

DEG

Literature Club

English and

German

Christmas poems



Joachim Ringelnatz

Schenken

Schenke groß oder klein, aber immer gediegen.
Wenn die Bedachten die Gaben wiegen,
Sei **dein Gewissen rein**.

Schenke herzlich und frei. Schenke dabei,
Was in dir wohnt an Meinung, Geschmack und Humor,
So, dass die eigene Freude zuvor, Dich reichlich belohnt.

Schenke mit Geist ohne List.
Sei eingedenk, dass dein Geschenk
Du selber bist.

Source: <https://weihnachten.tagesspiegel.de/vom-schenken-von-joachim-ringelnatz/>

Joachim Ringelnatz

Weihnachten

Liebeläutend zieht durch Kerzenhelle, mild, wie Wälderduft, die Weihnachtszeit.
Und ein schlichtes Glück streut auf die Schwelle
schöne Blumen der Vergangenheit.

Hand schmiegt sich an Hand im engen Kreise, und das alte Lied von Gott und Christ
bebt durch Seelen und verkündet leise,
dass die kleinste Welt die größte ist.

Source: <https://weihnachten.tagesspiegel.de/weihnachten-von-joachim-ringelnatz/>

T. S. Eliot Journey of the Magi

“A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.”
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.
All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

Source: <https://poetryarchive.org/poem/journey-magi/>

Die Weihnachtsmaus James Krüss

Die Weihnachtsmaus ist sonderbar
(sogar für die Gelehrten),
Denn einmal nur im ganzen Jahr
entdeckt man ihre Fährten.
Mit Fallen und mit Rattengift
kann man die Maus nicht fangen.
Sie ist, was diesen Punkt betrifft,
noch nie ins Garn gegangen.
Das ganze Jahr macht diese Maus
den Menschen keine Plage.
Doch plötzlich aus dem Loch heraus
kriecht sie am Weihnachtstage.
Zum Beispiel war vom Festgebäck,
das Mutter gut verborgen,
mit einem mal das Beste weg
am ersten Weihnachtsmorgen.
Da sagte jeder rundheraus:
Ich hab' es nicht genommen!
Es war bestimmt die Weihnachtsmaus,
die über Nacht gekommen.
Ein andres Mal verschwand sogar
das Marzipan von Peter;
Was seltsam und erstaunlich war.
Denn niemand fand es später.
Der Christian rief rundheraus:
ich hab es nicht genommen!

Es war bestimmt die Weihnachtsmaus,
die über Nacht gekommen!
Ein drittes Mal verschwand vom Baum,

an dem die Kugeln hingen,
ein Weihnachtsmann aus Eierschaum
nebst andren leck'ren Dingen.
Die Nelly sagte rundheraus:
Ich habe nichts genommen!
Es war bestimmt die Weihnachtsmaus,
die über Nacht gekommen!
Und Ernst und Hans und der Papa,
die riefen: welche Plage!
Die böse Maus ist wieder da
und just am Feiertage!
Nur Mutter sprach kein Klagewort.
Sie sagte unumwunden:
Sind erst die Süßigkeiten fort,
ist auch die Maus verschwunden!
Und wirklich wahr: Die Maus blieb weg,
sobald der Baum geleert war,
sobald das letzte Festgebäck
gegessen und verzehrt war.
Sagt jemand nun, bei ihm zu Haus,
-- bei Fränzchen oder Lieschen --
da gäb es keine Weihnachtsmaus,
dann zweifle ich ein bißchen!
Doch sag ich nichts, was jemand kränkt!
Das könnte euch so passen!
Was man von Weihnachtsmäusen denkt,
bleibt jedem überlassen.

Source: <https://weihnachten.tagesspiegel.de/die-weihnachtsmaus/>

III. The Seasons
“When icicles hang by the wall”
William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

From “Love’s Labor ’s Lost,” Act V. [Sc. 2](#).

WHEN icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipped, and ways be foul, 5
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 To-whoo;
To-whit, to-whoo, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow, 10
And coughing drowns the parson’s saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian’s nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl, 15
 To-whoo;
To-whit, to-whoo, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

Source: <https://www.bartleby.com/360/5/118.html>

Help Wanted

Timothy Tocher

Santa needs new reindeer.
The first bunch has grown old.
Dasher has arthritis;
Comet hates the cold.
Prancer's sick of staring
at Dancer's big behind.
Cupid married Blitzen
and Donner lost his mind.
Dancer's mad at Vixen
for stepping on his toes.
Vixen's being thrown out—
she laughed at Rudolph's nose.
If you are a reindeer
we hope you will apply.
There is just one tricky part:
You must know how to fly.

