

The Tom Swift Christmas Saga

By Scott Lockwood

The ongoing Christmas story starring
many of the fan authors writing
Tom Swift stories today!

Now updated with 2016's story

Published by Crackpots Productions

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Table of Content

Christmas Saga I	5
Christmas Saga II	11
Christmas Saga III	21
Christmas Saga IV	33
Christmas Saga V	55

Christmas Saga I

By Scott Lockwood

Published by Crackpots Production
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Michael (and everyone),

Actually, I'm not too worried about the Mayan End Of The World because:

Just a few short days ago, Michael, Leo, Scott D and I were making our way through the Central American jungles. After days of steaming, humid weather, snakes, jaguars, thousands of insect bites, left-wing guerrillas and shady guides with dubious reputations, we found ourselves at the base of a mysterious Mayan pyramid. A while after that, having passed through rooms with death traps that still, surprisingly, worked and lots of really icky bugs, we emerged into the pyramid's central chamber. There, on one of the walls, were two large buttons. Michael, using his intricate knowledge of ancient Mayan languages, translated the writing on the buttons: "It says," he told us, "THIS BUTTON. The other one says THAT BUTTON."

"Aha!" I exclaimed. "It's obvious! In order to stop the Mayan Apocalypse, you just have to press THAT BUTTON!" I suited words to action and—

There came a rumble deep down in the ground. The walls began to shake. Spikes emerged from the ceiling and it began to descend...

"Or maybe not..." I concluded.

“Scott, you idiot!” Scott exclaimed. “You should not have pressed THAT BUTTON! You should have pressed—”

Unfortunately, we’ll never know which button I should have pressed, because at that moment the world came to an end.

* * *

However, in another space/time continuum, Sandy Swift just happened to be reading all of this. “Gah!” she exclaimed, “Those Tom Swift Fan Fic morons! Do I have to do everything for them?” Grumbling, she rolled off her bed, changed into her cute and stylish safari clothes, grabbed her Temporal Quad-Space Location Displacement Transportation Engine Device (“I’ve really got to come up with a less-cumbersome name for this thing,” she muttered. “I wonder if Time And Relative Distance In Space has been taken?”), punched in the coordinates and—

* * *

“Aha!” I exclaimed. “It’s obvious! In order to stop the Mayan Apocalypse, you just have to press—”

“Out of the way, you Tom Swift Fan Fic moron!” Sandy exclaimed, appearing right in our midst. “Any idiot would realize you have to press THIS BUTTON!!”

Sandy suited words to action and—

With a great rumbling sound, the Mayan Apocalypse ground to an abrupt halt.

Giving us all a good glaring, Sandy activated her device and disappeared in a huff, muttering something about “that’s the last time I’m going to risk my neck saving you morons from yourselves!”

“Wow!” said Leo, “how *Deus Ex Machina* can you get??”

“Wow!” said Michael, “we actually got a visit from Sandy Swift!”

“She sure looked cute in that stylish safari outfit of hers,” one of us Scotts said. We all nodded our agreement.

But, while the world might be saved, we still had some problems: left-wing guerrillas, shady guides, jaguars, death traps ... oh, yeah, and those really icky bugs! How were we supposed to get out of here and back home?

Thankfully, as luck would have it, a Quake-style slipgate opened up on the opposite wall. Not questioning this rather inexplicable happening, we hurried on through it and—

—found ourselves in the Black Dragon’s lair where Tom Swift IV was currently being threatened.

“And now, Tom Swift, you will reveal to me your plans for — “ the Black Dragon broke off and looked up. “What are

these four doing here?” he asked.

Tom looked at us as well. We all gave him a cheerful wave. Tom just rolled his eyes. “Don’t worry about them. They’re just Tom Swift Fan Fictors.” The Black Dragon nodded his understanding. “I’ll deal with them later. For now—”

However, just at that moment one of Scott L’s insufferably cute kittens emerged from the slipgate portal as well, and that led to—

But that’s a story for another time...

A Merry New Year and a Happy Christmas to all of us crazy Tom Swift Fan Fictors!

Scott L

Christmas Saga II

By Scott Lockwood

Published by Crackpots Productions
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When we last left our intrepid adventurers, Scott L, Scott D, Leo & Michael, they were in the midst of falling off a three thousand foot ice cliff, plunging towards a sea filled with razor-sharp spears of ice, near-freezing water, ravenous Kodiaks and vicious-looking walruses.

Leo: “Pouring it on kind of thick, isn’t he?”

In addition to this, a massive, five hundred foot high, multi-ton block of ice was falling right above them, hardly ten feet away.

Michael: “How Wile E Coyote can you get?”

Fortunately, Sandy just happened to have—

Sandy: “Huh? Hey, wait a minute! How’d I get dragged into this??” She searched for some useful items in her purse. Thinking quickly (or rather, *swiftly*) she yanked out an air hose, some dental floss, a hair net, some chewing gum, her personal hair dryer, an old –fashioned shower cap, and a Mighty Mo atomic capsule.

Sandy: “It’s a good thing I brought my extra-large purse!”

She whipped them together in bullet time, plugged the hair dryer into the Mighty Mo (which just happened to have a convenient wall jack in its side) and used it

to melt a hole in the ice block big enough for them to squeeze through, then used it, together with the rubber hose and the chewing gum to inflate the shower cap to gigantic, air balloon size, while utilizing the dental floss to rope the four men together. They floated back up to the top of the cliff while the ice block made short work of the ravenous Kodiaks and walruses.

Michael: “MacGyver would be so proud!”

Back on top of the cliff once more, Sandy said, “I know I’m going to regret asking this, but what are you four mixed up in now?”

And so she found out how Santa had appointed Frosty his chief of security and how it had all gone to Frosty’s head. Now he was throwing his weight around, interrogating elves and reindeer, accusing them of not having enough Christmas spirit and stealing candy canes from nearby trees. Santa had told them it was almost impossible for them to get any work done with Frosty pulling surprise inspections almost every other day.

“So why didn’t Santa just fire Frosty?” asked Sandy.

“He tried to,” Scott D told her. “But Frosty used that magical top hat of his to hypnotize Santa into keeping him on the job!”

“It was Rudolph who told us about this,” Michael threw in. “He and Frosty used to be such good friends. Now he’s been put behind bars for drunken behavior.”

“And Frosty just ignores his pleas that his nose has always been red,” Scott L said. “Frosty keeps insisting that a red nose that glows is a clear-cut sign of too many Jack Daniels!”

“So it’s up to us to save Christmas,” said Leo. “We need to take Frosty down!”

“OK, but how did you end up falling from the cliff?” asked Sandy. “For that matter, how did *I* end up falling from the cliff?”

Scott L: “It’s complicated.”

Scott D: “It is what it is.”

Michael: “These things happen.”

Leo: “Uh, well, we were running from Frosty’s army of snowmen armed with BFG 10,000s and plasma rifles and we kinda overlooked the huge ROAD ENDS, THREE THOUSAND FOOT CLIFF BEGINS signs and when we finally saw them and hit the brakes, so to speak, we skidded right off the cliff which, for some odd reason, caused a huge chunk of it to fall right along with us and then there was all those plasma beams converging on a single point in space/time that resulted in—”

Sandy: “Sorry I asked!”

“Okay,” Michael said, “now what do we do?”

