

THE THEORY

We had become inspired by the vitality of the flowers. As much as Alida made her imprint known on the garden, she understood that her actual influence was limited. Her role was best expressed in those days that she was unable to venture out.

“The air is too heavy for me to leave the house.”

She could only watch the world behind glass. She saw the overall scheme that connected all living things. But she was unable to do a thing. So her observation was enlivened by her memories. Ultimately, we face our past when we watch the circus play itself out in the present.

“I have tried to leave my mark on the garden. But I can’t stop the movement of time. All the ordered boundaries will eventually be overrun by the exuberance of the plants. My husband once made a pathway with pebbles. Now it has been covered up by the grass. It did not last. The intent was overcome by a powerful force.”

In as sense, she was expressing her thoughts about her own health. Some days, she felt too weak to get out of bed. She fought back with all her will. And she was able to get herself moving.

“The garden knows my troubles. It will happen to all of us!”

Contrary to this demise, Alida had discovered a vigour that burned from within. It found its home in the imagination. And it was able to engage the lively fluctuations of the world. She did not feel isolated. Even when she looked at her garden from behind the glass, she felt that she was part of something greater. Her despair was only temporary. That was why her handiwork offered a unique inspiration. Each individual plant was moved by an incredible energy, a life force. But Alida understood an accord that went beyond that initial influence. She could appreciate the more complex arrangements that seemed to govern the universe as a whole. This was the cosmos coming to see itself.

“I can sense it!”

She had engaged the enlightenment. Her awakening did not originate in some obscure mysticism. It embraced the physical immediacy of nature. And it was ever-changing. Her own ingenuity found its inspiration in this infinite adaptability.

The plants worked to shape the design. The garden could not inhibit their vigor. The other yards looked so sterile in comparison. Alida recognized how the great parks of the world had incorporated the sense of wildness that found its expression in real power of living things. The maker offered a glimpse into the action without dispelling the very thing that made this drama so appealing.

“A wonderful garden makes you want to take an invigorating walk.”

She held her hand to the window. I could tell that she wanted to go out there.

“It’s a beautiful day!”

“Something’s wrong. I can tell without even going outside.”

She had to content herself with working around the house. She had some errands to do. But even that seemed to be too much effort. She gave me a list.

“Thanks for helping.”

“I don’t mind at all.”

“I hate to impose.”

The list was written out in such a precise manner. The various tasks had been clearly organized according to the various locations, the grocery store, the hardware, the library.

Alida believed that it was possible to bring order to a chaotic world. Even the turmoil in her past had been subdued by her attitude. So she felt that it was no less likely that she could provide the same frame for the rest of creation. For the short term, she let her will guide her. But she brought a more perceptive eye to experience in general. If chaos carried the self through these massive distractions, she had to make every effort to get back on course. Each morning she achieved a moment of clarity. On its basis, she could organize her immediate surroundings. She had the belief that these proximate certainties provided a view of the larger world.

Many people explained their confrontation with uncertainty in terms of mysterious forces that produced these irresistible impulses. Thus, individuals felt uncontrollably motivated by these irrational feelings. Alida couldn't afford to let this drama overcome her. Even if there was something in her moods that seemed to emanate from the planets, she never found fault with the stars. Indeed, she fought to bring her world in line with her will. That did not mean that she failed to take into account the magical powers that seemed to swirl around her. She simply tried to put all of her experience on a more reasonable footing.

In battling these phantoms, she felt that she was becoming distracted from pressing matters. But she had always engaged in this conflict with a more ominous presence. And she had done her utmost to keep the chaotic at arm's length. When she needed to rally herself in the midst of a pitched battle, she wasn't above shaking the spirits from their resting places. But Alida's final arbiter seemed to be her ability to reason through these puzzles. Once she had applied all her resources, she usually came to steady resolution. She used this end to her advantage.

Alida knew that she would get nowhere if she didn't bring an inspired outlook to her situation. All the order in the world wasn't going to make things happen on their own. It was one thing to spend her days gazing at the roses. But she had loads of work to do. And even the delights of the flowers were a reward for a constant vigilance with regards to their care. She did what she could to encourage the pastoral vision. And she never let herself become distracted by a utilitarian view.

