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Grandpa's Christmas Tree

– Serena Niensted

Everything
on Grandpa's
Christmas tree,
except the homemade
paper chains, stars
and baskets
- everything could be eaten.

I didn't wonder then
how long it took to string the popcorn,
the cranberries, and the peanuts
or what patience tied an apple or orange
on so many limbs.

When I tried to duplicate
the remembered splendor,
the popcorn crumbled, cranberries squashed,
and the peanut shells shattered.

All I had to show for my hard work
were needle-pricked fingers.

So my children never knew the delight of an untrimming party,
the unforgettable taste of two-week old popcorn flavored with pine
or the chewiness of peppermint candy canes
softened by the heat of a pot-bellied stove
and the love
of an old man
for his
grandchildren.