

Santa Is Coming To Town (by Robert Bee)

Rudolph struck the last chord on the christ-ylaphone with a saurian flourish. The audience applauded enthusiastically. This was one of their favourite carols and was played at worship almost every Vegaday.

Rudolph enjoyed performing it particularly, as it told the story of his namesake leading the way for their god's annual mission of delivery. Rudolph's only regret was that he did not have the sacred shiny nose, but he knew such thoughts were foolish, as foolish as wishing he could fly like his namesake and his fellow disciples, back in the ancient scriptural times.

Rudolph returned to his family in the congregation beneath the giant tree-shaped roof, sat on his tail and awaited the sermon.

Father Frosty, resplendent in his white cloak, scarf and top hat and coal-eyed, carrot nosed mask, approached the sanctuary and stood below the massive brick chimney. He raised his arms towards the Holy Presence and intoned the universal call for worship: "Ho Ho Ho!"

"Merry Christmas" the conservatives in the congregation responded, while the new charismatic faction chanted "Seasons Greetings."

Rudolph raised his eyes to the statue of then Holy One, all red and white with those divine puffed cheeks and magnificent white whiskers and felt both awed and at peace. He found himself pitying those of the Low Church who insisted the Chimney should be left empty, to signify His departure to another child who'd been good for goodness sake. How could they feel Saint Claus's presence before an empty chimney?

The sermon that day was particularly challenging and disturbing. Father Frosty -(not his real name, of course, he was baptised Dasher) – had recently drifted towards fundamentalism, condemning the Visitors for backsliding in the faith, only practicing the true religion one day a year. Certainly on that day they pulled out all stops, erecting plastic trees, decorating them with tinsel, stars and coloured balls, singing the sacred songs like "I Caught Mother Kissing Santa Clause," "Frosty the Snow Man" (after whom all our priests are named) and the legend of Rudolph's namesake on whom Santa's church was built. They even shared the sacred elements Tur-key and egg-nogg and exchanged tangible blessings, yet the next day, it was as if all forgotten until the same time next year.

The Visitors were in grave danger of wearing out their welcome on Glaak-(pop), or Vega 3 as the hu-manes called it. Though Glaak-(pop)-ians owed them a huge debt for showing the true way of christmas (they never properly explained why the 3rd last letter of their strange alphabet changed its pronunciation on that one day a year), their unwillingness to practice their own religion on a daily basis, as the Glaak-(pop)-ians did, was generating a ground swell of christ-eenophobia in the native population. These tail-less hu-manes, so superior in their technology and passionate in their Claus religion when they arrived in their gleaming spaceship 30 orbits ago, clearly missionaries to our backward planet, were now proving to be inferior in faith to their pupils.

Father Frost pronounce the benediction, casting paper snowflakes over the bowed congregation and intoning the traditional "May all your christmases be white." And then unexpectedly, he broke from the standard liturgy and pronounced the dreaded scriptural pronouncement while pointing towards the hu-mane enclave:

"You'd better watch out

You'd better not cry,

You'd better not pout –

I'm telling you why.

Santa Claus is coming to town.

"One didn't have to have christ-ray vision to see that there was going to be trouble for these hu-manes soon.

They faced the real possibility of being rounded up by radical Clausers and either shoved down a chimney pipe, live, or hung in a stocking and roasted over an open fire.

But it could be worse for them. We could have spurned their new religion and clung to our old tribal ways of peace and goodwill to all men. No, even to hu-manes, that would be too cruel.

* * *

(C) Copyright Robert Bee