

I'm Dressing Up Like Santa When I Get Out on Parole

by Keith West

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George Clayborne sucked in his gut and slid another foot down the chimney. When he swung his feet, they hit the back of the fireplace but nothing in front. That was good. It meant he was almost at the bottom. He pressed his hands against the side of the chimney and pushed. George slid down another six inches.

This had seemed like a good idea when he had been in the lockup. He'd missed last Christmas. He hadn't counted on the extra pounds he'd added due to the starchy prison food.

When he was a kid, George heard a story about a guy who got stuck in a chimney playing Santa. The guy had gone down the wrong chimney by mistake. He was supposed to have gone down the chimney next door. The family was on a two-week vacation in the Bahamas. They didn't get back until the second week of January. By that time, the guy in the chimney was getting ripe. George was beginning to fear the same fate was awaiting him.

George twisted his body and was able to touch the ground with one foot. Good, that was good. He should be able to get out of the chimney now. He'd come down the chimney so he wouldn't have to deal with the alarm system. He would go out the back door when he was done filling his sack. His truck was in the alley. He would be well away from here by the time the cops responded to the alarm when he opened the door.

Suddenly two hands gripped his ankles and pulled. George's tailbone hit the fireplace grate with a painful impact, but he didn't have a chance to react. The hands continued pulling. George hit his head as his body moved across the hearth and hit it again as he left the hearth and impacted the tile floor in front of the fireplace.

A face with a full white beard glared down at him. An angry face that was almost as red as the hat perched on its head.

“A parole violation? Really, George? So soon after you got out. Your blocking the chimney has made me late. I’m afraid you’re going on the naughty list for this.”

If the face said anything else, George didn’t hear it. He blacked out.

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When George came to, a police officer was putting cuffs on his wrist.

“Wha...what’s going on?” he asked, still groggy from the impacts his skull had experienced. A second cop was standing on the other side of him. A third was standing by the chimney. His face was the one George had seen when he was pulled out of the chimney.

“Police brutality,” George squawked. “That cop by the chimney assaulted me.”

“There’s no one by the chimney, sir. Now come along quietly.”

The third cop picked up a sack, laid a finger alongside his nose, gave George a nod and a wink, and disappeared up the chimney.