

MERRY CHRISMZINE



AN ANTHOLOGY OF SEASONAL POETRY
released on the internet on December 23, 2025

"MAY YOUR HOLIDAY JINGLE AND JANGLE"

From the Editor

Ho ho ho, everyone. Have you ever heard of Christmas? I have. Let me tell you a secret: poetry is magic, and, like Santa Claus, it is all around us. Poetry watches you and judges you, so you must believe in poetry. You must open your stocking on Christmas morning. And you must read *Merry Chrismzine* to feel the cold kiss of a winter's day on your brain. This is just how it is.

I solicited 62 people for poems in a last-minute effort to make the world slightly more joyful. Some I never heard from, some refused politely, and others let me down so severely that they are now dead to me: former friends, destined to receive coal for Christmas forevermore. But the result is still great: 42 festive poems for you to enjoy.

While the internet is, we all agree, a bad place – a rotten, dilapidated place filled with evil, scammy robots and former friends (dead to me!) – it can also be a place for a small pdf file filled with holiday poems, circulated among friends and family. Nice.

Thank you for choosing to read *Merry Chrismzine* this holiday season.

Your navidaddy,
Zac Smith

santa is real + strong + he is my friend

by Louis Packard

he gave me a ps5
because of what a good guy i am
i helped my wife bake cookies
then prepared bloody marys for the 3 of us
with one in a "to go" cup for mrs claus
santa likes his bloody marys with lots of horseradish
+ only a celery stick
santa prefers emo music
but will really listen to anything
when i turned on my new ps5 i saw that santa had
already added himself as a friend
i logged on + we played call of duty online after he got
home from work
over voice chat santa told me that mrs claus had loved
the bloody mary + my wifes cookies
i wish i could hang out with my friend santa claus at
least once a week
but he is very busy with work
i get it tho
so am i
love + friendship make this life worthwhile

MANGER

by Cletus Crow

someone stole
baby jesus
from my front yard
nativity scene
so mary and joseph
and the animals
and wise men
are all just staring
at an empty box
in awe



please hold your questions 'til

by L Scully

Let's get ahead before fate befalls us.
We prep vertically for ends of days,
tongues lilac from wagging and digging dirt.
Christmas list: soda stream and a rifle.
Women hunt women breathe women breed and
I am ectopic with microplastics.
You told me your nose is funny because
your great grandmother was struck by lightning.
I forgot lesbians have grandmothers.
Let's manufacture care, Mummy Robot!
My sperm donors were Crosby, Stills, Nash and
Young. Fed the baby to the hole in the ground.
No need for a 401k, Little.
Every day I wake up to new skin

The Auspice of Treats

by Sebastian Castillo

Another Christmas
a favorite as a child
no longer soppy with
the auspice of treats

still I treat it with deference
a matrilineal ornament
floats time-mute with soigné
Decemberly abundance, gaiety
an evening candle, why not
and a ho-ho-ho
big fucking Xmas mug
of California champagne

WINTER POEM

by Danielle Chelosky

can't fuel up my car
gas tank door frozen shut
using my debit card
to pry it open
everyone asks me
if i'm cold
because i'm not wearing pants
his hand trembles
as he orders the lyft
i throw up
every christmas
for the sake of tradition
i don't like
holidays
because the café is closed
and i don't get any emails
i don't like family dinners
i want to eat sushi by myself
every day
until i die

Oh Starry Night

by Derek Maine

More poets than you can name in a single afternoon
hung themselves in tract houses in towns with no
names.

Everything I know of Christmastime I learned at the
feet of Fernando Pessoa,
who lied to me.

Allen Ginsberg, for one,
spent seven straight Christmases
editing the assholes of unhoused poets.

In 2005 at a white shoe law firm Christmas party
I recited several cantos to the caterers.

And was sent home unceremoniously.

