

# Christmas Eve

On the hillsides foggy weather hangs,  
the clouds move heavily,  
and a humid gentle wind  
breathes through the dimness of the pines.  
Yet fond rejoicing smiles in the dimness,  
like a wedding feast at dead of night,  
for Christmas Eve has come.

From the room a merry whiteness shines towards the passerby,  
and the fruits a busy year has borne,  
are piled up in a tower on the table's white cloth to offer guests,  
and upon the floor the straw reflects the blazing Yule log fire.

At the table, all the household sits within the shining room,  
and before each member, limitless are set the gifts of heaven.  
All have equally earned, all the guests here,  
and as soon as they have had their fill, the Christmas carols ring.

Now a young one sings, an old one sings, a child devoutly hears,  
and the hymn in honor of Zion sounds, the greatest wonder tells,  
the manger-Hero in Bethlehem town,  
and the child who listens has a tear a-shining in its eyes.

When the brightness of the fire grows less, and carols reach a close,  
for a long time, all in silence sit, and solemnly reflect  
where the fireplace glows and red embers dim,  
and to rest they totter off at last, upon a bed of straw.

O Exalted feast, fair Christmas Eve!  
Upon the golden straw, in the firelight,  
in the joyful flame, in the womb of the foggy night –  
Who can forget you? Your carols echo,  
and the baby in His mother's lap, homeless at Bethlehem.

FINNISH POET ALEKSIS KIVI (1834-72)  
(TRANSLATED BY KEITH BOSLEY)