

A Christmas Tree is Memory

By Jordan Trethewey, City of Fredericton Poet Laureate 2021 – 2023

For the Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony November 26, 2021

Charlie Brown tosses his needle-less twig
near Snoopy's dazzling doghouse display.
His cast of Yuletide tormentors walk by
his ridiculed choice, wracked with guilt
from crippling Chuck's Christmas spirit.

No longer blinded by the bright
lights of empty consumerism,
children use furious-fast hands,
turn misguided angst against
the golden idol of excess,
transfer wealth to the poor,
restore faith in community
lifting the lowest branch up.

A Christmas tree is a brief reason
to downshift from our daily drive
toward pursuit of subsequent desires.
Chopped down in its prime,
the Christmas tree transforms—
becomes focal point for memories.

Nostalgia triggered by the scent of sap,
we drag dusty boxes from attics and basements
filled with poinsettia-ed paraphernalia.
Mutter curses untangling strings of lights
only to discover the whole strand dead
due to one burnt out mystery bulb.
Wrestle with whether it's worth
a painstaking search to replace it
or admit defeat—
purchase another to suffer
the same fate next year.

Maybe it is mothballed sentimentality
we smell, the reason tired parents,

jaded teens, and tantrum toddlers alike
gather around folded box flaps
marked "Tree Ornaments."
Each one a time capsule
delineating the best of times
in construction paper, macaroni,
Styrofoam, yarn, and finger paint.
Years guessed at and recalled
upon unpacking decorations
gifted to us in years when we grew
too busy to remember
our sons' and daughters',
mothers' and fathers',
passions and proclivities.

Oh, Tannenbaum!
Light our living room lives,
if only for a few weeks.
Be a healing evergreen heart,
the moment of respite required
to face a cold new year.