

THE GARDEN

A lone daisy was in a glass of water on the kitchen counter. She had recently plucked it from her front yard where it had been growing wild.

Alida Bright explained to me the basic principle of an appealing garden; “You build a garden around the flowers. It is not meant to be row upon row of neatly tended flower beds.”

I had answered an ad for a room to rent. I needed somewhere secluded to escape the madness of the last year. Although I was only renting a room, she gave me the use of the whole house.

She spoke to me about a wayward daughter. They still talked on the phone now and then. Alida eschewed cell phones. But they definitely lived in different worlds. The more that I roomed in the house, the more that she treated me as a son.

She walked me out the back door. I was struck by the vibrancy of life.

“The garden is the closest that we can ever get to heaven in our lifetime.”

Alida had arranged the garden to meet her vision. I wanted to learn what she recognized in her design. In full bloom, the array of color and intent was overwhelming.

The garden was an ideal place to engage the contemplative life. The gentle images quieted the soul and let my thoughts take their natural course. I became convinced that Alida was privy to the order of the universe that she was able to express in the garden’s overall plan. It was a map of how the heavenly bodies related to each other.

“Too many landscapers try to stifle the wild spirit of plants. It is the same thing as caging the great tiger. Just knowing that there are bars there demonstrates that his masters want to thwart his regal nature. He can sense that limit. And it crushes his spirit. He should be allowed to express his dominion.”

She resisted a linear approach the garden’s geometry.

“Plants are so full of energy. They twist and turn to express their beliefs. It is essential to preserve this excitement.”

I attempted to make sense of the tangled intersection of the different forms of vegetation. Even while they moved together, they could not shed their distinctions of species. No matter how much they veered into the other’s space, there was no intermingling of their fundamental character. Alida understood a deeper communication. It wasn’t simply an exchange of ideas. They were seeking a mixing of their personalities. This combination was so obscure that it was easy to ignore its development.

As much as each plant shared a common source of vitality, they each followed an independent path in the realization of their biology. A prolonged observation would reveal how a single plant could engage in an uninterrupted discourse with other vegetation in its vicinity. But there was no actual physical connection that tethered one organism to another. The same root could generate a series of connected shoots. And a parasite could attach itself to its host with the intent of draining all of its strength. You could even graft a branch onto a sturdy trunk. But there was no way to breach the gap that separated the disconnected entities. That didn’t stop people from assuming that psychic energy seemed to link together all living things. Many believed that if they charmed their plants with sweet talk that the plants would actually respond to the gentle flattery. Beyond the occasional magic provided by the garden, the epicurean

speculated about a more sustained force that joined all things in a universal harmony. There was something entirely organic about this relationship. If explored in more detail, this interconnectedness spoke of a collective being that provided an identity for all these individual existences.

Alida was hardly one drawn to these mystical pretenses. She could sense the hidden emotions of plants. But she was scarcely overcome by a cosmic explanation for such phenomenon. That was not part of her plan. She simply immersed herself within the life of the garden. And she reacted to all the wondrous events that took place around her. It was left to my observation to speculate about the secret world that generated her experience. My time in her garden allowed me to grasp the deeper mysteries that moved her soul. If I wanted to discern a well of psychic energy that nurtured the garden, then that was my doing. She offered me the ideal model for such contemplative pursuits. In turn, her own beliefs appealed to an objective foundation for her own awareness. This was the bedrock of her faith. Since I was much more skeptical on these matters, I craved more thorough answers.

I watched her uprooting the weeds in the flower beds. She was protecting her children. She had formed a close bond with her cherished marvels. The garden vibrated with this association on her part. She appeared to be the witness of a much stranger process. The plants whispered a secret language among each other. Beyond that communication, there were waves of energy that drew everything together. No other location had that same aura about it. I wasn't simply imagining things. There was something here that seemed too overwhelming for words. The place came alive in a more animated way than the action of any single plant. I was in the presence of one being whose form encompassed the entire backyard. It was a little scary to dwell upon this situation. The enigma was almost beyond my comprehension.

When I looked back at Alida, she bore a clever smile. I was sure that she knew something that she wasn't telling me. But she refused to grant these phantoms life. They remained exiled in the shadows. She had other way to explain what was going on around her.

I was convinced that she had special powers. The bizarre goings-on may have inspired her. But she had a lot to do with the very real feelings that were created when someone became lost in her paradise. There had to be more to it than simply her own inklings about the green wizardry.