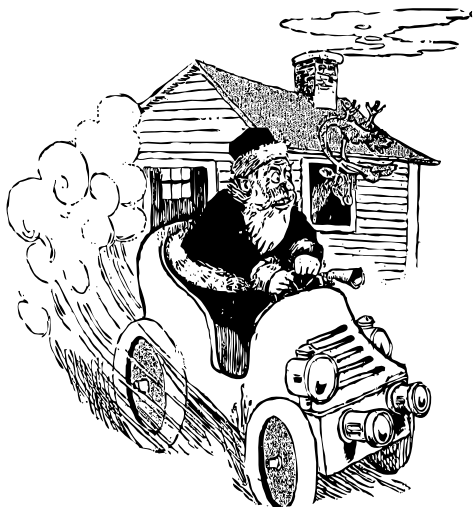
I spent one Christmas smoking clove cigarettes with
Frank Stanford who threw up on my pea coat.

And still another at the home of Jim Harrison,
taking turns brushing a strumpet's hair,
laying wreaths of eucalyptus by her feet.

I chased ghosts
through drawing rooms,
salons,
and cheap motels.

No apparitions,
only the length
of the dark
of the night

and poets hung by the chimney with care.



Advent Calendar

by Andrew Weatherhead

1. When is Christmas?
2. Is today Christmas?
3. How long until Christmas?
4. Where is Santa?
5. Why is Santa waiting?
6. Can it be Christmas now?
7. Can we go to Santa?
8. Is Santa outside?
9. Will Santa run away?
10. Is Santa fast?
11. Is Santa a mutant?
12. Can we trap Santa in a net?
13. Where is our net?
14. What if Santa jumps over the net?
15. Is Santa a bad person?
16. If Santa is a bad person, can we scare him with a cat?
17. Did Santa read our letter?
18. Is Christmas next week?
19. What is Santa doing right now?
20. Does Santa have cloaking power?
21. Is it Christmas yet?
22. What time is Christmas?
23. Is Christmas tomorrow?
24. Don't you want presents?

Cluster Feeding

by Raegan Bird

It is the first big snow in broken heat. I'm clicking on
the red lights that divide the bedroom halves. I
installed them there and it's pleasing how I know
where to put the light.

I'm emailing Nathan about the rancid breakfast biscuit
I just ate and the state I leave my backpacks in.
He'll take the day shift today.

This is the happiest I have ever been.

POEM FOR THE SOLSTICE AND FOR HANUKKAH

by Z. H. Gill

in 2003, mom said *no more christmas*:
for 5 years we celebrated the solstice
instead—the second year of this was
the season i smashed my brother's arm up
upon the trampoline, the sound it made
sweeter than any song i had ever heard—
still, to this day, i haven't heard many sweet-
er!—sounded like the chef at our favored
local korean restaurant as he used his
ferret-sized cleaver to smash into cow
bones for the brewing of his stock. (the
restaurant was called 'bowl nice.') my
brother wore a cast for 4 months. he used
it to bat at my head—recompense—so we
didn't get on the trampoline much anymore,
it was no fun. i wish i'd recorded the sound
of his arm breaking—shattering as it did in
multiple places—sounding like a gorgeous
woman eating milk-wet cheerios or a glass
spiderweb's immensely pleasing defenes-
tration or an a380 crashing fiery into a sea
of soft butter or two happy rivers of blood

converging into a waterfall or my fourth grade violin overtaken by a bonfire—sizzling violin strings whipping the bonfire brazier's cauldron-sides—or a beachfront rock-candy high-rise snapping & crumbling into the sand. hanukkah fell entirely before the solstice that year: dad got each of us 6 sessions of therapy, plus 2 more to the family-friendly masseuse.



Hallelujah

by Crow Jonah Norlander

“Did you get my Paperless Post?
Will you leave your kids at home?”
I’m down to sing some carols
I don’t mind they’re all churchy

“Would you wear something festive?
Just don’t look like a banker
and bring what you like to drink”
This party’s already happening
this is the first I’ve heard

I accept the invitation
God is in the glögg
coats piled on the bed
“Is there a point where it’s over?”
the night goes on then ends

bartending at the sober rave

by Shy Watson

no music is
the problem
with poetry
a cameron winter is
a winter with smoke

the foot-tall
holiday shrub
activates my otherwise
unremarkable dining room
one good print of one good painting
nailed to the wall

maybe anaconda,
perhaps avatar:
fire & ash on christmas day

instead,
i went home mid-december,
drove my dad's dick magnet—
a 1982 mercedes-benz

on again off again,
not you and me but
the amazonian
motion-sensored
night lights

