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Written by

Guy Bass

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Guy Bass

SECRET SANTA

Agent of X.M.A.S.

BLUE PETER WINNING AUTHOR BOOK AWARD



To Ruth – you're all my Christmases come at once ~ G B

To my nephew Lulan, my top of the "cutest little boy" tree ~ D L

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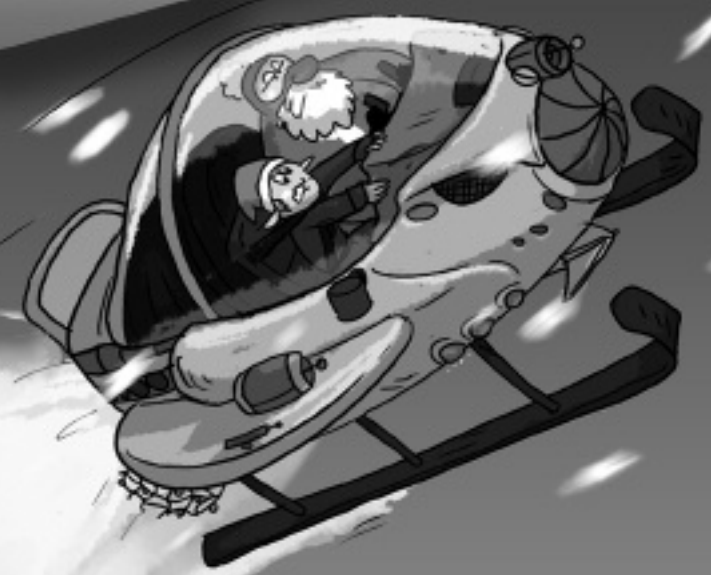
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SECRET SANTA

Agent of X.M.A.S.



Guy Bass

Illustrated by David Lopez

Stripes



Tokyo Water Treatment Facility, Japan. July 17th, 00:59 JST (Japan Standard Time)

Felix Fear loomed over the giant water pipe, a vial of his *Paranoia Potion* in his hands. His ice-white skin glowed in the darkness of the deserted plant.

"HA HA HA! The p-p-perfect end to a p-perfectly p-paranoid p-p-plan," stuttered the permanently panicky villain. "Once I d-d-dump my new super-high-strength f-fearsome f-formula into the water supply T-T-Tokyo will be gripped in t-t-terror! The whole city will b-be as nervous as m-me! Let the m-mayhem begin!"

"Felix Fear – you're on *The Naughty List*," said a voice from the darkness.

"WAAAAAHHH!" screamed Felix Fear. "D-d-don't s-sneak up on m-me like th-that! I'm a v-very nervous p-p-person! Wh-what do y-you m-mean by in-in-interrupting me?"

"Put a stocking in it, Fear. I'm here to bring you in, one way or another," said the voice. Fear saw an enormous figure looming over him in the shadows.

"Y-you! B-b-but that's im-impossible!" stuttered Felix Fear in terror. "I'd heard r-r-rumours, but I d-didn't think – it isn't – it c-c-can't be! You're – you're n-not *real*!"

"Yeah, that's what you're supposed to think, quaky-boots. Now put down the potion, or face the shiny nose of justice," said the figure. He drew a gun from his belt, which immediately began to glow with red energy.

"St-stay back! Or I'll d-d-d-drop this!" said Fear, holding the Paranoia Potion over the

SECRET SANTA

water pipe. "Y-you w-w-wouldn't hurt m-me, w-would you? You c-couldn't! You're meant to be g-good! You're meant to be k-kind! You're m-meant to be j-j-j-j-jolly!"

"Rumours of my jolliness have been greatly exaggerated," growled the figure.




VOOM!



Since the Dawn of Naughtiness, the Xtremely Mysterious Agency of Secrets has fought to keep the world safe from harm.

Working out of their top secret headquarters at the North Pole, a team of highly-trained Elf Agents monitors criminal activity all over the world.

The most dastardly and dangerous criminals are put on to The Naughty List – an index of infamy.

Only one man has the skill, strength and big white beard to bring these criminals to justice.

You already know his name.

But if anyone asks, he doesn't exist…



NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS

WHO IS SANTA CLAUS?

The North Pole. July 17th,
10:59 XMT (X.M.A.S. Mean Time)

"Umm…" said newly graduated Elf Agent Jingle Bells. He stared at the control panel, shivering in the subzero temperatures of the North Pole. "Wait, don't tell me, I know this one…" Suddenly, he felt a tap on his shoulder.

"Would you hurry up, Jingle? We're freezing back here!" Jingle looked round to see his fellow Elf Agent Candy Cane, and a queue of twelve other elves, shivering behind her in the snow.

"Keep your pointy hat on, Candy – I'm

thinking," replied Jingle, rubbing his chin. "Who is Santa Claus… Who is Santa Claus…"

"The answer is, '*There is no Santa Claus',*" said Candy. "Every elf learns that on their first day of training. Honestly, Jingle, how you ended up on top of the Christmas tree at X.M.A.S.[1] Academy, I'll never know…"

"Yeah, but I did, didn't I? I'm top of the tree, and that's what matters!" said Jingle. He turned back to the control screen and whispered, "Sorry about that. Just clearing something up. The answer, which I totally knew, is, 'There is no Santa Claus'."



[1] **X**tremely **M**ysterious **A**gency of **S**ecrets.



"IDENTITY VERIFIED. WELCOME TO THE GROTTO, AGENT BELLS," said a tinny female voice. Jingle recognized it immediately as *Christmas S.P.I.R.I.T.*[2] – the Grotto's all-knowing supercomputer.

"Thanks, S.P.I.R.I.T.!" said Jingle, as the secret door to X.M.A.S. headquarters opened with a clang and a whirr.

"I HAVE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU, AGENT BELLS – CONGRATULATIONS ON COMING TOP OF THE TREE. PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE ACCESS LIFT AND WAIT FOR YOUR FELLOW AGENTS," said S.P.I.R.I.T.

"Hey, Candy – did you hear that? Christmas S.P.I.R.I.T. has heard a lot about me!" shouted Jingle, as he strode into the lift.

[2] **S**ecretly **P**rocessed **I**nformation – **R**esponse **I**n **T**ime.



"How *did* Jingle ever make it to the top of the tree?" whispered Elf Agent Mistle Toe into Candy's ear. "He never seemed to be that good at anything when we were at the Academy. I wasn't even sure he'd graduate."

"I know, it's weird," replied Candy with a shrug. "Maybe he just didn't want to show off."

"I don't know if I should tell you this," continued Mistle, "but when we were training, every elf at the Academy thought *you* were going to be top of the tree."

"Yeah … I guess I did too," sighed Candy. "Jingle hardly seemed to know what day it was, half the time."