In the scattered enthusiasm of the wild flowers, Alida noticed a joy that overflowed the strict patterns of the rational mind. Their intentions were somewhat haphazard when compared with the deliberate purposes of the industrious gardener. Granted, the flowers needed to fight simply to survive. There was no steady hand leading their growth. Here was something that went beyond idea.

I thought about the image of image of a perfect rose. It seemed to burn bright within. There was something in that view that went beyond the fragility of the rose. At the same time, the idea capture the existence of the flower at a particular moment. It could sustain itself even as the flower withered away from our observation. How did the actual flower remain faithful to an image? A biological program seemed to discover its reflection in the lively array of flowers in the garden. At the same time, horticulture experts would debate the features of the perfect rose. They would argue about the proportion, shading, the delicacy and the resilience

"None of those abstract characteristics really matter. The proof is in the seeing!"

As much as the chaotic was part of her life, Alida could not find protection in a

completely scientific view of the world.

"I need to see these flowers for myself. It's not enough to look through a seed catalogue. It only makes sense when the plants push their way up through the ground."

I wanted to learn more.

There were some people who only saw the flower as a means to sustain the species. It attracted birds and insects to facilitate reproduction. But such a view did not even allow the flower an independence in itself. It existed only to maintain a general continuity of life.

"The flowers are the first great artists. They use the color palette to express their imagination to the world. "

To ignore this artistry would be the same thing as trying to explain why the sky was blue without describing how its deep hue affected our moods.

"Flowers are able to stop the flow of time so that we engage our artistic sensibilities to appreciate the wonder of the cosmos. If we were all lost in matters at hand, we would never be able to look up and see the stars."

Indeed, what did the beetle see when it observed the night sky.

Alida was mindful of the needs of the flowers. With the garden, she did all that she could to sustain them in their struggle. Through all her work, she became aware of the fine artistry of her surroundings. In surrendering herself to this wonder, she was getting closer to her own insight with regards to the universe. But she didn't want to make too much of this feeling. It was more of an inkling on her part. She filled in patches of the overall scheme. But there was something rather temporary in the design. And it shifted here and there with all the changes that were transpiring around her.

When she tied the flowers together into a bouquet for the indoors, she felt a special connection to her own creativity. She took an active hand in the development of these flowers. But it was difficult to get the source of their meaning.

"I enjoy them as they are!"

Indeed, she did. But I could hardly marvel with as much zeal as she did. There was a more profound sympathy that she was able to engage. I did not want to only be a spectator. I wanted to throw myself into the boisterous activity. It was too much to grasp with one look. That was why Alida was so much part of the garden. It allowed her to catch a more inspired glimpse of life.

I wanted to let go with the same vitality. But I felt constrained. I wanted a deeper reassurance. Alida couldn't risk such a deal. She was already situated within this world. As much as she worked to guarantee the survival of the flowers, they also offered her a sense of security. I craved such a mutual arrangement. Even if she left this place, her presence would remain. She blended so well with the absurd balance.

If I asked Alida how she could do three things at once, she would give me a perplexed look.

"I'm basically a simple person."

She wasn't one for debating the details of philosophy. But if I analyzed the affairs of her day, I would recognize that there was an intricate design that held everything together. This went beyond her lists or her program of daily tasks. Of course, I'd watch her change the towels every Monday so that she could do a laundry. Or she would gather the garbage that evening for

pick up the next morning. All these endeavors were accomplished routinely. Beyond that attentiveness, there were more complex orbits that linked her solar system. And I did my best to map these intersections. She always seemed to anticipate any problem. It was as if she was tuned into a metaphysical weather report that put every detail in place.

She strove to make each room immaculate. Even though, I was a boarder, I did what I could to help. At first, I offered my services. Later, I realized that I would just have to pitch in if she was going to accept my help. And I started to adopt the same attitude as her. I could understand the pattern, and I worked to accord every object with that scheme. I worked to generalize this hierarchy to a more universal view of the world. Her aspirations were based on such a plan. This provided me with deeper insights about the physical reality in total.

