

The Bivalves' Christmas

A tale told by my crass Uncle Ostrea

'Twas the night before Christmas,
And on the mud flat,
Not a creature was stirring,
Not even a spat.

The clams were nestled
All snug in their beds
While visions of plankton
Danced in their heads.

And I in my mantle
And *Virginica* in her shell
Had just settled down
From a long filtering spell
When out in the marsh
There arose such a clatter
I opened my valves
To see what was the matter.

Worms rose from their tubes,
Scallops blinked their blue eyes;
Clams stuck up their siphons,
Mussels gaped in surprise.

For there, on the crest of the incoming tide,
Festooned in seaweed,
On a dolphin did ride,
None other than Neptune,
Saint Nick of the deep,
Accompanied by mermaids
Just risen from sleep.

And in his wake,
By the light of old Luna,
I thought I espied
An entire school of tuna;
Not the chunk light variety,
But real *albacore*(!)
And with them were sturgeons,
Sea bass and more.

Crustaceans too:
Portunus, *Penaeus*,
Most every variety
Named by *Linnaeus*.
They all followed Neptune,
Who rode to the beach,
And as he dismounted
They stayed within reach.

With theatrical fanfare
He opened his pack
And poured out his gifts
On the *Spartina* rack.
He passed out *Artemia*

(*Brine shrimp* to you),
Purina fish chow,
And shrimp pellets too.
He had freeze dried krill
And bloodworms galore.
He passed out the goodies
Till there weren't any more.

Not a one was forgotten
Who swims in the sea.
But think on it now,
Does that include me?
That's right he'd omitted
The bivalves completely:
No algae to filter,
No diatoms to treat me!

There ensued a great silence
As the truth slowly dawned:
They'd gotten nothing
And the gifts were all gone!

Then there came a great cry
Of dismay from the muck,
And the bivalves rose up
To the last geoduck,
Demanding to know
(Could there be a good reason?)
Why Saint Nick had forgotten them
This Christmas season.

Not all clams were bad!
The scallops were ignorant.
The mussels may have conspired,
But the oysters were innocent.
And what of the cockles?
They'd done no one a wrong.
And thus in this vein
The clamoring went on.

Neptune climbed a high rock,
For protection may be,
But it had this advantage-
From the mud we could see
As he flourished his trident,
Silencing the crowd,
Then pronounced in a voice
That was righteously loud:

Frankly, Scallop, I don't give a clam!

Merry Christmas Shellfish Dudes
Nancy Hadley