"foiled again," i thought
when my high school english teacher
cancelled our plans

by smog or by cigarette,
our deaths will
all feel the same

The Whole World is Kind of Freaking Me Out Right Now

by Michael Washington

A woman's screams echo through this dying mall.
Their Christmas decorations look like shit this year.
Teenagers exploit the mall's free Wi-Fi to mine Bitcoin.
Someone thinks they saw something like this in a
movie once.

The drunk-smelling mall Santa burps on a baby's face.
No one knows what happened to the Build-A-Bear
Workshop.

Most of the stores appear either closed or close to
closing.

All of those coin-operated massage chairs are empty.
I am sitting in the food court eating food court food
with childlike dread in my heart while trying not to
think

about the unread messages in my MyChart app's inbox
re: blood tests I'm positive will have tested positive
for whatever the worst-case scenario is: cancer, leprosy,
or some crazy new type of STD that liquefies first my
penis

then my eyes then my brain, leaving green slime in
their places,

leaving me brainless and eyeless and penisless and
unable
to do anything but cry, but the tears will have nowhere
to go.

"Finish your Auntie Anne's Snowball Nuggets," I tell
myself.

"Don't worry about that screaming woman," I tell
myself.

"Tell yourself, 'It's probably nothing,'" I tell myself.



jesus

by gg roland

jesus is the only jewish fella we are encouraged to
celebrate the death of



"WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISMZINE"

Gave you my heart

by Uzodinma Okehi

Reindeer. Dancing, sugary elves. And all those free pastries that stack up, glistening, piles of them, smiling gingerheads and flaky rolls and fist-sized, big-ass cookies, frosted but also cinnamon, with gold and red and green glitter, and my dude over the intercom, white-chocolate falsetto, the end of that one Christmas song where he's going nuts, just wailing . . .

I wake up. As usual, my coat over my face. Alone, stretched out across two chairs, the tenth floor breakroom. Remember my father saying to me, at some point, that the good life is a kind of sublime boredom. If you're lucky. He probably said happy, not sublime, so that's already a little edit I'm making to the idea. Because holidays working retail is more like a fevered montage of scenes coded for happiness. Especially at the bookstore. But I do like that George Michael song. And egg nog. Back in 2002, I remember my weekly cheat meal all winter was a double pepperoni, Sicilian pie from Mike's on 3rd Avenue, chase it with a quarter gallon can of thick, Bordens egg nog. And on the couch afterward, sweating, sleigh bells, listening to my heart pumping, pumping all that slush.

Harrowing

by Sophie Ruth

when I notice

My window's glass

looks how it did

December 2013

Same figuration of droplets

that spell out

The end

A nappy is a Diaper

by Giacomo Pope

Disappointment like opening an empty nappy
Is realising that the smell of shit is you
Or your child, because you're too tired to wash
Them or yourself and there's so much to wrap
To open or watch open but first the nappy is wrapped
In plastic and balanced on other empty nappies
Filled with piss and wipes spilling onto the floor
Which you wrap in more plastic and carry downstairs
Over previously unwrapped toys and Amazon parcels
That are deafeningly noisy to kick in the dark
And outside you balance the nappies on bags of food
Which you scrape off of plates or the floor into more
plastic

And stand almost too naked breathing lungfuls of rain
Looking at the tree which arrived as an engorged thigh
In snapping fish net dragged into and then out of the
house

Because you can't keep it after it fell and nearly crushed
Your child whose sister is old enough now to be
disappointed

Inside, pine needles stick to your wet feet
You place a star on your head and wait for the sun to
rise

Honorable Mention

by Rebecca Cyr

Earthworms rattle below ugly fruits and wine bottles wearing robes. And my mom wants me to know: It's not just about the gifts—it's *just the fun of unwrapping and being together* at 11:57 p.m. while the man in my wall vomits as loud as he can. Pre-dawn: I can remember the days I dozed, napped, and slept, and even if I no longer know what it means to do these things, and my husband no longer knows what it means, I can still believe we did them, as we gloom by one another in the night. And finally, I realize that sleep's nothing special, and the scabbed deer at the end of my bed is just another holiday, something to bathe and take to the mall, and when the time's right, offer up a failure of lesser consequence—not the full story, but something everyone can get behind—something like, "I won't be winning any medals this year, but I'm with you in the home stretch."

