicks on the rooftop and reindeer with noses so bright and of a Christmas past with a heart given and then given away the very next day.

And memories of a bearded man dressed in red with a sack on his back and of little people running about screaming, and waving their arms in the air.

The gelatinous mass remembered all of these things and so much more. Memories of Christmas that the gelatinous mass would take to the stars.

The next place it found would know all about Christmas. Of that it was certain.

The gelatinous mass perceived another solar system not that far off. It would be there in another millennium or two.

Christmas is coming.

Iggy, Yugo and Sam Will Return In:

*The Last Elf*

*or*

*Fifty Shades of Red and Green*

*or*

*Waiting for Iggy*

*or*

*Saturdays in the Park with Yugo*

*or*

*Cogito, Ergo Sam*

*or*

*Something Else Entirely*



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