

## Pine Forest

Years ago somebody decided to plant Christmas trees here. I imagine it was a despairing decision, since the area was impossibly hilly, gravelly and sandy.

There is not much human habitation around here now, but there was a hundred years ago. There is a ruined house that the family calls, "Divine Ruin", because a woman named Miss Devine lived there. When I was a kid it used to have floors inside and a roof, but every year something else gave up to rot and time and then collapsed, and now there are four walls made of stone waiting to fall down.

As the house fell down, the Christmas trees grew up. Now they are living telephone poles, each reaching up to a sky crossed with crows and turkey buzzards floating in circles above. The wind whishes through the branches high up and only the deer walk on the soft ground covered with a million needles.

I know that before Miss Devine lived here there were other buildings which are gone now. When we dig up the fields nearby, bits if of plates and door knobs come up, and there are holes with vaguely rectangular shapes which are the old foundations of the ghost buildings. Lilacs mark their corners.

The wind has the voices of Miss Devine and these other people who had real lives long ago before me.

Time moves backwards here, the growth of the little Christmas trees remaking the forest where it once was – big, overgrown and wild, full of animals; coyotes at night and chickadees and squirrels in the day.

The grass swishes back to old farm houses and the warm sun on my skin heats the soil of past gardens. Miss Devine bakes an apple pie, and the smell of pine needles mixes with its' cooling on the window ledge.

Pine Forest (19.5 x 27.5)