

# JELLYBEANS

by Tom Murphy

## ON THE ABOLITION OF CHRISTMAS

The bell was given two or three clanging jerks. The quivering, shivering old hand gave two or three twitches. The snow was falling lightly on the glassed-top pot. Quickly, someone hustled a dollar out of their wallet and bustled it in the pot. The pot jerked two or three times. Statically records were playing in the background -- something about some baby who was born under a big star. It seems there were a bunch of angels flapping around too. No time to listen though -- Christmas shopping to do.

Her tongue was all licked out. Stamps, stamps, stamps -- I never want to see one again. I must have licked two hundred anyway. I don't remember getting a card from the Harrisons' last year, or from the Belliveaus' either. Her mother looked at the carefully kept record of cards sent -- cards received. You're quite right, she said, we didn't receive a card from either of them. Oh well, send them one anyway. Perhaps we'll get one back this year.

And what would you like for Christmas? The child looked at the huge white beard adoringly. Santa looked at the little girl -- so many, just another face, all wanting, all trusting, all believing. Ho, Ho, Ho, the elderly appearing man bellowed. He coughed a couple of times. It didn't sound like a real laugh to the little girl. Not like the one in the other store who was much fatter too. She noticed that. But she told him the things she wanted anyway. The same things she told the other guy. She could hope.

The lights blinked off and on. First blue, then red, then blue again. The store manager liked it. That should attract them, he said. We should have another boom year, he said. The sales will be up, up, up, he said. It's good for the economy. He was right. It was good for the economy. Think of all the employment and circulation of money caused by buying a single product. Raw material, processing, moulding, manufacturing, wholesaling, retailing, consuming. Hundreds of people, hundreds of dollar transactions involved in a single product. It is good for the economy. Except sometimes it causes inflation and bad stuff like that. The lights, first blue, then red, back to blue again.

Everyone sang loud and clear. The high school kids did this every year. It seemed like a Christmasy thing to do. And the old folks at the Home really appreciated it. One elderly lady sat back with tears in her eyes, sometimes straining off tune to join with the younger ones. Its just like the old days, she said to the elderly man beside her. All the carols and Christmas songs -- it makes you feel like when you were a kid their age, so young and happy. The elderly man nodded in the affirmative, since he could not speak. But the memories of the past and the olden days brought tears to his eyes too. Hark the Herald Angels Sing croaked the old woman, obviously delighted as a tear streamed down her withered and sagging face. The old man smiled.

The icicles were always the last thing they put on. First the lights, then the ornaments, then the icicles. The tree added atmosphere. What would Christmas be without a tree? And snow? If there is anything that can't be tolerated, it's a Christmas without snow. Anyway, it was snowing now.

Some two thousand years ago, a Jewish kid by the name of Jesus made the scene. Some called him the son of God, so they raised a big fuss over him. Angels, kings, gold, the whole works. Some time or another, it was decided to celebrate this kid's birthday annually. Christmas was invented. Why, in the name of Christ (literally) do we persist with this ritual that is today so filled with the phoniness and the irrelevancies pointed out above? It is so far removed from the original intent. If we want a gift exchanging season, let's have one with all the fun and games attached to it. But don't clothe it in the robes of religion. That's cheating. Merry Christmas!

### STUDENT

I carry my books  
Cradled on one hip  
With a dead weight  
Like a stillborn child.

— Babs Saunders

## IF ONLY YOUR FINGERNAILS

If only your fingernails weren't so dirty  
I shouldn't worry  
When Miss Elderkin comes to tea.

Because the red beard isn't really so awful  
And after all  
She knew we kept a mouse before.

We have removed the red carpet from the ceiling  
And with it our guests  
The flies.

And locked the maid in the closet  
So that her screams  
Would at least be muffled

And all the time wondered  
If it were any use

Although the bull has proven totally uninterested  
And the flowers have drawn back  
Into the blood-soaked earth

And you have tied a ribbon  
In your hair.

by  
Babs Saunders

## SEEN FROM A SIDEWALK

Run squirrel run  
go squirrel go  
beat it  
cat  
assassin

Run squirrel  
past the indifferent matron  
in her bulging lawn chair  
Redbook pushed eyelash high

Lady  
how would you like  
to have a white cat  
snapping  
at  
your grey fluffy tail  
on a wind-hot Wednesday afternoon?

— J. Sherman

## AUTUMN

by Michael Brian Oliver

No sunsurf laugh girl, wet girl  
You would shiver  
Your skin would shiver in this weather  
Your gold hair, straight long gold hair  
Wet yellow hair, your wet white teeth  
Your beaded breasts  
Your harnessed hidden ending breasts  
Your bronze breasts  
Would shiver  
Your belly  
Your dimple buttoned copper belly  
Your funny bottom  
Modest blushing bunny bottom  
Bronze and muscled moving legs  
Your sungold thighs and knees and shins  
Would shiver  
Your legs and suntanned feet  
Tiny toes and feeling feet  
Would shiver  
You sunsoak swing and soak the sky  
You burned and bronzed and wet and motion  
Your skin would shiver in this weather

Cover up, it's cold outside  
It's warmer in the afternoons  
But the burnt out leaves  
The silly make us laughing leaves  
Soon give off their heat  
And lay golden statues on the ground  
Scarlet rotting statues  
Walk in the park  
Walk on the sherbet grass  
The cold lime grass  
And wade through crinkled crunching curled up  
leaves  
It's topcoat huddling weather  
Quiet weather  
Walking weather  
Whisper into the wing wounded sun  
Whisper into the mist  
Laugh and it echoes from the crystallizing sky  
Crashes back from the walls of the tomb  
Whisper in the afternoon  
Indoors sit and listen  
Sit and listen in the afternoons and window look  
Whisper and listen  
This is slow kiss season.

## WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

I thought about you last night  
in the heat of summer sleep,  
and groped in empty places;  
for I cannot forget how once,  
in a hazy morning of comprehension,  
we both reached out,  
probing desperately  
with stuttering fingers.

— J. Sherman

## SHOW AND TELL

I saw many things today;  
I watched the neighbour woman  
give hell to her  
pubescent daughter  
for something or other.  
The red, angry voice  
grated and rose --  
like nail on flesh it tore  
and ripped the epidermal sobbings  
to shreds.  
That's just one of the things I saw today --  
And I watched a cat kill a bird.

— J. Sherman

## Lest We Think

Had an uncle who went to war  
Had a friend who went to Viet Nam  
Bought a poppy yesterday  
From a door to door salesman  
Sayin "Buy a poppy?"  
Said "Sure."  
Stuck it in my lapel  
Felt swell.

— R. Sansom