Source: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58519/help-wanted>

Twas the Night before Christmas Poem

By Clement Clarke Moore

Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads.
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below.
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tinny reindeer.

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name!

"Now Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! on, on Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky.
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of Toys, and St Nicholas too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.
A bundle of Toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler, just opening his pack.

His eyes-how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly!

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself!
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk.
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose!

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, 'ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

Advent

Es treibt der Wind im Winterwalde
die Flockenherde wie ein Hirt
und manche Tanne ahnt wie balde
sie fromm und lichterheilig wird.
Und lauscht hinaus: den weißen Wegen
streckt sie die Zweige hin - bereit
und wehrt dem Wind und wächst entgegen
der einen Nacht der Herrlichkeit.

(Rainer Maria Rilke)

Source: <https://weihnachten.tagesspiegel.de/advent-von-rainer-maria-rilke/>

In the Bleak Mid-Winter

Sarah McLachlan

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan

Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone

Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow

In the bleak midwinter, long ago

Angels and archangels may have gathered there

Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air

But His mother only, in her maiden bliss

Worshipped the beloved with a kiss

Oh what can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part

Yet what I can I give Him, give my heart

In the bleak midwinter, frosty winds made moan

Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part

Yet what I can I give Him, give my heart

Source: <https://www.songtexte.com/songtext/sarah-mclachlan/in-the-bleak-midwinter-73d65abd.html>

Advent poems 23: BC – AD, by U A Fanthorpe

BC – AD

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect

Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven.

U A Fanthorpe, from *[Christmas Poems](#)* (Enitharmon, 2002)

Source: <https://anthonywilsonpoetry.com/2019/12/23/advent-poems-23-bc-ad-by-u-a-fanthorpe/>

Weihnachten

Joseph von Eichendorff

Markt und Straßen stehn verlassen,
Still erleuchtet jedes Haus,
Sinnend geh' ich durch die Gassen,
Alles sieht so festlich aus.

An den Fenstern haben Frauen
Buntes Spielzeug fromm geschmückt,
Tausend Kindlein stehn und schauen,
Sind so wunderstill beglückt.

Und ich wandre aus den Mauern
Bis hinaus in's freie Feld,
Hehres Glänzen, heil'ges Schauern!
Wie so weit und still die Welt!

Sterne hoch die Kreise schlingen,
Aus des Schnees Einsamkeit
Steigt's wie wunderbares Singen –
O du gnadenreiche Zeit!

Source: <https://weihnachten.tagesspiegel.de/weihnachten-von-joseph-von-eichendorff/>

Heller Morgen (Börries Freiherr von Münchhausen)

Heller Morgen

Als ich schläfrig heut erwachte,
- und es war die Kirchenzeit –
hörte ich's am Glockenschlage,
dass es über Nacht geschneit.

Als ich froh die Läden aufstieß,
trug die Welt ein weißes Kleid,
meine ganze Seele wurde
glänzend weiß und hell und weit.

Denn in meinem hellen Zimmer
klang so hell der Glockenschlag,
dass ich schon im Traume wusste:
heute wird ein heller Tag.

Börries Freiherr von Münchhausen
(1874-1945)

Source: https://www.medienwerkstatt-online.de/lws_wissen/vorlagen/showcard.php?id=3843&edit=0

A Child's Christmas in Wales

by **Dylan Thomas**

Note from Ruth: Here is a good recording of Dylan Thomas reading aloud his poem

A Child's Christmas in Wales.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HoxycLmMOk&ab_channel=EvanBrandt

You'll need 20 minutes to listen to it all, so make sure you're sitting comfortably!

One Christmas was so much like the other, in those years around the sea-town corner now, out of all sound except the distant speaking of the voices I sometimes hear a moment before sleep, that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve, or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.

All the Christmases roll down towards the two-tongued sea, like a cold and headlong moon bundling down the sky that was our street; and they stop at the rim of the ice-edged, fish-freezing waves, and I plunge my hands in the snow and bring out whatever I can find. In goes my hand into that wool-white bell-tongued ball of holidays resting at the rim of the carol-singing sea, and out come Mrs. Prothero and the firemen.

It was on the afternoon of the day of Christmas Eve, and I was in Mrs. Prothero's garden, waiting for cats, with her son Jim. It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas. December, in my memory, is white as Lapland, although there were no reindeers. But there were cats. Patient, cold and callous, our hands wrapped in socks, we waited to snowball the cats. Sleek and long as jaguars and horrible-whiskered, spitting and snarling, they would slide and sidle over the white back-garden walls, and the lynx-eyed hunters, Jim and I, fur-capped and moccasined trappers from Hudson Bay, off Mumbles Road, would hurl our deadly snowballs at the green of their eyes.

