

Awen

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Anderson CCCLIX

By SchiZ

I would drink my own blood for you
Though, I belong to another
I cannot stop thinking about you
As the darkened skies close in
And the crack of thunder in the distance
I still hold on to him, as though, he was a crucifix
While he sings, my heart continues to beat faster
But seeing you, I want to be a vampire
And suck out him as the impurity of being
For I cannot resist yr eyes of the purest blue
That drip onto me like a dewfall
Baptizing me with a clear conscience
For yr love that of a forbidden taste
Like an unclean desire of verses
I cannot let go of visions of us making love
As I remain loving him at night

.....

If

By DJ Tyrer

If you can keep your head
When all those about you
Are bleating and braying like fools
Obsessed with pettiness
Uncaring about real horrors and abuse
Then, you're not a University student, my son.

.....

Atlantean Publishing will be closed to
submissions during December and January

Cars Like People *By Alan-Richard McMillen*

by the time they took her
her stuffin'
was coming out.
they hooked her up
to a pickup
and she was nearly
rusted through.
her spark plugs don't spark
and her headlamps don't
head anywhere.
she had her last MOT done
and she's got emissions galore.
her ignition don't ignite
any more.
she complained that
my tyre was bald
and I admit
my leathery seats
have lost their leather
and my gearstick's stuck
in first gear
and I've got rust spots
on rust
and my heater don't heat
but we stayed on the same
road together
bumping along
the same hopeless road
heading for the breaker's yard
where they break us into
our component parts
and we get crushed by the
crusher
and while I finish this poem
and I think about how
it all goes for scrap and recycling
I got one eye
on a new motor.

.....

that a hanged man
might converse
from the unhappy tree

single-eye to read rich runes
and fylfot leg to span
the fates' fine curse
for all that he can see.

By Anne Stephens

Happy New Year

By David M. Smith

*Note: This story follows on from Revolting Christmas published in **Awen 98**.*

Mrs Christmas checked on the toy workshops for the night, waved to Boffin the chief scientist through the laboratory window and said goodnight to Mr Green, the Head Elf. Then she went back to the house and made up a soothing herbal balm in the kitchen. She took this into the sitting room, calling out to her husband: "Come on, its time for your poultice." Claus muttered darkly but submitted to her administrations. Now that the immediate danger had gone she was able to smile at how ridiculous he looked with only half a beard. He looked up enquiringly at her as she entered the room.

"I was just thinking that you certainly can't go out like that," she told him. "You look like someone doing a stunt for charity."

It had been a tense time. He had been deeply upset the Christmas before last by the appalling behaviour of some of the children and their response to the 'ethical' presents he had delivered. He had tried to take Christmas back to its origins but it had simply resulted in the 'Father Christmas' brand becoming deeply unpopular and the shop Father Christmases losing their jobs. So with Boffin and Mr Green he had designed the 'Play Pear' phone and a tablet called the "Conference Pear" in order, he hoped, to defeat the global brands and make Father Christmas popular again so that everyone could get their jobs back. The trouble was they had become too popular and turned into a massive commercial success so that his 'Pear' brand had become a powerful international company.

He had despaired. All he had wanted was to try to make the world a happier and more moral place. So, in his despondency, he had tried to shoot himself. Of course, Claus's usual level of incompetence had set in and he managed to make the shotgun miss. He never could aim. Instead of blissful non-existence he had cut a trench in the side of his face, removed part of his ear and made himself totally deaf on one side. It had been extremely painful for him and he had frightened the lives out of his long suffering wife and his staff. So now he sat by the fire while his wife Audrey looked after him and supervised the business.

He tried to smile back at her but it still hurt too much. His face was going to take a while to heal.

"I'm going to have to do this year's run for you, you know," his wife insisted. "You can't possibly do it looking like that. You aren't well enough, and anyway you will terrify the children. Imagine waking up in the bedroom and seeing that face."

Claus shook his head, carefully. "I always do it," he said, pitifully.

"Well not this year. We'll have to swap roles. I'll do the world wide deliveries and you can make the homecoming biscuits for me and the elves."

"No. This is all my fault," he replied, "I must do it. I've a responsibility to the children."

