

A Holiday in Balance

BY JONN KARSSEBOOM

Growing up, the entire Christmas season for me has always seemed to be a confusing bag of mixed messages. Don't get me wrong; I'm in no means a fantastical Grinch or a strangely haunting Ebenezer Scrooge.

I actually love the holiday.

I love all of the extra niceties it brings, like eating baked goods with nice people. I like the sometimes funny, sometimes solemn but either way heavy with nostalgia music played to full tilt a week past Halloween onwards. (I tolerate well 24/7 Hallmark Christmas TV specials) I even like the passive aggressive (read "open battle") between MERRY CHRISTMAS and wonderfully tolerant and understanding and equally uplifting though a bit milquetoasty "Happy Holidays" retailers.

I just always wondered why as a child and well, as a fully matured-at-my-prime-but-maybe-not-more-than-a-week past-prime-but-admittedly-just past-full-bloom adult, the holiday leaves me still a bit confused.

Why for instance would Rudolph's nose so bright be better equipped at steering a sled during a blizzard? (Honest question here.) From my television screen his "light" wasn't any brighter than a taillight and certainly no brighter than the high beams on my dad's car. Was there much traffic up there anyway? This makes no sense.

As a kid I didn't mind the Santa story being out there but it would help greatly with believability if the small details were given even a passing chance. Why didn't the reindeer taking off and landing exert some form of propulsion? (Not even a shrub was disturbed.) A UFO landing at least blows onlookers hair and usually leaves a small burned area in a grassy field.

I loved the voice of Burl Ives storytelling of Rudolph. I was just never happy near the end though when Burl reveals himself as Frosty (I presume) because his mobility as a snowman made me question the entire story. Frosty glides freakishly across the snow and to this day I question how it's physically possible. (The happy cartoon version of Frosty at least gives him legs.)

Then swinging back, as if from a vine on a tall Doug fir, the "true" meaning of Christmas is brought back to me during "The Little Drummer Boy." It's my favorite story... I love the underdog, against all odds, rags to kind of riches flavor. I also enjoy from my perspective as a gardener the fanatical practice of a found talent.

My issue? In the classical stop-action film the beautiful simple song that I hum for days afterward is never in sync with the actual drumming of the drummer boy. It's a small detail here I know. But it would make all the difference. I so want to believe.

Which brings me back to the ongoing, somewhat troubling, somewhat exciting future in real life. (It's the holidays and we really shouldn't waste the opportunity on politics right?) It's just that all of the political commotion has many of us asking what in fact is reality. (And who or who isn't reporting it.) It doesn't help matters that all of this comes during a holiday season that upends all seasons combined.

It can leave us in reality turmoil.

I've learned to rest easy during trying holiday times. No matter the issue, I've learned to trust that crocus bulbs, even under the snow and ice will come to bloom. The flowering plum trees, despite



the odds, will somehow find a way to burst pink. Daffodils will keep striving.

Bad news, tough news even horrid family fights raging while "Silent Night" plays in the background cannot stop a Daphne bush from being wonderfully fragrant. These things in the garden may not cure all ills but it certainly helps in keeping a good sense of reality.

If you find me outside pruning back my hydrangea while singing pahrump a pum pum you'll know it's all about keeping a good balance.



Jonn Karsseboom continues to question even the simplest things around him and often his curiosity drives his children to irritation. Write to him: jonn@thegardencorner.com.