

#115 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 17, 2009

Santa finds a JOY job
By Curtis Seltzer

BLUE GRASS, VA.—An old, fat guy with a yellowing beard trudged in to the waiting room. He collapsed, a despondent heap.

Ten days later, the head of the new White House Office of JOY (Jobs On You) acknowledged his presence.

She: I'm Ms. Noway. I'm very busy. Put out that dreadful pipe. (She coughs into her elbow pit.) This office is smoke free.

He: You can still do a lot with mirrors. I need a job.

She: You need a bath.

He: Help me.

She: Are you too big to fail? Are you a private equity fund or a hedge?

He: I'm unemployed.

She: My heart goes out to you in this season to be jolly, but.... Oh well, name?

He: Claus.

She: Is that C-l-a-u-s-e or C-l-a-w-s?

He: Call me, Santa.

She: Mr. Santa, are you Latino?

He: I'm ecumenical.

She: Hmmm. Is that Pacific Islander? I'll have to check. Are you here in the country...shall we say...legally?

He: I come every year. Fly in at night and leave by dawn.

She: (Frowns.) I get the picture. Well, what kind of job did you have?

He: I ran a workshop.

She: Wonderful. A self-employed, unemployed, illegal entrepreneur! Now we're getting somewhere.

He: I was in the feel-good business.

She: We aren't going there.

He: I was the guy with the Ho Ho Hos.

She: (Frowns.) Another Imus. How many women did you employ?

He: Well, there was the Missus. But I never paid her.

She: Typical. Did others work for you?

He: Several dozen elves.

She: We don't call them elves anymore. What was their pay scale?

He: Virtue was their reward.

She: Sure. Was this workshop in China?

He: No. But it was off-shore.

She: What did you make?

He: Toys. Peace on Earth, good will toward men.

She: Once more, women were left out of your business model.

He: Girls got stuff just like boys.

She: We don't call them girls any more. So if you paid your employees nothing, why couldn't you make the business work?

He: We were under water all summer.

She: Tell me about it. The whole country's just treading.

He: No, I mean for real. The polar ice melted. The shop sunk. We were in the drink.

She: I'll make a note of your alcohol problem. How did you handle distribution logistics?

He: Rudy and the boys took me around. I'd go down the chimney with my sack.

She: You kept inventory in a sack?

He: You don't understand.

She: Oh, now I see. You broke in from the roof.

He: Well, that's where Rudy and the boys always landed.

She: Is that Rudy, The Snake, from the Chicago Mob?

He: That's Rudolph, The Flying Reindeer. He doesn't have a mob. He has a herd.

She: And then you went 'down the chimney.' That must be a Mob expression like 'Luca Brasi sleeps with the fishes.'

He: 'Down the chimney' is just how I got into houses where stockings were hung.

She: You burgled at night to steal hosiery?

He: I didn't take socks, I filled them. I was making deliveries.

She: Right. Did you ever take anything from those to whom you delivered?

He: Sure. Cookies and milk.

She: Is that Mob talk for jewelry and cash? And just how did a fat guy like you get down a chimney when there was a fire? How'd you get past the damper?

He: Trade secrets.

She: And which turnip truck do you think I just fell off?

He: A parked one, is my guess. Lady, I'm just looking for a job.

She: Do you have any marketable skill? Can you blog, Twitter or drink over-priced coffee?

He: I know the difference between bad and good.

She: Not much demand for that.

He: I could do your job.

She: Not in that dorky red suit, you couldn't. Wait a minute. I have it. We do need someone to play Santa Claus this Saturday at the White House party. I was trying to get Sarah Jessica Parker or Bernie Madoff on work release, but maybe...you'd do.

He: Sure. I'll get Rudy and the boys hooked up, and you tell me which chimney you want me to use.

She: NO CHIMNEYS! With that beard and weird hat, the snipers would take you out as a terrorist. Leave Rudy and the muscle at home. Don't bring a sack; you'll never get it through security. And don't give anything to anybody. We would get product safety complaints from the liberals and be sued for H1N1 infections by the Republicans. One more thing: Don't put anybody on your lap!

He: So what is it that you want me to do?

She: I want you to look like you're doing something.

He: You want me to play Santa, but not be Santa?

She: It's a new day. And one more thing. No more Ho Ho Hos. Sounds too much like a 1960s, Bill Ayres anti-war chant. Instead, do Heh Heh Heh.

He: Heh Heh Heh? Good grief! (He sighs.) Any jingle jingle in this for me?

She: Just like you, we don't pay elves. Think of yourself as an unpaid intern. Here's a JOY lapel pin. Now all you need is a lapel. Get it! So let me hear a big "Merry Christmas!"

He: Bah! Humbug!

She: And a Happy New Year too.

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