Alida would just go about her business, and she would quietly ignore me. She didn't head out here to become involved in a conversation. The flowers and birds were saying enough to her already. I couldn't really add effectively to the adorable song. I risked sounding out of tune. I did what I could to notice every joyous aspect revealed to me. And I did my best to blend in with its splendor.

Even in a well-ordered garden, there was a profound chaos which shook the regularity of the neatly tended rows. Flowers naturally followed the sun. And the weaving vine sought the most hospitable perch to sustain itself. Life was not meant to accommodate stasis. Such stillness encouraged the encroaching enemies. The biological urge pushed upward and outward. This excessive gesture could not be limited by any regularity imposed on the garden by the rigid hand of the caretaker.

The enchantment extended beyond the conventional recognition of a special power that inhered in the garden. There was a pandemonium that threatened the composure of the watcher.

That was why the steadied hand sought to imprint the land with a strict regularity. It only took a slight nudge to reveal the troublesome nature that abounded here. A plethora of insects flitted around. In the heat of summer, pesky mosquitos would threaten the visitor. Even the trusty bee could be down-right confounding at times.

The grass would do its best to cover the garden path. Tree limbs would head off in every which direction. Vines would rush along in their incessant dash. Wildflowers would explode. Nothing could contain the precipitate quality of every living thing. The garden celebrated that boldness. The caring intervention would do its best to contain these contrary emotions. But the garden needed to accommodate all these distinct passions.

A walk through the yard would expose the passer-by to a host of diverse aromas. Any one could cloud the emotions and render the self delirious. These vapors would make their way to the nervous system. The individual could even be overcome with a fever. There are hosts of myths based on the mysterious effects of plants. These tales have some basis in fact. Often, we have no idea what is happening to us.

If anything, Alida became invigorated by her walks in the garden. She seemed oblivious to all the deleterious consequences from the vegetation. She might have been so absorbed by the phenomenon that she appeared to be unaffected by it. It may have been rearranging her chemical makeup for years. She only seemed to be resistant. But her calm was so all-encompassing that it was unlikely that she was lulled by some kind of outside force. She maintained her composure.

That hardly meant that the chaotic sprawl did not overrun the whole garden. You could hardly look anywhere and not see that life was everywhere abundant. It exceeded its bounds. It seemed to be bursting at the seams. All the while, Alida was conscientious about controlling the presentation. The overgrowth had been cut away. But she did what she could to preserve the free spirit of the place.

Fundamentally, the chaos existed as a state of nature. You could try to fight it. But it would come raring back if you attempted to suppress its blaring intent. Alida used her hands to shape this terrible energy. It was what gave the garden its marvelous urgency. You couldn't fake this feeling. Other gardens looked so antiseptic. The plants barely seemed alive. Here, everything appeared so vibrant that the viewer could hardly contain his excitement. The flowers almost seemed ready to walk over and talk to people. After all, they were no different than sentient humans. Their awareness of the world was complete.

The lively plants seemed almost too numerous to be contained within the confines of the yard. They carried on and gossiped among each other. Their misbehavior was refreshing. They revealed their playfulness. I had trouble keeping up all the rambunctiousness. I wanted to believe that my observation didn't simply create its own justification. I wasn't imagining things. I had never noticed this underground society. It was performing its intricate theater for me, and I was taking it all in.

Alida took liberties with her version of the story.

From the window, she pointed to the camellias, "They tell a tragic tale."

I listened to Alida's narrative. The woman served men of privilege who saw themselves as nobility. She was judged terribly by her society. And she did what she could to resist a nasty reputation. It was never her intent to scandalize her followers. Her ambitions simply drove her to seek love with men who took advantage of her trusting nature. She hoped that one such

gentleman might deliver her from her forlorn state. The lament was for a woman who loved too much.

How could the teller prevent the story from appearing melodramatic? Love was not based on something frivolous or a trifle of the heart. The heroine accustomed herself to such meager blessings. She let her own emotions exaggerate every embrace. She kissed as if the gates of heaven were ready to open and let her in. The audience lived and died with each ill-fated gesture.

If the tale was to have a mythic impact, the heroine's demise needed to engender a potent lesson. A truly inspired telling would depict a curse that she used to punish her tormentors. Such a rendering would limit the tragic impact. She would be content with her revenge, but she would never challenge her will.

She was filled with contempt for those who had done her wrong. But she felt powerless to retaliate. That was why she was scorned. She didn't want to appear pathetic. Within herself, she needed to discover a strength that could beat back the ridicule. She adorned herself to make other women jealous. And she drove men wild. She wore a lovely camellia in her hair. She loved the fragile emblem.

