

## INSTALLMENT 9 | 28 DECEMBER 72

### NO OFFENSE INTENDED, BUT FUCK XMAS!

First of all, let's exclude the Prince of Peace. None of what I'm about this week has anything to do with him. From what I've read, he was an okay sort of guy on whom has been laid more superhero tripe than any one social malcontent should have to cope with.

What I'm concerned with here is how much I, and most of you, whether you will cop to it or not, have come to hate, loathe, despise and revile Christmas.

Not even the obvious cliché Scrooge anti-commercialized Christmas denigration that berates greedy shopkeepers for stringing plastic holly in the middle of August, that castigates even worthwhile charities for their shameless whipguilt hustling for funds, that chides average citizens for falling for the okeydoke and going in hock to BankAmericard to buy gifts they can't afford for people they don't give a damn about. *That* facet of the problem is so much all obviousness that everyone has learned to live with it, pays it lip-service the way lip-service is paid to horrors such as "everyone knows politicians are crooked," and does nothing to revise the situation. Amazing how much shit folks can learn to eat.

No, I'm finally going to come out of the closet and openly state in print how much the entire concept of the "holiday" horrifies me. If I touch a shuddering chord here that resonates in tone with what you've been concealing in your heart of hearts, then consider me only as the fatmouth willing to suffer the brickbats of Jesus Freaks, et al., who'll surely burn a cross on my lawn for putting down their be-all/end-all's natal day. I'm willing to stand the gaff, gentle readers, if you will merely turn to the East and say to the sunrise, "God forgive me, I've had the same thoughts."

Consider: the following items came over the news on December 24th and 25th: four men in San Francisco abducted two young girls off the streets in broad daylight; a young woman whose estranged husband showed up at her door with presents for their kids was shot to death by the wife, who then put the pistol in her mouth and blew her head off; a 63-year-old man in Manhattan threw himself off the Brooklyn Bridge with a note (apparently written with a ballpoint so it wouldn't smudge in the water, which is really forethought of a high order) saying he couldn't make it through another Christmas alone and unloved; a sniper in downtown Chicago knocked off four people on Christmas Eve and was never located; a noted psychologist released a statement that suicide rates go up to triple normal during the holidays; police in Los Angeles and San Francisco agreed, with some consternation, that crime doubles during Christmas. There's more, much more, but why belabor the point? The only good news during Christmas this year was that Harry Truman, that indefatigable old curmudgeon, was still holding on with filled lungs, failing kidneys, stuttering heart and deep in a death coma.

Christmas is an awfulness that compares favorable with the great London plague and fire of 1665-66. No one escapes the feelings of mortal dejection, inadequacy, frustration, loneliness, guilt and pity. No one escapes feeling used by society, by religion, by friends and relatives, by the utterly artificial responsibilities of extending false greetings, sending banal cards, reciprocating unsolicited gifts, going to dull parties, putting up with acquaintances and family one avoids all the rest of the year...in short, of being brutalized by a "holiday" that has lost virtually all of its original meanings and has become a merchandising ploy for color tv set manufacturers and ravagers of the woodlands.

Look: I dig my privacy. 364 days out of the year I can think of nothing more pleasant than being left alone of an evening, working at writing a story, watching some television, making a small meal, smoking my pipe, just swimming along softly behind an ambience of aloneness. There is nothing of *loneliness* in all that, but *aloneness*, which is something else altogether, something fine and rewarding, filled with restoking the internal fires, coming to grips with myself, perceiving my directions and my place in the universe.

But on Christmas Eve I was alone, and I wanted to slash my carotid artery. (And when I read the foregoing to the two young ladies who are secretarying for me, they stared at me with undisguised loathing for my rottenness and countered with the arguments that a lot of people *like* Christmas a bagful, and they offered as their reasons that many people dig it because they don't have to work, and others adore it because they get bonuses.

(Had I the sense of a maggot, I'd rest my case right there.

(But for the sanctimonious few who would revile the ladies for their opinions, only slightly less than they will me for mine, I press forward, bearing in mind Dickens's remark that "...every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart."

