

# Jersey Devil Press



Holiday Half-Issue 2010

**Jersey Devil Press**

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## Editor's Note: Secret Santa

Hello and welcome to the Jersey Devil Press Holiday Half-Issue for 2010. We've got a story about Christmas, Anti-Christmas, and one about the Winter Solstice. We've got a story about drinking, cockroaches, and one that's a direct result of why malls suck post-Thanksgiving. We've got a story about Satan, a goat, and one about nuclear weapons. We've got three stories, and, in the spirit of this gift-giving season, we're not telling you what's inside which. You're just going to have to wait until you open the issue and read them all.

The first tag says "'The First Thing I'll Need is a Goat' by Rijn Collins." Then it's a crudely wrapped box with "'Mall Satan' by the man they call Danger\_Slater" scrawled upon it. And, finally, a massive gift that says "'Blitzenkrieg' by Ryan Forsythe." That one's ticking for some reason.

So, OK, maybe you can discern a little from the titles. Try to act surprised anyway.

-- Eirik Gumeny

# The First Thing I'll Need is a Goat

by Rijn Collins

“Skål, mine venner!”

I feel the words tumble around my mouth, grappling for a foothold. The vodka has numbed my tongue and the cold has done the same to my fingers, but I raise my glass with the rest of them and shout “Cheers, my friends!” in Norwegian with a bad Australian accent.

Per wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, and smiles my way. The gap between his teeth holds my attention, and when he speaks, it takes me a moment to realise it’s in English.

“You really born on the Winter Solstice?”

I lick my lips. “I was, yes. Winter wench to my core – although in Australia, that’s in June.”

He slides a stream of vodka into my glass, and shows me that gap once more.

“Here in Norway, do you know what being born on the Solstice means?”

I shake my head, and reach for the glass.

“It means you’re a witch.”

I feel it burn my lips, my tongue, my throat. I try not to cough. I’m pretty sure witches can handle their booze.

“But with red hair like yours, you already are.”

I think he might be flirting with me. I think I’ve had a few glasses. I think maybe I am a witch, and I just never realised it. But what I *know* without a shadow of a doubt is that I’ve never in my life been so cold.

And you know you’re an obsessive smoker when you’ll head into a beer garden even in sub-zero temperatures to slide that stick into your mouth and watch the flame flicker. It’s only my third day in the hostel, but faces are already familiar, and this pot

belly stove out the back of the bar seems like the best place to pick up the names to go with them. My Norwegian is improving one phrase at a time, unaided by the guidebook that finds it necessary to teach me the enigmatic line "The first thing I'll need is a top hat."

I don't know what these Norwegians get up to, but I'm keen to find out.

I haven't got my snow legs yet, and my army boots keep slipping on the slick patches of ice scattered around us, but there's always someone to catch me. Our breath clouds out before us each time we speak and I have pins and needles in my hands, but the moonlight falling across the snow makes it all gloriously worthwhile.

I've never seen anything so beautiful.

We raise our glasses.

"To Gjøvik, the best hometown in the world!"

Clinks shoot through the night air, and more warmth rushes down my throat. I want to toast this magical land too, but for some reason the first thing that flicks across my mind is the 80s pop band, A-Ha. I don't think that'd make me any friends tonight.

We lift our glasses again. "To Skadi!" is the cry, and I raise my eyebrows.

"She's the goddess of winter... the Solstice is her night."

Per nods at me.

"She hunts on skis in the mountain with a bow and arrow. Also has a thing for bare feet." He winks. "Chose her husband by lining up the gods and selecting the best feet. Kinky little minx, hey?"

I laugh, clasping the vodka glass to my chest.

"How do you celebrate Midwinter then?"

I watch the lit ember of a cigarette end arc through the air as he gestures. Several people huddled around the ashtray watch him, smiling.

"Midvinterblot? We make white cakes, and drink Akevitt, strong liquor flavoured with caraway seeds."

Someone else joins in, voice warm and deep.

“Don’t forget the winter goat!”

Per laughs, and my eyes land on the gap between his teeth again.