The flower represented her panache. Men realized that they could not destroy her essence. Thus, her wonder attracted an up-and-coming adventurer. He didn't see her as a prize to be won. Instead, he believed that she was a lost soul who needed a reverent emissary to lead her to her promise. His advances spurred her on. She was ready to confront her accusers and leave them in the dust.

Her suitor realized what he risked in pursuing his new love. He would not countenance her notoriety. But he needed the support of a favored class if he was truly to advance in his goals. He was a young man of great talents, but he feared rejection would doom his enterprise. His advisers made it clear that he would have to make a break from the woman if he was going to be taken seriously in his pursuits. They believed that her only interest was in squandering whatever fortune he could acquire.

He tried not to take their words to heart. Despite his formidable skills, he had not measured his own independence. Thus he was subject to the influence of her detractors. She did her best to convince him otherwise. But he was not up to testing his heroic mettle. He had rescued her from bitter despair, and she had given her whole being over to a man who would never break that rigid shell that held his inner self prisoner.

When he ended it with her, it cut her deep. She had so little in reserve to counteract his attack. She had given herself completely to him. She gave him greatness when he so much lacked integrity of character. He let himself be tossed around like paper twisting in the wind. She suffered physically for her error. And she withdrew from the madness of this world.

As he learned of her grave illness, he tried to make amends. But it had been his knife that was plunged deep inside of her. How could he expect to be forgiven after such a serious offense? He tried to make penance. He sent her baskets after baskets of her signature flower.

The flower's beauty outlived its eventual withering. It burned its rich hue into the souls of its watchers. The rich pink was so demure even as it announced the martyr's suffering.

When the man discovered the poor dear, she was already overcome by her sickness. Candles surrounded her bed. And the room was covered in camellia petals. She died of

consumption.

“I sympathized with the story so much when I was young. I felt that I was touched by the camellias’ curse. I became very sick. And I believed that my disease was a result of identification with the Lady of the Camellias.”

Alida related her own battle with a disease. Her coughing had left her debilitated. She had struggled to recover from its effects.

“I wanted to believe that I had been marked for damnation due to my own moral impropriety. I felt that I was just as debased as the heroine of the tale.”

I loved Alida’s enthusiasm as she wove me Camellia’s story. It abstracted from the natural cycle of the flower’s life to the mythic struggles of the heroine. These cycles locked us into our own repetition. We might try to break bad habits, but there were biological imperatives that were not so easy to break. The garden accustomed us to that fixed character of life. Alida showed me how our dreams our memorialized in the flora.

“We don’t appreciate a flower because its beauty is going to fade. There is a poetry in our gaze that gives the camellia’s radiance immortality.”

I loved her adaptation of the tragic defiance. Her garden represented such an imposition against the decay of our lyrical vision.

“In opera, the soprano tries to hold that expressive note interminably. The bird may cry incessantly outside your window. But the calling is practical in nature. The female singer tries to break those bonds of practicality. She seeks immortality!”

The cycle of life gave Alida hope in her own struggles. There was a healing power in watching these flowers emerge into the light. They sought to capture all the vitality of the sun.

“The heroine believed that her heartache would redeem for her misdeeds in her quest for love.”

Indeed, Alida was attracted by the hyperbole of the story.

“We have our own romantic ideals. They help us through the mundane tasks that fill our days. We clean the stove. We do a laundry. There is nothing uplifting about the drudgery. But the garden shows us another way. It rewards us for our concern.”

There was no sense of entrapment that went along with Alida’s observation. The tribulations were inherent in the myth. But the heroine had offered expiation in her demise. The flower was a testament to her legacy.

I watched the petals fall from the camellia bush onto the ground. That particular tale was coming to an end. I went outside to pick up the petals. I then tossed them into the air. The cycle continued its imprint.

My hand felt warm where the petals had touched it. This felt a little freaky. The sensation was entirely due to my imagination. But I wanted to believe that it was more than that. It was almost as if Alida had touched me on the shoulder. I turned quickly, but I was alone out there.

When I went back inside, Alida was up in her room. Darkness was approaching. I turned a light on in the living room. I picked out a book, and I started to read. The story of the camellias continued to distract me. The colors burned brightly before me.

Once the azaleas started to bloom, spring was in full form. They surprised me this year. The cold seemed to hold on longer than usual. Spring would peek its face out of the shadows,

then it would return to its traditional hiding place. I thought that it would take a cataclysm to get it out in the open for good. Before I knew it, the weather seemed to change for the better. I looked out the window, and the azaleas were just dazzling. I had to shut my eyes briefly in order to take it all in.

