

Abi Williams

Drink and be merry

Fur fire and we are safe against the cold, cold night
drink! and be merry!

Warm, mellow bread breath chanting and a song
drink to winter! and be merry!

Fat boar bubbling in oil spit, and the lamb is bled
drink! to winter! and be merry.

*joy, pride swelling in the belly fear
the forbidden room
groans and secrets
blood! wriggling life! a name! love!*

Candles, hats—shake the snow from your coat, uncle—
drink! and be merry!

Hymns rattle around the silverware cadences vibrate the port
drink to Christ! and be merry!

Sanitized warm parsnip smells tender goose and the great pudding
drink! to Christ! and be merry.

*silence unspoken fear gritting the teeth and fingers
the forbidden room
groans and secrets
and when the time comes we will pray for you, and try not to forget*

Stockings spongy carpets the window clad in lights, closed against the great grey sky
drink! and be merry!

Green spindles stick to socks a silent great-aunt and the queen's speech, naturally
drink to Christmas! and be merry!

Turkey on a platter from John Lewis, cinnamon infused bread sauce and incongruous prosecco
drink!

to Christmas!

and, please, be merry.