"Responsibility!" she cried in sudden anger. "Were you going to accept the responsibility of telling the children that Santa was dead, if you'd been successful? No! It would have had to be me. Well, thank goodness you weren't successful but it means that you've got to take a back seat for the time being. This time it's going to be "Mother Christmas" whether you like it or not."

Next coffee morning she asked her close friends to help.

"Of course, Audrey," said the Tooth Fairy. "I'm used to sneaking into children's bedrooms in the middle of the night. It'll be easy for me. Mind you, I'm not used to doing the volumes of work that Claus manages in a single night. Even the best efforts of the confectionery industry haven't managed that level of tooth decay just yet."

Mrs Christmas then turned to her other guest.

"What about you Mrs Frost?" she asked.

"Well, even Jack doesn't go into the rooms, except for the very poorest families when it is really cold, but I will certainly help with the organisation and the packing. Would that be useful?"

"That would be great," her friend replied.

"I know," said the Tooth Fairy. "Why don't we make it an all woman expedition? Mother Christmas and her women pals? What do you think?"

"Yes. A good marketing gimmick. And Floss the Elf has helped Claus before so I'm sure she would come along. Let's do it!"

They began to plan their agenda. Audrey was particularly keen on the idea of an all women team - feminism writ large - but it did present some difficulties. For a start most of the reindeer were male and there wasn't much they could do about that.

"They're simply transport," the Tooth Fairy insisted. Audrey nodded.

Floss was keen to come with them but also had some doubts. "What will happen if the children wake up?"

"They do occasionally when Claus does it. It shouldn't be a problem. Mostly, he says, they pretend to be still asleep in case they don't get the presents."

"I was just wondering how they might react to finding three strange females in their bedroom, one dressed as a fairy and another a green elf? Might that not be a bit scary?"

"Hmm! Yes! We'd better work on what we are going to say in that case."

"What you are going to say, you mean," Floss replied. "I doubt they'll take it from an elf or a fairy."

So Mrs Christmas worked on her script, while the workshops geared up to full production and Mrs Frost organised the distribution.

"It's all going fine," his wife told him when Claus inquired. He still wasn't too happy about it, but could see the logic of his not appearing in the children's bedroom in his present state.

"As for worrying about the money the Pear brand is earning for you," Audrey told him, "you can always donate to charity. How about setting up a trust?"

"But which charity?" he asked.

"Well, one against global warming wouldn't be a bad idea," she continued. "Have you seen the state of the bottom of our garden? Those ice flows are definitely melting again."

Boffin had produced some refinements to the 'PlayPear' which made it even more desirable, so he expected children to really want them. Mrs Frost had designed some really attractive cases for them in exciting colours and Mr Green had ensured that the workshops were producing plenty of the phones and the cases for them. It was all going very well.

On Christmas Eve Mrs Frost arranged the moving of the presents from the workshop and the packing of the boxes onto the sleigh. Audrey made sure that everything was clearly labelled so that there were no mistakes and Floss calmed the reindeer and adjusted their straps. The Tooth Fairy waved her wand for luck. Then they climbed on board and took off, waving to Claus, Boffin, Mr Green and Mrs Frost as they passed over their heads.

As usual a few of the children woke as the presents were being delivered. After all it was an exciting time. All of the boys pretended to be asleep in case their presents weren't delivered. Some girls, however, being more curious, did admit to being awake. The first little girl to wake asked accusingly: "Who are you? You're not Father Christmas."

"Indeed I am not," Audrey told her, remembering her script. "I am Mrs Christmas and I am doing the job this year. Got a problem with that?"

"No. Very liberating," said the girl. "But what about the others? They look weird."

"This is the Tooth Fairy and this is Floss, the Elf. They are helping me."

"Are you really the Tooth Fairy?" the girl asked, accepting the explanation without further thought. "I've got a loose tooth. Look! It wiggles. If I pull it out now will you give me the money?"

"Certainly not," the Tooth Fairy replied. "I'm on Christmas business tonight. Anyway, you're bound to

have too many sweets to eat at Christmas so I should wait till next week. Don't worry. I'll pop round and collect."

Another older girl was astonished at Floss.

"What's it like being green?" she asked.

"Very ecological," Floss replied sarcastically.

The girl laughed. "Why are you doing this?"

"Are you suggesting that women shouldn't be doing it?" Mrs Christmas asked.

