




5-1-2017

## Christmas Eve

Jim Kerbaugh

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### Recommended Citation

Kerbaugh, Jim (2017) "Christmas Eve," *Westview*: Vol. 33: Iss. 1, Article 9.  
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol33/iss1/9>

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# Christmas Eve

by Jim Kerbaugh

Immobile under quilts  
In an unheated bedroom,  
I always waited for the stoves  
To heat three rooms  
Where I'd be trapped all day.  
Grandparents are up at dawn,  
Decades-later Dustbowl-grimness,  
Modified by Christmas visitors.  
Parents, in-laws, aunts came next,  
Ejecting children so the aunts could make the beds.

At breakfast, all was fried,  
Eggs brown-edged, potholder-tough.  
Expected to listen quietly  
To tales of county denizens  
Who committed strange, illegal acts  
And mostly went unpunished,  
I ate, longing for their company.

Surfeited, grandchildren were dismissed  
Into the stupor of the living room,  
Speechless as the Big Ben on the mantel  
Tortured every second of the eon-day,  
The evening's payoff hardly worth the wait.

We sat, hoping for the sun,  
An hour's release into the yard  
When the men were stultified,  
And the women didn't want us underfoot.  
The mixed-breed collie and air  
Not thick with sausage, coffee, cigarettes