I started to feel as if I was constructing a massive edifice brick by brick. In the past, such constructors had become overwhelmed with their dreams. And the monuments had only grown in proportion. Alida avoided building castles in the sky. But there was a persistent theme that gave her access to the stratosphere. I did my best to ascend the stairs to the far reaches. But my elaborate creation would not entirely support my desires. Alida was able to accommodate her intent while I remained lost in my dreams.

I worked to practice her method. This was not easy. I had trouble focusing for such long periods of time. My mind would wander. I couldn't keep at one task for too long. Alida could throw herself into the work at hand. I kept stepping back and trying to admire my progress. It only made me more fatigued.

I wanted her to teach me patience. When I tried to learn at her footsteps, I found that I was only making it harder for myself. I would get tongue-tied. And my hands would get all twisted up. I was hardly a good student. I let her go on her way, and I tried to observe her as she kept busy.

Alida never liked to remain still. She had the fortitude of a hummingbird. I watched her flail away at the most frustrating challenges until she discovered a method in the madness. I only wished that I had that facility. I would jump up and down just in the hope that I might be able loosen some connection that would help me carry on. Fortunately, Alida didn't depend on me to make things happen. She didn't mind it if I was an occasional spectator. And I did my best to keep out of the way.

She would find it absurd if I tried to sit her down and have her talk about the cosmos. But she offered a view of our physical reality that would have given Aristotle or Newton a run for their money. I did my best to construct that perspective from first principles. Some might wonder why would I bother. It only helped me in my own journey. I could not help but take comfort from the example that she offered.

I contemplated a cosmology that engaged these massive catastrophes but was still able to sustain life in the most controlled situation. If stopping time in its path meant offering this two-world view, then Alida was quite adept at making things happen in front of the curtain. Even if there was a dying star that was choking off some other star system, she maintained utter calm in the face of disaster. Of course, she could not quiet the disquiet that raged inside. She simply did her best to slow the tumult.

This was not simply a local physics. Without her link to the far reaches of the universe, her individual actions would make no sense. This picture of matter was what haunted

philosophers from the beginning of time. In the infinitesimal, there was a distorted reflection of the whole. From moment to moment, there created this incessant dialogue between these two realms. Within the infinitely small, there was a resistance to the laws of the colossus. And these recalcitrant particles did everything that they could to escape the discipline from their moody Goliaths.

This was a difficult puzzle to solve. The pyramids indicated an initial confrontation with the universe's hyper-geometries. And the great cathedrals were another effort to calibrate belief with a hierarchical arrangement of the physical universe. The rotunda demonstrated a more devilish approach to the same problem. Such a derivation encouraged the squaring of the circle. Even as the New World was becoming old hat, the stars were now open for grabs. And man's reach extended further than he had ever know before.

Alida understood that there was still hubris as man donned wings to fly towards the sun. You could only get so close before the heat would melt all your aspirations. Alida recognized that the curvature of space was a friendly solution to this difficulty. To get to your destination, it was often prudent to avoid the straight line. So she did her best to plot these variations. This never meant that she needed to compromise her intent. She continued to live by her word. But she learned how not to be foolhardy.

No wonder, she didn't want to get taken in by the philosopher's dilemma. She couldn't afford to spend all day contemplating her shortcomings. That only meant that she had stopped her own progress. The planet was moving so she had to move a little faster just to keep up. She was on her own trek so she wouldn't let herself get sidetracked by the flares in deep space.

While some thinkers had speculated how to escape the earth's gravitational pull, the forays into outer space had demonstrated a practical solution to the initial wonder. All this overwhelming excess had been a result of the initial representation the projectile's limitations. Galileo's experiments gestured toward conquering these obstacles. The observer always emphasized an independence from what he observed. Thus, he was seeking transport on a sleeker conveyance. The stars were always his to conquer. If only he could hop on board the merry-go-round as it kept turning. That was a stunt man's art. Alida risked her body each day so that she could climb aboard a craft of her own making. I was doing my best to learn about the means to propel her into the nether regions of space.

