

A Tree for Travis



*Jacqueline had a great idea—
but could she pull it off?*

By Charlotte Mae Sheppard

(Based on a true story)

“Tis love we get when love we bring”

(*Children’s Songbook*, 138).

Jacqueline’s family talked and laughed as they walked through the snow-dusted woods. But behind them, Jacqueline quietly trudged with the speed of a melting snowman.

She had waited all year for her family’s Christmas-tree hunt. She had dreamed about crunching through the frosty forest, sipping hot cocoa, and decorating the perfect tree until every branch sparkled with lights.

But now the frost she had waited for was freezing her toes, and the hot cocoa in her thermos didn’t taste as sweet as usual. She kept thinking about Travis.

Travis was Jacqueline’s best friend. He used to have a house near hers, but this winter his family had to move into a small trailer. The move had been really hard for Travis. There wasn’t even enough room for a Christmas tree in their new place. And Travis loved Christmas trees!

Suddenly Jacqueline stopped. Popping up from the snow in front of her was a tiny pine sapling. Maybe it would fit in Travis’s new home! Jacqueline’s eyes lit up as she reached for it—

“Whoa!” Dad said, putting a mittened hand on her shoulder. “We can’t cut down the little trees. They need to grow for next year.”

As Dad continued through the forest, Jacqueline looked back at the sapling and smiled. She had an idea.

Hours later Jacqueline was walking through the snow again—but this time in her own backyard. From where she stood, she could just glimpse her family’s Christmas tree twinkling through the windows of their house. *Their* tree hunt was over, but hers wasn’t quite finished.

She walked next to the towering trees that marked the edge of her yard until she saw a pine branch growing

low enough to reach. It was just the right size for Travis’s trailer. Dad had told her that taking one small branch wouldn’t hurt the tree too much.

With a grunt Jacqueline broke off the branch. But it didn’t look at all like the Christmas tree twinkling inside. Making Travis’s tree was going to be harder than she thought!

The next day Jacqueline sat in the car and watched the forest rush by in a blur of brown and green.

“Aren’t you excited to give Travis his tree?” Mom asked.

Jacqueline shrugged. She had spent all day trying to make the little tree look just right, but it didn’t end up nearly as nice as she wanted.

They parked in front of Travis’s trailer, and Jacqueline opened the trunk. When she saw the tree, her heart sank. It was lopsided, with needles drooping from its branches. Even the ribbons Jacqueline had tied around it were crumpled. Hot tears stung at the corner of Jacqueline’s eyes. It looked nothing like a real Christmas tree. It would probably just make Travis’s Christmas worse!

The door to the trailer swung open, and Travis bounded down the steps. With a deep breath, Jacqueline held out the tree. “Merry Christmas!” she said shakily.

When Travis saw the tree, a grin spread across his face. “Wow! It’s perfect!” he cried out. “Thank you!”

Jacqueline felt a warm feeling grow inside her, melting away the sad and worried feelings she’d had before. She realized that her gift wasn’t really the tree or the ribbons—so it didn’t matter if those were perfect or not. What she had *really* given Travis was love. Like Jesus would have done.

And she couldn’t wait to give it again. ◆

The author lives in California, USA.





ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHAWNA J.C. TENNEY



“If we do the best we can, the Lord will bless us.”

President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“Perfection Pending,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, 86.