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ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY YEARS

A n Eastern White Pine at sixty years old can be a hundred feet tall, have a trunk with a four-foot diameter and a forty-foot branch spread, weigh three thousand pounds. Its roots add four feet in length, if they come out of the ground, like they did the night of the storm. A standard roof from 1980 on a two-story Tudor can withstand twenty pounds per square foot. I bet you've done the math, too. That's why I'm writing to you.

I spent the night in the playroom in the basement. In a tent with my four-year-old daughter because *Thunder scares me, Mama. Please?* The boys weren't scared. You might think that they slept in the same room, maybe bunk beds because they were twins, but no. Four bedrooms. Three in a straight line. Hers, off to the side, so even if she'd been in her bed, she would have been fine. Her bed was still there. Her pink unicorn blanket was in place, wasn't even wrinkled. Though, her room didn't escape the infusion of winter forest and holiday, like a thousand invisible Yankee candles melted and oozed into every crevice. Nothing did.

But I would have been dead, too. Because of *Thunder scares me, Mama. Please?* only the men died. I say men, but the boys were only ten. No one would consider them men. Men are built of history, of secrets and lies and of kindness, too. Boys haven't had time for most of that. Maybe some boys, but not mine — raised in a house with a pool, under such a sturdy roof.

I'm sorry. I get distracted. It's all so hard to understand. I just wanted to ask you: how did you know your family was being punished? You said in