

Bitter Christmas

No one felt happy that Christmas, nor cheery
The stable was chill and barren and stinking
No angel sang save in the head of Mary
Till the pains thrust hard and Joseph stood thinking
Why good women suffer if told by an angel
That her son would be God's and would have cursed, angered,
Knowing the tale would be told evangel
To convert the stupid whose minds had hungered
For magic or else to convert those careless
Of justice and mercy, wanting it easy
To saunter into the kingdom of heaven.
He promised himself, "Their pals will be greasy
With longing for fortune, but God gets even"
Alas, poor Joseph! Agony-tossed,
The decent share good company, for Jesus lost.

Vassar Miller
Christmas 1991