

Garden in the

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Just like every day since they moved in together, Adrian rode in Michelle's hatchback on the same road to work. A minute or two more and they'd be stuck, once again, in the traffic jam on the roundabout. Adrian sighed.

The usual delivery lorries from the supermarket, the leather-clad man on the grunting bike, a stream of anonymous cars with their crowd of faceless drivers and there they were, stood stock still with engines growling in the jam on the roundabout. Michelle sighed, Adrian twiddled his thumbs.

Why it had to be now he may never know, but now it had to be. He turned to her, stroked her cheek and apologised for what he must do.

Michelle didn't seem surprised and they exchanged a kiss of parting, then Adrian stepped onto the pavement.

Beside him was a railing to prevent pedestrians falling over the deep end of a stairwell. Adrian made his way to the stairs and walked down into the pedestrian subway that would take him to the other side of the roundabout. He'd never been down here before, nor did he know anyone who had; he expected to find nothing but graffiti and litter.

Beneath the middle of the roundabout, shielded by the high hedges that barred the road's view, lay a garden of brick raised beds. Adrian checked his watch for time and realised how much allowance they had made for the jams, it seemed suddenly like a life time.

Riding on a wave of discovery he sat on the low brick wall that was the edge of the nearest bed. Gently he stroked a flower by his side as the world's weight melted away. He stared at the flower as he caressed it.

The garden seemed to grow as he heaved himself on to the soil, having removed his shoes into his hand. He began, carefully, to tread the soil and gazed in awe at the life around him. The earth beneath his feet seemed almost to embrace him.

He came across a lush berry bush, its red fruit deceptively small. Adrian picked one and placed it upon his tongue, squeezing with slow firmness against the roof of his mouth. Juice burst forth and flooded his senses, almost his very world, it made him feel as though the fruit had become his head.

Tentatively, not wanting to deny others of this gift, he picked only two more berries. These he cradled in his hand as he walked slowly onward, savouring their very existence.

The time seemed full, yet short all the same, as his fingers played over the flowers. Somewhat suddenly, though it was not abrupt, one seemed to captivate him entirely.

As he stepped forward Adrian realised, in wonder, that its leaves were as large as his body. Its aroma was sweet, a heavenly scent, and its texture smooth yet fulfilling. He lifted a leaf, though he knew not why, and was stunned by the sight that he found; curled there beneath, smiling at him, a young lady lay nude on the ground.

He hazarded to greet her, blushing with nerves, she smiled and replied in like manner. He offered his hand and she took it, to stand, they hugged and their eyes met in wonder.

From that moment on they would wander together, the original path not forgotten. He fashioned her clothes from the gifts of the earth, and she dressed him as well in kind.

Adrian realised in his hand were still nestled the fruits he had found so wondrous. He offered one to share and they dined, remarkably well on so little. With caution and care they saved each a seed, and planted them where they had eaten. Then smiling together and linking their hands, they danced for a while in their heaven.

It seemed somehow right, as they passed back again, that the seeds were already in fruit. Not minuscule berries, but great rounded bellies, one each bore a boy and a girl.

New parents delighted and cradled the young, their children they knew through the mystery. They fed them and dressed them, taught them and led them along as they returned to their trek.

Together they frolicked as they tread the small forest, all four in love with the land. Eventually came the way to the end, the way to the far side of the roundabout.

It was no easy choice to walk up the stairs, but it was one that had to be made. Adrian and his wife, now known as Sophie, knew that way their destination lay.

As they walked to the road Adrian stood and stared, Michelle's car had just pulled around. They greeted each other, each gazed at the other and remarked on the change in each visage. For both now were grey, their youth wrinkled away and each, they saw, had new companions.

All, to each other, were introduced as the former couple exchanged their tales. Michelle's drive had been long, slow, tedious and hard, yet some things she could not remember. The husband she had she wasn't sure why, the children seemed similarly strange. She expressed no small envy for the wonder of Adrian's journey, or the joy that she saw in his eyes.

Soon, once more, the parties divided. Adrian's path, he now knew, had changed. With Sophie he walked, their children now parting, contentedly toward the setting sun. Their hands never parted, their voices never raised, as they talked of their time...

In the garden.