"No. I think it's great. I just wondered."

"Father Christmas is unwell. And we women are just as capable of doing this as men so we took over. Any complaints?"

The girl shook her head.

And so it went on. They delivered all the parcels on time, leaving very little trouble in their wake. One teenage boy did get into difficulties with his mother when she discovered one of the Tooth Fairy's garters in his room. She found unconvincing his explanation that three women had appeared uninvited in the middle of the night; one older, one green and one dressed as a fairy.

When they got home they were laughing and brimming with excitement. Audrey was flushed with success, the Tooth Fairy had gone bright pink and Floss had turned chartreuse with the joy of it all. The men and Mrs Frost welcomed them back and Claus brought out his Christmas biscuits.

"I'm afraid they are a bit crisp," he said. "I overcooked them."

"Never mind," his wife told him, patting him gently on the shoulder. "You tried your best. We will have to dunk them in our cocoa. That will soften them."

"Well," said Claus, "I didn't think that I would ever say this again but..."

"A Happy New Year to Everyone!"

.....

beau constrictor
stranger in a strangled land,
stoops to draw
an arcane symbol
in the sand.

o zany-zone,
this sing-song sector,
the blade that cuts the purse
shall trace no valid vector.

By Anne Stephens

.....

Send us your letters of comment!

Lorry Chasers

By Geoffrey Taylor

Perhaps diners do as well
To go about their St. Jaques,
From the arrangement of tables
Which look out onto la place.
 What could be more disarming
 Than a people who are tranquil,
 And intelligently in love with life,
 Who are gazing all their fill?
Did he catch his pursuers
When glancing at the wing mirror,
With their arms flailing?
He must've seen with horror
 When he perceived a rear door
 Flapping when rounding the bend;
 Or heard the clash on a post
 And the shudder along the length.
Those who run as sprinters
Are the subject of some envy,
Their belief that the promised land
Lies just across the sea.

Then their camaraderie,
(Who never used a razor),
And the thrill of the chase,
– other times to laze there.
 Like bull-running thro' streets,
 In ones, twos, up to a dozen;
 The prey, the idée fixe,
 Is a firm latch to tug on.
With the whole thing moving.
Or should a driver be new
And a little hesitant at
The signage that comes into view.
 He presents a joy
 Of capture like a gazelle
 That's stray, and with gendarme
 Who are waiting as well.
Though in a blinding fever
Where is the man to restrain?
Or the siren's prolonged note
On lower octave of twain.

=>

Still they run and reach,
And tear at the cordage,
Perhaps with thirty or forty
Kilomètres on the gauge.
 They might leap onto the bar,
 The bar that restricts a spray,
 Where a phosphorescent spin
 From a police car plays
So close that one slip,
One fall could be fatal.
Then a riot would ensue
Where one would meet with all.
 Things got out of hand that
 Evening over our vingt-cinq.
 I saw one door swing after
 Another in that short span.
One gang run from the rue;
Another at the oval see the cause,
Whilst a third await the out-
Come from among fish stall.

Should any of them get inside,
They're ejected ere the arm.
Futile? I should say. Woe
If any should come to harm.
 The next day, the gendarme
 Try to keep them moving on,
 The fugitives meekly disperse
 At first in differing direction.
They know by now the quiet
Ways; the timings and shifts,
So as within a quarter hour
Unto public seats they drift.
 Like tadpoles when their tails
 Don't move in waters clear,
 And list for the lumbering,
 then watch what secureness appears.
Local girls might distract
Them from chasing one day.
In a fons et origo,
With songs of new Marseille.

Meanness Blooms

By Christopher Barnes

A put-on eyelash wizens
At that dining chair's button.
Sourpussing and inanity
Rough-up the soul.
Our guru amens phlegmatic devotions.
Nicotine stigmatas his fingernails,
It's been an evensong of hellions.

Dazzling Magnificence

By Christopher Barnes

We encompass our guru,
Brooding in the inflatable dinghy,
Luring concentration into the sanctum,
A harmony jammed with rapture,
Irreproachability, affection.
Matter-of-fact ragrug-swamp, condoms
Are overlooked for exalted detritus.

