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## Hanukkah at our House

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# Hanukkah at our House

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MINDY WOLF-TAYLOR

Before we recited the blessing  
and lit our first candle  
against the dying light of December,  
I insisted that we plug in the Hanukkah bush.  
Aglow with blue Christmas lights,  
it lit up the corner of the family room  
and the family photographs  
lined up behind it.  
I thought we looked dreamy  
in the blue-lit pictures;  
my brother, older, wiser, said we looked  
pitched up from the bottom  
of a very cold lake to the shore.

Each season, I pushed for blue lights  
on the tress outside but had to settle  
for the Hanukkah bush  
and a miniature Christmas tree  
with plastic pine needles and ornaments  
on the nightstand in my room.  
Each year, I imagined telling Santa  
my Christmas wish:  
that he steal down our chimney  
and leave my father  
the best box of Havana cigars  
he could find.

Santa never did come.  
Each December we lit the candles  
and we didn't do it  
against the dying light in the window  
as the sun set so the neighbors  
could look in and see the yellow glow

softening our faces.  
We put the menorah on the built-in bar  
in the corner of the family room  
and huddled around it.  
My father whispered the blessing  
like a secret,  
my mother cupped her hand  
around the quivering flame,  
my brother and I waited to get our gelt,  
then unwrapped the stiff gold foil  
and let the chocolate melt slowly  
in our mouths.

We ate until our throats burned  
and our stomachs ached,  
until the candles caved in  
and burned down.