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TREES AND SHADOWS Donna Gors

Roger gives me a look like he's confused as to why I'm not excited about our lumberjacking experience. He kept on changing shoulders that the axe would rest on. I was developing a tic just watching it.

"What makes you say that, sweetcakes?"

I said nothing. He did nothing to probe me further.

We came upon this one tree that Roger seemed to like anyway. Yule tree. Feeling it up, Roger smiled. Almost like he just found a dumb, drunk blonde at a club. 'Only go for blondes' he would say when he got home. 'Stupid as bricks and good looking too'.

"I want to watch TV." I said.

"Faith, who's going to help me cut down this Christmas tree? I don't got a son, so why not bring you?" Roger didn't really need me there, he just wanted someone to brag to.

"Isn't it illegal to cut down trees here? I mean, we're on city property."

"Doing the right thing isn't always right," he replied.

I know I was right. We're on this plot of land that's behind our house. He insisted on making the walk, too. Saying that we'll make snowmen on the way. The snow is hard, Roger. The warmth has a tendency to do that.

He picks up the axe, and positions himself to cut down the tree like a golfer at the tee. Only the tee is up off the ground. A couple of pseudo puts and then the real thing. I could hear his leather jacket rip when contact was made. Then an expletive came. He really doesn't mean it though.

You know, my father's never cut down a tree before. He just makes up stories. Just like he did earlier. But that's okay.

We don't have a fence behind our house, but then again most people didn't in this area. Roger started blabbing on about this one time that he went hunting. I've heard the story at least thirteen times. Took to the gun like a natural, he did. Shot more animals than his grandfather did, even though he hadn't been hunting before. Wanted to take me hunting someday, too. Had to wait a little longer for me because I'm a girl. I feel like a deer each time he tells me the story. At least I'm a smart deer. Only the stupid ones get shot. I rubbed my nose. Rubbed my ears. No earmuffs. "...And we've been hunting every year since. I always get the biggest kill." Roger finished. Same way he's finished the last ten times. He hasn't taken another swing at that tree since he started talking. So typical. Doesn't finish the things he starts.