“That should be obvious,” Sandy replied, “We—”

[Note: due to the shortage of time, this part will have to be cut short. It should suffice, however, to learn that our gang made it through raging blizzards, battles with half-frozen zombies, Slavic vampires, hordes of malicious snow sculptures (don't ask), and even a group of misplaced (but well-armed) penguins. Scott D & Scott L got to meet Quinn the Eskimo (Scott L: “I feel like I want to doze.” Scott D: “That's odd, I feel like I want to jump for joy!”), Michael went ice fishing with Nanook of the North (Michael: “I about froze to death, and didn't catch a bloody thing!” He paused. “Well, except for that strange, Nautilus-looking submarine...”), Leo got to ride the Polar Express (Leo: “Someone please explain this to me: a multi-ton train goes skidding across a sheet of ice and doesn't tip over or sink through the ice, but a single cotter key causes the whole lake of ice to shatter??”), and Sandy got to take out the Abominable Snow Monster of the North and, simultaneously, a ravenous Kodiak with her famous left-right one-two punch (Sandy: “That'll larn 'em not to mess with me!”). And so, less than an hour to midnight on Christmas Eve, in Frosty's secret lair, our fivesome stood in front of Frosty the Snowman, their arms behind

them in manacles of ice, encircled by an army of snowmen with plasma rifles aimed at them...)

Frosty: “Bah-hah-hah-hah-haaahhh!!” He laughed his evil laugh. “So, thought you could sneak in through the air vents and catch me unawares, did you?” he asked, his voice still sounding like Jackie Vernon’s. “Little did you know that I now have motion sensors planted in them, ever since the night those acid-blooded aliens tried the same thing (they have this thing for crawling through air ducts. What’s up with that...?). Now you’re my prisoners and I get to practice my evil rant on you! What a neat thing to happen to an evil guy like me!”

Sandy (thinking quickly): “Frosty, you’ve outsmarted us all! I must honor your superior intellect!” And with that, she dropped a nice curtsy.

Frosty: “Miss Swift, that is a very noble thing to do. I tip my hat to you.” Then: “Oops!” and froze solid when he removed the hat from his head.

“Dimbulb!” Sandy snorted as she snatched the hat from his frozen hand (her purse had contained some hand-warmer pads which she’d used to dissolve her ice manacles). “These silly snowmen. Once they come to life, they don’t know nothin’!” The snowmen army froze in dismay as well, the magic that animated them gone. Their

plasma rifles reverted back to wooden toy guns.

“Way to go Sandy!” the other four cheered, their ice manacles melting away.

“But what now?” Scott D asked. “It’s less than an hour before Christmas and Santa doesn’t even have a quarter of his presents ready!”

Sandy: “Well, as it happens, I have a magic hat on hand.” She placed it on her head. “Let’s see what this baby can do!”

And, after a bunch of multi-colored swirls of energy finished encircling her. Sandy used the magic hat to put Santa’s production line back on track. In less time that it takes to write, the bag full of toys and Saint Nicholas, too, were on their way around the world.

And so, once again, Sandy Swift saved Christmas.

THE END

Victoria Applepound breathed a sigh of relief. “There!” she exclaimed. “That’s finally finished!”

She began getting the manuscript ready for mailing. “Although, I have to say, I’m still not certain just why those four Tom Swift Fan Fictors keep creeping into my stories like that. They’ve been doing a lot of late...” She shuddered, then shrugged it off. “But, they’re just products of my fervid imagination. And a good thing, too. I hate to think what the world would be like if they really existed...”

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW
YEAR TO ALL US TOM SWIFT FAN
FICTORS!!

(Be we products of Victoria Applepound’s
imagination or not!)

Scott L

(a product of his own diseased imagination)

Christmas Saga III

By Scott Lockwood

Published by Crackpot Productions
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All Ambidextrous People Ignored

When we last left our intrepid fivesome, they had just entered the long, echoing hall of Tom The Great and Powerful.

“I AM TOM!” voiced the bald-headed hologram with the sour disposition. “THE GREAT AND POWERFUL! STEP FORWARD, um, let's see here... oh: SCOTT D!”

That individual took a few tentative steps forward.

“YOU DARE COME TO ME FOR ANOTHER SPORTS CAR—SPECIFICALLY, A WHITE KOENIGSEGG 2007 CCGT—TO ADD TO YOUR VAST COLLECTION, DO YOU?!”

“Well, no, that's not exactly what I—”

“AND YOU, LEO, DARE APPROACH ME AND ASK FOR YOUR VERY OWN *CHALLENGER?!?*”

“Uh, no, what I actually wanted was—”

“AND YOU, MICHAEL, DARE TO ASK FOR YOUR OWN TELEJECTOR WITH 3D, 4K RESOLUTION AND A KILLER HIGH-END KRELL SOUND SYSTEM (PLUS FLOOR-TO-CEILING DEF TECH SPEAKERS AND TWO M & K SUBWOOFERS) TO GO WITH IT?!”

“I don't think I mentioned that in any of my recent blogs...”

“AND YOU, SANDRA SWIFT—wow, you really are cute!—HAVE THE GALL TO ASK

FOR YOUR OWN MiG-31 *FIREFOX*—that's odd, I thought you already had one—DO YOU??”

“Yeah, and just what if I do?”

“I'm not certain how to answer that... Uh, AND, um, YOU, SCOTT L: YOU DARE TO ASK ME FOR YOUR OWN DO-IT-YOURSELF TRANSMITTATON KIT?!”

Said individual fainted dead away.

“WAKE HIM UP! THE GREAT AND POWERFUL TOM HAS EVERY INTENTION OF GRANTING YOUR REQUESTS!

“What'd he say? What he'd say?” Scott L exclaimed, waking up immediately.

“BUT FIRST YOU MUST PROVE YOURSELVES WORTHY BY PERFORMING A VERY SMALL TASK!”

“What?” they all asked in perfect unison.

Tom The Great And Powerful told them.

“OH MY GAWD!” Sandy screamed in dismay. “No, please! I beg you! Anything *BUT THAT!*!”

Blood drained away from the faces of the male members of the group. Scott L fainted dead away once again. “You can't be serious!” Michael said in a very small voice.

But Tom The Great And Powerful did not relent. “YOU HEARD ME! NOW G—”

But Scott D made a “time-out” motion. “Wait. I just gotta ask: are you Tom Swift or Tom Hudson?”

“DOES IT MATTER?” the hologram boomed. “NOW GO!!”

“But how can we possibly find—?” Leo started to ask.

“I SAID GO!!”

“OK, we're leaving already,” Michael said. “Sheesh, you don't have to make a federal case out of it.”

Dragging Scott L's limp body behind them, the sad-faced foursome began heading out the wall. “This,” Sandy said, “is so not going to be fun.”

“Yeah,” Scott D agreed. “We're going to have to be at the mall by one in the morning, wait in line during the freezing cold until 10:00 AM, then brave several thousand stark raving mad Black Friday shoppers just to get this Tom an X-Box One with all the relevant game titles!”

Shopping on Black Friday wasn't something to be done lightly. So our gang geared up.

Scott L went with his favorite weapon: the quad-barrel shotgun with a 1.5 second auto-reload and 200 rounds of magnum shells.

Scott D stuck with his weapon of choice: the Vulcan cannon with a 4000 round per

minute cycling rate and ten thousand rounds of armor-piercing ammo.