“We have this goat, you see – Julbuk. He used to carry the god Thor, but now he carries the Yule elf when he brings gifts to all the children.”

He smiles at me as glasses clink.

“We love that damn goat!”

This sounds reasonable. It sounds festive and pagan and utterly, beautifully Norwegian and when the mission is set to find a goat, it seems the only thing in the world to do. We lace up our coats and pull down fur-lined caps, and tuck half empty bottles of vodka into pockets. Tonight belongs to Skadi, and when the cry goes out to trek barefoot in honour of her, I don’t hesitate to untie my army boots and sling them over my shoulder.

Bare feet crunching on snow, we head into the Winter Solstice night to find a goat.

**RIJN COLLINS** is a Melbourne writer with a background in Linguistics, a future in Berlin, and an ever growing collection of red notebooks to scribble in. Her work has been published in *Going Down Swinging*, *The Age*, *Eclecticism*, *Notata* and various print anthologies and online journals, and has been adapted for performance on Radio National. She prefers spilling ink in cold climates, and is headed to Berlin to work on her novel, which will involve more red notebooks, and no doubt whiskey too. Snakes work their way into her writing often. She’s still not quite sure why.

## Mall Satan

by Danger\_Slater

"And what do you want for Antichristmas this year?" the Mall Satan asks the boy.

"I want a baseball glove and a chainsaw and I want all my enemies to burn alive in house fires," the boy chirps.

"That's a pretty tall order, young man," the Mall Satan chuckles, running a cloven hoof through the child's hair. "Let me see what I can do."

He fishes around in the crotch of his pants and pulls out a pack of matches. And his testicles. He tucks his testicles back into his trousers and hands the boy the matches.

"Make 'em pay, son," he growls. "Make 'em all suffer."

"All right kid, look terrified," a bored-looking demon lazily says. The boy makes a scared face. The Mall Satan does too. The demon snaps a picture. The boy hops off Mall Satan's lap and runs out of Hell-Land, back into the crowd.

"NEXT!" shouts the demon.

A girl steps up. Freckles. Pigtails. Thick-framed glasses. She has this scowl on her face like she has a pickle-juice soul. She crosses her arms and looks at him skeptically.

"What the fuck is your problem?" the Mall Satan says. "You find out you're adopted?"

"You're not the real Satan, are you?" she lisps, spitting milky-frothed saliva like the ellipses on a sentence.

"What makes you think that?" he goes, raising an eyebrow.

"First of all, your goatee is fake."

"You think so, eh? Why don't you give it a tug," he challenges her.

Without apprehension, she yanks on his beard. His face comes off with it, tearing from his skull.

"OW! FUCK! PUT IT BACK PUT IT BACK!" he screams.

The girl yelps and smashes the hairy mass of flesh back onto the Mall Satan's head. The Mall Satan laughs, recites an ancient incantation, and is restored to health.

The girl only huffs. "It doesn't mean anything," she says, "anyone can grow a goatee. The guy at the coffeeshop my mom goes to has a goatee. And he's not evil. In fact, he seems like a total dork. No, there's no such thing as Satan. My daddy told me so."

"Oh? And who's your daddy? Jesus?"

"It's pronounced *Hey-ZOOS*, and he's a very important man. Look, just because you have a silly moustache and wear red spandex and have a forked tongue, it doesn't make you the Devil. How could the Devil possibly exist? To cause all that evil in just one night? It doesn't make any sense."

"Shit, kid. You're a tenacious little booger, ain't ya? I bet your a real handful at school. You're probably why your teacher drinks. Ok, I'll admit it. I'm not the real Satan."

"A-ha! I knew it!" she shouts.

"... but I work for him," he goes, giving her a wink.

"What do you mean you work for him? Does Satan run the mall?"

"Sort of," the Mall Satan says. "Satan has his hand in a lot of cookie jars. He's all around us. He's *inside* of us. He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good..."

"... so be good for goodness sake," the girl finishes his sentence.

