

Holiday hysterias

I am looking out through the window from my seat on my morning commute. It is a short ride in to the city on a light rail train and this morning it's started to snow to all kids delight and mine. Most of the grown-ups have forgotten about all the fun snow brings and just complaining about mosh and mud. The snowflakes look big so they will probably lay around over the weekend. Its Friday today and I am taking the half day off to do my Christmas shopping hoping to dodge the long queue lines although I do not have a long list. Some relatives and neighbors that's all and then there is me of course. This year I decided to buy me something nice for a change. I do not know what is going to be yet, a surprise perhaps? Just before the lunch hour starts I go around and wish my co-workers a happy Christmas with a loaded eggnog and a Santa hat. Christmas is on a Monday this year so most of us are taking out overtime to cover for the whole next week, so we would not see each other until next year. At last week's office party we all put a small gift in a sack and distributed them among us randomly, so that part is scratched off my shopping list. I got a shoebox with a loaf of bread, a small bottle of White-Out and a pregnancy test. My luck I got the gift from the office clown. So all off my professional obligations are peeled off and I am steering my steps to the cities retail center. I am still wearing my Santa hat and the holiday spirit, the second eggnog made me do that. My office is on one of the streets with wide sidewalks so I am hovering nicely humming and smiling. That is when I saw my friend John Conner across the street. He was working the crowd with his mobile vendor stand. With a bell in his hand and a Santa hat he could be working for the Salvation Army. But instead for a big pot with a money slot he got the real deal for the starving masses. A hotdog on a bun. This is great. I expect a wild and enthusiastic conversation with him so I cross the street to meet him. He sees me and greets me:

"Hi Stan. Happy holidays, yu look great in yo' red nose an' hat. Rum 'n' eggnog again isn'tit? "

"Yup. What ar' ya doin here? I didn't know yu was sellin' happiness from a polished box on wheel John? "

"Every year I bring on the gospel of my buddy, the one an' only true son of quantum physics an' its strings. Spreadin' the good news from ma modern mechanical donkey."

"Is this one of ya many harsh jokes John? " I said with a deer-in-the-headlight expression on my face.

"Nope. In one of ma' earlier life's I run in to Him hanging out with his crew. It was late an' I was passing by them in an orchard with ma overloaded donkey. I heard Him saying out loud – Wine, bread but no goat cheese...! That's when I made ma move. I tide up my transport an' went ove' with ma last lump of cheese. He looked up an' gave me a big smile. What can I do for you, He said. So I replied – I saw yo' at a party were yo' turned water in to wine. I have fou' jugs on ma donkey. Mabie yo' can made some wine fo me, hadn't had a drop in ages. Would be really nice though. He raised His hand towards me an' I shock it. He said it's all good so I split. The wine tasted great an' lasted for week's man."

After selling a few hotdogs to a busy crowd of executives all on cell phones, he wiggles his thumb at them and said to me:

"There is da ones that neve' can see happiness in da Christmas messages Stan. No time foe smiles or concern fo' da neighbo'. Everi day is like beein' a traider on da floor fo' stock exchanges. Hysterical an' yellin' fo' moe money all da time huh. Oh man. Everi time I see one I thank da Lord foe not beein' one yu' know."

"So the Lord of Strings. One noodle to rule them all. Is dat the one John? "

He giggles at my remark then clear his throat and opens his pocket flask with unknown origin in it. Takes a sip, wipe of his mouth and takes a breath. Starts making some discrete dance moves while circling his both index fingers in the air and starts to sing:

"Santa has a list of who's bad an' naughty an' who's good an' nice. Sees ya when yu sleeps an' when yu ar' awake. Sees it all so be good for goodness sake huh. Da children belongs in Heaven so they'r da ones who gets de toys, all on the same nite. He's big an' fat an' still can get thru a chimney. That's a miracle in its self. Only requires some cookies an' milk, lives yonder an' there's notin' he an' his elves can't make or do. If yu believe in the spirit yu ar' saved fou ever. Beats any religion of grow-ups, just look at them."

He is now looking at me with a pause in his eyes and I start to worry. He is going to put a guilt trip on me! My big expensive present to myself starts to grow wings.

"I must admit John, I never seen it like that.... Yo' ar' so rite an' melodic too." I said with a crack in my voice, giving away a concern for my egoistic material satisfaction. He tilted his head a little preparing me for a ton of bricks of holiday spirit. But I beat him to the punch, read eggnog, by quoting Benjamin Franklin:

"A good conscience is a continual Christmas."

Now he got a glow because he know from whom I was quoting from. He put his arm around me and gave me a holiday squeeze, handed me a hot dog with ketchup and wished me a Happy Holiday. He grabbed his little bell and started to jingle it. As I walked away chewing on my treat the snowflakes had got bigger and denser. It looks like it's going to be a white Christmas after all I thought to myself. In my next column I will tell you more about the opinions of my friend John Conner.

Your man in the zone
Stanley Mintras