Michael took with him his favorites: the M56 Smart Gun and a thousand rounds of depleted-uranium bullets, plus his General Dynamics RSB-80 plasma rifle in the 60 Gigawatt range.

Leo was delighted to finally field-test his modified Swift Fatman Suit: it was now covered with a unique “mono-slick” carbon fiber armor that was almost frictionless; each arm was equipped with plasma cannons, phasers, and Vorlon planet-destroyers, while shoulder-mounted Shadow anti-proton emitters rounded out the weapons.

As for Sandy: she was, of course, dressed in her cute school uniform that came equipped with katanas, wakizachis, tachis and kodachis, four sais, and multiple Shurikens. To say nothing of her iridium bo staff, plus a lightweight bow and a quiver of arrows.

Thus equipped, they were ready to take on Black Friday shopping at the local mall.

Or so they thought.

The following night, Tom The Great And Powerful looked up in surprise (or rather, his hologram did). “CAN I BELIEVE MY EYES?” he thundered. “WHY HAVE YOU RETURNED?”

And well might he ask, they were a sight

to behold:

There were black eyes, torn clothing, bloody noses, weapons half-melted and rendered useless. Sandy's swords were snapped in half, her bow broken and bent into a U shape; Leo's Fat Man armor was covered with dents and holes that leaked smoke and sparks, one arm was missing, the Tomaquartz front riddled with cracks. From inside, Leo shook his head mournfully. "My energy," he said, "is spent to last and my armor is destroyed."

Michael nodded. "We have used up all our weapons..."

Scott D chimed in: "...and we're helpless and bereaved."

Together, Scott L and Sandy said, "Wounds are all we're made of."

Tom The Great and Powerful frowned at them. "DARE YOU SAY THAT THIS IS VICTORY??"

Sandy nodded. "Actually, it is!" She walked over to the hologram, removed a box from a torn-up shopping bag and placed it at the base of the image. "In spite of overwhelming odds, we managed to get you the last one in the store!"

"VERY RESOURCFUL, VERY RESOURCFUL," the image muttered. Then they heard him say, "I thought you told me they couldn't possibly succeed." A female voice answered, "Hmmm, they're better

than I thought!”

Curious, the bedraggled bunch made their way over to a previously-unseen alcove covered by a green curtain. Several kittens were playing with the fringed base of the curtain and by chance one of them leaped up onto the curtain, pulling it down, revealing:

“Tom Hudson and Phyllis Newton!” the fivesome exclaimed as they stared at the audio/video control room.

“PAY NO ATTENTION TO THAT MAN AND WOMAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN!” Tom yelled into the large, old-fashioned microphone.

“Would you mind shutting that thing off?” Michael asked, annoyed. “It's hurting our ears!”

“Oh, sorry,” Tom said as he complied.

“And why shouldn't we pay attention to you?” Sandy asked. “You're standing right in front of us!”

Tom shrugged. “I'm required to say that,” he explained. “It's part of the standard wizard's contract in case we get caught.”

Sandy, her hands on her hips, stepped forward and said, “So, what about our requests, huh?”

Tom Hudson, turning a whiter shade of pale, said, “Um, yeah, about that...”

Phyllis let out a strangled chuckle and replied, “Well, you see, we really didn't expect you to succeed like that. So, uh, we didn't think we were obligated to get you anything...”

“Oh,” Tom said as he turned to Phyl with a grin, “that reminds me. I did get you an X-Box One!” He reached into a nearby black bag and pulled it out.

Taking it, Phyl gave him a wide smile. “Tom, how sweet of you! But how did you get one?”

Tom waved the question away. “Oh, I got this months ago. I knew how busy the stores would be this time of the year!”

Phyl nodded her agreement. “You're really smart to have done so. Why, anyone would have to be crazy to fought the Black Friday crowds in order to get one! Let's run by your place, get it hooked up, and see how well it works...” Her voice trailed off as the two of them heard a curious growling sound behind them. Turning their heads a bit, Tom and Phyl stared into the angry faces of the five Black Friday combat veterans. Said veterans were discarding their damaged weapons and replacing them with back-up weapons they always kept on hand. From inside his armor, Leo pulled down a lever, discharging a small spherical object. Moments later, the object abruptly grew into larger, more heavily armed Fat Man suit.

“You mean to say,” Scott L said through clenched teeth, “you *already had* an X-Box One *on hand??*”

“Uh, yeah,” Tom replied, his face matching that of Wile E Coyote's when, after poking and jabbing at the wedged rocks overhead, he suddenly came to realize what he was doing, “Um, I guess I kind of forgot about that until just this minute.” He flashed them a quick grin. “But now I can have one of my own.”

“You know, Tom,” Phyl said, “that might not be the smartest thing to be saying right now.” The fivesome, growling even louder, began to approach Tom & Phyl, bloodlust clearly in their eyes.

Tom nodded. “Good point, Phyl!” He grabbed her hand and prepared to run. “So to you five, and to all Tom Swift Fan Fictors and group members, I just have to say:

“MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!”

THE END

EPILOGUE

In case you're wondering: yes, they got away. Fortunately, Tom kept a nearby repelatron sleigh nearby, just in case of such emergencies. He was always a man of action.

SANDY SWIFT AND THE FAN FACTORS FOUR WILL RETURN

(Promo: Be here next year for *Christmas Saga IV*, when special guest star (and fellow fan factor) Jon Cooper has our gang go shopping for him: at WalMart on Christmas Eve, fifteen minutes before closing time...)

(Sandy: “OH MY GAWD!!!”)

Christmas Saga IV

By Scott Lockwood

Published by Crackpot Productions
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All Ambidextrous People Ignored

It was a nightmare that never seemed to end, but just as the clock struck twelve, Sandra and the Fan Fictors Four managed to stagger out of Wal-Mart with all of the items on Jon Cooper's list.

They made their way over to Scott L's battered, woebegone 1978 Dodge Charger and somehow managed to fit inside. Scott L sat behind the wheel and began the usual routine of begging, coaxing, swearing and screaming as he attempted to get the car to start. From long experience, the others knew they were in for a good twenty-minute wait (if they were lucky).

A few minutes later, however, a strange thing happened: right there in the parking lot, Santa and his team of reindeer landed right beside them!

"Ho-ho-ho! Come out, you five!" he commanded them. "Looks like I'm in need of your help once again!"

The five looked at each other, then shrugged. "Better find out what he wants this time," Sandy said. The others nodded and climbed out of the car.

"What's up, Santa?" Michael asked.

"Climb on board and I'll fill you in," Santa replied. "We've no time to waste!"

The others did so, noticing for the first time that there were no toys in the sleigh,

only an empty sack.

Santa shook the reins and, moments later, the sleigh was airborne. The sleigh climbed until it was far above the clouds but, being magical, there was no danger of freezing or low oxygen content. And they could talk freely without being drowned out by the wind.

"A really nasty piece of work," Santa began, "called King Winterbolt invaded my castle a few days ago. He was the ruler of the Island of Really Creepy Toys."

"'Island of Really Creepy Toys?'" the others repeated.

Santa nodded. "Yes. That's the island responsible for toys like the 'Chucky' dolls and that clown from 'Poltergeist'. Anyway, he and his minions have now taken over my factory and are in the process of turning all of my nice, comfort-giving toys into – dare I say it? – even creepier toys! So I need you five to help save Christmas!"

"You mean," Scott L said, with a frightened look, "y-you want us t-to confront and f-f-fight King Winterbolt and his m-minions??"