The wise cats never appeared. We were so still, Eskimo-footed arctic marksmen in the muffling silence of the eternal snows—eternal, ever since Wednesday—that we never heard Mrs. Prothero's first cry from her igloo at the bottom of the garden. Or, if we heard it at all, it was, to us, like the far-off challenge of our enemy and prey, the neighbor's polar cat. But soon the voice grew louder. "Fire!" cried Mrs. Prothero, and she beat the dinner-gong.

And we ran down the garden, with the snowballs in our arms, towards the house; and smoke, indeed, was pouring out of the dining-room, and the gong was bombilating, and Mrs. Prothero was announcing ruin like a town crier in Pompeii. This was better than all the cats in Wales standing on the wall in a row. We bounded into the house, laden with snowballs, and stopped at the open door of the smoke-filled room.

Something was burning all right; perhaps it was Mr. Prothero, who always slept there after midday dinner with a newspaper over his face. But he was standing in the middle of the room, saying, "A fine Christmas!" and smacking at the smoke with a slipper.

"Call the fire brigade," cried Mrs. Prothero as she beat the gong. "They won't be here," said Mr. Prothero, "it's Christmas."

There was no fire to be seen, only clouds of smoke and Mr. Prothero standing in the middle of them, waving his slipper as though he were conducting.

"Do something," he said.

And we threw all our snowballs into the smoke—I think we missed Mr. Prothero—and ran out of the house to the telephone box.

"Let's call the police as well," Jim said.

"And the ambulance."

"And Ernie Jenkins, he likes fires."

But we only called the fire brigade, and soon the fire engine came and three tall men in helmets brought a hose into the house and Mr. Prothero got out just in time before they turned it on. Nobody could have had a noisier Christmas Eve. And when the firemen turned off the hose and were standing in the wet, smoky room, Jim's Aunt, Miss Prothero, came downstairs and peered in at them. Jim and I waited, very quietly, to hear what she would say to them. She said the right thing, always. She looked at the three tall firemen in their shining helmets, standing among the smoke and cinders and dissolving snowballs, and she said: "Would you like anything to read?"

Years and years ago, when I was a boy, when there were wolves in Wales, and birds the color of red-flannel petticoats whisked past the harp-shaped hills, when we sang and wallowed all night and day in caves that smelt like Sunday afternoons in damp front farmhouse parlors, and we chased, with the jawbones of deacons, the English and the bears, before the motor car, before the wheel, before the duchess-faced horse, when we rode the daft and happy hills bareback, it snowed and it snowed. But here a small boy says: "It snowed last year, too. I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea."

"But that was not the same snow," I say. "Our snow was not only shaken from whitewash buckets down the sky, it came shawling out of the ground and swam and drifted out of the arms and hands and bodies of the trees; snow grew overnight on the roofs of the houses like a pure and grandfather moss, minutely ivied the walls and settled on the postman, opening the gate, like a dumb, numb thunderstorm of white, torn Christmas cards."

"Were there postmen then, too?"

"With sprinkling eyes and wind-cherried noses, on spread, frozen feet they crunched up to the doors and mittened on them manfully. But all that the children could hear was a ringing of bells."

"You mean that the postman went rat-a-tat-tat and the doors rang?"

"I mean that the bells that the children could hear were inside them."

"I only hear thunder sometimes, never bells."

"There were church bells, too."

"Inside them?"

"No, no, no, in the bat-black, snow-white belfries, tugged by bishops and storks. And they rang their tidings over the bandaged town, over the frozen foam of the powder and ice-cream hills, over

the crackling sea. It seemed that all the churches boomed for joy under my window; and the weathercocks crew for Christmas, on our fence."

"Get back to the postmen."

"They were just ordinary postmen, fond of walking and dogs and Christmas and the snow. They knocked on the doors with blue knuckles...."

"Ours has got a black knocker...."

"And then they stood on the white Welcome mat in the little, drifted porches and huffed and puffed, making ghosts with their breath, and jogged from foot to foot like small boys wanting to go out."

"And then the presents?"

"And then the Presents, after the Christmas box. And the cold postman, with a rose on his button-nose, tingled down the tea-tray-slithered run of the chilly glinting hill. He went in his ice-bound boots like a man on fishmonger's slabs.

"He wagged his bag like a frozen camel's hump, dizzily turned the corner on one foot, and, by God, he was gone."

"Get back to the Presents."

