Denim Fig Leaf

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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.