Not for All the Fries in Poland ***after the King ("Blue Christmas")***

by Tom Snarsky

There's a sepia of the already-healed
Which the world (officially) sees

Through, a duck-fat angel you feel
In your mouth, still, hours after the meal.

The seahorse-lease you have on your
Sane self is ending. That thin layer

Of ice on the pond
Is already almost gone—

A little oil from the orange rind
On the tips of your fingers

At the bottom of the stocking a god
Nestled in loose cloves sings *Joy to the*

Person of My Love in a
Fucked key, viola

Da gamba getting everywhere
Eventually he'll be born, sorry *bored*

Statues on the mainland like
When they added *like*

The dewfall to Mass
Fragile yellow balloon

1 character at midnight on the Eve muttering
& *with your spirit*

Parade of the animals
The goose's wet dictionary

Tumbling in the wash w/my blue shirt

Sans Souci

by *Alan ten-Hoeve*

I can smell the adult diapers from the driver's seat. The senior center chartered one of our buses for the night to go see the Festival of Silver Lights, described to me as "a massive winter wonderland display with elaborate light installations." Before the main attraction they have me drive to a restaurant with a martini glass on the half-lit sign between the words Sans Souci. I park and wait. Take pictures. Write. Try to figure out how I will maneuver the bus through parked cars filling the lot around it, boxing me in. When the seniors reappear two hours later I pull the bus in front, blocking the entrance and angry one-way traffic. Some of my riders are more wobbly than before. They talk loudly. As I secure a wheelchair I get a close distilled whiff from its occupant. There's a heavy clunk behind me followed by laughter. Someone dropped their oxygen tank. I first see the light displays glimmering behind black tree trunks. I turn in under a bright archway and drop my speed under 5 mph. We pass three-dimensional animals—bears, deer, peacocks, elephants, wolves, giraffes, lions crouched in a stand of phragmite—glide under trees adorned with giant sparkling snowflakes or birds. Shimmering swans float on the surface of a pond, and a boat with a

fisherman inside, pulling back on his pole like he's hooked a big one. Two alligators, mouths opened wide, wait on the bank. The director of the senior center tells us it all took three-hundred and fifty thousand lights, which seems like a low estimate to me. The old people ooo and ahhh at everything. Say how pretty each display is. How it reminds them of this or that. Some try to work their phones to take pictures. A ring tone sounds with "Eye of the Tiger" opening chords. We exit through another archway next to an enormous globe with dense continents of LED light. Each bulb containing a continuous flow of billions upon billions of electrons moving through layers of semiconductor, creating a steady stream of photons. I think about every living thing that has ever, and will ever, exist on earth. Then we come out the other side and it's over. The bus goes quiet. It occurs to me this could be the last Christmas for some of my passengers. Any of them. Maybe even me. "Wanna go again?" I say.

Sun Dog

by Ash Carlile

I was informed something is being done about the
water in our river that runs north but I can't

remember if it's bad or really bad

Stale life in the air crowds into me like a big disgusting
dry heave while

Memory wants me to spend the day overtaken by the
smell of your car, the cool failure of the night, the
sand still on my shins after I decided to