"There were the Useful Presents: engulfing mufflers of the old coach days, and mittens made for giant sloths; zebra scarfs of a substance like silky gum that could be tug-o'-warred down to the galoshes; blinding tam-o'-shanters like patchwork tea cozies and bunny-suited busbies and balaclavas for victims of head-shrinking tribes; from aunts who always wore wool next to the skin there were mustached and rasping vests that made you wonder why the aunts had any skin left at all; and once I had a little crocheted nose bag from an aunt now, alas, no longer whinnying with us. And pictureless books in which small boys, though warned with quotations not to, *would* skate on Farmer Giles's pond and did and drowned; and books that told me everything about the wasp, except why."

"Go on to the Useless Presents."

"Bags of moist and many-colored jelly babies and a folded flag and a false nose and a tram-conductor's cap and a machine that punched tickets and rang a bell; never a catapult; once, by a mistake that no one could explain, a little hatchet; and a celluloid duck that made, when you pressed it, a most unducklike sound, a mewling moo that an ambitious cat might make who wished to be a cow; and a painting book in which I could make the grass, the trees, the sea and the animals any color I please, and still the dazzling sky-blue sheep are grazing in the red field under the rainbow-billed and pea-green birds. Hardboileds, toffee, fudge and allsorts, crunches, cracknel, humbugs, glaciers, marzipan, and butterwelsh for the Welsh. And troops of bright tin soldiers who, if they could not fight, could always run. And Snakes-and-Families and Happy Ladders. And Easy Hobbi-Games for Little Engineers, complete with instructions. Oh, easy for Leonardo! And a whistle to make the dogs bark to wake up the old man next door to make him beat on the wall with his stick to shake our picture off the wall. And a packet of cigarettes: you put one in your mouth and you stood at the corner of the street and you waited for hours, in vain, for an old lady to scold you for smoking a cigarette, and then with a smirk you ate it. And then it was breakfast under the balloons."

"Were there Uncles like in our house?"

"There are always Uncles at Christmas. The same Uncles. And on Christmas mornings, with dog-disturbing whistle and sugar fags, I would scour the swathed town for the news of the little world, and find always a dead bird by the Post Office or the white deserted swings; perhaps a robin, all but one of his fires out. Men and women wading, scooping back from chapel, with taproom noses and wind-bussed cheeks, all albinos, huddled their stiff black jarring feathers against the irreligious snow. Mistletoe hung from the gas brackets in all the front parlors; there was sherry and walnuts and bottled beer and crackers by the dessertspoons; and cats in their fur-about watches the fires; and the high-heaped fire spat, all ready for the chestnuts and the mulling pokers. Some few large men sat in the front parlors, without their collars, Uncles almost certainly, trying their new cigars, holding them out judiciously at arms' length, returning them to their mouths, coughing, then holding them out again as though waiting for the explosion; and some few small aunts, not wanted in the kitchen, nor anywhere else for that matter, sat on the very edges of their chairs, poised and brittle, afraid to break, like faded cups and saucers."

Not many those mornings trod the piling streets: an old man always, fawn-bowled, yellow-gloved and, at this time of year, with spats of snow, would take his constitutional to the white bowling green and back, as he would take it wet or fire on Christmas Day or Doomsday; sometimes two hale young men, with big pipes blazing, no overcoats and wind blown scarfs, would trudge, unspeaking, down to the forlorn sea, to work up an appetite, to blow away the fumes, who knows, to walk into the waves until nothing of them was left but the two curling smoke clouds of their inextinguishable briars. Then I would be slap-dashing home, the gravy smell of the dinners of others, the bird smell, the brandy, the pudding and mince, coiling up to my nostrils, when out of a snow-clogged side lane would come a boy the spit of myself, with a pink-tipped cigarette and the violet past of a black eye, cocky as a bullfinch, leering all to himself.

I hated him on sight and sound, and would be about to put my dog whistle to my lips and blow him off the face of Christmas when suddenly he, with a violet wink, put *his* whistle to *his* lips and blew so stridently, so high, so exquisitely loud, that gobbling faces, their cheek bulged with goose, would press against their tinsled windows, the whole length of the white echoing street. For dinner we had turkey and blazing pudding, and after dinner the Uncles sat in front of the fire, loosened all buttons, put their large moist hands over their watch chains, groaned a little and slept. Mothers, aunts and sisters scuttled to and fro, bearing tureens. Aunt Bessie, who had already been frightened, twice, by a clock-work mouse, whimpered at the sideboard and had some elderberry wine. The dog was sick. Auntie Dosie had to have three aspirins, but Auntie Hannah, who liked port, stood in the middle of the snowbound back yard, singing like a big-bosomed thrush. I would blow up balloons to see how big they would blow up to; and, then when they burst, which they all did, the Uncles jumped and rumbled. In the rich and heavy afternoon, the Uncles breathing like dolphins and the snow descending, I would sit among festoons and Chinese lanterns and nibble dates and try to make a model man-o'-war, following the Instructions for Little Engineers, and produce what might be mistaken for a sea-going tramcar.

