

The Day That Christmas Died
by tb mcglone

It started like all others,
With a forecast that looked bleak.
A blizzard was approaching,
That promised hail and rain and sleet.

The reindeer were all tethered
With a slight case of the nerves
As the sleigh was full to bursting
Thanks to Manny, Nell and Irv.

The take off and the landing
All seemed in perfect order.
Our first stop was in Texas,
Old El Paso, near the border.

Our team parked near the chimney
And Manny opened up the bag
Handing out a pair of presents for
Two kids who weren't half bad.

I shimmied down the chimney
And reached the hearth below.
It was then the trouble started,
Just beneath the mistletoe.

Guns, all locked and loaded
Sprang out from behind the tree.
"Drop the cookie, fat boy, before you set
One foot in the land of the free."

Before my wondering eyes, I thought,
"Is this some kind of trick?
A dozen border guards demanding
Papers from *Saint Nick*?"

"Your passport and your visa!
Show them now before you're splattered!"
To make things worse, Manny dropped down
To see what was the matter.

"We need documents for you! And,
Likewise, your pointy-eared son.

Your days of breaking immigration laws
'Round these parts are now done!"

"Manny's just an elf," I cried,
"To help on Christmas Day!"
"No matter," said the soldier,
"I have my orders to obey."

Unfamiliar with the Glock
Manny pointed with a jest,
Causing agents dressed in Kevlar
Then to puffen up their chests.

Manny said, "I've made two hundred
Water guns like that myself!"
Then a Kevlar-sporting hombre aimed
And fired at the elf.

The tip of his right ear was grazed,
And Manny ran from fear.
They tackled him with gusto
Just as Nell and Irv appeared.

I was cuffed, despite protesting,
Taken to a cramped detention cell.
While some social workers separated
Manny, Irv and Nell.

"Papers, show me papers!"
"I repeat, I have not any!
You see, I'm Santa Claus!
Now, where are Irving, Nell and Manny?"

Confusion crossed their faces.
They had orders from the top.
All these worthless illegals
From shithole countries have to stop!

A lawyer was assigned and said
She understood my plight.
"Asylum seekers like yourself,
By law, have certain rights."

"It's not asylum that I seek,
But presents to disperse."
The nuance of my situation
Made the matter so much worse.

A judge he ordered me returned
To whence it was I hailed
My lawyer pointed to the law
But all her efforts failed.

The agent said, "He is unfit
For 'Unum E Pluribus'. "
They put me with the deportees,
Bound for Honduras.

The cartel greeted me with guns –
More guns! – upon arrival.
They chained me in a basement
Demanding cash for my survival.

"I have no money. Believe me, sir!"
And not to be dissuaded,
Asked about my elves and where
Their destinies were fated.

A snicker came from mean Omar
(On the naughty list, as well.)
And I learned that human trafficking
Had befallen Little Nell.

Outrage took me then, and, oh
There followed such a clatter.
Beaten half to death, they threw me
Out all torn and tattered.

I searched for my old crew,
But without money no one cared.
Eventually, the lawyer called
Providing some detail.

Manny, profiled, went to juvie,
(Perhaps it was the ears?)
For stealing food at Wal-mart
He got sentenced twenty years.

Young Irving's now in foster care,
Outside Schenectady.
Attending school he studies
'Bout the land of opportunity.

And how dear Lady Liberty
(as taught in certain classes)
Has promised shelter for the poor
Who huddle, still, in masses.

The idea, he thinks, was oh, so quaint.
But now it must be said:
To be a patriot these days means
Protect your own instead.

And my poor reindeer, roaming free?
Met a fate far worse than gruesome.
Turns out 'venison', as Texans call it,
Is a Yuletide treat in Houston.

Now here I sit upon a beach
Sipping lime and Tanqueray.
"The priorities of man," I'm thinking,
"Have made Christmas quite passé."

Words like 'love' and 'kindness'
Now have their limitations.
Myopic greed and selfishness
Direct this generation.

I ponder where or when
The giving spirit went to seed?
How can one turn from the cries
Of gentle-folk in need?

If the one who started Christmas
(Yes, the one who's in the name)
Saw the shitstorm man has made it,
He'd feel very much ashamed.

I ruminate, despondent, eating
Honduran baleadas.
"If you don't recognize the one born
On this day, you really oughta."

"He's here again, I tell you! Now!
Being tortured at ports of entry.
Federal agents and politicians playing
The part of Roman sentries."

As 'Pontius Pilate', years before
Decreed that Christ must die,
"We've got problems of our own," they say,
"So *screw* the other guy! "

'Keep in line, you, with the leader!'
But you do it at what cost?
What gain the rich and mighty
When it's his soul that has been lost?

For here come desperate people
Fighting for their families.
Saying, "Better to die up-standing
Than live crawling on our knees."

I don't pretend to have the answers.
All I know is what I see.
People asking to be helped,
People begging to be free.

You can hold fast to your values
When you're choosing up the sides.
Only know that you're complicit
On the day that Christmas died.