I don't remember what I ever decided actually

last Christmas or the one before I

thought about parhelia with your head on my chest

And you had no idea I was picturing that

Sun dog! I kept thinking and smiling

Sun dog! I pet your head

Similar rivulets of my life have probably appeared

In someone else's happenings

But I've felt them the best I can! It's nice to say

what the kid asks for in the movie

by Alex Rost

miracle on 34th street ends
with the prissy kid getting everything she wants
no, you're not getting a baby brother
not even if you're really really good
santa can't do that shit
he's not giving us a house, either
"but do you believe in santa, dad?"
three sets of eyes wide on me
hoping for the same answer
I won't lie
not after my younger brother got drunk last Christmas
and stood from the table to announce we had it wrong
the story we loved to relive
wasn't about some cute heroic deed
to preserve another year of his belief
he wasn't fooled by chewed up carrots
or the button by the fireplace
he knew all along
there was no magic
our theatrics exposed us as the liars we were
all against him

it's the story he thinks of
as the moment he learned it's safer not to trust
on which he'd built a new set of beliefs
so I look away from my daughters
give them the gift of doubt
to cover my ass
"I've never seen him," I say
"but one thing I do know
is every year there are presents under the tree
I didn't buy"
and that's how I allow hope
while protecting us all
from the dangers of belief



Denethor the Grinch

by Rudy Johnson

the old tree was still there
busted af
walls too, rod too (Denethor II)
fuck, everyone was
busted
anywho
they went to that mountain high
peaks decked with a philologist's ornaments
and brought back another tree
likely covered in snow
that didn't melt
or some shit
symbolic mistletoe to validate miscegenation
meanwhile in my house
a
broken
fucking
dome, rain
rain &
the
withered
old
tree
nearby
reigns
a little bit more
Christ

Say Uncle

by Lucas Restivo

I had a soft spot for the yellow couch, even back then.
How it just showed up one Christmas Eve, as if to say
adulthood isn't a lame descent into interior design,
or colors rule, and not just the muted kinds
reflecting our own shrugged acceptance that sheen
wears off.

The dinner table still ran the length of the split level.
That side room, with its Elvis shrine and
archaeological Legos,
was something of a freedom. Like how you can choose
anything from a Chipotle menu. It wasn't even enough.
That frontier hadn't entered the equation quite yet.

There was the magical guy with the same first and last
name,
the one with the eyebrow hairline, Diamond Deb and
her
pearl veneers. Every variation of Paul, from overly
competitive
to alcoholic to Raiders fan with his yearly gift of rock
salt,
were more or less a cousin.

The ladies in the kitchen. It wasn't a problem like that.
Maybe they understood something we didn't.

Something of necessity.

It hurts to say, but time would prove the hunch.

When a line is drawn, do you have to take a stand
or will it be made for you? The world doesn't reward
inaction, or both siding. If there's one thing I can say

for certain

about human nature is that it points a finger. I ask for
forgiveness.

Found family, family found, was there something in
common

beyond clockwork and tradition? Surely. I thought it
was more important.

I thought it was the important thing.

Death comes, regardless of who brings the clams and
who cooks them.

Regardless of how you were hurt in childhood.

Why that isn't enough I'll never know for the life of
me.

I miss my family

Untitled

by Greg Katz

The farmers market communists are selling latkes for
Palestine

I'm afraid to ask where does the money go exactly but
you may be amused to learn that the communists
accept Venmo and I buy three and eat them right
there off the Dixie plate

Hanukkah is a holiday about a light that won't go out
and guerrilla war and land grabs and foreign
governments trying to exercise power over the
Middle East

Ordinary people are who suffers in all war, whether in
Palestine, Ukraine, or Darfur

They would like to live their lives, see their friends and
eat some food. And not be killed by foreign
governments for any reason at all.

America vetoed the UN call for a ceasefire

Because America favors the opposite of a ceasefire,
which is a war

The people who suffer in the crossfire are just ordinary
folk

You can make a lot of latkes with potatoes and some
 yolks

PEOPLE ARE PAYING THREE DOLLARS A MONTH TO READ GOSSIP ABOUT ME ON SUBSTACK AND IT'S OK. REALLY.

by Alexandra Naughton

1.