Santa glared at him. "Heavens, no! Except for Sandy, I wouldn't count on you four to take down a scout troop composed of puppies and kittens! No, what I need you to do is talk a legend out of

retirement."

"A legend?" Sandy asked. "What legend?"

Santa beamed at her. "Sandra, I'm talking about the most celebrated warrior of the 16th century! The legendary, magnificent, incorruptible, undefeatable, invincible, unstoppable (and about four or five other hyperboles) legendary (I believe I already said that) Miaowara Tomokato, the Samurai Cat!!"

A hush fell over the Fan Fictors Four and Sandra; awe lit up their faces. Then, in one, shared breath, they said in perfect unison: "*Who?*"

Santa's sleigh set down near a village in 16th century Japan. Santa and the gang climbed out. After stretching his legs Santa sent out down a path to a nearby house. Knocking on the door, the Fan Fictors Four (plus one) were surprised when it was opened by a large cat dressed in a kimono.

"St. Nicholas!" the cat exclaimed, bowing. "Very pleased to meet you at last. My brother has told me of your adventures in Germany in 1944!"

Santa bowed in return. "Honored to meet your acquaintance, Shimura Tomokato! Your brother has, in turn, regaled me in your adventures on Bazoom

when he was hunting down Zad Fnark."

Shimura laughed. "I know! My son Shiro is currently at the local Barnes & Nobel signing copies of his books about those adventures. He calls the latest two novels 'More Adventures of the Samurai Cat' and 'The Samurai Cat in the Real World'. But where are my manners? Please come in, you and your friends!"

Santa shook his head. "We can't stay for long," he told the cat as they went inside. "I need to locate your brother as soon as possible. I badly need his help!"

"Oh?" Shimura said, eyebrow raised. "More trouble from Frosty?"

Santa shook his head. "Not this time. It's worse: King Winterbolt has taken over my castle and is turning out really creepy toys..." Santa quickly filled Shimura in on the latest threat. "So I've brought these others – " he pointed at Sandy and the Fan Factors Four " – to help persuade your brother to come out of retirement and take Winterbolt down!"

Shimura gave Sandy an approving look and the others a dubious glance. "Come with me," he said.

They followed him down a winding path to a typical Japanese house. In the front yard, they found a grim-looking cat dressed in a white golf shirt and khaki pants

practicing his putting. From the number of golf balls surrounding the practice green hole, they could see that his putting game needed some work. Even as they watch, still another golf ball rolled towards the hole, only to veer to one side at the last moment. A loud hiss followed, and it looked as though the amateur golfer was about to bend his putter into a "U".

"Hello, brother," Shimura said with more than a trace of amusement. "That last attempt wasn't too bad, all things considered."

Without looking up, Miaowara Tomokato replied, "What on earth possessed us Japanese to take up this infernal game anyway? Were the Scots trying to drive us mad?"

"Us ... and everyone else," his brother replied. "But, before you end up in a well-padded room wearing a white jacket with overlong sleeves, you might just wish to talk to an old friend of yours for a few minutes."

Looking up from the golf ball he had been glaring at, Tomokato noticed Santa and his small entourage. At once he bowed low in Santa's direction. "St. Nicholas! An honor to meet you once again!" He gave the others a puzzled look. One was a very pretty blonde girl, the other four looked like those Dungeons and Dragon types he'd

encountered near the start of his adventures. He shrugged, then motioned towards the sliding rice paper door. "Please honor my house with your presence!"

Inside, they all sat down on pillows around the table. Santa wasted no time filling the cat in on the takeover of his castle. "That's why I thought of you," he concluded. "It's still midnight in most parts of the world. If you can drive out Winterbolt and his minions, I can get the sack full of nice toys and continue my journey. Christmas can yet be saved!"

Tomokato, however, shook his head. "Alas, my fighting days are over. The last of my lord Nobunaga's enemies is dead and I have renounced the way of the Samurai. I now live a life of quiet contemplation and being one with nature."

Santa nodded, he'd been expecting this. So he turned to Fan Fictors Four and said, "You're on!"

Scott D told Tomokato that millions of children would be without a Christmas if he didn't help.

Scott L told Tomokato that millions of children would be stuck with very creepy toys and have nightmares as a result.

Michael told Tomokato that letting King Winterbolt and his minions rule was a

rotten thing to let happen.

Leo told Tomokato that the Christmas season's popularity would take a nose dive if everyone received creepy toys.

Tomokato shrugged their pleas off and replied, "I'm a Buddhist, things like that don't bother me."

Then Tomokato found himself staring into two very intense blue eyes. *A cat, he thought, even an ascetic cat such as myself, could get lost in eyes like that...*

"Miaowara Tomokato," Sandy said, her voice low and poignant, "if you don't get off your rear end and help Santa, Samurai Cat or no, I'm going to kick your lazy bottom from here to Asgard!"

Tomokato stared at the girl in astonishment. *Small wonder, he thought, St. Nicholas brought her along!*

As the sleigh flew back towards the North Pole, Sandy was thinking that this wasn't exactly what she had in mind: sitting next to her was a small kitten. At least, that's what he was supposed to be. But he wasn't like any kitten she'd ever cuddled in her lap.

"Hi ya, toots!" the kitten had said to Sandy as he came bounding up the road. "Where'd you come from and why haven't

you come here more often?"

"Who is *this*?" Sandy demanded.

"That's my nephew, Shiro," Tomokato informed her. "He usually ends up coming along on most of my adventures." The Samurai Cat turned to him and said, "How come you're back so early? Get tired of signing books?"

Shiro snorted. "Actually, Unc, I was doing pretty good until some guy named Tom Hudson showed up and put his books on display! Man, the chicks flocked to him like a magnet! All that was left at my table was some eighty-year-old ladies and a few Tom Swift Fan Fictor wannabes. So I decided to pack it in early."

"Just as well," his uncle told him. "We're about to go on an important mission. Go get your gear."

"Yes!" the kitten exclaimed enthusiastically. "Things have really been dull since you retired, Unc!" He looked at Sandy. "Is she coming too?"

"Of course," Tomokato answered with a nod.

"Double yes!!" The kitten was all but dancing with joy and raced off for his house.

"Why," Sandy asked herself and the others, "am I suddenly worried?"

She was answered a short time later when Shiro returned, a huge sack perched on one small shoulder. It made a loud crash as he dumped it into the back of Santa's sleigh.

"What all do you have in there?" Sandy couldn't resist asking.

Shiro shrugged. "My usual gear: my M16/M203 over and under, a couple of dozen Desert Eagle .44 magnums, some automags, a few genuine Colt .45 Peacemakers; Atchison auto-shotguns, some grenade and rocket launchers with three or four crates of ammo, a few LAW rockets, some sniper rifles, a couple of BARs and, of course, my pride and joy, the Vulcan electric cannons and ten cases of uranium-depleted rounds."

Sandy was tempted to ask how a small kitten like him was able to carry around about a ton of weapons like that – but thought better of it.

The Fan Factors Four wanted weapons of their own, of course. But Tomokato, Shiro, and Santa exchanged looks and shook their heads doefully. In the end, the four were given collapsible rice fans and feather dusters to protect themselves with.

"I think we've just been insulted," Leo remarked.

"We're certainly being sidelined,"

Michael pointed out. "Notice how the narrative has focused mostly on Sandy and Shiro the past couple of paragraphs."

