

The Meaning of Solstice

December 14, 2000



Well, it's late at night and I just got back from Bernard's annual Solstice Party over at chartreuse.com. Many of you know Bernard is our rather *outré* former marketing consultant who has now made his fortune selling Chartreuse over the web, so any occasion with Bernard (he insists on *BER-nard*) is an odd experience. But you know, it's all about personal growth. That, and making sure you *never, ever* stand under the mistletoe at one of these things.

Actually, it was a pretty good event, especially in comparison to the non-parties the dot-gones are having this year. Snow Queen was there ¹ of course, wrapped up in fifty layers of gauzy white fabric laced through with tiny white lights, and the good Mr. B. had brought in the *Smithereens* for the night, and I can testify that the story about them being big Chartreuse drinkers is true. It's kind of difficult to describe what Bernard himself was wearing— kind of Tommy Lee meets Orson Welles in Sherwood Forest. Little scraps of green leather shaped like leaves stitched together in a kilt sort of thing with a red cummerbund that I was told later was Shatoosh — something made from the down of Himalayan antelopes. Yeah, and those Lucite shoes. I don't think he found this outfit at Wilkes Bashford.

"Green V.E.P. for the holly-days, a slam-natch..." he yelled over the noise as he filled my glass much too full. I'd had my eye on the magnum of Roderer *Crystal* he was hauling around in his other hand but I got the lump of coal. My own take on this stuff is that if Chartreuse is an acquired taste, it plays pretty hard to get. In fact it's a first-rate example of how you don't have to build a better mousetrap in order to get the world to beat a path to your door — it's fine to build a worse kind of mousetrap and just promise venture capitalists that you can attract a better class of mouse. But I guess this is exactly why Bernard owns 11,000 square feet of penthouse in Manhattan at the Dakota and drives DeLorean #7 and I ... well, I don't.

The band took a break and you could actually hear something. "Just a Microsoft minute, Hon," he said to one of his thoroughly pierced minions as he addressed my question about The Meaning of Solstice. "It's lights, lights and Rudolph, my fine young man. Lights and Rudolph lighting the way through the gloom of the year's longest night. "

"Rudolph? You mean that infernal Reindeer? Are you telling me that Solstice is about Rudolph?"

¹ Long, long story 'bout Snow Queen. You gotta check the ISS45 Web if you really want to know.

Bernard looked wounded, like a guy who'd spent most of November looking for dimpled chads in Broward county. "Don't you understand? Understand the way Rudolph and his nose are leading us out of the darkness?"

Whether he'd had too much V.E.P. or too much *Crystal* I wasn't quite sure, but it was too much of something. "Darkness? What darkness?"

"Yes, sweetie, darkness. The darkness of same-itude."

"Same-itude. Now I'm supposed to know about same-itude."

"Think, Boyfriend, think about Rudolph. A societal misfit, shunned by the other reindeer. Wasn't allowed to join in the reindeer games. Damaged goods. Lost. Alone. Called names. Hurting. But then redemption! Not his redemption, but our redemption. Remember about that 'foggy Christmas Eve?' It was obviously symbolic of Mankind, foggy, you know, lost in the dark. Then 'Santa' — you know, the bringer of joy — 'came to say.' Now, I'm not going to say, that 'came' means that Santa was really the 'second coming' but you know, there's a real powerful metaphor going on here."

He stopped and took a slug of crystal right out of the bottle, causing me to reevaluate the benefits of the Chartreuse after all. "Then, the thing about 'nose so bright' and 'guiding' the sleigh? It's all there! Perfect! So obvious!"

"What's obvious?"

"Diversity!" Bernard fairly exploded. It's all about Cultural Diversity! The power of Cultural Diversity. If we were all the same, like 'all of the other reindeer' we'd be lost marooned in the dark. But Rudolph's diversity saved mankind, guided the sleigh, his light showing the way out of the darkness. Bernard finished with a flourish, sloshing green Chartreuse V.E.P. onto the floor, where it immediately ate through the varnish.

I stared at him, dumbfounded.

"And that's what Solstice is all about!" he cried, gleefully. Someone handed him a JDRazor 2000 and Bernard flew away, the LED wheels of his scooter flashing madly, not so unlike the dress Snow Queen was wearing.

So now you know the secret. Happy Solstice, everyone.

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