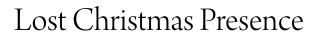


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## **Lost Christmas Presence**

Surveying snapshots from the sixties, I see a small wall-papered apartment With a baby family smiling By a cedar tree Father whacked For wife to shower with wisps of plastic Chrome icicles and one strand of lights, Bruised blue.

What made that red-haired boy so happy?

Was it the Roy Rogers lunchbox With matching thermos, which would be dropped and shattered The following day.

Was it the cherub-faced sibling, always standing beside Or behind the "perfect" big brother Who never stood up For him?

Was it the loving gaze of the mother, Whose arm lies Unselfconsciously teasing The lock of dark hair of the head Relaxed, smiling, for once, In her lap.

Surveying snapshots from the sixties, I remember the laughter; I remember the smiles, but I have lost all those gifts.

Paul M. Bush 14 December 2002