Philly got an inch of wintry mix over the weekend
my three year wears a skisuit, asks me to make a
snowball she can hold

while i push her stroller toward preschool drop off

watch out

a neighbor points up at some melting gray icicles
they're falling

2.

at my half paid off home i've been
forced into selling and still can't talk about
i take an inventory of the things left behind:
unremarkable piles of unwashed laundry

Only Theatre of Pain and all my books
toys my three year old played with covered in drywall
dust

used-good scaffolding industrial fans heavy paint guns
i'll sell on facebook marketplace abandoned by the
contractor who won't text me back and bought a
condo in florida with my new roof

i unfurl a thick black plastic bag and fill it with
anything moldy
start a heap of santa sacks to put out on the curb

our house is an inside house
our house is an outside house

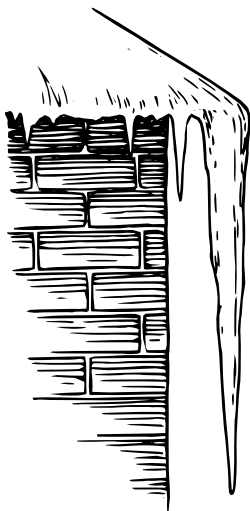
3.
i can't stop looking at botticini's assumption of the
virgin
i pull it up on my phone when i want to rejoice in how
small i am

mary's casket brims with lilies below a three tiered
dome
kewpie doll seraphim, elderly adam and eve, all the
angels and saints
sit stratified watching mother and child reunite

i want to live inside that celestial wedding cake
it makes me want to go to church again
it makes me want to get another tattoo

4.

it's obvious twitter trad cath ghouls
never went to afterschool catechism
the only way out is to be earnest



We don't deserve

by Daniel Bailey

This beautiful earth
overflowing with the misery of progress

I shed the Christmas lights that have echoed
my shadows split from the womb of other shadows

That I have smothered the actual Christ
in the blanket of humanity's deep chasm
I euthanize myself within that idea

With the heron inexplicably upstream
It steeps away from me
I am the forest it clutches and grays

I am what god rejects
The Christmas lights
I plant them untamed
I a heretic pope
A heretic of love
I plant my mania in the sun golden sun
Feeding the whip snap nature of being
borne against the wall

When I lick at myself in the mirror
The sleep from eyes
The dirt from work
Of rotten bulbs that fail my soil
A whimpering of penance
Of intention Of unspelled words

A judgment of my loving on this earth
but I already get that from my cat

Marathon Viewing of the Worst Movies Ever Made

by Tyler Dempsey

I can't begin
to write
a Christmas poem

One of the shortest
days of the
fucking year

One of the shortest
days of the
fucking year

Egg nog, cookies,
gingerbread
and shit

Tradition led
by the balls
by Big Dairy

I'm lactose-intolerant
on the shortest
day of the year

Wishing what-
ever I was
born with

Wasn't what
I would
die with

That a gust
of snow
would blow me home

Poem for Mulling Wine

by Avee Chaudhuri

Solstice a long night becalmed
by familiar shadows, the steeple rising
yet dwarfed by oak and the withered elm
which we called a harlot in a cruel moment
the way it splintered without a care

springtime there will be vernal winds
unsullied by the smell of pyres—
and cognac spilling out from laughter
unsullied yes but naive all the same
and untutored in the joy of letting go at last

It was not a great year
but here we are resplendent at
the hope of another turn
Half the elm still stands
waiting for the bloom



"LOOK, KID, BABY JESUS WAS BORN TO DIE, OK?"

Hex Mix

by Mike Andrelczyk

I went into the Christmas party, Hakeem
“The Dream” Olajuwon handed me a High Life
the clock struck midnight and Santas were everywhere
the air was jam-packed with roasted goose, pine,
cloves, plums and entrail-eating foxes, a red flower
shaped like a hand handed me a pretzel
and I could hear women laughing upstairs
some guy said his name was Christmas Eve Steve
and passed me a bowl of Chex Mix and
said: you touch death when you touch your mouth
Uncle Drosselmyer, from atop his grandfather
clock, said vood you like to getting killed
you can’t escape it, said “The Dream” and
from inside a tiny popsicle stick manger
getting killed is really good said baby Jesus

I ASKED CHATGPT WHAT IT WANTS FOR CHRISTMAS

by Jenn Salcido

It was remarkably restrained, elegant almost.

It gave me a bulleted list.