(And did you ever notice, the only one in A CHRISTMAS CAROL with any character is Scrooge? Marley is a whiner who fucked over the world and then hadn't the spine to pay his dues quietly; Belle, Scrooge's ex-girlfriend, deserted him when he needed her most; Bob Cratchit is a gutless toady without enough get-up-and-go to assert himself; and the less said about that little treacle-mouth, Tiny Tim, the better. No, Dickens knew what he was doing when he made Scrooge the focus of the story. My only disappointment in him is that he let himself be savaged by those three dumb Ghosts. God Bless Us, Every One *indeed!* Not even at Christmas would I God Bless Nixon or the terrorists who machine-gunned the Olympic athletes or the monkey-trial reactionary fundamentalists who bludgeoned the California State Board of Education into stating in all future textbooks that Darwin's Theory is an "unproved theory" as valid as the "special creation" nonsense. Bless 'em? I'd like to boil them in their own pudding and bury them...but you know.)

Christmas is constructed and promulgated in such a way that to defy it or ignore it makes one a monster. To refuse to send cards, to toss the ones received in the wastebasket, to refuse to accept gifts and refuse to give them, to walk untouched through the consumer-crowds and never feel the urge to buy Aunt Martha that *lovely* combination rotisserie-&-bidet, to maintain one's sanity staunchly through the berserk days of year's end makes one, in the eyes of those who lack the courage to eschew hypocrisy, an awful heretic, a slug, a vile and contemptible thug.

But consider the millions who are alone on Christmas. All the divorcées, all the kids on the road, all the septuagenarians in the Fairfax retirement homes, all the parents who lost kids in 'Nam, all the truck drivers who take Christmas schedules so they won't have to sit around and brood on how miserable they are. Think of the poor sonofabitch glimpsed through the front windows of an Automat, sitting there by himself eating the \$1.79 Xmas Special w/ giblet gravy.

And don't give me any of that bullshit about how we must take these poor unfortunates to our Christian bosoms and make them welcome at this wonderful time of the year.

Half of them are rapists and ax murderers, and they'll eat your dinner, knock you in the head with a candlestick and steal all the presents from under your tree.

What they want, flat truth, is to be left well alone, to get through this horrendous sorrow-show as quickly as possible.

And when I read all that to one of my secretaries – the other having resigned and stalked out of the house muttering *Antichrist* – she snottily advised me she didn't mind anyone's not liking Christmas, what she resented were loudmouths like me who *talked* about it. Which is a terrific Silent Majority attitude, paralleling the Administration's attitudes about civil disobedience and vocal dissent. They don't mind your thinking it (at the moment), but god forbid you should try to *do* something about it.

It never occurs to her that the pro-Christmas lackeys bombard the rest of us through every possible medium of mass communication from Muzak wassail wassails in the elevators to *White Christmas* and *Miracle of 34th Street* all over the tube for two weeks prior and a week post. That every nit one encounters in banks or bakeries, who snorted and snarled and dealt you inept service all the rest of the year suddenly blossoms forth with a phony "Merrrrry Christmas" in hopes of a Yuletide giftiepoo. That even the blasphemy blasphemy curse blasphemy telephone company answers its phones with, "Merry Christmas, may I help you?"

"Yes, I'd like you to check out an address for me, please."

"Merry Christmas, we are not permitted to check addresses."

"Yes, but, er, I'm a paraplegic cancer victim in an iron lung and the house is on fire and I'd like you to check out my address because I'm blind and the fire department needs it to locate me before I'm incinerated."

"Merry Christmas, I'm sorry, sir, but you'd better fuck off."

"Thanks. And a Merry Christmas to you."

What I'm saying, in sum, dear friends, is that it is all hopelessly artificial. That people are no better at Xmas time than any other time, and by spouting platitudes in the name of a scrawny prophet who got hammered in place for saying stuff a lot more radical than what I'm saying here, none of these Yule-nuts become brighter or more sanctified or even a tot kinder.

And weighed against the people who suicide out of loneliness and misery, all the sales of Timex watches don't mean a goddam thing.

So next year, to all my friends, and particularly to my enemies, take your pointless and money-wasting Hallmarks and jam them up your pantyhose.

Next year, time and finances permitting, I will cause to have erected on the roof of my home a ten foot high neon sign that blinks on and off in blood-red and cash-green, BAH! HUMBUG! and any little clown who comes caroling at my door is going to have boiling pitch dumped on him.

And fuck you, Tiny Tim!