I wondered if Alida had a story to accompany these flowers. They presented a more exuberant liturgy than the camellias. This was not at all a tragic story. There was no ambiguity about their transcendent intent. They did not get lost in self-love. Did these flowers offer enough motivation to bless our search for a higher purpose. The sensual delight was immediate and overwhelming. I could feel my head spinning. I could sense this flurry of activity around the plant. But after that initial burst, it was difficult to maintain the excitement. There was none of the drama that had accompanied the camellia. I needed to discover a deeper foundation for my interest.

“The azaleas are our pagan companions. They are our link to a more ancient desire. It is our primitive longing that surfaces when the vitality of the world first surrounds us.”

I wanted to explore this mystery.

“There is no regret in their flowering. They have no subterfuge. They aren’t trying to be something special. They are putting on airs. They love the passionate energy of the breeze, and they are ready to soar in the open skies.”

Alida could imagine them with wing soaring off in the celestial seas.

“You’re afraid to be too happy. I can see it in your eyes. You find these flowers a little embarrassing. Don’t be afraid to let yourself go.”

Following her discourse on the camellias, I was surprised how much Alida was enticed by these seductive flowers. She seemed to encourage their mischief.

“They don’t have time to wait. It will only be a short while before the petals are lying on the ground and turning brown. It is all about living for the moment.”

I knew that she wasn’t about to abandon her prim attitude for the rebelliousness of these inspired flowers. But she found a particular stirring within as she observed their foolishness.

“You can’t be sad looking at these darlings.”

I imagined a bee making his way towards the delicious nectar. The azaleas knew no shame. The higher realm was theirs for the asking. They were proud in their invocation.

This was not about sacrificing myself to attain oneness with providence. The flowers left no doubt about their claim. So they did not have to negotiate to receive their well-deserved reward. They were meant to serve our adoration of the glorious in creation.

“You can feel the pulse of the earth in their magnificent form.”

Alida was cluing me into the symphony that was being performed in her garden. She had made sure that these different melodies could blend together. Color and form worked to insure this harmony. And this only allowed the azaleas to be more triumphant. An elegant flute solo rang out the grandeur.

She smiled, “You do hear it.”

“The azaleas are getting a little out of hand.”

We both started laughing.

“Time stands still here. I’m sure that you know that.”

I wanted to believe her.

The rose bushes needed to be babied in order to bring forth their yield. Ugly weeds could stifle the first flowering. The ground needed watering and enough nutrients. The roses could be very fickle.

“I’m sure that they know that we are watching them. They are so haughty.”

“Does that make you despise them?”

“I love them even more.”

It would take volumes to explain the personality of the rose. Lives have been lost trying to understand these mysteries. I did not want it to appear as if I was failing to take this history very seriously.

The fragrance of the rose was enough to induce visions. Its appeal was more potent than any lotus flower. It was as if the rose was made to haunt us. Its pungent odor struck deeply in the soul. The rose ticked that propensity which gives rise to the human will. As such it made us oblivious to any other sensation. We were ready to do its bidding.

The rose accustomed itself to elegance. But its reign went way beyond its physical attributes. It asked for complete devotion. The worshiper could not escape its appeal. The flower was enlivened by such adoration.

The rose’s coquette nature far surpassed a taste for flattery. The rose demanded more than simple complements. It asked for nothing less than the recognition that no other creature could truly command heaven’s blessings.

Left to his delirium, the observer was ready to suffer any indignity to remain in favor with his monarch. On his knees, he pledged his total fealty. He was ready to accept a perilous mission to prove his worth in the eyes of the rose. He believed that all his efforts were bearing fruit. The rose made its ascent toward the sky. As he reached to bring the flower closer, it eluded his grasp. He gripped down on the thorns. The rose laughed at the foolishness that it engendered.

The rose enhanced its regal breeding. It made sure that its caretakers would spare no trouble just to care for its whims. The rose would glide lazily in the wind. All the while, the conscientious gardener worked the soil to tend for the celebrity’s every need. The rose possessed the body of the fan until he could think about nothing else but this luxurious flower. Thus, the rose could propagate its philosophy in the world.

The regent would lord over the yard and challenge every other being to bow reverently. Failure to show the rose its due would result in the worst sentence for the hapless rebels. While the rose was able to weather the extremes of climate, the other flowers would succumb. A surprise frost would cause the proprietor to cover her rose bushes. The rest of the garden would have to fend for itself.

