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## sandy lee carlson

### First Tree

Among the decorations  
My grandmother put on my  
Christmas gifts,

Here is the oldest, most fragile,  
Now least presentable,  
Ornament

Front and center on the tree:

A once-smiling Santa  
Who has since lost his mouth,  
Gone mysteriously the way of  
One of his twinkling eyes.

This one-eyed elfin Odin's  
Thick Nordic beard

Suggests warmth as he takes me along  
The borderland of memory  
With his reindeer granting passage  
To the Valhalla of childhood:

Dad says every ornament goes on the tree.

Forget nothing.

Mom promises to vacuum when we're all done.

We will have order.

Farther back, though:

Gram at the door, her ruby lips  
Puckered to kiss her granddaughter  
On the cheek

And Grampa behind her.

Inside, a place for everyone at her table  
In the great hall of family.

The truth of eternal life is the searching,  
Always the searching, for a way home.

(continued)

(continued from page 1, "First Tree" by Sandy Carlson)

An eye for the eye,  
You reset the clock,  
Taking us back to the first moment,  
The first gift,  
First sight of the first tree  
At the center of a universe  
Adorning it with stars.

There it is in the wink of your eye.  
So, too, in a grandmother's kiss on the cheek.