

The Four Trees

By Clifford A Bartley

Cold and tired, Jessie had been hunting since early morning,
without even seeing a fresh track in the deepening snow.

Onward he trudged all day deeper into the woods, hoping for new game.

Suddenly a large deer jumped in front of him,
Though his reflexes were numb with cold his first shot dropped the big buck.

Quickly, he readied his quarry for the long journey home.

As darkness fell the wind and snow picked up. "Ugh what luck!"

He could hardly see through the blistering storm.

Exhausted he came to a bluff and realized he was hopelessly lost.

Off to his right he thought he could see some distant light,

"Thank God", he sighed to himself, "someone's camp".

On he trudged using his gun stock to steady himself, pulling the deer behind,
for more than two miles never seeming to get any closer.

"I'm so tired and cold Lord," he whispered.

Finally he came to a clearing where the snow and wind eased,
a tall pine covered in ice glistened and glowed in the center of the clearing.

In awe he walked around it feeling strangely warmer and renewed,
he thought to himself, "mustn't tarry."

Onward, through the thickening woods he struggled with his load,

Now, slowed to a crawl and half carrying the deer,

Thorns pulling at his clothes, he uttered "Good Lord please help me!"
Backing through wall of thorns he fell into clearing with another pine glistening,

Jessie Stood in puzzlement, "I must be losing my mind."

Ahead of him he could still see the light in the distant and pushed on.

He could almost run through the tall woods, hours past,
till hunger gnawed at his stomach as he realized he hadn't eaten all day,

Lightheaded he moaned, "God I'm so hungry"

Again he came to a clearing, this time there was a medium glistening tree

Encircled with blackberry bushes, he ate several handfuls.

surprised that they were not frozen, as the deer he pulled.

Soon he was on his way again, heading towards the illusive light.

Confused, he began to fear that he might never get back home.

He began to pray as he walked "My family needs me, please help me home Lord."

On he journeyed towards the light,

till predawn he found himself on a crest of a hill

Looking at another small glowing pine tree covered in ice.

From this vantage point he could see his home in the valley below.

He fell to his knees "Thank you Lord, for thy grace."

That was Christmas morning nearly sixty years ago.

Jessie and his family looked many times,

but never found the trees in the clearings.

only the pine on the hillcrest, which they reverently decorate every year.

