

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

December 25-31, 2020

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD – Part 61



Wanda Sue Parrott, 85, eats Christmas corn at Chili's before the current lockdown. She models the 'Ugly Christmas Sweater' given her as a gift by Robert's Lake Community of homeless vehicle dwellers in Seaside and wishes you a Happy Ho-Ho-Holiday and a better New Year.

Photo by Harold E. Grice

INTRODUCING MONTEREY PENINSULA MAKEOVERS - WHO WILL YOU BECOME?

(I am celebrating this holiday with an inspirational short fiction story in which Mrs. Santa Claus becomes homeless and makes a surprise life-changing decision. It's the final column in the current series and introduces the new "Monterey Makeovers" series that debuts next week.)

CHRISTMAS MAKEOVERS

By Wanda Sue Parrott

TWO NIGHTS before Santa's big gig in the Macy's Christmas parade, he went on his annual post-Halloween bender, chugging eggnog as his bewildered wife stared at his costume. "The Lone Ranger?" Merry asked. "Why not Robin Hood, as you've been for. . . ?"

"About three hunderd years."

"Where's your sidekick, Tonto?"

"I givem the resta his life off."

"Seriously, Santa, where are all our elves?"

Santa rolled his brown eyes skyward. "Shumwhere up there."

Merry spotted a flashing disc with red and green lights that spun like a Christmas frisbee. "Those lights are our elves?"

"Nah. That's a craft. Elves're onboard."

"A UFO?"

Santa nodded. "Recruitment Ship for earth's next great immortal heroes."

"Aliens?"

"Yup. Our elves ain't elves any more. "

“What are they?”

“Gettin’ Christmas makeovers to become Grays.”

“What are Grays?”

“Good aliens. Got big almond-shaped eyes.” Santa offered his mug to Merry.

“No, thanks. You know I’m a teetotaler, Santa.”

Santa extended his cowboy hat to salute the starship. “Ish makeover time for humanity. Ish makeover time for us, too. I'm going as kids’ most-loved masked man. What're you gonna do, Merry? Make yourself over or reinvent yourself? There's a big difference, but you gotta be willing to die for what you get in either case.”

Merry said, “We'll talk about it when the holiday season's over.”

“Nah. Not this time.”

Santa staggered over silvery luminescence of dying ice from global warming.

Merry followed him toward North Pole Enterprises’ Historical Heroes Hall of Fame, a collection of miniature dolls with porcelain faces hand-painted by the elves. Merry designed one human-sized costume from each character's lifetime, and the elves sewed miniature replicas for the figures whose collectable likenesses spanned human history.

Merry asked, “Without a labor force, who’ll help fill Christmas socks?”

“Stand ins. False Santas. Parents. Advertisers. Bankers.”

“How’ll we make next year's dolls?”

“Outsource 'em to China.”

“But you’re the *real* Santa!”

“Folks won’t miss what they don’t know.”

In the corral, Santa approached Dasher. “Merry, let’s saddle up old Silver here.”

“Dasher? His antlers are brittle like our bones.”

“Change’ll do us all good.”

“What’s this makeover kick you’re on?”

“I watched an Oprah rerun about making yourself over. I’m the Lone Ranger. Who do you want to become?”

Santa found a bit made from old harness parts. Dasher snorted as Santa tried to force the gadget between his teeth. “Merry, whack the old rump. Gently.”

She smacked Santa’s behind.

“Not my butt. His!”

Dasher reared and the bit slid into place. Santa stood on a footstool and mounted the reindeer, “Forget the saddle. He’s too schwaybacked.” Then, with a nudge from Santa’s high-heeled western boot, Dasher took off as Santa shouted, “Hi-ho, Silver. Away!”

Merry heard him exclaim as they flew out of sight, “Merry Christmas to all, and to all a goodbye.”

Then, what to her wondering eyes did appear? A UFO’s bright beam, and she cried out, “Oh, dear!”

Merry Claus kissed Santa's cold lip prints, gulped his dregs, and blew a farewell kiss to the female dolls. "Without Santa, we're done." Ancient wives included Eve, Mrs. Noah and Isis, Virgin Mary and Kate Kringle, godmother of Santa Claus. Other famous heroines were Salome, Joan of Arc, Mother Teresa, and Merry's secret favorite, Lady Godiva, nervy naked equestrienne who rode bareback through the streets, covered only with her own long white hair.

Merry shifted to comic-characters. Focusing on the miniature Lone Ranger and his faithful sidekick Tonto, she sobbed, "You're part of me. I'll carry you always in my heart."

Retreating, she thought, "*I no longer have an identity. I'm homeless! Now what do I do?*"

Merry donned Santa's red suit, tied his waist-length beard behind her ears and secured it with his ermine-trimmed hat. Macy's Lear Jet pilot didn't suspect his *ho-ho-ho*-speaking passenger was a stand-in in distress.

Parade-goers cheered the sleigh float through a blizzard. *Makeover was easy*, Merry thought, *but reinventing oneself means changing my character. How?*

After the parade, she ordered a shaker of eggnog, guzzled it and went to bed.

Merry woke from a dream of an alien elf leading her to a riderless horse.

"Coming, Santa," she muttered before slogging through freezing snow. In Central Park. She found the riderless horse, dragged a trash can to its base, and mounted the statue. "*I'm coming, ke-mo-sabe.*"

Skin-purpling frostbite had crystallized her legs when the UFO's beam finally flickered through the darkness and Merry soberly realized she'd made a bad decision. "*Go away! I'll stay here! I'll become a clothing designer!*" Too late. She was a rigid ice statue from her waist to her toes. *Gotta design the perfect costume. . .*

Merry's stiff fingers ripped Santa's coat open. It slid down her arms and hit the ground. She snatched Santa's cap with two claws and flung it at the blinding circle. Her frozen thumbs shifted the beard so its wavy locks covered her breasts.

"Lay. . ."

Merry strained to hear the muffled voice.

"Hey, lay. . ." The light engulfed her.

"Lady. . . hey lady. . .?"

Lady. . .

The cop shined his flashlight into her open, frozen eyes.

"Mmmmm," she wheezed.

"You're alive!"

"Ummm..."

"What's your name, lady?"

Lady. That's me! Merry inhaled, held the breath, and exuded, "L-l-l-a-a-d . . ."

"Is that your first or last name, ma'am?"

Merry's breath jangled like shiny new sleigh bells. "I'm-m-m Go-di . . . Godi-va Tontoclaus."

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Credits: Photo by Harold E. Grice. "Christmas Makeovers" (fiction) by Wanda Sue Parrott.

About this Column: "Homeless in Paradise" is a free public service self-funded and produced by the author. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this column appears regularly on the last week of each month in the Cedar Street Times at www.cedarstreettimes.com (and as periodic FLASH columns). It also appears weekly on Facebook, in Nextdoor and on private email lists. If interested in being added to the list, submit your request to the contact info below.)

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