Desperate and Needy



by Miles Mathis

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Thoreau is famous for saying that men lead lives of quiet desperation:

But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.

So we see that it has always been this way. But it does seem to be getting worse. Witness the fairly new phenomenon of putting up Halloween decorations on September 1, two full months before Halloween, then putting up Christmas decorations on November 1. When I was a kid it was considered gauche to even mention Christmas before December, and certainly before Thanksgiving. And it isn't just decorations: the radio stations begin playing Christmas songs on November 1 as well, sometimes 24/7.

Back then Halloween was just for kids, and no one even thought of it until the week before, when they started seeing the candy in the special aisles in the stores. But now everyone is competing with the neighbors to create the most outrageous yard displays, many of which have crossed over from Halloween into borderline Satanism. And I remind you again I say that not as a Bible beater, but just as an older person who remembers it wasn't always this way. Yes, it was always about witches and goblins, but it wasn't about mass murderers and bloody corpses everywhere.

And what happened to Thanksgiving? Why does it seem to have receded into the shadows? My guess is because people have had it beaten out of them: they don't feel thankful anymore and don't feel like celebrating American history or the family. Independence Day is bad enough, but Thanksgiving is just too much. Without the explosions and the big yellow Sun, we are down to nothing. The CIA and the merchants have destroyed the family on purpose, so Thanksgiving just seems passe now to five generations of casualties of this war, five generations of PTSD survivors of societal obliteration. To cover up this hole in the calendar and hole in our lives and hole in our psyches, we start singing Frosty

the Snowman and watching Rudolf before the weather has even changed.

And of course that suits the merchants just fine, since they can start their Christmas advertising blitz a month earlier. McDonalds for one skipped Thanksgiving entirely, rolling out its first big AI Christmas ad last week. No, check that, that was last year—I just noticed that the Matt Walsh segment that led to this paper is dated 2025. But they are doing a similar thing this year, though they brought in Macaulay Culkin this time, so it is just CGI not totally AI. It is equally bad, or worse, since Macauley has aged like a fine . . . grape, now looking like a premature raisin. His eyes are surpassingly scary, like he never sleeps and is shooting for the George Soros look. They should have used him for the Halloween commercial, not the Christmas commercial.



This commercial is a *Home Alone* homage, but it utterly tanks for the usual reasons, starting with the fact it is DESPERATE. It reeks of desperation. And not even quiet desperation. Noisy, hyperactive, obnoxious desperation, tarted up with every modern trick to try to hide the fact it is an empty idea tarted up with every modern trick. Like everyone else all creative fields, the writers at the ad agency working for McDonalds have no new ideas, and cannot even prompt AI to come up with any new ideas. They can't riff off anything happening now since everything happening now sucks, so they have to try to rewarm these Hollywood leftovers from almost thirty years ago, convincing us we are nostalgic about them. But we aren't. Not one person is nostalgic about Macaulay Culkin, and if they *were* desperate enough to be nostalgic for 1990, they would want to remember him as a cute kid, not as this aging Hollywood burnout with a creepy bio. In the ad he has all the charm of a meth tweeker. They could have gotten an equal performance from anybody they pulled off San Pedro Street.

Much the same can be said of *Ebenezer*, the new Scrooge movie with Johnny Depp, which not coincidentally came out on Friday the 13th. Since it owes more to Halloween than Christmas, like some

Tim Burton atrocity. Depp as Scrooge? I thought he retired. He should have. Bah, humbug. If there is anything Depp is and Scrooge definitely is not it is impish, so the actor and the character go together like tunafish and maple syrup. Ian McKellen as Marley buries him in the first scene, which is inconvenient if nothing else.

Did we need yet another Scrooge rehash? No, since this one is all hash. And I don't mean Who-hash. Like a McDonalds commercial, this film is cocooned in a chrysalis of AI goo and other special effects that prevent any transformation into a Christmas story, or any consistent story whatsoever. But that could be said about anything coming out of Hollywood now. What makes this thing especially vulgar —and timely for its vulgarity—is the astonishing chutzpah exhibited by the writers* in not only rewriting Charles Dickens, but hanging him by his heels, we suppose at the behest of their producers in Langley or somewhere. If you pay close attention, you will see them flipping the script, apologizing for Scrooge's greed and blackwashing the poor beggars in the streets. They also rewrite the charitable gentlemen and the character of Mr. Fezziwig, having him murdered by a beggar, making the film little more than a hatchet job on communal values, charity, and goodwill—sort of undercutting the whole point of *A Christmas Carol*. I guess the next order of business for these scriptmonkeys is to rewrite *It's a Wonderful Life*, fluffing Mr. Potter and having George Bailey run over by a threshing machine in a new fifth act. Like Scrooge, these Hollywood writers are both deluded and mistaken, being not as good as the stoners who wrote *Home Alone* while thinking they are the better of Dickens or Homer.

More than anything it reminded me of the transparent hatred leveled at hippies in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* by Tarantino. In both cases from a "liberal" Hollywood. You have to laugh. A Hollywood that actually hates barefoot singing girls in shorts and hates equally a jovial and generous Fezziwig, dancing with his wife and daughters. That reminds us too much of Thanksgiving, nodding to the detested family, and this film is a Halloweening of Christmas, not a Thanksgivinging of Christmas. My guess is these writers would have done the same to Bob Cratchit's family, including Tiny Tim, if they possible could, drowning the whole lot in a scummy ditch somewhere. But that isn't yet feasible in this world, so they did the next best thing, giving them only a couple of flat cameos. They don't even get the Christmas goose at the end.

As a tack-on, I want to comment on something else that is fairly new. That is the quick edit, where all pauses are edited out of any commentary or narrative, AI or not. I guess those who do this think it avoids wasting our time, making everything very concise, quick moving, and efficient. However, as quick and efficient as I am, I can't stand it. Why? Because just as a human needs time to speak a language, a human needs time to digest spoken language. Without any pauses you can't keep up and the ideas never jell. The whole thing becomes an annoying jumble and you end up pausing the narrative on parts that seem important, rerunning them, sometimes at a slower speed. That sort of defeats the whole point of the edit, doesn't it?

Another thing that people my age will have noticed is the speed and volume of much of this commentary at places like Youtube, even when pauses aren't edited out. And this includes the speed of head and hand motions during the speech. It can be truly frightening, and I think it can only be due to drugs. These people are literally zapped on some sort of speed, and I guess they think this makes them look intelligent. It doesn't. It only makes them look zapped. Ben Shapiro was the poster boy for this for years, but I have seen many who now make him look like the Pokey Little Puppy. I don't know what these people are on and don't want to know, but it is another bad sign of the times. I click off their videos immediately, as a form of self-preservation, always thinking of *Desiderata* as I do:

Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit.

Besides, they scare my cats.

*Mainly Nathaniel Halpern, according to the credits. Don't ask me why he would be hired to rewrite Dickens, when he was just a TV writer with zero film credits. I suspect he was hired as the fall guy here, to hide those actually to blame for this.