



# Misrule Missive



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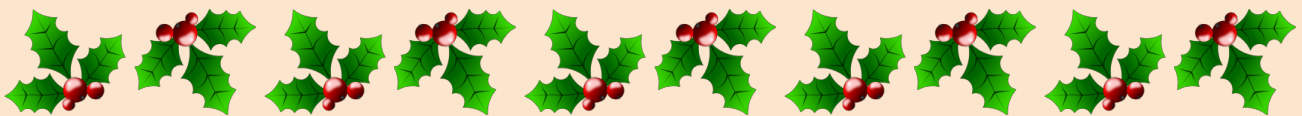
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## What is Misrule?

Misrule is a winter season game of sorts. A person is chosen by lot to be the king of the feast and give silly commands for the amusement of the revelers. Given that the winter weather tends to the unpleasant and indoor games have begun to lose their savor. The misrule festivities probable served the same kind of outlet as the celebration of Mardi Gras does for the more solemn Great Lent in preparation for Easter.



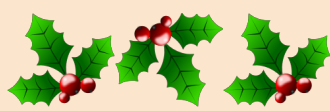
## Misrule Missive Disclaimer

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## Winter Holiday Customs (reprinted from several years ago...)

December 26....

The day after Christmas in the present era is a day for returning presents for an assortment of reasons. In the past, prior to the inception of the Market at Wall, there were other customs which some of which survive to the present day though a bit changed. Here I will take a peek into some of them...

### Boxing Day

The day after Christmas—though today if the holiday falls on a weekend it is observed on the next Monday as a day off of work—the general idea appears to involve the nobility giving something to those who depend upon their custom or protection; the serfs, servants and tradesmen if you like. It seems to me that this is like the tips my grandmother was wont to give to her postman and hairdresser. The custom also reminds me of the gifts of rights here in Elfsea.

### The Feast of Stephen

The theme of charity is continued in the observance of the Feast of Stephen--In many countries December 26 commemorates the life of St. Stephen... who was known for his service to the poor.[i] The carol (the words are from the 1800's) about Wenceslas is set on the feast of Stephen and the gift of his cloak to a poor man is at the center of the verse (based on the earlier life of the saint). Because of several mysterious events Wenceslas was proclaimed a saint and has been recognized as the patron of his native Czechoslovakia. There is a pretty story on Wikipedia which recounts a barefoot walk in snow undertaken by Pope Pius II – as one who has walked barefooted in the snow I found this an amusing suggestion – in imitation of the saint perhaps.. I also found a lovely play[ii] about Wenceslas designed for school children. The things one finds...

### The Hunting of the Wren

I find much delight in the music of Heather Dale (*Mistress Marian of Heatherdale*) and I have dog-eared my copy of the *Dark is Rising* series by Susan Cooper. Both of these fine ladies have turned to the practice of the hunting of the Wren for inspiration. The tradition continues in Ireland with boys carrying cages through the streets from house to house asking for treats. I have been round and round seeking the origins of the hunt and here is what I have found.

A lively discussion of the different wren songs[iii] – one of which is also credited as an inspiration for the song by Heather Dale[iv] – *The Hunting of the Wren*[v] about which she notes “There’s a tradition in rural Ireland, where the local children are sent out to try to catch a wren on the day after Christmas. If somehow they manage this feat, then they’re allowed to parade their prize around the village gathering treats and praise. To be honest, it just sounds like a great way for tired mothers to finagle[sp] a full day of peace and quiet!”

Helga Sagen[vi] connects the hunt with the story of how *lleu llaw Gyffes* got his name[vii] (the Welsh is wrecking havoc again...) by piercing the leg of a wren with a needle. A continuation of her article





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connects the hunting/funeral of the wren with the ending of the year on the shortest day (Dec 21<sup>st</sup>) "This tradition incorporates Indo-European religion and custom in various ways, as the custom of "burying the wren" with a lament for the death of the sun, and as the custom of Hunting the Wren which reenacts the myth of the celebration and naming of the new sun, and finally as a performance in which the death and revival of the sun is reenacted in the many mummers' plays([viii])." It seems this is the version adapted by Susan Cooper in her story where at one time there is a wren on the bier and at another there is a woman.

A further connection is tied to the tale which records the Wren as king of beasts (instead of the traditional eagle. As happens, the birds engage in a contest to determine which shall be king. They agree that the bird that flies the highest shall have the honor. Only the bat refuses to join in the contest—thus is ever afterwards ashamed to show its face in the light of day. The eagle flies the highest it seems until he tires and the wren leaps to flight from the concealment of his wing to steal the honor that should be the eagle's right. Because of his tricks the wren is reviled and thought fair game for all.

The hunting of the wren most often appears to involve carrying the bird (or an effigy / empty cage) through town stopping at each house to ask for a bit of something. In some cases coins are offered in others food especially sweets (hence the Bag pudding recipe). At any rate the offerings are used to bury the wren. Several articles I found on tourism sites for Ireland in particular indicate that a present adaptation or incarnation of the hunt leads to gifts for local charities not unlike the trick or treat for UNICEF which occupied late October evenings during my childhood.

