

Orange Tears

by Glen Binger

Remember me? I am the large, dented acorn you threw at your brother, Ken, during the huge acorn war of 1969. You were thirteen. He was eleven. And the entire neighborhood was in your backyard that day. Steve, Jack, Jerry, Tom, Dan, Jeff, Drew. A bunch of the kids from the basketball court and even Stephanie and Morgan were there, watching from the stoop. What am I saying; of course you don't remember me. My appearance has changed. I am now a massive Oak standing in the garden where your mother once grew tomatoes and peppers. I'm nearly forty years of age and know only of the other Oaks standing on the other side of this fence. There aren't anymore tomatoes and peppers; in case you haven't noticed.

I see you've come back. You have aged, but I recognized you from the moment you stepped out that back door. The same eager face. The same pace in your walk. I haven't seen your mother in quite a while. The garden is full of weeds. Is everything okay? Assuming she passed, please accept my deepest condolences. And who is that young man you're sharing a beer with? Is he your son? Old enough to drink, I see. Congratulations. I like his beard. He has a similar nose to your mothers. A good looking kid, indeed.

You seem to have recognized me. At least I think you did. You are leaning on my trunk and talking to your son. "This is probably one of the trees from this giant acorn war we had as kids," you say. So maybe you do recognize me. It makes me feel better to be around a familiar face. "Yeah, there were probably fifty kids in this very backyard, that day," you say. Your son slugs what is left of his beer. "It really is a sad thing to see all of this and remember so many things, knowing you'll never see it again."

Wait, what do you mean?

"I can imagine," says your son.

He walks over to you, beneath me, and pats you on the shoulder. What is happening? Tell me, please?

You chuckle. "You know... when I was a kid I always thought this house would be in the family for centuries."

Are you selling the house? You look upset. It sounds like you're selling the house. It's okay if you are. I just want to know. Tell me, please, are you selling the house?

"I know the feeling," says your son. "I think that about our house all the time."

I begin to weld up. My leaves grow heavy.

I don't want you to sell the house. What if the new owners cut me down? I probably won't see you again if you sell it. Do you know how hard it was not seeing you for forty years?

I feel an orange tear break loose and float down. It lands softly next to your son's feet.

"Look," he says, "your upsetting the tree."

You both laugh. And it makes me sadder. You laugh and I feel sad.

Your son turns and heads back towards the stoop and the door with an empty glass bottle in his hand. You pause and turn towards me, looking up into my foliage tears yet to fall. You seem upset. I haven't seen your face in forty years. But that doesn't mean I have forgotten how you look when you're upset. You push off me and pat the bark of the area on which you were just leaning. I feel another orange tear snap loose and waft down. But before it reaches you,

you have already turned for the backdoor. And for the last time in our lives together, I whisper, "Goodbye." You must have heard me, because the moment before you step inside, you turn. You turn, look up at me again, nod your head, and you smile.