Did the flowers tell us the secret? I imagined picking apart the Cherokee rose in the hopes of finding the answer. The petals would be strewn on the ground before me. I would have missed the intent by my furious action. I needed to do more to grasp what was really being said by this delicate flower. It may have never reached the heights of Chartres, but the lovely rose still offered a lofty tale for the willing listener. I need to listen if I was going to truly understand.

I knelt down to take in its fragrance. I needed to become more reverential if I was going to commit myself to the solemn task. I was too much of a non-believer to play along. I wanted to pull out a pen and a pad of paper to calculate all the angles. I wanted to project this complexity into space so that I could map the point of radiance. I was losing the mystery of the flower by concentrating on the details of its form. But I would only find satisfaction if I attempted to complete this picture.

Alida called me over to see the intense luster of the setting sun. She embraced these gentle surprises. But she needed too much consistency in her life to surrender herself to random

occurrences. The flowers could gamble on a streak of good weather. They would suffer a dry spell in the hopes that a spring rain would motivate their growth. However, Alida didn't have those kind of resources. Inclement weather could keep her indoors for days on end. She wasn't lacking for shelter. So the plants were left to fight off the terrible extremes.

Her eyes remained wide open so she could absorb all that she could from her indoor watch. It was important that she could vividly remember her experience of being outdoors. She hated her confinement. But she reconciled herself to the fact that was all that she could do under the circumstances. The flowers radiated a wonderful confidence even from this distance.

Alida understood the trade-off. She survived to enjoy another day. It may not have been enough. But it was her only consolation. In the winter, she couldn't share in this vibrancy. So her bounty was not permanent. But she held on to an affinity with this activity that meant she was never entirely separated from its sustenance.

Her distant view added another facet to her understanding. The flowers never diminished in power. There was always a inner glow that attracted her to their spirit. And she felt that even more as she reminisced about her experiences. The flowers offered her all that they could. And she was able to take from their warmth and turn to a place that was even more engaging. She felt almost compelled by this pull. Such a phenomenon seemed so far removed from actual experience. She hated to feel that she was obsessed by a philosophical idea, and that hardly explained what was really happening to her. It was her only way to maintain contact with what was her ultimate reality.

As remote as this perspective seemed, it still was the main way that she could say in touch with the forces that influenced her life. She didn't want to think of herself as embroiled in philosophy. And she made every effort to throw herself into the physical world. However, it would have been foolish on her part to ignore these currents that swirled around. As much as she made her way in the material realm, she found herself drifting off into this domain. She was hardly living in a dream. This is how experience presented itself to her. If its outlines were murky, that hardly meant that she was delusional. She spent every second of her life rooted in a rigid environment. And she was totally aware of every aspect of her body and all the limits that it placed on her. All the while, she brought an intense curiosity to the profound questions that motivated her. This perspective colored the overall picture. She was focused on the inner dialogue that emanated from every corner of creation. She did her best to interpret this conversation.

Alida was entirely open to the unfolding revelation that made itself known through her observation. There was nothing dramatic about this experience that came to her in bits and pieces. She could not devote herself to a region of experience that only partially stood forth. There was no hardy angel to point the way for her. And if there was she might have stubbornly turned the other way. She found herself participating in this uncovering. It was almost like a detective story. And there was an element of fear that accompanied everything that she was shown. Alida couldn't help but go along. Her actions were totally consistent with her solid grounding in the world. She would not give in to flights of fancy. But she listened closely to her calling. And she did what she could to supplement her vocation with all the unusual discoveries that welled up before her.

Alida's vision gave her an understanding of why the world presented itself as it did. But

there were moments when she felt utterly perplexed. It was only with great reluctance that she relinquished herself over to providence. She wouldn't admit that she was an unbeliever. But it wasn't as if there was a plan to all this absurdity. She only clung to the hope that there was something that would connect her soul to a greater salvation. She didn't pretend that she could understand every complexity within the universe. At the same time, she wasn't about to surrender her will to some great mystery that was outside of her grasp. She did what she could to piece together a view of the whole. In her deep questioning of revelation, she continued to see some kind of shining light to get her going. She really didn't believe that this chaos was a thought of a higher being. Instead, there was a coherence that existed separate from this maze. And there would eventually be a rescue from this morass.

