

Plano, TX 75075

My Perfect Tree

Plastic tree owners are missing out when it comes to the overall Christmas experience. They miss out on the sap sticking to their jeans, an array of pine needles for the vacuum's dinner, getting the tree in the stand just so, and the mouthful of prickly plant that accompanies the failure of this task.

However, to me, they're also missing out on a symbolic tradition. Most families buy and decorate their trees weeks, even months in advance; mine does so on Christmas Eve. This custom might seem rushed, careless, and foolish at first, but the story behind it makes every tree we own perfect.

On my fourth Christmas, money was extremely tight in my tiny family. My parents were teenage ones, and, despite the mounting challenges, were doing the best to stay together for their daughter. My parents, desperately wanting to give their daughter a tree for Santa's gifts, were just as crushed as I was when it was obvious that we couldn't afford a tree.

On Christmas Eve, my father had less than twenty dollars in his wallet. Unwilling to completely give up, we went out to look for a tree. Most sellers had closed up their tents for the season, but we managed to find one still open. Burrowing through the misshapen, leftover trees, we eventually found a keeper. The impending question of cost, however, still hung in the air. Maybe the salesman was tired and was eager to close, or maybe he could sense our family's desperation. Whatever the reason, he let us have our tree free of charge.

To me, a Christmas tree is a symbol of perseverance, faith, and a family's love. Everyone can have their trite, packaged trees; I'll take the sap-covered jeans, the pine needles, and the twig-littered face over neat plastic anytime.