



High Country

Tw'as the night before Christmas, I paced through the house,
With the worst of intentions, I grumbled and grouched.
No stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
For I knew absolutely no one would be there.

The puppies were nestled all snug in their beds,
What did they care, they'd already been fed.
I didn't have kerchief, would not wear a cap,
Couldn't settle my brain, I never could nap.

Outside my small room there arose such a clatter,
It scared me to death, set my poor teeth a chatter.
Away to the peephole I flew like a flash,
Tripped over my laundry and fell with a crash.

I slid out the door onto new-fallen snow
And dealt my poor noggin' a heck of a blow.
My legs were like jelly, my stomach felt queer,
My eyes purely startled as a headlight caught deer.

I tried to get up, all lively and quick,
But knew in a moment I must be quite sick.
My neighbors came running, yes running they came,
They whistled, and shouted, and called me by name!

Now Justin, dear Justin, you little ole vixen,
You need to get up though you seem rather blitzen.
They propped me on porch! Leant me up against wall!
Then dashed away, dashed away, dashed away all!

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, so then must I.
Must get back to my house 'fore my fingers turn blue,
Of this much was certain, of this much I knew.

Tis cold in the mountains, there's ice on my roof,
So no time to dawdle, no time to goof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the steps with great joy my puppies did bound.

They were dressed all in fur, from each head to each foot,
Which up on my shoulders they gleefully put.
With one at my front and one at my back,
I felt the sweet warmth, being part of my pack.

My eyes now they twinkled, my dimples were merry!
My cheeks were like roses, my nose like a cherry!
My once droll sad mouth now drawn up like a bow,
E'en though my poor feet were all buried in snow.

My smile was so wide you could see all my teeth,
And happiness curled round my head like a wreath.
I tickled their ears and each round little belly,
No longer felt scared, no more Nervous Nelly.

Each was chubby and plump, each a jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw them, in spite of myself!
A wag of each tail, a shake of each head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

They spoke not a word, but went straight to their work,
They filled my poor heart, turned me back from a jerk.
Their wagging of tail, their nudging with nose,
Gave me a lift, and my spirit it rose!

I sprang to my feet, to my pups gave a whistle,
And home we all flew like the down of a thistle.
I was heard to exclaim, now free from my fright,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

-Justin G Mikel

Justin G Mikel, LCSW, LCAS is a proud member of NAMI as well as a psychotherapist and integrative health coach in private practice in

Boone. She lives with her two rescue dogs, Miss Sadie Hawkins and Miss Priscilla Queen of The Desert who are the inspiration for her slightly fractured retelling of the classic Christmas poem. She explains "Everyone knows the holidays are a stressful time. I could have written an article on coping strategies and engaging our wise minds to appreciate



those we have in our lives who do love and cherish us. Instead I offer this little retold poem with the hopes it will give folks a chuckle. Enjoy."



nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

**High
Country**

Upcoming Meetings:

Monday, December 2nd at 7 pm – Holiday Celebration
Come out for food and music and bring a dish to share if you can!



Happy
Holidays!

***Our meetings are switching to the Watauga County Public Library conference room. Watauga County Public Library in downtown Boone is located at 140 Queen Street, behind Mast General Store. If you get there before 7pm you will be able to go in the main door. After that we will enter and exit through the side door. Don't worry – there will be signs!**

Monday, January 6th at 7pm – Bonnie Church

Listen to us on the Radio:

We are lucky enough to be able to go on the radio with Johnathon Roten a couple of times a month. Take a listen to recent radio programs on our website (www.namihighcountry.org)

Here's a selection of our radio programs:

November 15, 2013: Caroline Bond discusses the health benefits of gratitude.

November 1, 2013: Justin Mikel discusses dual diagnosis.

October 18, 2013: Steve Moeller shares what changes for the better when you receive a diagnosis.

October 4, 2013: Dr. Murray Hawkinson shares information about DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy).

September 20, 2013: Laura Anne Middlesteadt discusses the connection – and lack of connection – between mental illness and violence, in the aftermath of the Navy Yard shooting.

August, 23, 2013: Justin Mikel discusses the stigma within the mental health system against clinicians who themselves have mental health challenges.