At no time did Alida abandon her faith. And she went through the motions with the overall impression that there were real effects that corresponded to her prayers. She felt that the fundamental connection to the spiritual realm existed through good works in the physical world. And she was attentive to every concrete manifestation of that reality. Her practical nature made her skeptical of any explanation that relied too heavily on mysterious forces in the service of heaven. The timely intervention of spiritual beings was primarily a thing of the past. Her belief on this matter may have added to her overall doubts. But she wasn't averse to seeking grace to help her accomplish the most mundane tasks. A plea to St. Anthony could help turn up a lost ring. But she wasn't holding her breath for the latest miracle. If there were powers that could sustain her own health, such forces would surely be welcome. But she never took each storm as an omen of a greater cataclysm to come.

Through it all, Alida remained clued in to a number of psychic fluctuations that suggested a deeper insight about the universe. Her dreams often seemed vibrant and provided her with a proximity to the unusual. Some were very violent and added to a general feeling of trepidation. But none offered anything specific in the form of supernatural revelation. They just added to an overall sense that she was part of a unique phenomenon. She wasn't able to put her finger on it, but she did detect a design to these strange experiences.

She wasn't going to sit in front of a horror movie to try to gain further understanding about her feelings. That wouldn't have helped. She only thought that was silly; she always did. She didn't enjoy being scared. In no way would it answer any of her questions. As well, she didn't like to dwell too much on her problems. But she did take comfort from her her observations.

Alida knew that she couldn't simply wait for a future revelation. She learned techniques to highlight her feelings. But she wasn't looking for further proof of these phenomenon. She just needed to see clearly enough to make it from day to day. She had her routine that seemed to have nothing to do with the mystical world. But she was driven by this deeper yearning. And she held on through adversity because she felt in touch with her more urgent desires. She learned how to savor the moments in between. That was why she appeared so tuned into this quest. There were times when everything seemed to go in reverse. Then she wondered if there would ever be any rescue from confusion. In these stormier times, the dark clouds seemed ready to announce the world's end. Alida sought refuge in song. She would try to while away her hours while the heavy winds assailed everything around her. Somewhere within, she was able to find comfort. And from the conflict, she found a deeper insight. But she wasn't one to dwell. So she

moved on to her next challenge.

I had seen the paradise that Alida had sketched for me. But what would it be to see the same Arcadia through her eyes? There were moments when she had also envisioned the spacious flight of eagles. But she sought to temper these flights of fancy with a more earthbound speculation. It all meant sense when I watched her in the garden with a spade in hand as she worked to cultivate her flowers. She was separating the light from the darkness. Even in this conflict she noticed a primary oscillation that sanctioned these contraries. The flowers held themselves together by their understanding of this accord.

I wasn't supposed to make more of it than it was. On this occasion, the words were getting in the way. If there was something to say, I would have to perfect its delivery. Otherwise, my praise would sound garbled.

Her theory made no sense until she had immersed herself within the garden. For those days when she couldn't venture out, it was important that she could tap her memories. But they were never meant to be a substitute for actually losing herself in the splendor. When she was inside, she longed for a future time outside. She watched a daisy that she had rescued a week ago. The petals were drooping. It was almost time to admit to its demise. But the stem continued to hold out promise. And Alida didn't want to give up. She had watched this flower gesture towards the window. It could sense the excitement that vibrated beyond.

"Sometimes, there is nothing that we can do!"

