

## Winter's Day

Within the den there stirred and twisted  
    In troubled sleep one Bruin Bear.  
His empty belly now insisted  
    That he awake, get up, find fare  
To feed himself; and so he grumbled,  
And grunted, yawned, arose and stumbled  
    Towards the cave mouth; there he stood  
    And blinked and stared. Was that his wood?  
Were those strange shapes so white that glistened  
    The trees he'd known before he slept?  
He heard no sound. Did all except  
For him still sleep? He stood and listened.  
    "Where shall I go for food? Which way?"  
Thought Bear at dawn one winter's day.

A lone bird chirped and startled Bruin.  
    "What ho!" cried Robin. "Bear, what ho!"  
"This whiteness," Bear said, "all this ruin -  
    What means it all?" "'Tis only snow,"  
Young Robin laughed, "'Tis nothing fearful.  
"Come on, Old Bear, come on; be cheerful."  
    "But why the silence? Why no sound?"  
Asked Bear, "Is none but you around?"  
So Robin told our Bear the reason  
    That sounds were dulled, and how beneath  
    The snow lay woodland, brake and heath,  
Protected till the Springtide season.  
    "But oh," said Bruin, "tell me, pray,  
    "Where food is found this winter's day?"

"For sure," said Robin, "in the village."  
    "Come with me. Come on! Make haste!"  
"No, no," cried Bear, "for if I pillage  
    They'll kill me - trust in you's misplaced!"  
"Do you not know," young Robin chuckled,  
"What babe was born, what babe was suckled  
    By Virgin Mother long ago  
    This very day? Do you not know?"

Then Robin told how God Creator  
Of heav'n and earth had not disdained  
To come into a world all stained  
And marred and be its vindicator.  
And Bear in wonder made his way  
As Robin sang that winter's day.

And Bruin heard how angels bringing  
Glad tidings of great joy and peace,  
Once filled the sky with heav'nly singing  
While fear and death that day did cease.  
"So evermore all down the ages  
"On this one day are stilled all rages.  
"On Christmas Day all fears subside  
"And wolf and lamb live side by side,  
"And kid lies down beside the leopard,  
"And calf with lion cub will walk  
"While beasts with men that day can talk;  
"For once again the Babe is shepherd.  
"So, Bruin, put all fears away,"  
Sang Robin on that winter's day.

As bird and bear left woodland clearing  
They caught the strains of joy and mirth  
Of women, men and children cheering  
In song the blessèd Baby's birth.  
The smell of cooking and of baking  
Led Bear towards the merry making.  
And soon they saw the village green  
And marveled at the festive scene.  
"Ho bear!" men cried, "we bid you greeting!  
"We've food enough for man and beast  
"So come and join our Yuletide feast!  
"This is indeed a merry meeting."  
So bear and bird with no delay  
Did join the throng that winter's day.

Thus Bear did feast and join the singing  
Of Christmas songs and Yuletide lays;  
Their music set the valley ringing

On this most joyful day of days.  
And Bear joined in the games and dancing  
And children laughed to see him prancing;  
    For none thought evil, none felt fear  
    And peace filled all with Christmas cheer.  
With pies and puddings Bear was sated -  
    His belly full and heart at peace.  
    He wished such joy would never cease,  
That love continue unabated.  
    But Robin said they must away  
    At eventide that winter's day.

And all were sad as Bear departed;  
    Each hugged and kissed him as they said:  
"God bless you, Bear, so gentle-hearted,  
    "May angels tend you where you tread."  
So Bear and Robin left the village,  
And passed its fields and folds and tillage,  
    All hidden neath the winter snow.  
    With bellies full and hearts aglow,  
The pair in silence slowly wandered  
    Along the path they'd come that morn  
    And thought of joy and peace reborn  
Each year on Christmas day, and pondered:  
    "Why cannot peace and love hold sway  
    "For aye as on that winter's day?"

Then from his rev'rie Bear was shaken  
    When he beheld the tracks they made.  
"To dogs and wolves 'tis unmistakable  
    "The path we've left," he cried, dismayed.  
"Oh Bear," said Robin, "Flakes are falling  
"To cover tracks so naught appalling  
    "Will harm you. Angels tend you where  
    "You tread and keep you in their care."  
Then Bruin gazed in awe, astounded,  
    As flakes fell fast and swirled around  
    In flurries, covering all the ground.  
The tracks were hid, his fears unfounded;  
    For nothing would his steps betray

As Bear returned that winter's day.

The pair, by angel guides protected,  
Returned once more to Bruin's den,  
So Bear might slumber undetected  
Till Spring awoke the woods again.  
"Farewell, dear Robin," Bear said sadly,  
"This day has bless'd us both, and gladly  
"Did I the Yuletide message learn;  
"But to my rest must I return."  
"Sleep now, dear Bear" said Robin, "Cherish  
"The Christmas news of love and joy;  
"And let not evil thoughts destroy  
"Our blessings. May they never perish!"  
Oh would we all such love display  
As Bruin found that winter's day.

*Ray Brown, January 2012*