



This is a little story recently submitted for the NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) 600-word short story contest. Readers may notice that it is all thanks to Jon Cooper's marvelous list of humorous Tom Swift titles.

Tom Swift and the Frictionless Elf

By Thomas Hudson

Tom Swift, blond-haired teen inventor, sat in his laboratory one morning, angrily contemplating the recent theft of a small statue from the Swift front yard. The three-foot tall representation of the Germanic mythical creature had been a present from a grateful business client and had a special place in the yard on a stylish cement and brick plinth. Tom knew it was worth many thousands of dollars in addition to being an antique and irreplaceable.

He also knew that it “must be placed outside your front door in order to avoid the wrath of the vengeful ‘dark’ elfin community!” So, outside it sat.

Twice in the previous month it had disappeared, only to be found in the back yard of a neighbor, a man who thought nothing of the illegality of his actions, but believe it all to be a huge joke.

After the second time, Tom had drilled a hole in the plinth, embedded a bolt into a tight

lead anchor and then added a hidden locking nut to the underside of the statue. The elf was missing the next morning.

Now, he was giving it a special spray-on coating he believed might do the trick. Based on a frictionless system he had developed for his famous Transcontinental BulletTrain—capable of taking 100 cars between California and New York in 18 hours—it provided an ionic surface charge alternating so quickly between positive and negative that it repelled anything coming within one millimeter.

Exceptionally good at repelling, Tom was working on a stronger version to be part of a new lightweight body armor his company was developing. But for now, his attention was on protecting the valuable elf.

Fortunately for his needs, the statue was partly hollow. Tom added a long-lasting Swift Solar Battery to the insides along with the necessary circuitry to provide the frictionless charge to the coating. Being almost totally clear, the coating merely added a bit of luster to the old, dull paint on the statue.

He stood back, admiring the renewed appearance. For the first time in hours a smile crossed his face. The elf statue looked wonderful.

Tom pressed the partially recessed switch he had added to the bottom of the elf. A quick glance inside showed him the now glowing LED indicating the system was on and beginning to build up the charge. It would be a matter of only a few seconds before he needed to get it upright—while he could still hold on to it.

A half hour later he was satisfied that it was impossible to pick up. As he was about to turn it off, the door opened and his best friend, Bud Barclay, poked his face in the door. Approaching the statue, Bud reached out to stroke it. His fingers practically dropped to the floor as they found zero purchase on the surface.

“Jetz! That’s neat!”

Tom merely smiled. In his mind he made a checkmark by “testing complete.”

The elf statue was returned to its plinth that evening in what Tom knew would be sight of his neighbor’s side window. Making a big show of screwing it down, Tom secretly pressed the button.

The following morning Tom looked outside, happy to see the elf still in place. He went to the recorder for the home’s security cameras and checked the footage. There, on night vision and plain as day, was his neighbor using everything in his power to unscrew the elf. After an hour his hands slipped once final time and his face smacked into the elf’s backside. Holding a bloody nose, the neighbor slunk home.

Tom smiled.