"What?! Hell no! Steal. Cheat. Lie. Harm yourself. Harm other people. Do what you want, when you want. You think your daddy's gonna let you eat ice cream all night and then glue the cat's asshole shut? Fuck no, he ain't! But you want to, don't you? So do it. If that's what you want, that's what Satan wants too. Little girl, listen, if you believe in black magic and you have hate in your heart, anything is possible in this shitty world. It can all be yours.

Just take it. And don't say thank you. Now run along, bitch. You're annoying the crap out of me."

The girl smiles and starts walking away, her faith in all that is unholy renewed. But before getting swallowed back into the mall's shopping horde she pauses and turns back to the Dark Prince.

"Hey, mister?"

"What now?"

"Go fuck yourself," she goes.

"You too, little girl," the Mall Satan smiles back. "You too."

"Look terrified," says the demon. The camera shutter clicks.

"NEXT!"

**DANGER\_SLATER** is more machine than man. He's an explosion-bot! Handle your Danger\_Slater with extreme care. One false move and KA-BOOM! – you're nothing but a stain on the pavement and a few cancerous ashes. Danger lives in New Jersey. His work has appeared in Jersey Devil Press, The Drabblecast, and the Seahorse Rodeo Folk Revival. His dirty limericks have appeared in truck stop bathrooms and seldom-used freight elevators nationwide. Here is his website: [dangerslater.blogspot.com](http://dangerslater.blogspot.com).

# Blitzkrieg

by Ryan Forsythe

It was a dark and stormy night. All throughout the house, not a creature was stirring. Okay, that's not exactly true. Behind the east wall of nine-year old Penny's bedroom was a whole colony of cockroaches. I'm talking *Macropinesthia rhinoceros*. Yep, Australian rhinos, the biggest of all cockroaches. One of these dirty buggers could take your foot off, if you know what I mean. And there were *thousands* of 'em. But little Penny was finally sound asleep, after tossing and turning for hours thinking of each and every thing she had asked Santa for. Would she wake up to find a My Little Tweeker with GlueSniffing Action™ under the tree?

Anyhoo, let's try not to get sidetracked by the cute kid—and she was cute, with her freckles, dimples, wide corrective lens-free eyes, and nary a hint of the pimples that had scarred her stupid brother Jimmy, making him think he was the butt-ugliest boy at Carson High, which he was, by the way. No, let's not get off course. Right now we're more interested in these cockroaches. Big mean hairy sonsabitches with one aim, one purpose uniting them on this of all nights.

Revenge.

It was precisely one year earlier, on a Christmas Eve not unlike this one, when one of them eight fancy reindeer stomped NrwFTrb. Just so you're not confused by the name, I should note here that cockroaches don't take names like Willie and Peter and Dick. No, those are names that *Homo sapiens* reserve for their kids to ensure a lifetime of penis jokes. But cockroaches don't have penises, not technically. You might just say the cockroach's very name is something of a misnomer. Which is not to say that they don't have cock *jokes*. Which they most certainly do.

*Excerpt from The 101 Best Cockroach Cock Jokes for Kids  
By RuxotPr "Ruxotie" Johnson*

*Cock-cock*  
*Who's there?*  
*Cock.*  
*Cock who?*  
*Cockroach.*

—

*Q: What's the difference between a *Gromphadorhina portentosa* and an angry automobile driven by an asshole *Blatella germanica*?*  
*A: One is a Madagascar hissing cockroach. The other is a mad hissing gas car roach cock.*

—

*Q: What did the female cockroach say to the male cockroach after sex?*  
*A: My one time and I end up with Mr. *Attaphila fungicola*!*

Just in case you didn't get that last one, I should mention that the smallest species of cockroach, the *Attaphila fungicola*, reaches a maximum length of 3 millimeters. Also, some females mate once and then are pregnant the rest of their lives. As you can see, this is a large source for jokes among cockroaches. The book may have sold well among cockroaches, but it was a total bust among all other species—even humans, who will generally buy anything, especially if it has the word "Best" in the title.