Nevertheless, they were in the sleigh as well as it plunged through the clouds towards Santa's castle. The moment the sleigh came to a stop in front of the castle, Tomokato sprang into action.

Whipping out his katana and washabee, the Samurai Cat marched straight up to the castle gate, currently being guarded by panda with the head of a grizzly and a crocodile with six additional arms.

"I-I-I'm a c-c-cold b-blooded animal," the crocodile was complaining, his teeth chattering. "W-why put m-me on g-g-guard outside l-like th-this?"

"I know," the panda-grizzly sympathized. "And who are we guarding this place against? There's no one around here for miles!"

Then they noticed Tomokato approaching, decked out in his samurai armor, swords flashing despite the lack of sunlight. "Wow, what a stud!" both exclaimed.

"Winterbolt really went all-out on you!" the Panda said admiringly.

"Y-you're the cr-cr-creepiest-looking t-toy I've seen y-yet!" the crocodile agreed.

Then they saw Santa and the others approach. Shiro was holding his M16/M203 while the Fan Fictors Four held out their feather dusters. Santa didn't seem to be armed at all.

"Uh-oh," the panda-grizzly muttered. "Not liking the looks of this!"

"W-we c-c-can t-take th-them!" the crocodile assured his friend. It might have been a bit more impressive if he hadn't been shaking so much.

"I have business with your king," Tomokato informed them. "Will you step aside and let us through, or does this have to get distasteful?"

The panda-grizzly growled and raised his arms to attack. With a simple flick of his katana, Tomokato disembowled the panda-grizzly, cotton stuffing spilling out all over the frozen ground. "The unkindest cut of all!" he complained, then fell over flat on his back. The crocodile took two steps forward, then fell over, shattering as he did so. Ignoring him, Tomokato stepped forward and rang the doorbell. A creepy-looking mechanical eyeball popped out of a round opening. It said something in a strange, alien language. Before it had a chance to withdraw, Tomokato sliced its stalk off, then kicked in the door.

He was attacked at once by oversized toy soldiers and giant mid-60s type plastic

robots. But Tomokato became a whirling dervish, sending splinters of wood and plastic parts flying in all directions. Eerie-looking teddy bears and evil clowns were quickly disassembled with contemptuous ease. Barbie and Ken dolls with punk-rock makeovers, G I Joes made up to look like Khmer Rouge insurgents, superhero dolls with tattoos and skin-piercings, Disney characters shooting cocaine and smoking dope – they all ended up diced, sliced, and pureed.

"I have to hand it to you, Tomokato," spoke a voice that sounded to a considerable degree like Paul Frees. It was King Winterbolt. "You took out my vanguard pretty easily!"

Tomokato looked over the evil monarch. He stood about six feet tall, wore a white robe and carried a long scepter that was obviously made out of ice. "Enough!" The Samurai Cat snarled. "You will return control of the castle to St. Nicholas at once. Or I and the rest of my friends will be using you to chill our drinks with!"

"You don't frighten me!" the evil king sneered. Then he aimed his scepter at Tomokato. It emitted a cheesy-sounding sound effect and fired a blue beam at him. Tomokato deflected the beam with his washabee, but gasped in dismay as the sword froze over, then shattered. King Winterbolt fired again. Tomokato used his

katana this time, but the same thing happened: it froze over and shattered. *And those were my favorite swords*, he thought sadly. Then he gritted his teeth. Winterbolt wasn't going to get away with this!

"It seems you're out of swords, cat!" Winterbolt laughed. "Maybe, instead of fighting, you ought to join my side!" He gave the cat a closer look. *What a stud!* he thought to himself. What he said was: "You would make a wonderfully creepy action figure!" He walked around the cat, inspecting him. "Hmm, yes, just a few minor changes, hmmm, downplay the heroic look, emphasize the menacing glare, that's about all it would take..."

Tomokato had had enough! Pulling out his backup swords (with which he was never without), he sprang at the evil monarch – only to be frozen in mid-air by a beam fired from a concealed emitter in the ceiling. Winterbolt smiled up at Tomokato. "The ceiling freeze ray is courtesy of my good friend the Snow Miser. He gave it to me as a birthday present last year."

"Yeah?" another voice spoke. "Well, Unc got me this for my birthday last month!" It was Shiro, carrying his favorite weapon of choice: the Vulcan electric cannon. Shiro opened fire on Winterbolt at once.

For an old man, Winterbolt dodged

aside with remarkable ease. Shiro charged after him, doing his best not to be knocked on his back by the Vulcan's recoil. When another ceiling-mounted freeze-ray opened up, the kitten immediately whipped out his M16/M203 and fired upward, taking it out. Then he opened fire with the M203 grenade launcher, blowing a hole under Winterbolt and flinging him into the air. To Winterbolt's vast dismay, his ice scepter flew from his grasp and shattered on the floor yards away.

"Got you now, your highness!" Shiro laughed.

Regaining his feet, Winterbolt sneered. "Think so, kitten?" Then it was his turn to whip out a Vulcan cannon-type of weapon. Only, as Shiro found out, instead of uranium-depleted bullets, it fired solid-ice fleshette. They hit Shiro's Vulcan dead-on, tearing his weapon to pieces.

"Um, this isn't good," Shiro muttered to himself. What made it worse: Winterbolt's creepy toys began emerging from hiding places beneath the floor and opened fire with various other weapons.

With a yelp of fright, the kitten scurried back to the others and hid behind some massive furniture.

Now, the Fan Fictors Four weren't just cowering underneath a table while all of this was going on, they'd been busy:

namely, cowering behind some conveniently bullet-proof packing boxes of Winterbolt's. Shiro soon joined them and Santa.

"We're all gonna die!" Michael wailed.

"I'm too young for this stuff!" Scott D moaned.

"I'm too old for this stuff!" Scott L cried.

"On the whole, I'd rather be in Beverly Hills, L.A.," Leo commented. They all looked at him. He shrugged, "Just sayin'"

But out of the chaos and in the face of certain defeat, a hero arose. Fearless, determined, smartly dressed, Sandra Swift reached into Shiro's weapons sack. "Give me those!" she commanded, yanking out his Desert Eagle .44 Magnums.

Without breaking stride, she walked towards the creepy toys and King Winterbolt and began opening fire.

Shiro stared in amazement. Not since his father had shot down the legions of the Pterns on Bazoom was he witness to such amazing gunplay. Hordes of creepy dolls and action figures went flying, shedding cheap plastic, styrofoam and cotton batting all over the floor. In one of the giant-sized panda-grizzlies, she spelled out "SANDRA SWIFT WAS HERE!" in bullet holes.

When her clips were exhausted, Sandy

ejected them, then rammed them down into her autoloaders on each side of her (a birthday present from Bingo), loaded up and went back to work. Several creepy toys tried to attack her from above, or from other hiding places, but Sandy seemed to have eyes in the back of her head (or, maybe her Sandy Senses were tingling) and she blew them away with an economy of movement that would have made a ninja weep. By the time she finally reached Winterbolt, however, her autoloaders were empty.

"You put up a good fight, Sandra Swift," Winterbolt acknowledged, his face a mixture of hatred, fear, wonder and respect. "But you're out of weapons." He grinned, and held up a longer, thicker ice scepter. "It's my Mark II model," he told her, "and it's more powerful than the other one!" He laughed his evil laugh. "Prepare to become a giant-sized popsicle, Sandra Swift. I shall enjoy licking you!"