She held the flower in the hopes of restoring its vitality. There was little there. But she recognized a form that she could work with. And she did what she could to breathe life into the dying plant. Over time, her work seemed to revive the hopeless case. Everywhere that I looked, I could see other examples of her magic. The plants were able to sustain themselves. But they only had so much to apply against their enemies. Alida understood what she needed to do to inspire all the potential and help the flowers realize their destiny. The garden could not exist without her. Everywhere, there was an imprint of her effect. I was filled with awe trying to contemplate how she made herself part of this world. Her philosophy had a deeper intent. It gave life a meaning beyond its immanence. Such was the very essence of the plant's journey. It learned from its predecessors. In its fragile existence, it learned how to give leave its mark upon the world. Alida was attentive to this marvelous text. She could turn the pages of the book to link together the incredible stories of each of these whimsical character. She loved the intertwining tales that all contributed to form the panorama.

Alida needed to call on an extra resolve to sustain the telling. That only invigorated her more. She came to exist outside of herself in the design that she outlined with her own desires. She did not watch this world from a distance. She lived at the center of its verve.

I had to push myself so that I could motivate my own witnessing. Alida would not let others ignore the fantastic spectacle that was so much a part of her. It would have been so easy to ignore this vitality that was so necessary for Alida survival. I had my own concerns, and the could have distracted me from the garden intense beauty. It manifested itself in an absurd irregularity. The symmetry was evident. Alida was attentive to the opposite course. This was what made the garden such a focus of amazement. It constantly tried to exceed its very definition. The garden constantly spoke of rebirth. I too became extra-heedful of the urgency that compelled the plant world.

To see through her eyes implied a massive burden that brought with it the possibility of awakening the immense power of the universe. Alida was able to chart the bizarre character of this balance. She performed the very pandemonium of the garden.

She was trying to discover an inner peace that she had already known before. She was not reaching deep into a past life. Her sense of contentment did not seem that far out of her grasp. But she could not easily attain that state of mind. There were times that she even thought that she was deliberately working contrary to her own satisfaction. She wondered if she wasn't meant to achieve happiness. That seemed ridiculous. She did enough to keep herself functioning. Wasn't that enough to guarantee her salvation. At the same time, she felt somewhat excluded from her eventual reward. It wasn't as if she wasn't meant to receive her just desserts on the earth. But she couldn't figure out why things were still so beyond her. She could taste the ambrosia that she so craved. But she could not achieve enough to sustain that part of herself.

Alida never felt bitter. She hadn't been excluded from Paradise. She could observe a proximity every time that she looked out her window. But she wasn't sure how to embrace these gifts. As well, she wanted them to unlock some other mystery that they seemed to announce. She didn't want to get ahead of herself. And she didn't want to assume a harmony that hardly existed. Nevertheless, she did feel in touch with a more profound arrangement in the universe.

In these solitary moments, she wasn't sure how to push further in the hopes of a more comforting revelation. There seemed a point that she would just have to let go. This wasn't something that she was creating in her head. But at each stage, she felt that her thoughts were leading her along. At times, she believed that all that she had to do was give it time, and it would all make sense. It wasn't just a puzzle. And her faith told her that there was some other reality that would put everything in a sharper light. And her occasional glimpse of this spirit seemed enough to bring her closer to the realization that she needed.

She didn't want to be accused of pushing things. She had made it this far. And that seemed to be the natural progress to correspond to all her efforts. But she knew that she expected more. She didn't want imagine herself as a frustrated customer looking for a refund. She hadn't brought such a strict interpretation to her experience. But she needed a clearer sign so that she could keep going.

It wasn't as if the darkness would throw her in a total oblivion. She wasn't ready to abandon the quest. And commitment was not fraught with despair. But she didn't know how to get over that impediment that seemed to be in her way. She didn't want to think of her spiritual life as some kind of challenge. But she did face a major disquiet that colored all her activity.

Her hesitation never caused her to stop in her tracks. She never avoided work that was necessary to keep the place going. When she couldn't participate directly in what was happening, she had a clearer picture of her malaise. It was rooted quite directly in insight. It spoke to that fact that she was given enough reassurance to keep her going, but she was never blessed with the sensation that allowed her to truly rest.

Each time that the questions struck her, she did what she could to put them out of her mind. She wasn't meant to do the work of providence. However, she did have to wonder about the consistency of the promise. It would never be enough to marvel at what was arrayed before her. She wanted it to mean something more. That didn't make her selfish, just wise.

