

## **The Spirit of a Christmas Tree**

By: Marianne Sierocinski

On December 24<sup>th</sup>, a child eagerly presses her petite frame against the glass door overlooking the forest behind her home. Her eyes intently search for a glimpse of Santa's reindeer in a landscape of snowcapped pines sprinkled over the white, immaculate blanket of winter. "It's Christmas," she breathes, and she reaches to grasp a branch of her family's own tree: their own piece of Christmas.

Years pass, and the family moves – to South Florida, where "Winter Wonderland" serenades 70 degree weather and where palm trees are decked with shimmering lights. The child grows into an adolescent, and she learns to no longer search for Santa's reindeer – but the sense of disillusionment extends beyond the end of Christmas magic. What was once the most wonderful time of the year begins to transform into the annual commercialized hassle often associated with the month of December. Nonetheless, one aspect of her childhood Christmas perseveres. Though the new glass doors open to a lake caressed by an ever-green lawn, a real Christmas tree stands in her living room.

Year after year, the same ornaments twirl and wink in the tree's glow, disproving the notion that possessions must be continuously upgraded in order to be enjoyed. Handmade decorations from grade school, preserving the innocence of Christmas, complement the candy canes dotting the height of the tree – a reminder of life's sweet gifts. Glistening streamers and lights illuminate the entire tree, demonstrating how the joy of the season extends beyond the gifts piled below. Finally, the tree's decoration cannot be complete without a star adorning the highest point, illustrating how Christmas would be incomplete without the love of family. Today, though a witness of an increasingly materialistic holiday season, I stand next to my Christmas tree, inhale the scent of pine – and I remember perfectly.