

Christmas

by Gary Percesepe

My first girlfriend had blue Christmas lights strung on trees in front of her stone house. My family had all gone to bed. When midnight came, it was snowing. The streets were silent as I drove. Snow filled the lumberyards of Peekskill along the Hudson River. I'd gotten a wool sweater, some gloves, a navy blazer with gold buttons, gray pants. A wet kiss from my father, his holiday tears. She was in her wooden bed, high on the second floor, beneath the dormer. I parked in her driveway, cut the engine, listened to it tick. Her house was filled with brilliant surprises, narrow white feet and her girlish sleep. It'd be years before I returned. She'd be a teacher, I'd be married, my grandfather dead, my grandmother still in the kitchen in her worn housedress. The lumberyards along the river would be empty. She'd hold me all through the night. We'd try to sort the past, but everything had fled, her innocence, small chin, the thinness of her wrists. She'd lay beside me on the couch in her terrible insignificance, the life we never lived dissolved to tears. But that Christmas in her driveway snowflakes like diamonds stuck to the curved windshield of my father's Ford. I waited for the sun to rise, like a story.