After such a catastrophe, the rose would demonstrate little concern for its fellows. Impervious to the storm, its erect pose was an affront to the unfortunate. The rose ignored the pleas. It kept on with its rich lifestyle. The rose was aware of the deepest mystery of the universe. Its admirer might press the flower in a book, but there would come a day when all its majesty would amount to naught. For the time being, the rose needed to appeal to providence for a more lasting legacy.

The scarlet flower could inflame the heights of passion. The white rose was so serene. And the yellow rose spoke of a honeyed-sweetness. It was so easy to become distracted by all

these variations. In memory, the rose gave off a poison for which there was no antidote. The gardener sacrificed to the order of the rose.

Alida showed me a part of her garden that was given over to herbs. “These are life-renewing. They are meant to be consumed.” She grabbed a sprig of rosemary and handed it to me. It was intoxicating.

“These plants are very special. They are not meant simply to give flavor to food. They unlock deeper secrets.”

She was initiating me in the mystery of spice.

“You know that the ginger root has healing properties.”

I smiled. Did such remedies cause us to take more chances in our lives since we believed that they could rescue us from our ailments?

“If I didn’t have these wonders, we might never venture out to meet the world.”

She told me how here chamomile tea gave her the ability to relax.

“It seems to quiet my nerves. Anything that I can find to help me settle down.”

Alida professed to a sense of discomfort about her place in the world.

“I always believed that I was a being from another world. I was always restless. I always had to be doing something. That is why I cherish spices so much. They speak of exotic locales. They bring joy to a dull routine. Add some basil to tomato sauce, and the flavor dances around the room.”

I imagined the lively dance!

Alida claimed that the spices revealed more esoteric properties. Some were prized for granting immortality.

“Food helps sustain us. But its effects are only temporary. We absorb its nutrients. Then we need to eat again. Some spices promise more. They aren’t a substitute for food, but they claim to offer long-lasting effects. They help us ward off disease. They reduce the symptoms of a cold. They reinforce the healing-properties of the body. They work miracles.”

These were the products of her magic kit. Alida admitted that she wasn’t adept in the dark arts. She didn’t even dabble in any kind of spells. She simply took a passing interest in the wonders of the garden.

You read about stories where they discover unusual drugs in the Amazon rainforest. I’m sure that there are those bizarre concoctions that can end any sort of illness. I just entertain myself.”

The spices appealed to her long-lasting poetic interest. The journeys to Asia were prompted by the desire to gain the knowledge of the spice doctors. These cures were valued as a result of the mysteries that they inspired. These stories added a drama to the growing of spice.

“It is so natural to grant personalities to the different plants in the garden. They talk back to us. In these conversations, we ask for more. Plants spend all this time attending to the little details of each day. They catch so much that we miss. In coming into contact with them, we hope that they can reveal what they have learned. If we ingest the plant in a meal, we feel that we are absorbing its knowledge.”

Alida had enlivened a theater.

“Spicy food inflames the passions. That is why it is so fantastic. It gives us the opportunity to live a little dangerously. We may not be able to journey down a mighty tropical

river. But the inventive flavors transport us on the magic carpet. We can escape our routine. It is amazing that nature allows us such a glimpse of its inner workings. It helps the body to come alive.”

The spice garden allowed for a more incisive view of creation. It highlighted our complex motivation. And it gave a noble character to what seemed ordinary in our lives.

I loved to view the garden as a place of renewal. Alida embraced the curative power of the green world.

“I grew up on a farm. But it never offered me this kind of protection. If I had lived in this garden as a child, I probably would have never gotten seriously ill.”

Alida explained the therapeutic power of the garden. It was a place of well-being that allowed the body to cast off all the harmful influences. Its pleasing image to the eye reflected the overall concord that was the principle behind its cultivation. The overall layout demonstrated a deeper understanding of the natural tendencies of the plant life. In this way, it encouraged the healing mechanisms of the body. Sitting in the midst of this harmony, there was an utter feeling of calm.

“I’m not really one for meditation. But the garden is a solemn place. You can make your offering to the heavens.”

I felt as if was in a place of well-being. I didn’t need any kind of medication to make me feel alive.

The seasons allowed plants to have a time of renewal. All the destruction was trampled underneath to prepare for the coming rebirth. There was something entirely tenuous in Alida’s approach to the garden. At any moment, its fragile balance could dissipate. Nevertheless, her vision persisted. It admired the chaotic.