She couldn't live with such abstractions. For her, they only meant confusion. She needed

to make do with what was before her in all its splendor. That was why she did her best to piece together the pattern that held everything in place.

What was she supposed to do with her knowledge? It helped her to enliven each individual encounter with a tenderness in creation. Thus, she could observe a more urgent passion in all living things. Even the recalcitrant squirrel had his mission. And there was something entirely poignant in his struggle.

Despite her efforts to bridge the gap between her desires and the will of providence, Alida recognized how the garden concealed a terrible devastation. Try as she might, she could not muster the effort to counter this incredible power. If she looked at things in a different light, she would see the haunting shadows of this perspective. She did everything that she could to try to avert her eyes from such an omen.

When the air was too heavy for her to go outside, the garden was subject to neglect. Too many days like this, and Alida would notice how the noxious weeds were creeping in on her order. She was very tolerant in her view of living things. They needed a chance to develop on their own terms. But the weeds had nothing good to offer her vision. She would do her best to curtail their influence. Sometimes, it was all too overwhelming.

The cycle of life had its own threats to her well-being. Bad weather and disease left the plants vulnerable. As the rot took over, the former majesty crumbled before her eyes. This was all part of the renewal that prepared the next season. But that didn't make it any less heartbreaking. For her, the roses attained an immortality that could not be upset by the temporary set backs of time. But when she faced such a massive power, it was difficult to challenge its dominion.

She observed the struggle more fervently in the soul. Even the parables spoke of the wickedness of the weeds. Alida could not help but allow her first-hand experience to influence her attitude. More than this ever-present intruder, she sensed a fundamental decay that pervaded life. She would watch the flowers droop as life was taken away from them. She mourned for their loveliness and wished that they did not have to suffer such a loss. It seemed that their exuberance resulted from their recognition of their own mortality. In this, they found the ultimate motivation. They exceeded their own being in their zeal to make their legacy everlasting.

Everywhere that she looked, she could see the unstable nature of life's triumphs. She adored the vanity of the brightly colored plants who would not let their future demise bring them down. Alida admired the struggle. She took strength for herself in the battle against decay. In the valiant gestures, she too believed that she had discovered a way to surpass these deleterious influences.

It was impossible to avoid all these signs of damage. You could never let your guard down as there were always dangers close by. Even as the green stalks stretched themselves out to touch the sky, they could feel the limits of their quest. That tension seemed to galvanize the inner power. They lived in the space that they sketched out. Their geometry was an intimate part of their being. Alida tried better to understand this picture. It brought an urgency to her own experience. Even on days when she felt too weak to move, she used her vision to reassure her about her place in this complexity. She would not let herself become lost in the tangle. She was always pushing herself upwards and outwards.

Beyond their outward appearances, Alida was becoming acquainted with the inner dynamic that gave plants their excitement. She never felt tied to the earth when she looked upon her garden. Her thoughts provided her with the launching pad to touch the heavens. She could stretch out in this place and reach out to meet the sky. She did not simply skim the far reaches; she found a way to strengthen her grasp. So she overcome any constraints upon the flowers' magnificence. They helped her to soar.

There would be times when Alida was working hard in garden, and she felt the need to pause in middle of her task. She took time out to admire everything around her. She breathed in the sweet fragrance of the sprightly vegetation. She could live off this lofty perfume. She felt herself transported to some far off land.

I thought about her contentment. The garden was such a natural setting for her. It was almost as if she was appealing to one of her mythic flowers to take her being. She looked up at the great pines. They were the columns which held together this temple. And the sky was the ceiling of this edifice.

I was a lone worshiper in a holy shrine location. I had felt Alida's touch, and I became one with this place. I worked to grasp what was miraculous in this conjunction of forces. Alida still held to her belief, and it had it fundamental expression in the garden. I could sense this harmony even without her explanation. Her vision had so clearly taken shape. I thought about what these ideas meant independently of these grounds. The ideas continued to reinforce her being within this realm. These ethereal forms could not so easily migrate to heaven.