



Black Santa

by James Seidler

FLYMF December 2005, The Holly Jolly Year End Issue, Volume 2 Issue 12

I wear a red suit with fine, white fringe and have a nice hat to match. I ride in a sleigh pulled by reindeer, drop through chimneys to give good little boys and girls just what they want for Christmas. My large, round belly is held in by a shiny gold buckle, and my cheeks are covered with a curly white beard. When I'm feeling jolly, which is most of the time, I can ho, ho, ho with the best of them.

So I'll give you one guess why I'm sitting in the L.A. County jail, waiting for my lawyer to come down from the North Pole to bail me out.

That's right, I'm black. Black Santa. You haven't heard of me? Well, let's just say I'm not surprised.

North Pole Industries had promised me when they recruited me that there wouldn't be any problems. "It's 2005," they said. "People are looking for a little more diversity in their media. Just look at *Desperate Housewives*."

In any case, my distribution cycle wasn't set to begin until the next holiday season. So when this year's "traditional" (white) Santa went down with "exhaustion" (coke nose) three days before launch, they weren't even able to get a marketing campaign together before sending me out there. "Just do your best, Carl," they'd told me. "We're sure people will love you."

Ho, ho, ho.

Boston, MA

I'd decided to start easy, with an orphanage on the South Side. The reindeer swept down onto the street, bells ringing and snow whirling all around them, and I hauled my bag into their rec room, where they all sat glumly around some pine-branch castoffs they'd collected from the local Christmas tree yard and stuck in a vase, with crushed aluminum cans and broken light bulbs for ornaments.

"Merry Christmas!" I shouted, and swept into the room. "Ho, ho, ho."

"Santa!" one of the little girls shouted.

"That's not Santa," one of the older ones corrected her.

"Well, of course, I'm Santa," I answered. "I brought presents for all of you."

The little girl looked hopefully from me to the girl who'd corrected her before. The older girl shook her head.

"Ho, ho, ho, tough crowd," I laughed. "But if I'm not Santa, then who do you think I am?"

"Paul Pierce?" one of the boys asked hopefully.

"What? No."

"Ricky Davis?" another one asked, a little less hopefully.

"No."

"Mark Blount? Al Jefferson?"

"Children, I'm not a basketball player. Look at me. Who am I?"

This puzzled them, and they furrowed their brows to think it through. I sat back and grinned, waiting for them to come up with the answer. Finally, one little boy had a flash of inspiration; I nodded to encourage him.

"David Ortiz!"

"No!"

"Manny Ramirez?"

I glared at the kid. He waited patiently for me to answer.

"Yeah," I said, "I'm Manny Ramirez. Here are your presents. Merry Christmas." I dumped their stuff onto the table and walked out.

As I drove my reindeer to leave, one of the little kids came bursting from the orphanage door. "Wait, wait," he shouted, and ran me down.

I relaxed the reins as he jogged up, smiling at the late recognition.

"Go Red Sox," he panted breathlessly, and ran back into the building.

Cairo, West Virginia

I decided to keep it simple after that: down the chimney, drop the presents, hit the road. That worked pretty well along the Eastern seaboard, and by the time I hit the Appalachians, I was starting to feel pretty good about myself.

The next stop was a farm in the mountains; I might have whistled a little bit going in. I left the presents under the tree, a fresh-cut pine, probably from the hill outside. As I headed down the hallway to leave, I saw a shadow leaning across the doorway. It was the daughter, just turned seventeen.

“How do you do, Cindy Lou?” I chuckled at her.

She smiled herself, then looked both ways down the hallway. “Is it true what they say?” she asked me.

“Is what true?”

“You know.” She winked at me, then licked the corner of her lip.

“Oh. You want to know if it’s true that all black men can’t resist fooling around with underfed white girls with buck teeth? That’s what you’re asking?”

She didn’t even hesitate, just yelled “Daddy!,” and I got the hell out of there. Next thing I know it’s just like something you’d see in the movies: pappy’s popping shotgun blasts at the fleeing car, except in this case the fleeing car is a bunch of reindeer, meaning I was dropping venison all over the state. Down Dasher! Down Dancer! Down Prancer and Vixen, and then I was out of range, leaving me with just enough power to limp across state lines.

Chippewa Falls, WI

The little boys and girls in Chippewa Falls don’t sleep lightly, nor are they shy. “But I don’t want any collard greens or rap music,” one little boy wailed upon seeing me. Another made me promise not to steal anything from his mommy or daddy. Finally, one pretty young mother thanked me for my compliment of her milk and cookies, only to apologize for not having any malt liquor.

Dallas, TX

“Uh-uh,” the young black woman told me. “Santa Claus is white!”

“You know, I’ve been hearing that stuff all night,” I told her. “I’m just a little surprised to be hearing it from you.”

“I’m not letting you into my house.” She moved to shut the door.

I shoved my foot in. “Now, wait a minute! Why can’t Santa Claus be black?”

“I watch television,” she told me. “I read.”

“Now come on! Just because Santa Claus has historically been presented as white doesn’t mean that a black man can’t be Santa Claus. That’s discriminatory.”

“I don’t see any black people living at the North Pole.”

“Nobody lives at the North Pole,” I told her. “That’s just a tax base.”

“Get out of my yard,” she told me.

“You know where Saint Nicholas was born? Turkey! Does that sound like a white man to you?”

“Get out of my yard before I call the police.”

“Discriminating against your own people,” I shouted. I left.

Provo, UT

A little girl told me I was going to hell.

“Merry Christmas to you too,” I answered back.

Pacific Palisades, CA

I was just about done rearranging the stockings when a man came in shouting, “Panic room! Panic room!”

“Oh, boy,” I thought, “must be an earthquake.” I ran after him through the house, but he kept running into stuff and knocking it over, so I ended up just getting the door slammed in my face.

“What kind of way is that to treat Santa?” I thought. I stood still for a second to check for swaying, but the ground seemed to be steady, so I decided to keep moving on.

It wasn’t until I got outside that I noticed the flashing lights of the private security force.

“Put your hands on your head!” a big-jawed fellow with a sub-machine gun shouted to me.

“Are you kidding me?”

“I assure you sir, I am not kidding. Put your hands on your head!”

“Man, fuck you,” I told him, and started to leave.

That’s when they sicced the dogs on me.