

# have a nice (HOLI) DAY!

Story | BRUCE FARR  
Illustration | PAUL SVANCARA



**W**e all like to imagine the holiday season as a joyous time. Come the fall each year, we begin to re-nourish our notion of the weeks ahead as being filled with mirth, merriment and boundless goodwill. There'll be turkeys to roast, trees to trim, gifts to wrap and open—the whole nine yards of festivities. In my experience though, I could probably count on the fingers of one hand how many holidays have actually turned out the way I imagined them.

No matter, it seems that regardless how the season plays out from year to year, hope always springs anew that *this year* will be a return to the sort of celebration and good cheer we remember from our youth. It's a concept that, in reality, might exist nowhere else but on the front of a Hallmark card.

Maybe it's our own supercharged emotions and expectations themselves that

tend to burst our festive bubble. After all, who among us hasn't experienced a holiday that somehow didn't quite live up to the ideal?

Growing up in my own household, there was that memorable Thanksgiving a few decades ago when my sister, who was then away at college, informed my parents that she'd be arriving home for the holidays with her new boyfriend, Harvey, in tow. As she matter-of-factly informed us, Harvey—a PhD candidate in philosophy—would be perfectly happy to gorge himself on our traditional family turkey. But, because he was a bit squeamish about animal carcasses, she asked, would it be possible for Dad to carve the bird away from the table?

Needless to say, the family muttering that went on for weeks prior to their arrival rumbled through our old New England homestead like distant thunder in the hills.

And then there was the Christmas Eve my parents decided to host a gala party at the house and urged us kids to invite several of our friends over to mingle with the family. I think my folks envisioned it as a group of us standing around the fireplace singing carols, sipping cider and noshing on Swedish meatballs. Things quickly headed south, however, when my high-school pal, Roger, after a few too many eggnogs, began reciting from his memory trove of bawdy limericks. Following several verses detailing the misadventures of that well-known lass from Cape Cod, my father suggested it might be time for Roger to head home for a long winter's nap.

Roger dejectedly donned his coat and scarf to leave when my father noticed that he was staggering to the front door cradling a fifth of 15-year-old scotch that he'd snatched from the liquor cabinet. I have to

admit I would never have thought Dad could move as quickly as he did, springing to the door like a football running back and inserting himself between Roger and the snowy, snowy night.

What ensued from that point can only be described as a good old-fashioned tug-o'-war, with dad straining and pulling the bottle toward himself on one side and Roger yanking it back on the other. My mother stood by watching the struggle in disbelief, her mouth agape. After a few to's and fro's, both the combatants managed to tumble through the door and off the steps, planting themselves neatly in a snow bank.

"Next year, we're going to midnight mass!" I overheard my mother vow, as she dusted off my sputtering dad with a whisk broom.

So, all that said, the question is am I looking forward to a wonderful holiday season? You bet, and I hope you are, too. ♣

# SUBS, MISSILES AND MANPRIS

Story | BRUCE FARR Illustration | LISA PAULA PATRICK STEWART

The other day, I was recharging my testosterone levels in a conversation with my brother-in-law, who happens to command one of the largest nuclear submarines in our U.S. fleet. The talk mostly revolved around Trident warheads (his ship packs 24), deployment trajectories, tours at sea (they often stay underwater for three months without surfacing) and other potent details of our country's armed defense, when the topic abruptly swerved to "manpris."

I don't exactly recall what prompted the about-face, or in what context the captain felt inclined to introduce a subject that rocketed like a ballistic missile through my cerebral cortex, but let's say it went something like this:

*Brother-in-law:* It's sort of like that trend in some of the big cities where men are actually wearing capris...

*Me:* Wait a minute; did you say men wearing capris? You mean mid-calf things, like (gulp) clam diggers?

*Him:* Yeah, you didn't know about it? They're calling 'em 'manpris.'

On this, I was clueless. Mind you, I would never venture to call myself a fashion maven or anything remotely close to it. It would just be too far out of whack, on the scale, say, of the hash-slinging short-order cook at Joe's diner calling himself a gourmet chef. Along those lines, the summit of my own haute couture usually consists of a well-worn cotton shirt, a pair of jeans and—when I think I really need to put one on—a blazer.

But for years now, I've been watching a little worriedly the direction men's shorts have been trending in, lengthwise

that is. When I was a kid, the act of wearing shorts was a sensitive issue. After all, boys were supposed to wear trousers,

weren't they? However, we of the creamy white calves and knobby knees eventually came around to donning Bermuda shorts in

madras plaids and seersucker stripes. Later, our fashion sense somewhat emboldened, we even dared to cut off our raggedy old Levi's and wear them so short the white pocket pouches underneath protruded in plain view. Remember?

Come the '80s and '90s, men accepted—albeit grudgingly—the gradual march of our shorts' hems ever downward from their former heights, which a quick check of Larry Bird's or Dr. J's early career photos will confirm was right around mid-quad. But then they plummeted toward our knees and even lower, in much the same way that—happily, for a time—women's skirts took the opposite route. Still, I didn't protest too much, even when shorts got so long and baggy that most men's legs looked like hairy toothpicks jutting from below a sea of shapeless cloth.

But now this mid-calf deal? C'mon guys.

The online Urban Dictionary tells it like it is: "The 'manpri', is a rendition of the 'capri' pants, but worn by metro-sexual and euro-trash males. The 'manpri' is usually, but not always paired with the 'mank,' a man tank. Please look up 'mank.'"

I'm shaking my head as I type. The very notion of men—regardless of what fashion might dictate—parading around in pantaloons that conjure up Mary Tyler Moore's perky garb on the old *Dick Van Dyck Show* just boggles my mind.

As I confessed to my submarining brother-in-law over one final margarita, the weight of all this "hemming" and hawing has hit me hard, and I'm wondering where it will end. Perhaps around our ankles? Now that would be a fashion trend I could live with. ♣