But the cockroaches. The Christmas before, little NrwFTrb had just finished covering his spermatophore in a protein-reach wrapping, in order to provide some nutrients for his best girl. When WAM! Out of nowhere comes Blitzen. I know, it would have been better to say "along came Rudolph" —Santa's got to make it to town and all that. But we want to be true to NrwFTrb's memory. And so, we must stick to the facts. Which can pretty much be summed up this way: Splat.

Ah, but he wasn't dead yet. No, NrwfTrb was a smart little cockroach, and so he was able to detect the smallest movement in the air by the tiny hairs sticking up on his cerci, two little appendages on his back. The hairs sent the word along his nerve cells to get out of there pronto. Unfortunately, compared to NrwfTrb, the reindeer were enormous. And there were eight of them. His cerci said, "Move! Move! Move! Go now! Run! Go! Go! Go!" And I don't use all those exclamations loosely. They are nasty things, certainly never to be overused. But as I noted above, we must be true to this story. And NrwfTrb's cerci most certainly were shouting.

He darted from Dasher and Dancer and propelled past Prancer. The vermin virtually vaulted Vixen and quickly covered ground between Comet and Cupid. He even dashed doggedly away from Donner. But then, there NrwfTrb was. A bloody blemish beneath Blitzen. Blast that belligerent beast.

Really, our hero had just lost his head. Cockroaches can live a long time without their head. But he was no longer able to fend for himself, to fight off predators. And sure, even if *technically* he died an hour later because that gull considered him a tasty snack—just the right mix of crunchy and salty—the other cockroaches still attributed his death to that asshole Santa and his reindeer goons.

Man, those cockroaches were *steamed*. And so they planned and plotted for this day, knowing that the executioner in red only comes once a year. Ah, and this brings us right back to where we started. To catch us up: A dark and stormy night. Penny's house. Cockroaches stirring. Revenge.

Knowing this night would be their one chance in 365 to exact revenge—for this was no leap year—the cockroaches were abuzz with chatter. It came to a head forty minutes before midnight, when Tyyyyuk raised a point.

"What if Penny and the other child—the one called 'Jimmy'—have not been good this year? What if Santa is bypassing

the house this year? Then we've prepared this whole time for nothing. I say we must cut our losses now."

Please note: when I say Tyyyuk raised a point, you must understand that cockroaches are silent animals. They communicate without vocalizing, instead using touch and chemicals and sometimes even visual cues to share information. Don't think I don't know this. Hey—if anyone knows these particular cockroaches, it's me. But I'm paraphrasing here, translating for you. Obviously if I said, Tyyyuk touched Pwdssv's back and then probed her antenna before proceeding to drop a trail of feces in a four inch circle and finally touching twice the smaller sensory bristle extending from her abdomen, you'd have no idea what I was talking about. You'd literally have no freaking clue that Tyyyuk was a pacifist, advocating that they give up the mission.

Anyway, Tyyyuk's speech riled NrwFTrb's mother, Sally.

"No!" she screamed. "I won't let this be in vain! They took my son—my only son!"

"Actually," said her husband Ubdqm. "We have 246 children. And you've got 32 more babies in your ootheca, coming any day now."

"Shut up, dear. I'm trying to make a point. And the point is this: How often have we let Santa dictate our lives? We could live freely. But no, we live in fear."

And she was right. Santa didn't even stop to help poor NrwFTrb. Didn't care, probably didn't even notice. It's behavior like this that gives us humans a bad name. (Yes, I, your trusty narrator, am a human. Are you surprised? Imagine how completely surprised you'll be when you find out I'm Penny and I'm actually dead and reciting all this from heaven. Yeah, trick ending—go me!)

"Tonight," said Sally, "we celebrate... our independence day!"

"Wait—you mean Christmas, right?"

"No, my little Blattodea. Today we will be free of the red

suited menace. Forever! We have been planning for this moment for months.”

“Yeah!” shouted hundreds of cockroaches.

“Now,” said Sally. “Who’s with me?”

Finally, the big moment arrived. The reindeer thumped on the roof. Mom and Dad and Jimmy slept through it. Penny stirred a wee bit, but was soon back to her dream. Probably that one about Charlie Burkhalten, this dreamy guy in her math class. He had this great smile, but he liked Darlene Stapleton. Bitch.

