

Poetry, #22 Silent Night...: From “The (chap) Book of the Dead”

They said I must be out of my mind
wanting to celebrate Christmas this year,
that survival was all we had
to be thankful for; that the stories
were lies, and worse, hope was harm
waiting to happen. I said, “Shut up
both of you and open your presents.”
See, Jenny used to talk all the time
about this unbreakable composite bat
she saw once. And it’s no surprise
that Stevie’s jokes about shoveling
the driveway with a flamethrower
each winter wasn’t a kid’s dream
of the perfect gift under the tree.
Finding these things was hard enough,
hiding them until the 25th? Almost
impossible. But it gave me something
to focus on other than death. My gift
was seeing their faces look a little
like before all this happened: normal.
I won’t tell them how I risked myself
raiding that strip mall out by the town,
just to find canned milk for eggnog.

The stockings are just socks, plain wool,
but the handguns inside are the gifts
that keep on giving. This year we have
a small piece of a holiday we once took
for granted. We enjoy our time together.
...I'll tell them about the bite tomorrow.