I hope you have found some diversion in this ramble through some of the customs of December 26 and look forward to seeing you at the revel!

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[i] " St. Stephen's Day ." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online School Edition.* Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010 . Web. 1 Dec. 2010 . <<http://school.eb.com/eb/article-9438714>>.

[ii] KŘESADLO, Jan, and VZ] Pinkava. "GOOD KING WENCESLĀS." *GOOD KING WENCESLĀS.* 1996. Web. 01 Dec. 2010. <<http://kresadlo.cz/goodking.htm>>.

[iii] Sagen, Helga. "Wren King Songs." *Wren King Songs.* Yahoo! Contributor Network, 12 Dec. 2009. Web. 01 Dec. 2010. <[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2509599/wren\\_king\\_songs.html?cat=37](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2509599/wren_king_songs.html?cat=37)>.

[iv] Dale, Heather. "Celtic Songs for the 21st Century." *Heather Dale - Celtic Songs for the 21st Century.* Amphis Music, 2010. Web. 01 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.heatherdale.com/>>.

[v] Dale, Heather. "The Hunting of the Wren." Rec. 2009. *The Green Knight.* Heather Dale. Amphis Music, 2009. *Heather Dale.* Amphis Music, 2009. Web. 1 Dec. 2010. <Dale, Heather. "Celtic Songs for the 21st Century." Heather Dale - Celtic Songs for the 21st Century. Amphis Music, 2010.

Web<<http://www.heatherdale.com/music/GK.php>>.

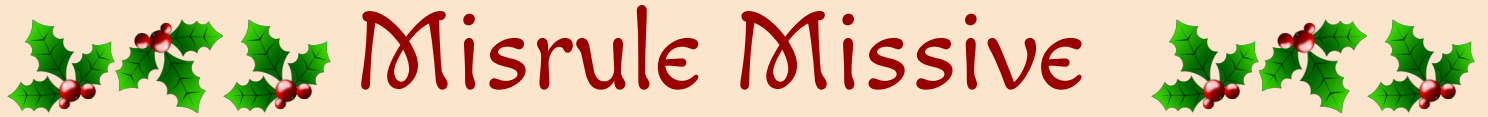
[vi] Sagen, Helga. "Hunting the Wren." *Hunting the Wren.* Yahoo! Contributor Network, 9 Dec. 2009. Web. 01 Dec. 2010. <[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2474278/hunting\\_the\\_wren.html?cat=37](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2474278/hunting_the_wren.html?cat=37)>.

[vii] Sagen, Helga. "How Llew Llaw Gyffes Got His Name: A Celtic Myth for the Winter Solstice." *How Llew Llaw Gyffes Got His Name: A Celtic Myth for the Winter Solstice.* Yahoo! Contributor Network, 12 Dec. 2009. Web. 01 Dec. 2010.

<[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2474698/how\\_llaw\\_gyffes\\_got\\_his\\_name\\_a.html?cat=34](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2474698/how_llaw_gyffes_got_his_name_a.html?cat=34)>.

[viii] Sagen, Helga. "Hunting the Wren." *Hunting the Wren.* Yahoo! Contributor Network, 9 Dec. 2009. Web. 01 Dec. 2010. <[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2474278/hunting\\_the\\_wren.html?cat=37](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2474278/hunting_the_wren.html?cat=37)>.





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## A Fantastical Feast of Farcical Fare

### Amuse Bouche

Stories of the glories of Christmases long ago

### Main Course

Roasted Recalcitrant Writers  
Stewed Slow Story Submitters

### Dessert

Songs from Sweet Ladies  
Tunes from Boxed Bards

## Reminder from Baron Arthur

Please do not plan on burning candles or incense in the library.

The Site is dry.

Ice will be provided.

The tables are 8 foot rectangles - should you wish to decorate...

Some "fine feastware" will be available for those in need of it.





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## Elfsea Yule Party Menu

(Based on Baron Arthur's List and the Elfsea Facebook Listing)

### Appetizers:

- Fruit salad
- Cheese ball and crackers
- Vegetable crudite platter

### Soup:

- Taco Soup

### Bread:

- Fresh baked - including sourdough

### Savory Meats:

- Game Hens
- Roast Pork
- Smoked Turkey

### Vegetable dishes:

- Green Bean Casserole
- Sweet Potato Casserole
- Swiss Vegetable Medley
- Broccoli Casserole

### Deserts:

- Coconut Macaroons
- Pies
- Baklava - Pistachio & Almond w/ Lime Syrup
- Crepe Brulee
- Brownies

### Beverage:

- Mint Tea
- Apple Cider
- Other Hot Seasonal Drinks

Add items that please you if your item is not listed here - substitutions are also allowed.