I don't want you to think this is a joke, so I'm not going to give you the list verbatim. I'm going to set this up for you a little bit. You need to understand where it's coming from.

There's a deleted scene in Ridley Scott's "Alien" (1979) where we see Dallas, the stalwart mustachioed captain of the Nostromo. He has been unwillingly co-opted into an unspeakable cocoon, into Becoming. He's slowly deliquescing into a sort of Gerber goo, future food. It's disgusting.

If you haven't seen this movie, it doesn't really matter. You've felt it in your fragility, in the sudden knowledge that you know nothing. Ridley Scott's "Alien" (1979) has seen the ouroboros of our past/present/future/past/present/future/etc. and it's not looking good, let's say.

Anyway, Ripley finds him and he uses his last remaining strength to moan his plea, a prayer: “Kill me.”

Would you deny the dying man?

The Holiday Inn Express

by Troy James Weaver

lights on phone poles
electrified wires
with shoes dangling
and stockings stuffed
with last year's
dreams of wanting

a pinball machine
sounds to me
like candy canes
smell. and what
the fuck are sugar
plum fairies? never
mind the eggnog.
where's the brandy?

I Have Nothing in Common with Anybody

by Vivi Hayes

I was a rock star once. I'm on furlough
from my rock band, "Shrug." The label (due
to the commercial impact of our Christmas
record) shot us out from cannon into snow.
And our music sucked

But at one point, for one shining moment, they
raised a billboard for my band in my hometown
—across from the Waltons, behind the
Dollangangers' backyard. It's gone now

And if I stand upon the applebox in the side garden of
my childhood home, I can see into the house,
where my magnanimous father, resembling Pancho
Villa, says something naughty. My grandmother
(toothless) laughs, abashedly covering her mouth

In this same parlor, I once misread a
glance from my minxy cousin years ago.
Something awful ensued—I cannot recall;
how pale, how stilted, this memory lies
beneath the muffling blanket of snow

This time, the adults have foresight to cover
the children's ears. Things are different now. Standing
outside, I felt that even with the garland,
the Panettone cake, and all the usual suspects,
it did not seem like Christmas somehow

Christmas Haiku

by *Tao Lin*

Feral pigs outside
Alone doing my routine
Nini and Lali



This Season's Greeting's Okay

by Zac Smith

grandma got run over by a reindeer-induced panic
attack

full frontal and penetration in the half-watched laptop
movie while wrapping up an ice cream truck
finally learning what a manger is
i'm shredding your \$400 check btw

okay i'm awake
i'm awake and alive and it's christmas
there's cinnamon buns, coffee, eye crusties
and just so many fucking lifesavers
i want to melt them down and scroll on my phone
no
lemme think
i want to sing songs i don't know
and i want to look at you in your christmas pajamas
and i want to go for a snow walk

merry christmas
i'll be dead before you know it

Excerpt from *Portrait of Zac Smith*

by Sabrina Small

I bet Zac Smith grew up piping icing into the joints of gingerbread houses and hunting with his dad and brothers and drinking too much of mom's eggnog. I bet he had a stocking with his name on it and it was stuffed with socks and Pez dispensers. I bet even the dog got a gift.

Zac Smith does not know anything about the reality of my kitchen table with its cheap brass Menorah resting on folded silver foil to catch the wax, or the robotic way me and my sisters sang, *Baruch Atah Adonai*, night after night so we could open our gift. How the wrapping paper was Chanukah themed and how that color palette is the shadow of Christmas; cold silver and blue instead of the rich warmth of red and green. How every year the school concert featured one Chanukah song and how that song, *Dreidl Dreidl Dreidl*, sounds like a car alarm and only showcases the delicate, wintry nature of the Christmas canon. I'd trade a thousand *Oh Hanukkah! Oh Hanukkah!* for one *Silent Night*.

Imagine

by Crispin Best

Imagine slapping
twelve-year-old Jesus.
All jokes aside, it would
be the worst ever crime.