Fumes

By Frank Symons

Death. Disgraced. Denied. Died. Done. Demon “D” words dance in my head. I’m a grease monkey. I clamber around cars in the old lube pit at Donaldson’s Garage, and agonize over Stone and Kyle who committed suicide. We were in the same school, in the same classes. They were my closest friends.

I’m tired and hungry and cold and my throat hurts. I bang my head against the underbelly of an old car, just arrived. Through the cracks in the rusty floorboards I see parts of the beautiful legs of the woman driver, inches above me. Her exhaust system leaks. She doesn’t shut off her motor to spare me from carbon monoxide. I cough my guts out, shoot up the ladder and shout, “Turn off your engine!!” My cough shakes me, and I choke, slithering back down the ladder. I bend to my task, my face and fingers close to the woman’s legs. I’m a hunchback in thrall.

But I must concentrate on her car. In this pit, curiously designed in the shape of a coffin.

You disgorge all your differential fluid, so your car is dead, I mutter to her under my breath like an old fart out of his mind. I pour in a nutrient serum, molasses brown, to bring your car back to life. Your engine oil stinks of burnt carbon, unlike the new gold blood I inject. Your coolant oozes out pinkish blood-like. I replace it with orange fluid but first I lick a drop. It tastes sweet, like Kellogg’s Froot Loops.

I cough again and wipe my snotty nose with a paper towel, and bend to squeeze your car’s hoses, like I’d check your arteries for weak walls, your cables and clamps for corrosion, and your tendons for arthritis – a vicarious intimacy.

Stone died in his Dad’s car, in the garage, where his parents found him, with a guy I didn’t know. Engine warmed up, bodies cooled down, carbon in the blood 79%. The mystery for me is why? Drugs? He was stoned most of the time, whence his nickname. But it’s not like he was an overdosing aboriginal in Northern Canada, his future so bleak that he wanted to die as soon as possible.

Kyle habitually wore a sarcastic smile, as if laughing at a private joke. Like me he read books by the boxful, and we talked about them. He spoke Arabic like his father, a patriotic American who had fought in Afghanistan – and was later assassinated here at home. They never found the killer. I spent a lot of my time at his place. I knew his folks — or so I thought.

His mother found him on the sidewalk beside a sawed-off .410 shotgun. Did he want to create a final message, a volcano blast of frustration? Or perhaps an

inner tension burned an aching trail through his brain. Was death a clear option for months, maybe years, until the death wish won?

Turning the car key seemed to me a mere mechanical problem. Kyle’s death took more courage. Pulling the trigger versus turning a key. That key was so familiar, so easy, and so gradual versus the trigger’s absoluteness, its split-second finality. I’d seen no ‘signs’ they were going to do it, no mood changes, no lack of interest, no brooding, no shunning. Virginia Woolf said each character in a story is like a deep cave, and the caves are connected. Stone and Kyle were deep caves. Now I realize I never did understand them.

I look down at the crosshatched mess of black cuts on my hands, a mirror of my emotional state. Then up, straight up through the floorboards at the woman nestled up there. Maybe she thinks of her car as a nest. What strikes me is how clean her white blouse is. How she pays and pays all over town, a woman who turns into a customer, turns into pieces of paper and then gone, blown away like a voice in the wind. Like Stone and Kyle.

Ends

Read the Stars

By Bruce Grove

We gaze,
turn our faces to the heavens,
in order to perceive-
worlds beyond our own.

The, cosmic, night-
envelopes,
The mystery-
intensifies,
as our souls reach heaven
(just for a moment).

Never There

By Marc Carver

The young woman walks along the beach
as soon as she walks 5 steps
the sea washes them away
almost as if
she had never been there

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<https://viewfromatlantis.wordpress.com/>

Poison Pen Friends

By Matthew Wilson

I didn't mean to start the war, but in my defence I was young and stupid.

Naturally Ms. Davies had it in for me ever since I made fun of her wooden leg so she purposely tried to bore me to death by handing out the homework assignment.

Make a Martian penfriend.

But I was petty and so very angry at wasting my time with homework when other kids were killing zombies on their new gaming systems. I wrote horrible things in that letter. Things I would not wish on my worst enemy and yet putting such poison on that page released a lot of stress in me.

Looking back it was a mistake to send my letter to the Martian prime minister's son, but I was filled with self importance. So sure that my rage should be heard at the very top of their Empire.

