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Denim Fig Leaf

Henry D. Goldkamp
University of New Orleans

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HENRY GOLDKAMP

Denim Fig Leaf

Winner of the Ryan Chighizola Memorial Award

My mower trusts dry rot like a wedding
gown. How kind of me to cut out a yard
in my man's stomach, to stifle his claim and reach.

There is more power in my bargain machete
than his picket ivy grip. Blistering with a neighbor's
edger, I march a sidewalk. I parachute little packets

of herbs and fruit seed to make future
smoothies and mojitos. As if the blue sky
was a big screen. The sand in my toes itches

the pond in my boots. I kick them off before tasting
moss drool in a window unit. Crawling out his beard
late for supper, sunburnt and covered in dirt, I apologize

for the time. Alright, so my hands are brown and in love
with his stupidity. He rakes my face of dead leaves
and sweet gumballs. Some call its bark alligator wood.

Some say squirrels blow bubbles in the summer.
Some termites writhe an orgy on the porch bulb.
His sheds set inside the smoking lounge, smoking.

His dad is a weed-eater with a firm handshake.
His mom is a terracotta crackpot mulching black
soil from the 70s. We chat over a little wire basket

with a cactus that matters. His dogs sniff gasoline
and onion on my clenched palms. Wagging their hoses,
they water down my fear of the garden. I would learn

soil and light as I go. I could work him to the bone
a dog buries. The pales of evening pour themselves
in a toothpick. The tradition of his folks does not

allow me to leave their table until I finish all my milk
and honey. Chockfull of that ancient sap, walking back
in the humidity feels like stepping inside another man's
mouth, a thing worthless I'm getting used to.