

A winter pome

Of snow and stars and hearts

Snow
Falling slowly.
Smoke
Gently rising.

It's winter.
The air-chill, crisp.
Far off-chiming bells.

Slowly, easily,-warmly-
dusk falls. Snow stops.
Stars shine. Your heart
rises to them—to that tiny
pure light seeking

you out. And there,-
yes, right about there,-
is your own pure light. Yours
to see and feel and know.
You have seen it.

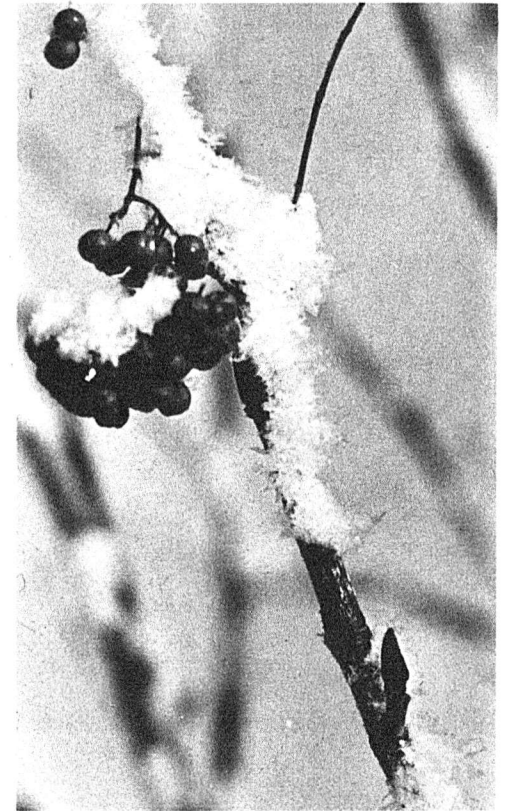
And the bells
Ring.
White, warm snow
Falls.
Hearts of men
Glow. . . .

Hurt
To know they have
Sinned.

Killed, stolen, lied
blasphemed, coveted,
idolized.

Hurt
To see their brothers
Sorrow
For love, for hunger,
for pain, for grief,
for joy.

Hurt
With knowing.
But hurting hearts
can love. Love those
who hurt. Love Him
who died for our hurts.



—Bob Povaschuk photos



Love.
Hallowed, cleansing
Love.
Swaying, sighing trees are
Love.
One star in the sky is
Love.
Being born is
Love.
And with love
Let us Die.

By RON YAKIMCHUK

casserole

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Merry
Christmas

and
a

Happy
New
Year

Rich Vivone

Some not-so-happy Christmas fairy tales

Every place that serves liquor will be filled soon. The people will be on their way home but will stop and have a drink and shake hands and kiss each other because that is the thing people do on the day before Christmas.

They will sit in the booths and the bar maid will come and serve them. They are all laughing as each orders a drink. Then one says to Liz, the bar maid, "It must be tough working on a day like this." He says it because it is the only thing he can think of to say to her.

She slides the money into her tray, counts the change and says, "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year." It sounds like a recording.

The customer blushes and dumps the change in her tray and Liz says 'thanks' and walks away to serve another table.

Everybody is going home to a happy house and kids and gifts and Christmas tress. But to Liz, today and tomorrow and the day after are just tomorrows and tomorrows. Christmas Day will be a holiday and she is thankful for

that. Then she can go up and see her husband who is not in a position to come and see her.

Her husband has been in jail for four years and less than a year after that, her son Shawn, was picked up too.

Sons sometimes get out of hand when the father is put away. Shawn was no different. He came home one night, three days after he turned 18, with his eyes flashing and his hands shaking. He was on the gooballs. She tried to get him off the stuff but he stole a car and ran over a few people and they put him away. Like father, like son. Liz doesn't argue.

"There has always been trouble in my family," Liz said when the customers were fed and contented. "First it was the old man, then my sister, then my husband, then Shawn and now Lila. She's in trouble too."

Lila, 17, had a lot of trouble finding and keeping friends after her brother and father were sent away. She had a few but as soon as they found out, they stopped coming around. Lila had to be ex-

tra nice to people to keep them on good terms. Being extra friendly to boys meant one thing and one night not too long ago, she came home and told her mother she was pregnant and didn't know which one was responsible.

"What could I do," Liz says. "Throw her out in the cold? Even rats don't do that."

So she kept the girl at home with her younger daughter who is six years old and doesn't know what it is all about. She barely knew her father and how he tried to play the game.

He was an accountant for a small company. Loyalty and efficiency were his tradewords but, in time, discovered that words wouldn't feed his family. So he got into the company funds and before they found out, he had heisted a pile big enough to buy a fleet of cabs. He put the money in a dozen different banks.

"I used to wonder where he was getting all the money," Liz said. "He had all these little things for us and I knew we couldn't afford it. But he said he had a few deals cooking and some small invest-

ments. I should have known better."

Then she walked away to fetch some booze for another happy customer. This job plus tips made a reasonable living for the reduced family. They know they aren't going to get a lot for Christmas, Liz says, but they know enough not to expect much.

It was getting late now and the people were leaving in small groups.

"Merry Christmas," they said. "Be seeing you."

Liz nodded and went back to work.

Maybe you think this isn't a nice story. Maybe it isn't. But it's a Christmas story. Somewhere someone is reading the lively tales of Scrooge, Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer and the rest of it. These are nice stories. They are also fairy tales.

The human fairy tales are not so nice. Especially at Christmas. But this is the way Christmas is for many.

It seems there are so few Tiny Tims and so many outside the window with hungry faces.