The missiles started falling shortly after I returned to school. At first I was pleased when Ms. Davies said school was cancelled, but I lost my happy mood when the Martian soldiers loaded my classmates into their cage.

Our human prison isn't so bad, the bug eyed creatures even let us have paper to write letters.

Being much nicer this time I managed to sneak some notes through the bars and made a new pen friend.

The lonely Martian guard's son likes to write back stories of how he passed the day.

I'm sure if I asked tomorrow he would leave me the key in our meeting place.

Hopefully I will escape this miserable pit but will pick up a gun like other people seeking redemption if I do. I will never touch a pen again. Now I know that words have power too.

Not after they stuck Ms. Davis's head on the Pike.

Ends

Jealousy

By Marc Carver

As a young man
I was always jealous
as an old man I have no jealousy at all
every chance a man gets he should take it
and forget about the consequences
the trouble is
the older you get
the less chances you get.

Mr. Nemo in Kernow

By Neal Wilgus

Camilla calls me Jack Lizard
because I'm staying at the Lizard Hotel,
but she doesn't know the real me. Yet.
She's a freeborn girl and a hinderment.

Lizard Jack she says, the furriner,
she running her hands on my prinked up body.
Jacky the Unkid, she says, knowing I hate the vang,
but she's so cyable, listing to my stramming.

We met mumchance on the cliffs at Land's End,
I looking to paint Lyonesse of lost legend,
she following widdles, wow-wow, whimsly-wambly.
She wang, asking hard fer 'ee Lizard?

I could see she was bedwaddled, moving back-long,
like Merlin all withershins – I know the look
and put it on canvas or to sleep in shadows.
She was whip and go, attending at the sacrifice.

Jack-be-lizard, she says, all you want
is to draw my picture as I lay abed –
a cold-blooded lizard, she says, or an emmet,
strayed from your Whitechapel nest. Boah, I say.

Are you looking for Jack Harry's lights, she taunts.
Looking for Jack Ashore, I say, feeling jowlin.
Johnny-come-fortnight, says she, jiggery-pokery,
Ish and ish, I say, know now do ee?

Back at the hotel, bored with each other, preoccupied,
I deep as Dolcoath, she zam-zoodled, besting.
I thought of using my dark persuasion, hyding behind,
nuzzling her nuddick, around the uzzle, stop the clacker.

I lay scrinking, hoping to catch her scrumpun,
but fell hilla, mag ridden in guise pinas a casa.
Was I hand-raised cask-cade rebel pirate
or only dauntless Dick the Butcher's dog? Same o'?

She rips my ream, suggesting Mr. Johnson, not Padgy Paw
then asks if the Johnson rod was still kelter.
O Japheth, she says, and me with Hans in kelder.
Are you then the witheosis road of Count Jackula?

I watch her in long silence before I say
you know full well more fitty is Count Fistula.
We may not read from the same vile text
but this I know – she'll be necked.

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with poetry from Cardinal Cox, Aeronwy Dafies, DS Davidson, Gary W. Davis, Clive Donovan, Denny E. Marshall, DJ Tyrer, and Matthew Wilson;
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Remembrance

By Donna McCabe

To the soldiers who died where they fell
Who fought against oppression
Torture and hell.
Your bravery was astounding
And your valour true
You fought for Queen and Country
Your red, white and blue.
The front line must have been a harrowing sight
Whatever the country
Whatever the war
All the terror, all the pain
We can only imagine what you saw.
Your blood spill was the nations' pain
Your heroic acts are remembered every year
In the poppy wreaths on cenotaphs
And in our hearts and tears.

.....

Grey Day

By Bruce Grove

The tunnel stretches as far as the eye can,
Beyond this point lies tomorrow. Blue neon halos
Rest easy on angel hair, cold air touches dilated pores,
Tingles dance beneath the surface. Above us sleeps the Thames,
Caressing the shingle with liquid lips.

The angels descend as particles of god,
With closed eyes and open hearts we reach the final climax.
Set here for a purpose unknown, and yet we knew.
We knew our destiny and that we must complete it
Without knowledge. The hand sees not that which it touches
And so we touched it blind, reaching inward,
Beyond our lives.

.....

Predatory Priest

By Arthur C. Ford, Sr

You keep your faith
And I'll keep watch
For the next time
That you do it!

