

Firewood

By Matthew Crump

The tree wasn't unlike any other on our property, it just sprung up in the wrong part of the cow pasture. As the tendrils of its roots plunged deeper into the soil over the decades, our livelihood and traditions expanded up on the surface. I imagine Great Grandpa Bootise hadn't worried about it at all when he first built the shed.

What once was a few meager upright planks for protecting his tools, evolved later into a makeshift garage for the tractors and plows. As the family construction company became more lucrative, the shed gained a rickety ladder into new rafters for some much needed storage space. At some point, it must have made sense to fully commit to the idea of a barn. This was the incarnation of the structure I was born into.

The two forces grew alongside each other well into the new millennium. By that point Bootsie was too old to keep up with the pasture but too stubborn to altogether quit. Even so, it didn't take much convincing to have him clear a path and set up a few dinner tables. By the time Bootsie finally saw the tree for the threat it was, the shed was the primary spot for every major holiday. No force of nature, no matter how familiar, would compromise Christmas.

I wasn't allowed to be there but I'm sure the crash was heard for miles. That holiday season my cousins and I bounded up the sideways branches of our gift with full bellies, eager to discover what the tree might've brought down with it from the sky.