"Ewww, that's just gross!" Sandy replied. Tossing Shiro's guns aside, she pulled out a tiny purse, opened it up, and yanked out a Led Zeppelin-sized double-neck flame-throwing guitar! Pausing a moment to tune up the strings, she let loose with an ear-shattering, headache-inducing power chord, ending on a drawn-out high note that shattered Winterbolt's new ice scepter.

Cowering on the floor, his hands over

his bleeding ears, Winterbolt said, "Huh! Sure didn't see that coming!"

Sandy walked over to the ice column where Tomokato was frozen in. She cut loose with the flame thrower and soon had him free (the ice column was pretty cracked anyway). Tomokato bowed low to her, saying "You have my thanks, Sandra Swift. You have the true heart of a samurai!"

Sandy gave him a modest smile. "Well, hanging out around my Texas friend Bingo Winkler (*nee* Horton) definitely pays off!"

Shiro soon approached her as well. "That was awesome, Sandy Swift! Say, do you think that you and me could..." He whispered something into her ear. With an angry look, Sandy bent the kitten over her knee and began paddling his behind. Then she stuck a bar of soap in his mouth. "Bad kitten! Bad!" she scolded.

Tomokato laughed at the sight. "I've done that a few times myself! Never seems to do much good, though."

Santa looked around with a sigh. "Well," he said, "you've helped me to regain my castle, but it's still midnight and there aren't any toys to deliver!"

But Sandy had already thought that out as well. Putting Shiro aside, she walked over to Santa and gestured around the room.

"Santa," she began, "would it be possible to use some of your Christmas magic and turn all of these creepy toys into really nice toys? That way, you don't have to start manufacturing from scratch!"

Santa beamed at her. "Sandra Swift, that's a brilliant idea! Yes, that certainly could be done, and quickly, too. It seems that once again, you've saved Christmas!"

"It's getting to be a habit," she replied.

Releasing his elves from captivity, the castle hummed with activity as Winterbolt's creepy toys were morphed into really nice ones. In what seemed to be mere moments later, his sack was full and loaded onto his sleigh. The others climbed on board, then Santa himself (and to his team gave a whistle). Moments later they were off!

(Down below, his arms secured with weatherproof rope, Winterbolt muttered, "Nice toys, bah! My creepy toys were a lot more fun!")

Santa returned Tomokato and Shiro to their homes first. The others assisted Shiro with his sack of weapons (which had been precariously perched atop Santa's toy sack).

"Sure I can't interest you in a long-distance relationship?" Shiro asked Sandy as she got back aboard the sleigh.

"You live in 16th-century Japan," she

replied. "I live in 21st century America. Do the math!"

And with that they were off. Santa soon returned the Fan Fictors Four (and Sandy) to the Wal-Mart parking lot. He even (after banging on the hood several times) managed to get Scott L's car to start (and keep running).

Moments later his sleigh took off. But they heard him exclaim ere he flew out of sight, "Merry Christmas to all, and I'll see you next year!"

The five exchanged puzzled looks. "That didn't rhyme!" they all exclaimed. With a sigh, they climbed into Scott L's car. Scott put it into gear and began to drive off, completely unaware of the sinister-looking black van that began to follow them...

THE END

SANDY SWIFT AND THE FAN FICTORS
FOUR WILL RETURN!

Christmas Saga V

By Scott Lockwood

Published by Crackpot Productions
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All Ambidextrous People Ignored

Christmas Saga V

It all started with the snow. And the sleigh ride (in a one-horse open sleigh) the Fan Factors Five (plus Sandy) were enjoying. The gang made their way through the hills and valleys around Lake Carlopa, singing Christmas carols and having a fun time. Then they came to a side road, one that Sandy, though she'd driven along this route many times, had never seen before.

"This is a strange route!" she said to the others. "Let's see where it goes!" Before the others could summon up a word of protest, Sandy was already leading the horse down the road. It wasn't long before they came across a sign that said "Christmastown - 3 Miles". And, sure enough, up ahead of them was a beautiful Olde England-type of town, complete with mid-19th century architecture, gas lamps and cobblestone streets. There were even carolers strolling around singing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen".

"This is peculiar," Sandy muttered, looking around in awe. "I've never heard of a town like this anywhere near Lake Carlopa!"

"What does it matter?" Michael asked.

"This place is awesome!" None of them disagreed with that.

Sandy guided the sleigh to a nearby sleigh-parking area and the gang disembarked. For the next hour or so, they wandered in and out of various quaint stores, buying gifts and souvenirs (prices were surprisingly low). Heading back to the sleigh, however, they came across a very sad-looking man – so sad, in fact, he looked as though he were about to burst into tears.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Sandy asked. "How can you possibly be sad in such a lovely town?"

"Because," the man replied, "this town will soon be gone, if something isn't done!"

That caused the others to pause. "What do you mean?" Tom H asked. "Why would this town disappear?"

"Because I'm going to have to sell it," the man informed them. "You see, I'm the mayor of Christmastown. Mayor Kris Kringle, at your service!" The man bowed low. "But I've been operating the town at a loss, you see, and now my evil twin brother, Krass Krangle, has threatened foreclosure unless I come up with enough money to pay off the mortgage! You can kinda see why I'm not very happy today."

"When is the mortgage due?" Sandy asked him.

"Oh, at 5:00 PM today."

The others exchanged looks.

"Yes, we can see why you're not happy about this!" they exclaimed.

"Well, we're not going to let that happen!" Sandy turned and shot pointed looks at the Fan Factors Five. "*Are we??*"

The Fan Factors Five, who looked as though they were about to run away as fast as they could, shook their head and said, "No, of course not!"

The five brilliant minds of the Fan Factors Five went into overdrive at once:

"We'll have a bake sale!" said Scott D.

"We'll set up lemonade stands!" said Michael.

"We'll sell Amway!" said Tom H.

"We'll find old bottles and exchange them for cash!" said Scott L.

"We'll enter the Publisher's Clearing House Sweepstakes!" said Leo L.

They all looked at Leo. He shrugged. "There's a vague chance we might win!"

Sandy just shook her head and groaned. She pulled out her SwiftTalk. "Let me get a hold of Daddy!" she told the mayor. "I'll bet he can help!" Unfortunately, all she got was a "NO SIGNAL" message. "Do you have a landline phone I can use?"

The mayor shook his head. "Unfortunately, the huge snowstorm we had the other night conked out all of our phone and Internet connections. It knocked over the one cell phone tower we had as well. It'll be weeks before the services are up and running again! We're lucky we still have power."

Sandy pondered the problem. "Well, it looks like raising any kind of money it out of the question. There's only one thing left to do."

"What's that?" the group asked.

"I'm going to have to visit this twin brother of yours and see if I can strike some sort of deal."

"You won't have to go very far," the mayor told her. "Here he comes now."

And sure enough, along came another person who looked almost exactly like Mayor Kringle. Only, whereas Mayor Kringle was a normally happy, jolly soul, Krangle had a sour, snarling expression and beady little eyes. At the moment, though, he had a wolfish grin on his face as he surveyed the town which would soon be his.

"Come to gloat, brother?" Kris asked him.

"More like to plan, you old fool!" his brother replied.

"Old?" the mayor snorted. "I'm actually two minutes younger than you!"

