

My Childhood Home

by Holly Waddell

Twenty feet of snow faced him through the windshield as he sat in the driver's seat of his rusty red Chevy truck. As he breathed out a sigh in frustration, his warm breath formed vapors in the air like a chimney on a cold day. Questions raced through his mind. He wondered why the township piled snow in front of the entrance to his road. *What should I do now? How will I get home*, he asked himself.

He convinced her to move there the spring after they married. It was a modest home consisting of only five rooms. The setting was spectacular. On the edge of a state park, it was deep in the woods and surrounded by some of Ohio's most beautiful scenery. As they drove there that day, he thought to himself, *I couldn't have picked a better day*. Crossing over the field, they turned onto the dirt road and entered the forest. He parked the car and held her hand as they walked under the canopy of trees, which hovered over their heads like a protective mother over her children. Smells of cedar and pine filled the air, as songbirds sang their whimsical songs and chipmunks scurried about their feet. A slight breeze softly caressed their skin while they enjoyed a picnic lunch. It was a day like no other. "Living here will be like living in our own Garden of Eden," he told her. Her eyes lit up like sparklers on the Fourth of July as she told him how exciting it would be to have a place of their own. They cuddled on the blanket under the trees, both imagining their future together in their lovely new home.

Tightening his hood, he got out of the truck and started walking around the mound of snow that blocked the entrance to the dirt road. The wind gusts were hard, forcing him to take a step back. It felt like knives cutting him from all directions. The moisture in his nose froze instantly, forming tiny ice crystals. Each breath felt painfully sharp.

He walked a little while, and then stopped to look back over the snow-covered field. A glimmer caught his eye. Was he hallucinating? What he saw he later described as a “snowbow.” According to him, it was a perfectly formed halo of ice that encased the setting sun. The ice crystals that formed the halo were emitting rays of all different colors like a rainbow around the sun. It was a sight to behold!

When he finally arrived at the house, bones aching and legs feeling heavy as lead, he collapsed onto the porch with a thud. She instantly threw the door open. “You’re alive!” she said, tears rolling down her face. From her clutching embrace, he knew she was happy to see him. She explained they lost power in the early afternoon, and with no phone service she was terribly worried all day. He gently calmed her and remarked how nicely she had the fire going.

As they huddled by the stove, they listened to the battery-powered radio. Weather forecasts were predicting a terrible night:

Many are without power and temperatures will be dipping below zero. There will be wind chills as low as negative five, and wind speeds up to one hundred miles per hour.

He again felt her body stiffen. He knew she was worried. This would be a very long night.

He suddenly stood. And then with a strange smile on his face he said, “Wait here, I’ll be right back.” Disappearing down the hallway into the bedroom, she could hear him rummaging in

the closet. Upon returning, he was carrying a bottle of wine that she recognized instantly. He'd purchased it the year before they married when he was a bachelor traveling the south of France. It was a hydromel, or "honey wine" as some call it. She knew it was special to him because he told her he was planning to share it with her on their tenth wedding anniversary. "Go get some glasses. We're having steak and wine for dinner," he said. She stared at him in disbelief as he took the steaks out of the refrigerator and carefully prepared a meal. He cooked the steaks over cedar planks on the woodstove and also warmed some bread. The meal was delicious. Then, with bellies full they snuggled peacefully. Outside the wind was howling like a wolf trying to get in and temperatures were well below zero. Still, despite the freezing temperatures, together they stayed warm.

My parents made it through the Blizzard of '78, which had fifty-one documented deaths. Thankfully, despite winter weather conditions, my parents continued to live in those woods. We shared many special moments there, and it was an amazing place to call home. The forest is a wonderland of adventure. It is full of amazing sites to behold: the trees, animals, sounds, sights, and smells. Just remember that the weather, like life, can change in an instant.