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Santa saved in daring deli deliverance

By Curtis Seltzer

BLUE GRASS, Va. Not many people know that I am sometimes sent on secret missions to rescue innocents from harm. I try to keep this part of my life out of the media glare.

On assignment, I flew into Damascus in a jet so stealthy that I couldn't find the bathroom. We landed at two in the morning on Monday whereupon my handlers placed me in the back of a rattletrap food truck advertising

FRIENDLY FREDDIE'S

SMOKIN'-HOT FALAFELS

Within minutes I was transferred onto a one-hump camel, then a two-hump donkey, then a three-hump burro and finally an unflying carpet. It was still dark when I arrived at a wattle-and-daub compound near the village of Joik.

As the sun rose, I came beard to beard with the most dreaded jihadist in the world, the secretive Sheik Ali Bu Bu.

My assignment: Save Santa.

Me: I bring greetings from the President of the United States, Barak Hussein Obama.

Bu Bu: Stuff it, Jack.

Me: Your English is quite good. Very American, very vernacular. Bu Bu: It should be, chump. Before I became head of BeheadersRUs, I sublet a one-bedroom dump off Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn for 10 years. It was hard to find halal, so I ate kosher. I drove a taxi.

Me: Well, driving a cab in New York would make anyone crazy. Not that I mean you're crazy. Not crazy in the romantic sense, anyway.

Bu Bu: Let's cut to the chase. Is Obama a

Muslim? Me: He says he isnt.

Bu Bu: What kind of Muslim does he say he

isnt? Me: All kinds.

Bu Bu: With a name like that?

Me: He didnt name himself. Most of us

dont. Bu Bu: So hes a self-hating

Muslim! Me: I think hes an agnostic.

Bu Bu: An infidel! I hate American infidels
masquerading as Muslims when theyre not.

Me: So lets cut to the chase. How much do you want ?

Bu Bu: Do you think your Yankee dollars can buy my
prisoners freedom...from justice?

Me: I do. That *is* why Im here. You, Bu Bu, are not
going to behead Santa Claus in prime time!

Bu Bu: He deserves nothing less! He flies around at night
like a dope dealer handing out samples. Hes hooking our pure
Muslim children on dirty western civilization. So far, fortunately,
weve prevented our Beheader kids from keeping the infidel candy
and presents they find next to their fireplaces.

Me: So who eats the candy?

Bu Bu: My righteous Beheaders...who are immune to your
wiles. Me: The more you deny, the more your kids will want.
This is a season for peace.

Bu Bu: You preach peace, but this Claus is the main pusher
of Crusader Cultural Imperialism. Why is it that only Christian
children can be good? What about my kids? Theyre good.

Me: I see your point. Why dont you work up a jolly old Sheik
who travels at night on a flying, red-nosed camel bringing toys to
your kids?

Bu Bu: What would my children do with toy guns and
bombs? They need the real deal. I want my Beheaders dropping
assault rifles and grenades down Muslim chimneys. Do you know
how many IEDs I could stuff into a bottomless sack like Santas?
Not to mention itty-bitty bombs for shoes, underpants and

evening wear?

Me: I think were going in different directions. Sa nta is about giving gifts and promoting good will to men.

Bu Bu: Well, at least we agree on keeping women out of any good tidings.

Me: Uh...its just an expression...it means good will for all of us, not just men.

Bu Bu: (Not listening.) Wretched things. Bu Bu do this. Bu Bu do that. Bu Bu take out the garbage. Bu Bu change the light in the hall. Four is more than enough.

Me: Lets get back to your ransom demand. First, show me the prisoner.

Fifteen hooded gunmen with scimitars clenched in their teeth brought in a small, white-bearded, bedraggled man in red rags. His sad little mouth was turned down like a bow, and the poor little guy had lost his Ho-Ho.

Bu Bu: Hes confessed.

Me: To what? Bringing toys to boys and girls around the world? Or not bringing them?

Bu Bu: Hes an infidel!

Me: He is not. Hes a right jolly old elf!

Bu Bu: He wants to seize our lovely lands.

I looked out at the flat, treeless, rocky desert, punctuated by the occasional pumpjack.

Bu Bu: Those presents he dumps here, its like marking territory. Hes an American Crusader who wants to crush Islam.

