

# 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.

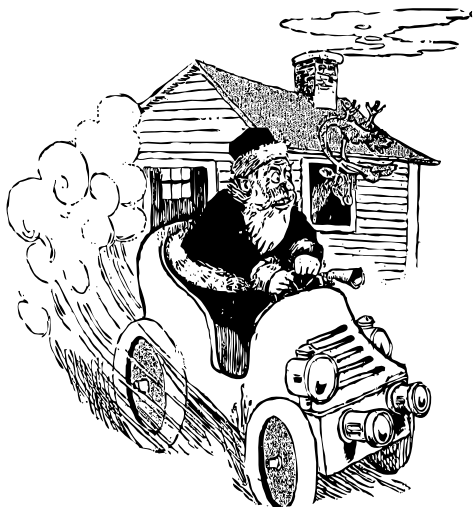
And still another at the home of Jim Harrison,  
taking turns brushing a strumpet's hair,  
laying wreaths of eucalyptus by her feet.



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

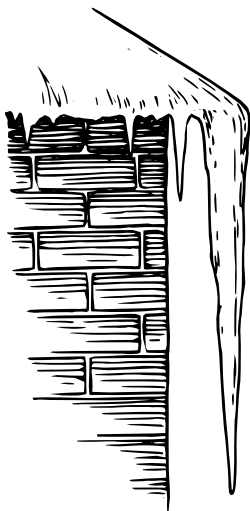
3.  
i can't stop looking at botticini's assumption of the  
virgin  
i pull it up on my phone when i want to rejoice in how  
small i am

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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