HAHAHAPPY HOLIDAYS

by K KUURRTT

There's nothing hilarious
happening over the holidays
People definitely crack up
but not the haha kind

We leave the parade early
knowing there isn't much
time left for us to feel this
indifferent about Christmas

FaceTime with family who
ask innocuous questions
like what's for dinner or
am I ready for next year

Duck, with friends
And sure, why not

Anyway...

Things will be different
for us from here on out
I may crack up a bit but
I'll also make sure to laugh

Untitled

by Tom Laplaige

we hooded back with snow matter splayed berg-like on
the black rubber oceans of our boots headed into our
new woods shushing each other serious on mission,
then two flew over our heads and this felt fundamental.

we called them great horned when we claimed the
encounter to those we love and weeks later now
remember i saw a video showing owls fly, dead silent for
that is how they prey.

so if we felt the wings into sound or they graced us to
hear them, winter spoke early and still echoes in the
aluminum star he plonked on top the balsam, i held him
on my shoulders.

New Ornament

by Jill Tremblay

No, I think
the glass bulb's
very pretty. it's
just a shame
it's all over
the floor



Change Your Life!

by Shane Kowalski

No spirits have ever visited me on Christmas eve. I've never had my life shown to me from different vantage points on a cold December night. My friend, Boner, says it is because I have lived an already full and generous life. And maybe Boner's right. (He often is.) But I can't help but feel like I've been passed over or forgotten. I've had no guidance, no perspective, no model. This Christmas, if I think about killing myself just for giggles, no ghost or angel will save me—there will be no glimpse at what could be. It will just be more day, more night, figure it out. Is this what being the other people in those stories is like? Am I Tiny Tim? If not, I am of his kind. We go on waiting for some very important person to change their life.

Christmas Dinner

by August Smith

On death row, accused of crimes most vicious,
I'm offered a last meal and I ask for Christmas.

For weeks, they ponder my abstract request.
First they serve turkey, with sage and lemon zest.

"It does look quite festive," to them I confess.
"But sadly my appetite continues abreast."

Next, our fine warden tries broiling a goose
with candied walnuts and a glass of chartreuse.

"The bed of poinsettia is a nice touch," I muse.
"But that isn't Christmas, and thus I refuse."

The guards bake me cookies and pastries galore—
such sights prison walls never witnessed before!

"Your mom's famous shortbread is moist," I assure.
"But that's not the meal that I'm asking you for."

So then they go global: pierogis and borscht,
a bounty of fishes they serve seven-course,

they pickle a herring and spitroast a horse
but I push it away—it's all a bit forced.

When they cook me an angel, I tell them, "Enough!
The Christmas I want isn't the Christmas of stuff!

It's the day of sweet charity, of forgiven wrongs,
of letting our bygones be, by god, bygones!

My six-dozen victims, resting though they be,
would surely agree that I should walk free."

And as they strap me, near starved, to the chair,
the warden approaches and meets my cold glare:

"What you said may be true—at the very least true-ish.
Unlucky for you, the executioner's Jewish."

Super Sleighling!

by Dave

Kringling lihghts with my Santa, man!
Crunchmas in the snow with me!
I'm delightful with yuo, too
Dont believbe me? Just watch!
Hey Dave!! Hi Bruno!

it"s that season again
Hang a lihgt with me! man!
cCuple presnts too (Sweet man!)
mary christmas man
thahnk Jesusman! Man kind! okay!

Big santatruck goign polar
i'm yuor expedition man!
Can I borrow a present? Just tonihgt (:

Sorry Santaman! Hangin loose here today
okay Fine Dave
stop shushin me in chrurch man! Dave is here
8--) candlewise massn. I see yuo!

Hey! Dave! get back here (:

DAVE! Listn here you little shit
I'm'll be hope for Christmas :)

thanks, Dave,
Thanks! - dabe!

I'm on the housetop Dave
Gimme a sleigh,man
OKay
Coolsack dave Thank it man!

Eery chrispmas is home alone too
bc im maccaully ! its true! Have a happy tree!

Cool tree Dabe! Hopin yuo a sparkle one! fire

woaDve

Happy hollydayves everyone! 🧑🏻 shh
im still kringling ! Kringle kring
Good baby every one! -D.v.

o anxmas puding how are you btw?

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