So the cookies were on the mantel, the sleigh was on the roof, and a sound pierced the air. “Ho.” Then two more just like the first. “Ho Ho.”

Yes, the moment they’d all been waiting for. The cockroaches made their move, rising up and swarming Santa in a sea of brown. Biting his rosy cheeks, nibbling his cherry nose, attacking again and again.

But Santa was not perturbed one bit. In fact, he began chuckling. The chuckles turned into one mighty guffaw that shook his belly like a bowl full of jelly. Something was wrong—something was very wrong.

Sally was the first to notice something peculiar: his glowing eyes. She flew back for a better view. And it was then that she realized: This Santa was no human.

She tried to alert the others. But the roaches paid no attention. Few saw her spin around two times, back her wing against another roach, and tap her front legs together. And so they did not know what she was desperately trying to convey.

This was none other than a Robo-Santa XK, one of 14,237,502 then in existence, used by Santa to be in so many places around the world at the same time. And that didn’t even count the 3,942,807 Generation One SantaBots still in service. Santa was phasing them out as their warranties expired—he didn’t get the three-year service plan, which was actually fortunate because soon after he got all

those Generation Ones, the XKs came out.

What's more, this particular XK was one of a new breed, the Cockroach Eliminator 4000. Yes, Santa knew what these cockroaches were up to. Surely you didn't think the whole "He knows if you've been bad or good" applied only to humans.

The elves had been hard at work in their North Pole bunker outfitting the Eliminators. All those claymation shows you saw as a kid? Not even close. Santa and his crew lived fourteen-thousand feet below the surface in a titanium reinforced fortress, protected by a deltamethrin-encased layer of hydramethynon gel, reduced to a temperature of forty below zero—cold enough to freeze any cockroach in his tracks. Additionally, a perimeter extending forty meters, composed of fipronil, surrounded the compound. When it came to cockroaches, Santa took no chances.

In the middle of the swarm, Santa gave a wink of his eye and a twist of his head. Suddenly, a cloud of boric acid blasted from his schnoz, coating the cockroaches in toxic powder. Those closest to the robot immediately started dropping. Only those buzzing on the outer perimeter were able to escape. Sally was not so lucky. In her fruitless attempt to warn her fellow roaches, she got a little too close to the acid.

The Robo-Santa XK Cockroach Eliminator 4000 tapped a finger to his nose and soon disappeared.

Though he was out of sight, Sally heard him chuckle and shout, "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a goodnight!"

As Sally lay dying, she turned to her younger brother.

"Tyyyyuk, promise me you'll destroy that man, if it's the last thing you do. That you'll avenge my death and the deaths of all who have given their lives today."

"I don't really think it's appropriate to engage—"

"PROMISE ME!"

"Oh, uh. I promise."

And with that, Sally fell on her back, her legs shook three times, and she was gone.

The survivors regrouped and surveyed the damage. Fully three-quarters of the cockroaches had perished in the epic Battle of Christmas Eve.

“What are we going to do, Tyyyyuk?” asked WqYIPf.

Tyyyuk was torn. On the one hand, he didn’t believe in aggression. But he couldn’t sit idly by while those reindeer continued to destroy the roach way of life. Or could he?

“I don’t know, WqYIPf. I don’t know.”

“I hate to say it. But there’s only one thing that can ensure that our way of life continues.”

“No—you don’t mean...”

“Yes, I’m afraid it’s the only way. We must acquire a nuclear bomb.”

Tyyyuk gulped. He really did. This is the one action that means the same among cockroaches as it does among humans. So I didn’t have to translate. But I wanted you to know that I wasn’t translating, just describing the scene. So I had to tell you that. Sorry—I’ll stop.

“Where in the world are we going to find a nuclear bomb? Those things have got to be locked up tighter than a—”

“Leave it to me,” said WqYIPf.

Nuclear-grade Plutonium was hard to come by in the U.S., but in the former Soviet Union, they only had to get past one man with a gun and a chain-link fence. Still not convinced that a cockroach could get past security? Chew on this: for an adult cockroach that can squeeze into a space the thickness of a quarter, a chain-link fence is an invitation.