Or I would go out, my bright new boots squeaking, into the white world, on to the seaward hill, to call on Jim and Dan and Jack and to pad through the still streets, leaving huge deep footprints on the hidden pavements.

"I bet people will think there've been hippos."

"What would you do if you saw a hippo coming down our street?"

"I'd go like this, bang! I'd throw him over the railings and roll him down the hill and then I'd tickle him under the ear and he'd wag his tail."

"What would you do if you saw *two* hippos?"

Iron-flanked and bellowing he-hippos clanked and battered through the scudding snow towards us as we passed Mr. Daniel's house.

"Let's post Mr. Daniel a snowball through his letter box."

"Let's write things in the snow."

"Let's write, 'Mr. Daniel looks like a spaniel' all over his lawn."

Or we walked on the white shore. "Can the fishes see it's snowing?"

The silent one-clouded heavens drifted on to the sea. Now we were snow-blind travelers lost on the north hills, and vast dewlapped dogs, with flasks round their necks, ambled and shambled up to us, baying "Excelsior." We returned home through the poor streets where only a few children fumbled with bare red fingers in the wheel-rutted snow and cat-called after us, their voices fading away, as we trudged uphill, into the cries of the dock birds and the hooting of ships out in the whirling bay. And then, at tea the recovered Uncles would be jolly; and the ice cake loomed in the center of the table like a marble grave. Auntie Hannah laced her tea with rum, because it was only once a year.

Bring out the tall tales now that we told by the fire as the gaslight bubbled like a diver. Ghosts whooped like owls in the long nights when I dared not look over my shoulder; animals lurked in the cubbyhole under the stairs where the gas meter ticked. And I remember that we went singing carols once, when there wasn't the shaving of a moon to light the flying streets. At the end of a long road was a drive that led to a large house, and we stumbled up the darkness of the drive that night, each one of us afraid, each one holding a stone in his hand in case, and all of us too brave to say a word. The wind through the trees made noises as of old and unpleasant and maybe webfooted men wheezing in caves. We reached the black bulk of the house.

"What shall we give them? Hark the Herald?"

"No," Jack said, "Good King Wencelas. I'll count three."

One, two, three, and we began to sing, our voices high and seemingly distant in the snow-felted darkness round the house that was occupied by nobody we knew. We stood close together, near the dark door.

*Good King Wencelas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen...*

And then a small, dry voice, like the voice of someone who has not spoken for a long time, joined our singing: a small, dry, eggshell voice from the other side of the door: a small, dry voice through the keyhole. And when we stopped running we were outside *our* house; the front room was lovely; balloons floated under the hot-water-bottle-gulping gas; everything was good again and shone over the town.

"Perhaps it was a ghost," Jim said.

"Perhaps it was trolls," Dan said, who was always reading.

"Let's go in and see if there's any jelly left," Jack said. And we did that.

Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang "Cherry Ripe," and another uncle sang "Drake's Drum." It was very warm in the little house. Auntie Hannah, who had got on to the parsnip wine, sang a song about Bleeding Hearts and Death, and then another in which she said her heart was like a Bird's Nest; and then everybody laughed again; and then I went to bed. Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-colored snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the music rising from them up the long, steadily falling night. I turned the gas down, I got into bed. I said some words to the close and holy darkness, and then I slept.

THE END

Source: <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks07/0701261h.html>

The Song Thrush and the Mountain Ash

♪ Through the hospital window
she said to me
she'd forgotten the name
of her special tree,
and forgotten the name
of her favourite bird.
Through the hospital window
I mouthed the words:
the song thrush and the mountain ash.
Through the hospital window
she asked again
why I stood outside
in the wind and rain,
and said she didn't
understand
why I didn't want
to touch her hand.
The song thrush and the mountain ash.
She said she liked
the flowers I sent
but wondered why
they had no scent,
and why the food
had lost its taste,
and why the nurse
had covered her face?
And why the gates of the park were shut?
And why the shops were boarded up?
And why the swings were tied in knots?
And the music...why had the music stopped?

Through the hospital window
I called her name
and waited a while
but she never came,

then I saw reflected
in the glass
the song thrush
and the mountain ash.
The song thrush and the mountain ash. ♪

Simon Armitage

Source: <https://www.simonarmitage.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Song-Thrush-and-the-Mountain-Ash.pdf>