

## The Dark Side: Holiday in the Sun

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I somehow have (barely) managed to survive Christmas this year. Things got tough, but I made my way back here to lovely Greensboro without visible scarring or permanent psychosis. When I was a kid, I adored the

many brightly-colored decorative products. To involve yourself, you have to go to big, scary malls and buy presents; in fact, searching three hours for the perfect gift will probably cause you to hate the person you're buying it for.

People expect you to decorate your house with homey snowflake motifs and sing songs about fat old men and lonely deer over and over until suicide seems like a viable option.

Basically, I don't like events (or anything) that involve effort on my part or encourage suburban soccer moms to wear sweatshirts decorated with glittery Christmas trees.

In order to "enjoy" the Holiday Season™, one must travel to visit people that one normally wouldn't even associate with—i.e., family.

You pretend to enjoy your relatives' company (at least until the egg-nog kicks in) and appreciate the horrible strange presents they purchase for you on some sadistic whim. After a mass gorge-on-turkey-and-bring-up-

embarrassing-past-events session, everyone sits around waiting to go back to work.

What mirthful joy. Holidays would be much easier if we didn't actually have to see other people.

I've created a plan that'd make such celebrations less painful—which is a good thing. Instead of shelling out a hundred bucks to buy Aunt Bertha an electric cat toothbrush, we all spend an allotted amount of money on ourselves.

It's not that I hate giving or receiving gifts (preferably cartons of cigarettes); it's just that our lives would be a lot less stressful if we purchased our own gifts. You know the sweaters

will fit, and nobody will have to stand in line for three days to return a Spice Girls CD.

On Christmas day (or Hanukkah or the Solstice, Halloween or whatever) you can sleep late, open presents and spend the day alone, drinking beer and watching wrestling in your underwear.

Order a pizza, call a few relatives and exchange heartfelt greetings (the less you see people, the more you like them) and compliment yourself on your excellent gift-giving taste.

Sing a seasonal song, decorate your cat's litter box, or just fall asleep on the couch to the sweet sounds of Jerry Springer.

Now that's heaven.



I am the goth Santa Claus. You haven't seen much of me because I can't find any houses with Rudolph's black light nose and all my reindeer keep trying to kill themselves.

PHOTO BY CHRIS SNYDER

holidays; since I was young and stupid (as opposed to old and stupid) I didn't have any responsibilities except opening lots of gifts and running around 'till I threw up. Alas, I've matured (slightly) since then, and have reshaped my ideas on the whole Holiday Season™.

Holidays a) induce high blood pressure, b) cost money, and c) involve too

## Campus Candid



Denizens of Hobbs prepare to destroy the earth. See them laugh their evil laughs. See them plan their evil plans. Fear them! Flee from their path!

PHOTO BY BECCA LEE

**CHIP DANGER** DAREDEVIL SQUIRREL by Bill Buehler 1998 - part twelve -

WINTER ARRIVED. ONCE, IT EVEN SNOWED. THE STUDENTS DISAPPEARED FOR A FEW WEEKS, AND THE CAMPUS BELONGED TO CHIP AND ME. THIS FEELING OF ENTITLEMENT GAVE ME A NEW BOLDNESS - ONE I KNEW WOULD LAST EVEN WHEN THE CAMPUS GREW BUSY AGAIN. I FELT

WILD, DARING AND UTTERLY FREE. I FORGOT THERE WAS ANYTHING TO BE AFRAID OF.

ON THE DAY IT SNOWED, I CLIMBED A TALL CONIFER AND JUMPED OFF, JUST FOR FUN. BUT THE ROOF I LANDED ON WAS A SHEET OF ICE, AND I COULDN'T GET A CLIMBING HELDRESS. I SLID TOWARD THE EDGE.

**BAM!!**

MY HEAD HIT THE EAVES, AND I SPIRALED BACKWARD.

I FELL THREE STORIES.

LUCKILY, THE SNOW HAD BANKED, AND MY LANDING WAS NOT VIOLENT. SANFORD THE OLD SQUIRREL, GAVE ME AN AUSCULTATION. I WAS NOT INJURED, PHYSICALLY.

BUT THEREAFTER, I WAS TERRIFIED OF JUMPING. I SHRANK FROM THE SLIGHTEST GAP. I WAS TWICE AS FEARFUL AS I'D EVER BEEN, AND I COULD NOT OVERCOME IT.

I TOOK SOME COMFORT IN MY OTHER PASSION - BOOKS. OUR STORY IN THE LIBRARY LEFT CHIP AND I ADDICTED TO PICTURE BOOKS. SANFORD WAS MORE SYMPATHETIC AFTER MY FALL THAN CHIP, AND SOMETIMES READ THE WORDS TO ME.

BUT WHEN CHIP OR I PRESSED HIM TO TEACH US, HIS COUNTEenance DARKENED, AND HE SHUT HIMSELF UP IN HIS LAB.

WHEN THE SNOW MELTED AND THE CAMPUS WAS FULL AGAIN, I COULD ONLY WATCH CHIP FROM BELOW. I GREW IRRITATED WITH HIM EASILY, NOW.

IT HADN'T OCCURRED TO ME BEFORE HOW TRULY DANGEROUS OUR GAMBOLES WERE. I TRIED TO PERSUADE CHIP TO EASE UP, AND HE TRIED TO PERSUADE ME OF THE OPPOSITE.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE ICE, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE SLIPPED!

IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE SNOW, I'D BE DEAD!

IT WAS UP TO ME TO SHOW HIM HE WAS WRONG. CHIP DIDN'T FEAR DEATH BECAUSE HE DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND SQUIRRELS COULD DIE.

SUCH WAS MY REASONING. I THOUGHT I UNDERSTOOD CHIP COMPLETELY. I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG.