

On the Cellar Door – 2005

Dear Santa,

I want – I want – I want – I want –
Toys – Toys – Toys – Toys –
Well clothes too, all sorts of things.
The same stuff my friends have,
but better, bigger, brighter. For me!
I want the prettiest tree.

I want snow on Christmas Eve.

I want decorations, better than next door.

I want everything. I deserve it.

I want – I want – I want – I want –
You to be happy too.

I guess I'll share some of what I get.

I mean you can have some stuff too.

It's okay. Want some of my presents?

I mean, I'll loan you some.

Oh! I made this for you. Take it.

Here Mom, Dad – I saved.

Hope you like it.

What? Oh, that's okay. I love it.

Listen. Listen!

Do you hear the carolers?

Bethlehem, kings, shepherds,
angels, stars, wonder, a baby,
a new King, gifts, love.

I want – I want – I want – I want –
All sorts of peace and happiness
for my family and friends.

I want – I want – I want – I want –
An evening sky, bright enough
to guide us.

I want a fire to warm us.

I want smiles from the heart.

I want everyone to be selfish.

I want them to steal thoughts.

I want them to go back.

I want them to go forward.

I want them to remember their
happiest holiday memory.

I want them to use that
as a foundation.

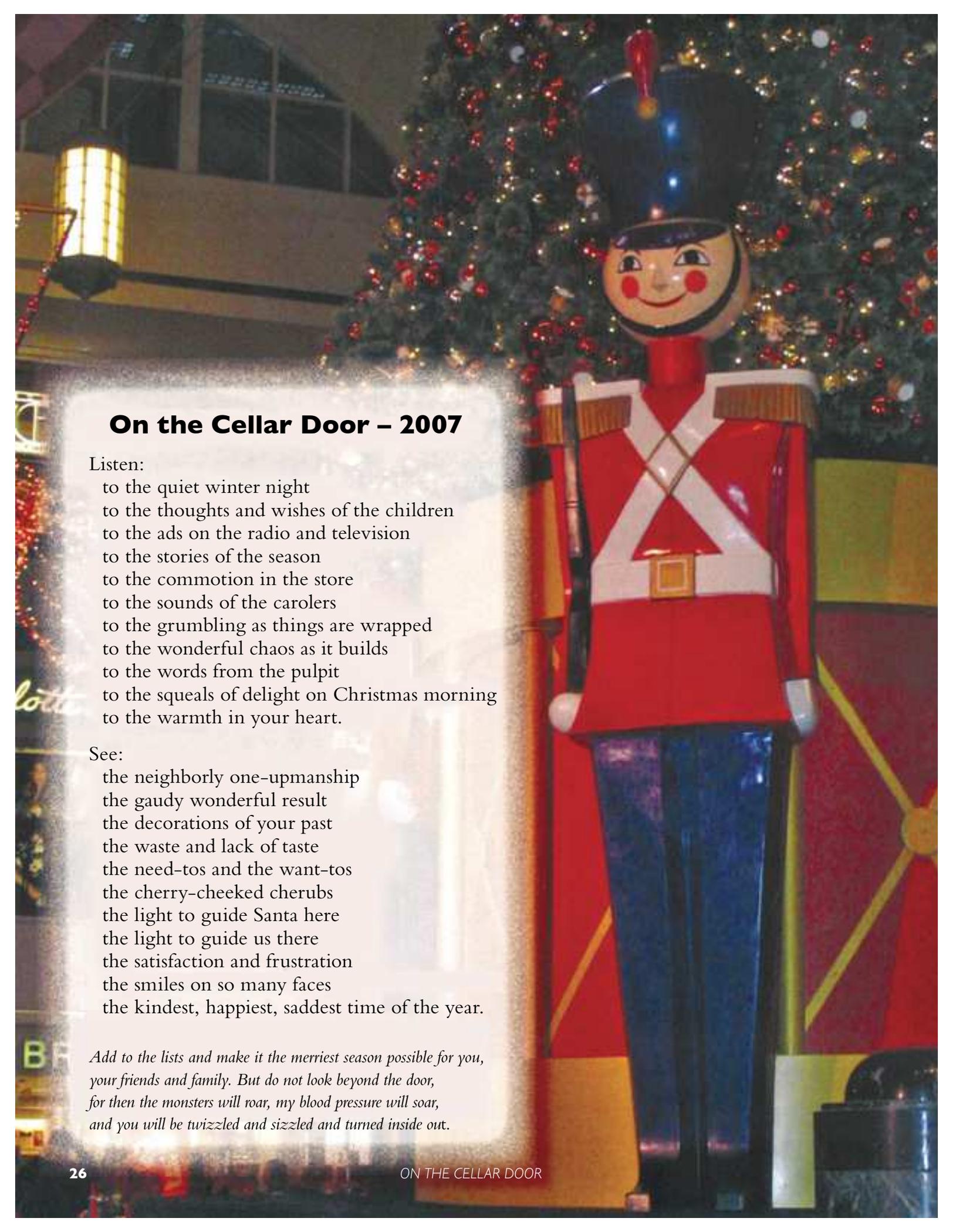
I want them to build
on that foundation
to bring a happy future
without darkening the past.

I want them to continue to grow.

I want them to love
the simplest thing: each other.

I want – I want – I want – I want –
You to stay out of the cellar
'cause if I see footprints in the dust
or hear creaking louder than my knees –
Well, I bet you a bowl of fruit
And a big "patuee"* there will
be something less for you and your
Brother Louie.

*Alternate spelling: P-toohey, Ptooey,
Phattooie, Pitoohy, Pahtuy, Patouwi,
Patooie, Puttie, Patuie, Patowe, Petui,
Patwoe, Patooy, Patuey, Petuey or Petuie.



On the Cellar Door – 2007

Listen:

to the quiet winter night
to the thoughts and wishes of the children
to the ads on the radio and television
to the stories of the season
to the commotion in the store
to the sounds of the carolers
to the grumbling as things are wrapped
to the wonderful chaos as it builds
to the words from the pulpit
to the squeals of delight on Christmas morning
to the warmth in your heart.

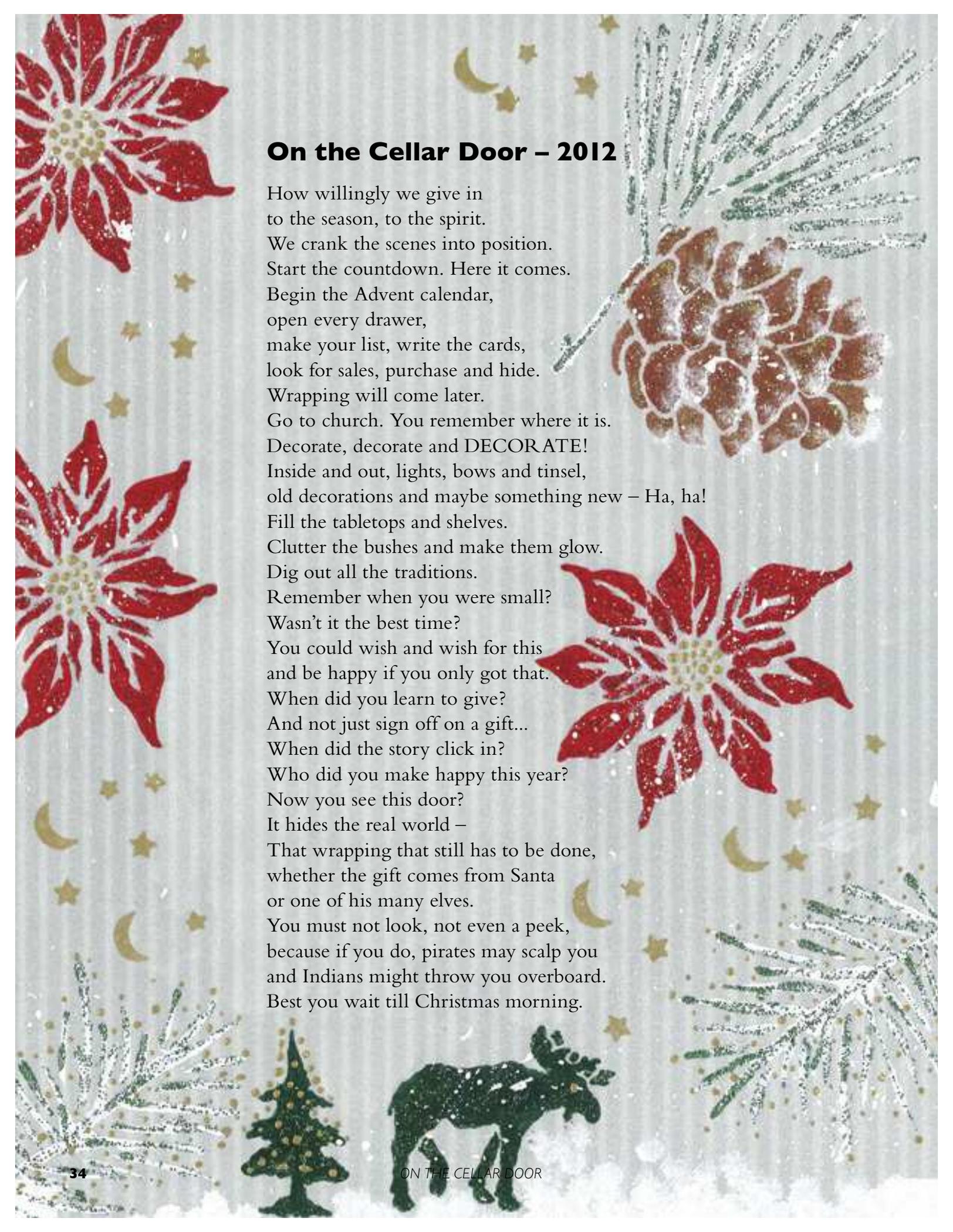
See:

the neighborly one-upmanship
the gaudy wonderful result
the decorations of your past
the waste and lack of taste
the need-tos and the want-tos
the cherry-cheeked cherubs
the light to guide Santa here
the light to guide us there
the satisfaction and frustration
the smiles on so many faces
the kindest, happiest, saddest time of the year.

*Add to the lists and make it the merriest season possible for you,
your friends and family. But do not look beyond the door,
for then the monsters will roar, my blood pressure will soar,
and you will be twizzled and sizzled and turned inside out.*

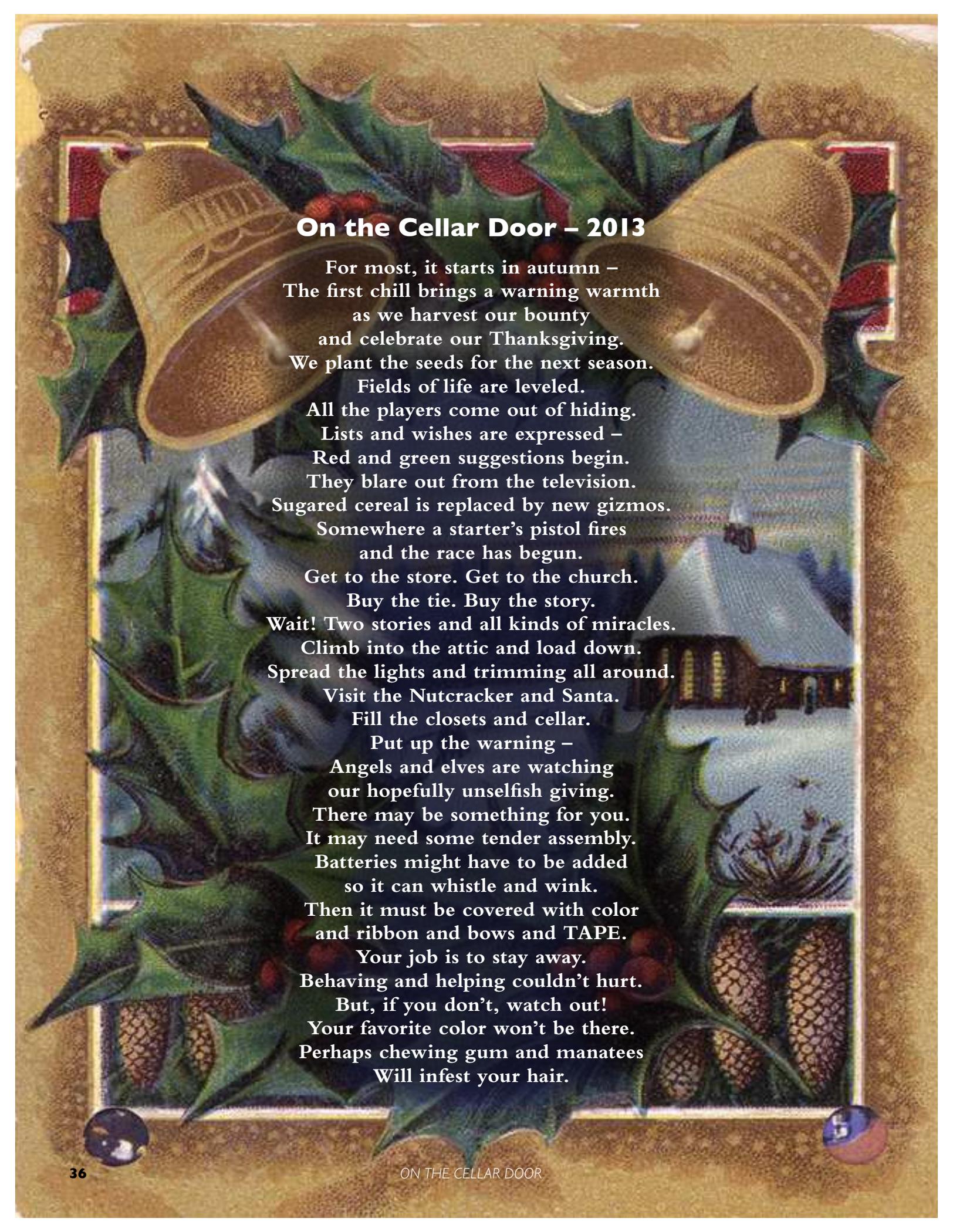
On the Cellar Door – 2011

I come falling, twirling, descending
from a gray winter sky.
Silently I glide toward earth
riding the wind's currents.
I have no voice of my own.
My carrier announces my arrival.
Softly I spread myself down,
covering the brown leftovers
of autumn's final moments.
Not satisfied with my arrangement,
the taxi wind moves me
here and there, in piles and drifts.
Then I must survive plow and shovel
till the woolen blobs finally find me.
Now the fun begins with shivering laughter.
I'm bunched and balled and thrown,
hitting and missing targets: friend and foe.
I'm ridden on with sled and sleigh,
crushed in tiny angelic forms.
But most of all I'm constructed –
Forts and ferocious monsters give way
to the traditional homespun construction.
Two... No, better! Three snowballs are rolled.
Stacked large to small, I am ready,
armed with sticks, topped with hat,
scarf about my no-neck junction,
buttons for the Emperor's coat.
Finally eyes, nose and smile
give me my friendly disposition.
I am guardian of these little ones.
I appear and disappear at weather's whim,
but I am always in their heart.
Now should you be at an age of grumbling,
don't spoil the fun by toppling
or go peeking behind cellar doors.
For if you try to spoil the Christmas magic,
I'll melt in your boots and turn your face red.
I'll give up my buttons and
you'll find them in your stockings instead.



On the Cellar Door – 2012

How willingly we give in
to the season, to the spirit.
We crank the scenes into position.
Start the countdown. Here it comes.
Begin the Advent calendar,
open every drawer,
make your list, write the cards,
look for sales, purchase and hide.
Wrapping will come later.
Go to church. You remember where it is.
Decorate, decorate and DECORATE!
Inside and out, lights, bows and tinsel,
old decorations and maybe something new – Ha, ha!
Fill the tabletops and shelves.
Clutter the bushes and make them glow.
Dig out all the traditions.
Remember when you were small?
Wasn't it the best time?
You could wish and wish for this
and be happy if you only got that.
When did you learn to give?
And not just sign off on a gift...
When did the story click in?
Who did you make happy this year?
Now you see this door?
It hides the real world –
That wrapping that still has to be done,
whether the gift comes from Santa
or one of his many elves.
You must not look, not even a peek,
because if you do, pirates may scalp you
and Indians might throw you overboard.
Best you wait till Christmas morning.



On the Cellar Door – 2013

For most, it starts in autumn –
The first chill brings a warning warmth
as we harvest our bounty
and celebrate our Thanksgiving.
We plant the seeds for the next season.
Fields of life are leveled.
All the players come out of hiding.
Lists and wishes are expressed –
Red and green suggestions begin.
They blare out from the television.
Sugared cereal is replaced by new gizmos.
Somewhere a starter's pistol fires
and the race has begun.
Get to the store. Get to the church.
Buy the tie. Buy the story.
Wait! Two stories and all kinds of miracles.
Climb into the attic and load down.
Spread the lights and trimming all around.
Visit the Nutcracker and Santa.
Fill the closets and cellar.
Put up the warning –
Angels and elves are watching
our hopefully unselfish giving.
There may be something for you.
It may need some tender assembly.
Batteries might have to be added
so it can whistle and wink.
Then it must be covered with color
and ribbon and bows and TAPE.
Your job is to stay away.
Behaving and helping couldn't hurt.
But, if you don't, watch out!
Your favorite color won't be there.
Perhaps chewing gum and manatees
Will infest your hair.

On the Cellar Door – 2014

Ma, look! The Christmas decorations are up!
Never mind... We're late and it's only October.
But, Ma, look! Santa's here!
We'll come back another day. Now come along...
Look! The Griswold's are decorating their yard!
What a waste of money, hmm.

Dad, can I help? I'll be careful.

Thanks, Son, but you better let me take care of it.

What are you going to do this year?

Well, besides the usual, I have a few surprises.

Come on, Dad, tell me. Maybe a manger?

I wove my own deer out of willow branches.

Oh gee, that's swell, Dad. Maybe Mom needs help.

Wait, Son. Watch when I plug it in!

Everybody has deer that nod and graze.

Yeah... But do they have LED lights
and animated pooping?

No, I guess not, Dad. Good job. I'm going in
to watch "Frosty."

Happy Thanksgiving, everybody! Now help
clear the table.

Can we go to church, Mom, please?

Sure, we'll all go. We haven't been in awhile.

I like the story about the Baby Jesus.

I'm glad. Do you know what you're giving your sister?

Yeah, I do. I made it myself.

That's nice, dear. There's a sale at the mall.

Can I come with you? Can we get the tree too?

We'll see. I'll check with your father.

Mom, what's your favorite Christmas carol?

Oh, I don't know. Have you made
your list for Santa?

Yes, Mom, and I helped Sue with hers.

Dear me... Time is flying. I have to
bake cookies.

On the cellar door this magic sign appears.

Keep out, those who are too busy.

Keep out till you're ready to listen.

Don't risk Linguini Lips and Brillo Buns.

Get into the spirit of the season.

Feel the goodness of giving

and the graciousness of receiving.