In fact, cockroaches are not uncommon in former nuclear weapons holdings. Sure, in the U.S., janitors regularly mop the floors at high-security nuclear laboratories. But with the break-up of the Soviet Union, the regular cleaning schedule has been stopped altogether. Hence, cockroaches are not an uncommon sight. A fact that they exploited to their advantage to walk off with seventy-five

kilograms of Plutonium—enough for a baker’s dozen of Nagasaki-sized bombs.

*Excerpt from the Congressional Subcommittee Hearing into Who Knew  
What When.  
And How.*

*SENATOR A: Madam President, refresh our memory. Why did you elevate the threat level on December 6 to ‘Really, Really Red’?*

*PRESIDENT: There was clear and present danger. We had detailed and highly specific information that an attack was imminent. It is my sworn duty to warn the American people, to prepare them—*

*SENATOR B: Madam President, is it your intent to negotiate with the cockroaches? Are there even presently any agents who can understand cockroach... ese?*

*PRESIDENT: Um...we’re working on it. As I’ve learned, cockroaches don’t talk so they must communicate in other ways. But as I’ve stated before, under no circumstance will the cockroaches be allowed to maintain these weapons. If there are any cockroaches listening now, let me say—*

*SENATOR B: What I want to know is, why weren’t we prepared for this? Homeland security spent so much time monitoring emails and library books that they ignored the real menace right in front of our faces—cockroaches! We now face a nuclear-capable order of insects. Just how in God’s name did this happen?*

*PRESIDENT: If I may, Senator, no one had any clue that the cockroaches would do something like this.*

*SENATOR B: No clue? It’s my understanding there was a report issued by your administration in February regarding cockroaches. Is that true?*

*PRESIDENT: Uh, yes. That’s correct.*

*SENATOR A: Do you recall the title of this report?*

*PRESIDENT: I believe it was something like ‘Cockroaches Determined to Get the Nuclear Bomb and Use It Against Santa, Possibly Taking Out*

*the Rest of Humanity With Him.'*

Tyyyyyuk flipped off the television.

"Okay, I agree that this Santa is a problem. But we *have* the weapon now—it's a deterrent. There's no way we can use it. I mean, how do we even know that *we* will survive the blast?"

"Oh, come on, Tyyyyyuk. We've *all* read the stories about how we'll survive anything. We're cockroaches, damn it."

"Yes, but that information comes directly from the humans themselves. What if it's a trick? To lure us into a false sense of—"

"Tyyyyyuk?"

"Yes?"

"Shut up. It's been decided. We're doing this. And we're doing it now. We must avenge NrwFTrb."

Under his breath Tyyyyyuk said, "May cockroach God have mercy on our souls."

*Beeeeepbeepbeep... Beeeeeeeeepbeepbeep. This is the emergency broadcast network. This is an actual emergency. We repeat, this is an actual emergency. A nuclear bomb is expected to arrive in the KPOW Loyal Listener area in approximately twenty-seven minutes time. All Loyal Listeners are urged to duck and cover. We repeat, you are urged to duck. And cover. If there is a bomb shelter or bunker in your region, what the holy hell are you waiting on? Go now. Please stay tuned for more updates as we get them. We now return you to our Retro 80's Rewind Weekend here on KPOW, home of all your favorites from yesterday and today. Anyway, Merry Christmas, everyone. Here's Loverboy. Everybody's workin' for the weekend.*

In case you're wondering, I never got that My Little Tweeker doll. But it didn't matter as within a few months just about everyone on earth was dead. Except for Santa, of course. The bombs didn't touch him in his bunker. The cockroaches are reorganizing. I guess they have some bigger ideas for next Christmas.

**RYAN FORSYTHE** is a writer and artist from Cleveland now living in Southern California. He is the author of *The Little Veal Cutlet That Couldn't*, a children's book for adults. Learn more at [www.ryanforsythe.com](http://www.ryanforsythe.com).