The plants adjusted their form to accommodate their knowledge. The idea attained a physical presence. As the path was traced through the tangle, markers were left to trace the progress. The plants cherished each small victory.

A plant was a response to the changes in the surrounding environment. It sought out light and water so that it could sustain its growth. It absorbed chemicals from the atmosphere. Its roots dug deep into the earth. Each action sketched the world around it. The plant animated every moment of its existence into a living panorama. It peered deeply into this picture to observe a single force that seemed to motivate it all. In a sense, the plant created its own terms of being. Ultimately, all these gestures together suggested a plan for creation. The living organism gave a direction to the universe in flux. It pointed the way towards its own self-generation.

In walking in her garden, Alida was affirming something deep about her own connection to the world. She did not feel overwhelmed by the forces around her. Instead, she recognized how her own actions could affect this larger pattern. She became an active participant in the unfolding of the universe. This gave a particular strength to her own resolve.

“I thought that today was going to be difficult. I woke up with signs of a cold. Walking out here has reinvigorated me. I no longer feel congested.”

She took a breath. She could make her own miracles.

“There are days that I feel such a great burden in just trying to survive. My body no longer feels as active as it once did. With each new day, it all begins again. Everything is

exciting again. There is that giddy pace of time. We await a new awakening of life.”

Even in the lulls, Alida felt that she was moving closer to an uplifting realization about the present.

“I can naturally follow along the story. It is illuminating, but it is never too difficult. This is my teacher.”

She was such an integral part of this place.

In the farthest part of the yard, there were patches of weeds that awaited her toil.

“I am afraid that there will always be something that remains undone. And that will be the very thing that destroys my garden. I have worked so hard to keep things pleasant. And it only takes a couple of bad days to destroy the years of care.

She knew that her commitment could not so easily be shaken. Nevertheless, she was always working and did not want to let up. As much as she felt close to the dynamic that enlivened her world, she feared the intermittent lapses. She could feel herself getting lost in the world.

“The plants never seem to give in. They don’t doubt their role.”

She busied herself by her attention the resplendent theater.

“Can you hear them talking?”

The words were still too faint for me. I needed her to interpret the language for me.

All the chaotic majesty of the garden made the air reverberate with a sympathetic imbalance. The clouds gathered in the sky, and the air felt electric. A storm was threatening. We watched the front roll towards us. When the heavens opened up, they would just swallow us whole.

A giant pine reached out to the sky. It was almost ready to ignite the tempest.

“Some things seem too big for us to control.”

Even though Alida seemed resigned to the coming rain, she revealed the suggestion of a deeper power.

“You’re not telling me that you can affect the weather.”

What if she could make unusual events happen?

“I never thought of myself as a sorceress.”

Granted, there was something entirely mysterious about the garden. But I hardly believed that the minor frivolities could combine together to influence the air pressure. The meteorological patterns seemed to move in entirely the opposite direction. The garden was always at the mercy of boastful gusts and torrential downpours. The ancients railed against the capricious gods who messed with the elements. And the defiant soul would meet the pelting rain with his bellowing growls.

I tried to imagine how the garden could propel its articulate force up against the mighty skies. The currents turned around and around each other as a way of gaining strength. Then they would just let loose against the meek foliage. This attack from on high was so full of rage. I was frightened. But the plants were ready to counteract these effects. They had banded together to impress their own version of events. They could live with calamity.

“It just takes a few seconds, and your whole life is completely changed.”

She had surrendered herself to this organic existence.

“So is everything a surprise?”

She spent her time observing these natural cycles.

“And it all makes sense to you?”

Was she simply accepting things as they happened?

“It’s not as if the plants are hanging still.”

Their stand went beyond simple vigilance. They were offering their own alternative.

“It only takes a little bit to rip a plant to shreds.”

“Look at the strength of twine. Trees know things!”

I talked about the power of a tornado.”

“Often the winds are so much more powerful without the protection of the trees.”

“It doesn’t take much for storm to pull a tree out by the roots. It can shake it around like a dandelion.”

“There are forces that you do not see. The mysteries of the garden.”

I envisioned a funnel cloud emanating from the heavy vapors from the plant life. It was nature’s way of challenging the imposition of a physical order. It was a potency that was easily overlooked. I was learning something.

When the rain finally arrived, it was as if it was meant to be. It was all about forgetting. I let the waters rush over me and wash away all my sorrow. Why did I welcome this exuberance. I just needed to let go.

Alida watched me from inside the house.

“I told you that it was going to rain. Why didn’t you come in?”

“I needed to experience it on my own.”