Krass Krangle waved a dismissive hand. "Um, well, whatever. Your quaint little village will soon be mine, and there's nothing you can do to stop me!" Then he let out a truly evil laugh.

"Yes, in place of these ridiculous old buildings and streets, I will have modern office buildings, billboards, telephone poles, strip malls and landfills! I'll see about getting in some fracking, drilling and ore processing plants as well! Maybe even a few pig farms! I'll even import in some street gangs to liven up the place! Christmastown will soon become known as Krangleville and my profits will go through the roof!"

The Fan Fictors Five and Sandy looked at one another. "Yep," Michael said, "that's a true evil twin brother!"

Sandy thought fast. She motioned to Mayor Kringle. When he came reached her, she whispered in his ear, "Don't sign that mortgage paper! Hold off to the last second!"

The mayor looked at her. "Why? What do you think you can accomplish in a mere four hours?"

"You'll see!" she promised.

Sandy wished Mr. Krangle a good day and, as surreptitiously as possible, made

her way back to the sleigh, the Fan Fictors Five following in her wake.

"Um, just what *are* we planning to do?" Scott D asked her.

"First, we need to get to Krangle's office and hunt for that mortgage!"

"Oh, we're planning on stealing it!" Tom H exclaimed.

Sandy glared at him. "Nothing quite so crude! Stealing! Really! Do I look like a thief to you?" Before he could answer, she went on: "No, I need to examine that mortgage. I've got a hunch about something..."

"But we don't know just where Krangle's office is," Scott L pointed out.

"Well, somebody around here probably does!" Sandy declared.

And sure enough, several of the townspeople were happy to point out the evil twin brother's office. "It's located on the edge of town," they told the group. "At the end of a dimly-lit street."

A short time later, Sandy and the gang stood staring at the place. It was surrounded by a huge fence topped with razor & barbed wire. Guards manned searchlight towers and were armed with machine guns. More guards and attack dogs were at the main entrance.

"Wow," Michael said, marveling at it all.

"Industrial espionage sure forces you to take precautions!"

Sandy whispered some instructions to the others, then the gang approached the front gate. At once they began singing "Joy to the World" in an off-key tone of voice as they could manage (which, for some, wasn't much of a problem). The guards clapped their hands to their ears. When the group paused for breath, he yelled, "Go away! Mr. Krangle doesn't allow Christmas carolers to come to his offices and sing! He runs a very joy-free business!"

Sandy motioned the others to stop singing. She appeared to pause for a moment, then said, "Tell you what. If you let us go inside the building, we'll go away and not sing to you anymore!"

The guard nodded. "Sounds good to me!" He raised the stop gate and motioned them on through. It wasn't until they were inside the building that a thought occurred to him: "You know," he said to the other guard, "that statement didn't make any sense!"

The other guard just shrugged. It was hardly the first contradictory statement he'd heard while working for Krangle Industries.

Inside, Sandy let out a sigh of relief. "Good thing minions have about the same level of intelligence everywhere!"

The gang hunted around for a directory. The building, which came from the old Soviet school of Really Depressing Architecture, didn't have one. But Sandy wasn't deterred. She went up to the second floor and began to hunt around. Before long she found an office with double doors. Inside, a woman wearing 60's-style glasses could be seen typing on a manual Royal typewriter.

"Excuse me," Sandy said, "but is this Mr. Krangle's office?"

"Why yes," the woman replied. "I'm afraid he's out at the moment, but if you're willing to wait, I'm sure he'll be back sometime before sundown."

Sandy motioned to Scott L and Tom H, it was time to put Phase Two into motion.

They wandered over to the receptionist's desk and looked over the high wooden barrier. "Say," Tom H said, "that's a really classic-looking typewriter you got there! Sure don't see many like those around anymore."

The secretary smiled at him. "Yes, isn't it a beauty! And I've been using it the past sixty-two years I've been on this job. But Mr. Krangle keeps threatening to take it away! Says he wants to keep up with the times and replace it with something more modern, like a Timex-Sinclair 1000, or maybe one of those state-of-the-art Commodore PET computers! Why, I'd have

to learn to save my correspondence on a cassette tape! Can you imagine??"

Tom H and Scott L exchanged looks. "Um, it does strain the imagination at that..."

While they kept the secretary occupied, Sandy and the others crouched low and snuck around to the other side of the receptionist's cubicle. Quietly, Sandy opened the door to Krangle's office and the gang crept in.

Gently closing the door behind them, Sandy had the remaining Fan Fictors start searching for the Christmastown mortgage. Leo L was the lucky one: he found a wall safe behind a portrait of Mr. Krangle. Muttering to herself "I should have thought to look there first!", Sandy removed her Snooper, placed it against the vault door (a magnet held it fast) and pressed a button near the middle. Then she began turning the large knob. About halfway around the dial a green LED on the Snooper lit up. Sandy pressed a button and the light went out. She turned it back the other a bit and the light came on again. She pressed the button once more. Then she turned it forward once again until the light came on for the third time. Sandy pressed down on the vault door latch and it promptly sprang open. Seeing the look the others were giving her, she said, "What?" Then added: "Bingo told me this would come in handy some day!" Sandy searched through the

vault for a few minutes, then cried out "AHA!" She removed the Christmastown mortgage papers and spread them across the large desk. Sandy removed the Snooper and switched it to Microscope Mode so she could read the super-ultra-tiny fine print on the lease. "AHA!" she cried again and proceeded to snap some pictures. "Time to go, people," she announced when she had finished. "We're done here!" Sandy didn't even bother to put the papers back in the vault.

Outside the office, the secretary was still going on about what life would be like in the (circa early 80s) computer era. "How can I possibly type without the comfort of a sheath full of Korrekt-O-Type close at hand? Or that heady smell of a freshly-opened bottle of White-Out? I'll go mad!" Then she paused. "Say, what happened to the rest of your group? I haven't seen them for the past ten minutes or so!"

"Group?" Scott L & Tom H replied. "What group? There's just the two of us here!"

The receptionist glared at them. "No, there wasn't! There was a very pretty blond girl here, along with some other nondescript-types. And now they're gone!" She continued to glare at the two Fan Fictors. "You two stay right there, I'm going to summon the guards!" The Receptionist picked up her phone and dialed zero. "Myrtle? This is Elanore. I think you'd

better send up the guards, we might have some sort of hanky-panky going up here in Mr. Krangle's office ... no, I'm pretty certain it's not something he set up himself ... well, you know he doesn't approve of office Christmas parties ... well, yes, I know we've thrown a few behind his back ... oh, I didn't realize we had another one scheduled for next week! I'll be sure to mark my calendar! I do hope Lizbeth brings those delicious dinner rolls of her, and Marty that Mexican dish he always does so well ... oh, and if it's not too much trouble, can you please send the guards up here? Thanks!" She turned back to Scott L & Tom H. "Now don't you two be going anywhere! The guards should be here shortly, and it would be very rude for you two to be gone!"

Before she could go any further, the office doors burst open and Sandy emerged, followed by the other Fan Factors. "I got it!" she exclaimed, holding her Snooper up triumphantly. "C'mon, people, we're out of here!"

"Uh, there might be a problem..." Scott L said.

As Sandy stopped to ask him what, the outer office doors burst open and several guards dashed in, machine guns raised, their heads swiveling around as they searched in vain for armed burglars or industrial saboteurs. What they saw was a very pretty blond woman holding up what looked like an oversized fountain pen and

five rather harmless-looking individuals who looked as though they'd be right at home at a fan factor convention.