You bought your cloaks
From Dracula's store
With guarantee
Of, no disclosure!

Your sins are cooked
In minds entwist
As you offer
The Eucharist!!

Your leaders and their backers,
Turn their backs
On your falters
As you walk and
Plot on sacred altars-
Of The Lord!!

Alphabet Army

By Donna McCabe

A is for army, prisoners of war
B is for bomb site, a total eyesore
C is for carnage, a loss to both sides
D is for death, seen in a soldier's eyes
E is for enemy, be on your guard
F is for firearm, bang and your scarred
G is for governments, who can't seem to talk
H is for hijackers, that constantly stalk
I is for intelligence, spies laying low
J is for journey, mind where you go
K is for kidnap, prisoners carried away
L is for liberate, they'll be free some day
M is for military, precision's a must
N is for nations, caught on the cusp
O is for obey, an officer's command
P is for poppies, that lay on the sand
Q is for quiet, moving on silent feet
R is for remembrance, where we all seem to meet
S is for salute, remembering the dead
T is for thoughts, that remain unsaid
U is for unbearable, living with the pain
V is for veteran, a battle-scarred name
W is for war, the thought is insane
X is for xenophobic, inhospitable terrain
Y is for yell, screams of death fill the skies
Z is for zone, in which so many died.

.....

Silent Sentinels

By Phil Knight

These silent soldiers stand sentinel
And slowly oxidize in the damp air.
This greening of the grey is chemical,
We won't see it however long we stare.
They stand above names of those who were lost.
Their downcast dead eyes seem to be closed
Counting forever the terrible cost
And last there's a tribute finely composed.

There will be no marble men, no soldiers of bronze
Raised by survivors of nuclear war.
If the sky burns like a thousand dawns
The songs of our Earth shall be sung no more.
We honour the past not with flowers of paper
We stop the world being an atomic taper.

.....

Troubled

By DJ Tyrer

Narcotic dreams
Troubled by trembling reflections
Of a reality preferred forgotten
A misbegotten horror
Birthed by the light of day
As a cruel joke
Upon the weary soul
Of a broken body
Retreating deeper and deeper
Shunning the light

Xerxes

By Paul Murphy

You're a head in a suitcase
You're the middle of a room
You're a whirlygig that blew
You're new only for one day.

I can fix it for you
To be whole again, to be one.
Cancel the elixir, buy the cancer
The poison will creep in, allow it.

Don't listen to me I'm a mere
Fragmentary voice that saw the blue
Of a sea facing, that stood
Where you stood. In moments

The leopard changes its spots
There's meaning in adverts.

Comeback

By Donna McCabe

Back with a boom
A new page, a new start
The rusty gears now turn once more
Reliving the fear in one's heart
I was dried up and static
No inspiration did flow
A blocked up barren damn
With nothing to show
But the rains have now fallen
Replenishing and full
My ideas are pumping
My pen in full flow
A myriad of ideas pound in my head
To be written in ink
All freshly bled
So thankful for the unblockage
It was a tough ride
Now on the waves of penned freedom
I can finally ride.

Resignation

By DS Davidson

Another minister
Who hasn't a clue
Resigns, leaving us asking
Who the hell voted for you?
They offer a choice
Only to break their pledge
Leave the country a mess
Teetering on the edge.

The Last Train

By Phil Knight

I ride the last train
it rolls on the line,
its click and clack
is music sublime.
The engine roars
as it gets up to speed
and then it purrs like
a beast that's been freed.
The passengers talk,
they pull out their phones,
a drunken man shouts
and an old lady moans.
Some stare at windows
into the dark of the night
and others read books
in the flickering light.
There's laughter and songs
and periods of silence.
For some there's an air
of menace or violence.
But it's just talk,
the people come and go
with each stop there's
always ebb and flow.
Swansea, Llansamlet, Skewen
and finally Neath.
I leave the last train
without joy or grief.

Christmas Is Coming

By DS Davidson

Christmas is coming
Promising bright-light pleasures
Fairy-dust futures

Decorations hung early
Unnoticed by Christmas Day

Presents under the tree
Assembled moments of joy
Over in seconds

By DJ Tyrer

*Look out for **Xmas Bards** and **Christmas Chillers**
– coming soon!*

Awen will return in February 2019