Me: Hes not even a U.S. citizen.

Bu Bu: Bah! Humbug! Me: He doesnt care about your religion.

Bu Bu: Thats exactly what he says! Off with the head of The Satanist Santa!

Me: (Pausing for effect.) Look, Sheik. Santa doesnt really exist. Bu Bu: So whos this weird little dude we caught on the

roof,
casing my Joik joint?

Me: An impersonator. You know like the Elvis guys who run around in sequin jump suits repeating, Thank you, thank you very much. There are thousands of phony Santas around in December. This guys a fake!

Santa: I am not. Im the real McCoy.

Me: See. His name is McCoy, not Claus. Santa: I am not a McCoy.

Me: See, hes not himself. Bu Bu:
Then who is he?

Santa: I am Kris Kringle. I am St. Nick.

Bu Bu: This old geezer has more aliases than I do.
I gave a wink and a nod toward Santa to play along.

Me: This isnt Santa Claus. This is Bernie Fishbein . He runs the best kosher delicatessen in Pittsburgh.

Bu Bu: A deli? A deli! Like Katzs in Manhattan on East Houston? Santa: Katzs schmatzes. Fishbein taught Katz what little he knows. A pastrami, I could make for you! A salami, you should know intimately.

Bu Bu: On a home-made loaf?

Santa: With Russian dressing and a three-meat combination. You will see chopped liver comin thro the rye.

Bu Bus eyes glazed over.

Bu Bu: And a pickle? A real dill pickle!

Santa: A special with Fishbein. So much garlic, your eyes will swim in brine. And the crunch! One Fishbein pickle has more snap, crackle and pop than three tons of the Krispies.

Bu Bu: So whats your best offer?

Me: A Fishbein deli-of-the-month lunch tray for you and the merry men. Every 30 days a different sandwich. Ill arrange for a CIA drone to drop it wherever youre hiding. The pastrami will arrive hot; the cheesecake will be cold. Like door to door. You

should try to catch the salamis before they hit the ground.

Bu Bu: Not good enough. I want a platter for 30 every month. With that soup that has the white grenade floating in the middle!

Me: That's steep. I dunno.

Bu Bu: And a pickle dish. And two rounds of Dr. Brown's Cream Soda. ...and a goat.

Santa: Fishbein doesn't do goat! Bu Bu: No goat, no deal.

Me: Santa will do goat if you and your colleagues promise to be good little boys.

Bu Bu: Good! What's that mean? Me: No more beheadings. Bu Bu: Aw gee.

Me: You can threaten, but not do.

Bu Bu: You mean not do, like forever?

Me: For a Fishbein lunch platter and a goat every month, it has to be forever.

Bu Bu and the boys huddled up to discuss the terms.

Bu Bu: One more thing. I want stockings for all Muslim children Me: You drive a hard bargain, but Obama will throw in socks. Now one last thing. What did you do with Rudy and the eight miniature reindeer?

Bu Bu: Cleverly disguised, I grant you. They are, in fact, pygmy goats. Fishbein decked their horns with boughs of holly. We plan a feast tonight.

Me: NO!

Santa: WAIT! Fishbein will also deliver a breakfast platter for 30. Fresh bagels. Fifteen kinds. Salt, poppy seed, everything...even falafel.

Bu Bu: (Pausing shrewdly.) I want cream cheese, too. With dates and pistachios. Regular and light. No skimping. No nickel-and-dime New York schmears.

Santa: Fishbein promises cream-cheese tubs, all around.
Me: Done! Bu Bu: (Pausing more shrewdly.) Yo Fishbein! Can you really do a falafel bagel?

Santa: Sure. Fishbein can cook up anything.

Bu Bu: (Pausing even more shrewdly.) Maybe we can work a franchise. I run a little food truck on the side, **FRIENDLY FREDDIE'S SMOKIN'-HOT FALAFELS**, and I'm looking to expand our menu. You know, add something exotic for the locals. Falafel bagels would fly in the Islamic State. We are very open to eating others, as well as our own.

Santa: I'll have my people call yours. Give me your cellphone number.

And that, friends, explains why bagels will become the new peace process in the Middle East.

Fly, Santa. Fly.