"Psst. Elanore!" one of the guards whispered. "Where are the bad guys?"

Eleanor pointed to the Fan Factors Five and Sandy. "You're looking at them," she whispered back.

The guard's eyes bulged. "*Them?*"

Tom H, always a man of action, said, "You know, I'm getting a little tired of all these put-downs we're forever enduring. Give me that!" and before Sandy knew it, he snatched the Snooper right out of her hand. Quickly he set it to "defense" and pointed it at the guards. They looked at him and laughed.

"What's that supposed to be?" the main guard said. "Some sort of James Bond gadget?" He laughed some more.

"Well, now that you mention it..." Tom pushed the button. Luck was on his side, it was aimed in the right direction. The guards suddenly found themselves immobilized by a fast-hardening yellow goo.

"Oh my goodness!" the receptionist exclaimed, then ducked under her cubicle desk.

"Nice shot!" Sandy said, taking back the Snooper. "Now, we've got to get out of here."

There's no point in trying to get back through the main gate, the guards have probably been alerted by now. So we've got to try to escape another way!"

"How?" the Fan Factors Five wanted to know.

"Start gathering up all of the pieces of paper in this place, along with some cardboard, every rubber band you can lay your hands on, some paste, some marbles & gumballs, some Post-It notes, some paper clips, some aluminum foil, some scotch tape and the biggest darn boot you can find!" She paused a moment, then added: "Once you have them, meet me on top of the roof!"

In the end, the five used a mail room cart to bring the requested items to the roof. On top, Sandy could be seen wandering around the roof, moving carefully so as not to slip on icy patches, muttering to herself. As soon as she saw the gang and the cart, she ran over to it and dragged it to the shelter of some HVAC units. Then she upended the cart, dumping it all over the ground.

"Hurry!" she shouted. "We have very little time to spare!"

"But what are we doing?" Michael asked.

"Building a glider!" Sandy replied, setting right to work.

She had the five arrange the paper and cardboard in the shape of a large plane and began gluing, taping, and using Post-It notes to hold it all together. Rubber bands were used to control the various flaps and a rather rickety collection of pens and pencils served as joysticks. Some Saran Wrap was used for the wind screen, and the huge boot Scott L found in a locker served as a drag hook. Finally, the remaining rubber bands were stretched across the width of the roof, then pulled back as far as they could. The galvanized metal vent pipes they were attached to creaked ominously, and Scott D distinctly heard several of the rubber band snap.

"OK," Sandy announced. "We're as ready as we're ever going to be! Everyone climb on!"

The Fan Fictors Five stared at the bizarre glider, constructed mostly of corporate bureaucracy forms and cardboard inserts from next year's calendars. A pathway made of gumballs and marbles led to a ramp at the far end, which was covered with Pam-sprayed aluminum foil. "Hurry!" Sandy shouted. "I can hear the guards coming up the stairs!"

She was correct: moments later, the roof to the door burst open and the guards

poured out. "Launch, Leo!" Sandy cried. Leo reached behind him to the rear of the glider and, with his pocket knife, cut the shoelace that was holding the plane in place. As the guards watched on in total astonishment, the impromptu glider sprang forward, the marbles and gumballs providing a reasonably frictionless path, and flew into the air as it hit the ramp. Sandy let out a laugh of pure triumph as they flew high into the moist, snow-laden sky. Circling back around, she swooped over the heads of the guards and hit the quick-release on the oversized boot, which gave the glider even more lift and hit the head guard right on his head. "Ouch!" he cried. Then Sandy banked the glider and headed back to Christmastown.

Meanwhile, back at Christmastown, it was just two minutes to 5:00. Krass Krangle was waiting in the town square, goose-feather pen in hand, sitting at a desk located near the flagpole. Sitting across from him was his good twin brother, Kris Kringle. "Ready to sign, dear brother? In less than two minutes, you default on the mortgage and the town becomes mine. Mine, do you hear me? *Mine – mine – all mine!*" And he laughed his evil laugh.

Kris Kringle sighed and shook his head. He had delayed it as long as he could, but his brother was right – he could delay no longer. Slowly, reluctantly, he accepted the pen and began to sign his name on the dotted line. But he'd barely finished the second letter in his name when there came such a clatter that both brothers looked up to see what was the matter. And what to their wondering eyes should appear but the weirdest-looking airplane (all right, *glider*) they had ever clapped their eyes on!

"Kris!" he heard Sandy shout. "Don't sign anything yet! I've got some important information!"

Her long blond hair whipping behind her, Sandy looped the glider (causing all of the Fan Fictors to scream in pure terror) over and came straight down to the table where the brothers continued to stare. Yanking back hard on another lever (made from a mop handle), Sandy brought the glider to a screeching halt a mere yard from the ground. Without so much as a word of explanation as to how she accomplished that, she jumped out of the cockpit and walked over to the table. Removing her Snooper, she stuck it onto the table and activated Telejector Mode.

At once, a 3D lobe appeared, showing the lease form. Sandy gestured with her hands, zooming in on the super-fine tiny print (she really had to gesture a lot, making it look as though she was

swimming through deep waters). Finally, the print grew large enough to read without squinting. "There!" she pointed out triumphantly.

"What is this?" Krass Krangle asked, his voice a mixture of awe and dread.

"What it is..." Kris Kringle responded, "...is the solution to my problem! Sandy Swift, you've saved Christmastown!"

Puzzled, the Fan Factors Five gathered around the table and stared at the telejector image. Their eyes lit up as they read a section of the lease: "... mortgage will be due on December 23, 2016, at 5:00 PM. However, on the off-chance that the current owner of the mortgage, one Krass Krangle, decides to do something hideously evil with Christmastown, the due date for the mortgage won't be due until December 23, 20,016, at 5:00 PM..."

"And insofar as you've done nothing but boast of your hideously evil plans for Christmastown," Sandy said, "guess that that means!"

"Oh. Darn," was all Krass Krangle would say, though Michael thought he heard him exclaim as he walked away from the table and out of sight: "Curses! Foiled again!"

As for Sandy, Kris Kringle and all of the town people assured her: "You'll have a bust – "

" – Have a bust! – "

" – Have a bust! – "

" – in the Hall of Fame!" they concluded.

With that, Sandy and the Fan Fictors Five began to slowly back away. "I think we'd better get out of here," she whispered to them, "before they break out into a huge song-and-dance number!" The others nodded and they hurried back to their sleigh. Moments later they were flying down one of the empty side streets, on their way out of the town.

"Say," Tom H asked, "just how did Sandy bring the glider to a halt like that?"

Leo L shrugged. "Beats me. Might as well have asked how that Looney Tunes-esque glider ever managed to hold together, let alone get off the ground with all of our weight! Guess it must have been one of those Christmas miracles you often hear about."

"And is used so frequently in all these Christmas Sagas," Scott L muttered to himself.

Sandy just smiled to herself as she heard them chatter. They didn't realize that it came from having a good heart, a winning smile, beautiful teeth and flowing blond hair, being filled with the magical Christmas Spirit –

– and the miniature G-Force Inverter built into her Snooper...

So, once again,

A very Merry Christmas to all TSJ Fan
Fictors & Fans!

(And a Happy New Year, too!)

Scott L

(his Snooper could use some fresh
batteries)

Be here next year for
Christmas Saga VI!