

Roots Claim the Ruins

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Gardens are hardly the worst place to be buried. As the world would warm into springtime, tender sprigs of mint stir the rain-moistened soil. Fleeshy curves of youthful crocus flowers push rich earth aside, rising to take their place amongst the changes of the season. They were perennials; as windblown particles of silt darken the pebbled surface of my headstone, as rainfall smoothes the chiseled edges of its epigraph, nourishing the lush patches of moss that obfuscate my name, years, relations with each drop—I watch the blooms rise and fall, rise and fall. Every wave fuller than the last, every wave bolstered by the last.

Sat beside the crocus patch, I lean against my slab of stone, its bumps and ridges pressing the cool of shade into the base of my neck, shoulders, back. I reminisce about the times that its divots and cracks would have stamped their shape into my flesh; purpled impressions would fade to red as blossoming warmth announced the return of blood. You would think nothing of it, not beyond noticing the dents during a hasty brush of the palm over raw skin. But this

world doesn't leave its mark on ghosts. Death tempers the soul into its final form, and out from the churned ground arises a phantom, tragically impervious to change.

I rest my hands into the dense pad of clovers blanketing the burial plot. My shape sinks away there, replaced with verdant rounds of supple growth. They continuously shrivel, decay into the soil, and sprout, unfolding broad leaves and redolent trefoils as I absentmindedly run my fingers through the phasing greenery, eyes turned towards the sky. I gaze beyond the tips of maple branches framing the garden; they lengthen further into view as I follow the arc of stars across time, across space. Rocks crumble off the mound of stone at my back. Rain freezing to ice carves fissures into them, giving way to cracks, then crevices, then breaks. Granules of dirt and sand soften the jagged edges. Returning roots claim the ruins. I wonder about the moment after stars burn out, the way the celestial elements sift away, their light finite, expended.

But their light reaches me, luminous pin pricks bellowing, *I be here, and you, too* after stillness gives way to dust. The clovers,

plush and warm after a day of consuming sunlight, feel alien in my touch. The breeze, lulling summer heat down to an evening's cool, humid curve into night, whispers in peculiar tongue. Its breath stirs the garden into a chorus of rustling waves while I remain, unmoved, deciphering the lyrics. And I decide that while this garden graces my death, the cosmos commune with my soul.