

Elves laid off

- North Pole industry under fire

The first of two parts
from our Eskimo
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want your opinion." I moved to the corner and pulled up a chair, positioning myself close to the stove; immediately I felt a euphoric blast of heat. "So what's up?" I said. "Well, Jeremy, it seems that things have taken a turn for the worse." "And how's that?" I exclaimed.

"Today, 14 more elves received layoff notices and it looks like there will be more before Christmas; it's gonna be real grim for a lot of families." The third elf laughed and exclaimed "progress; here at North Pole Industries, it sure ain't doin' us no good!"

The light of the bar picked up the features of my companions. Dressed in work clothes, with bright red hats, they sat regarding me, while the bright light of the open heater danced and flickered on their weathered faces.

I looked into the fire and pondered out loud, "you know, ever since this Jupiter Nutech Fellow has been here, everyone has been unhappy. Almost 50% of the elves have been laid off and replaced with his project — solidifying modularity. The machine he brought in from putting North Pole Industries out of business! Without the spirit of Willie Bullshit! Without the spirit of Nelson was playing softly workmanship put into those while the sounds of off-duty toys and gifts, we won't have a elves rang in unison real Christmas. It's obvious throughout the room.

It was a windy night with the teeth of winter in its breath; a layer of new snow glowed under the moonlit sky. I opened the door to "Rudolph's" and walked to the bar. The music of Willie Bullshit! Without the spirit of Nelson was playing softly workmanship put into those while the sounds of off-duty toys and gifts, we won't have a elves rang in unison real Christmas. It's obvious throughout the room.

As I took a draught from the hot rum toddy laid before me, a voice caught my attention. My ears perked up as I spun around to stare into the far corner of the room. Three elves sat around the old Franklin Stove. There was a movement from one of them toward the wood box, then the heater opened with a squeal of iron hinges and there came a cluk as a log was tossed inside. The flames flared up.

Suddenly, one of the elves' voices shattered my stare. "Jeremy, come join us, we

Ah yes, Jupiter Nutech, from Nutech consultants in Toronto, the boy wonder who was going to make Christmas cost-efficient. I ain't denying that he isn't qualified, I mean, he's got an M.B.A. from Western, 2 years working for the Ontario Revenue department, and a booming consulting business. The one thing he doesn't have is a spirit of Christmas. That's where all of our problems began.

Santa met with Jupiter last spring. The bank was

threatening to foreclose on Santa's workshop if he didn't meet his loan payments, and the boss was desperate. He called Jupiter in Toronto and arranged a meeting. Jupiter agreed to take over the financial management only if Santa allowed him to cut back costs wherever he saw necessary. Now Santa, being oblivious to the consequences, agreed and signed a two-year management contract. So, here we are in a one-industry town, with 50% unemployment and a profit-crazy manager, who couldn't care less about Christmas. Enough background!

I looked to my companions and decided the time had come; I would meet with Santa. By now, the sounds of Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" were faintly flowing from the jukebox. We were all suddenly possessed with a sense of imminent fear, a fear that the real spirit of Christmas was in jeopardy; we got drunk and forgot for a while. I personally got loaded to the gills. A sad excuse of a man, I fell finally to my bed unaware of what tomorrow would bring.

I awoke the next morning, the boom of my head grew even more sonorous, like the thunder of an impending storm. I dressed quickly, the whole while pondering my upcoming visit to Santa's office. Dissatisfaction had settled on my mind like a shadow and I prepared my thoughts carefully. It was a cold morning but the fresh, crisp air gave needed relief to my booming head.

Santa's office is located in the western sub-section of the plant and is a short walk from my home. I arrived at the office and knocked timidly on the huge pine doors. "Come in," a voice bellowed. "Why Jeremy, my friend, what br-

ings you to my office today?" Santa bellowed out in his jolly way. "Jeremy, you crazy elf, it's a long shot but it's worth a try! You round up the elves and many of Jupiter's at 7 sharp; I'll arrange to meet with him then."

The next night was as beautiful a sight the north had seen; the stars were shining and a new layer of snow made everything pearly white. All the elves had assembled in front of Jupiter's, the children in front and the rest of us in a large semi-circle. Santa approached the door, hesitating for a moment and then knocking three times with authority. When Jupiter opened the door, a look of shock graced his face. "What the hell are all these elves doing here?" he said to Santa. Santa looked at him calmly, "Well, Jupiter, we thought you and your family would join us for caroling practice." Jupiter scowled, "Fat chance, old man; I paid good money for my satellite dish and I don't want to miss the 'A'-Team! Besides, I don't like to sing."

Santa turned to the elves and raised his hand; suddenly, in harmony, the whole group began to sing "Silent Night". The sound was beautiful and it brought the rest of Jupiter's family to the door. His youngest child tugged on Jupiter's jacket and asked if he could join the carolers. Mrs. Nutech pleaded with him, "I think it's time the children had some fun; they've been cooped up in this house for a month and it's not fair." Jupiter stared at Santa, "if this is some kind of trick, I don't find it very funny. O.K. kids, go ahead, but dress warmly."

Will Jupiter come around? Will the elves go on strike? Stay tuned to our first issue of the new year to find out. Until then, merry Christmas and a happy new year.

to be continued next year