Lovers on the Lawn

by Kenton deAngeli

One day, every girl I've ever slept with showed up on my lawn. They started to arrive in the morning, parking their cars and bikes across the street, and then in my neighbor's driveway, and finally, in the road itself. It took them all day to assemble. They took taxis and carted carfulls from the airport. I watched them through the blinds. They didn't seem interested in approaching the house; they spent all day mingling, trampling my bushes and claiming small plots, like a flock of geese. In the afternoon a catering service arrived, and they chatted in small groups, sipping cocktails.

When night came, dozens of tents sprouted, and they felled a small tree and made a campfire. I could hear them throughout the evening, a low murmur of pleasant conversation and shrieks of sudden laughter. My neighbors called, complaining of the noise and the fact that the group had stolen several sets of lawn furniture. I told them I didn't have anything to do with it, that they should go over themselves. The streetlights blinked once, twice, and then began to glow, and through my window I saw my neighbors make their way over, and after a few minutes, accept hotdogs or swigs from brown-bagged bottles. Most went home and stopped calling; others spent the night there, laughing and swapping stories. Someone pulled out an acoustic guitar.

For three days I kept my blinds closed and didn't leave the house. They were content to stay where they were, and I didn't want to interrupt whatever they were planning; I paced my hallways and thought of a thousand small guilty things. I rationed my food and smoked in the bathroom.

On the second night there was a small series of taps at my bedroom window. Curious, I slid it open, and waited. There are night bugs in the suburbs, but what few find a place to live between the asphalt and chlorinated pools were inaudible below the murmur of my new guests.

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/kenton-deangeli/lovers-on-the-lawn»*
Copyright © 2010 Kenton deAngeli. CC licensed as Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike. Some rights reserved.

A voice came from the dark opening in my window, hesitant and small. “I'm sorry,” it said. “Do you need any food?”

I waited. I asked, "why is everyone here," and immediately dreaded the answer. I heard her creep away, and sat there for a while in the cool breeze from the opening.

I slept fitfully. I could have cleaned but I didn't. I surfed the internet and looked through old family photo albums. I ate cereal three times a day and played chess against myself, losing every time.

I watched the girls on my lawn and tried to decipher through their body language which one had approached my window. A shuffling of the feet, an unfolding of the arms, a glance towards the sky. A sign that read, "I forgive him, even though no one else does."

I tried to explain what was going on to the colony of ants that had been living in my kitchen.

“You've been good to us,” they buzzed. “You've fed us well and respected our colony.”

“Also I've never had an anteater for a pet,” I added, not amusing them.

“Regardless,” they said (they all spoke in unison, their tiny voices sounding like thousands of ball bearings dropping into a punch bowl), “we'll miss you if they decide to execute you.”

Finally, a select group approached the porch and rang my doorbell. In anticipation I had worn a suit and black tie. It felt like an execution, the air electric and all my ex-lovers on the lawn. They held a document I had seen them collaboratively edit during their stay on a small computer workstation they had hooked up to a generator.

"We have come to a decision," they read. "Factions within the group argues strongly for castration, death, dismemberment, encasing your body in bronze for defacement, and forgiveness. In the end, however, none of these verdicts gained the consent of the majority."

I held my breath. A horse nickered. I wondered how they had gotten in touch with her.

"We also considered torturing those among our number who have forgiven you, while you watched, rooted to the ground in terror." What a bunch of Solomons.

They siphoned all the gas from the generator. Red gas cans appeared from backpacks and luggage, and after packing up, they doused my lawn in kerosene. Several passed out from the fumes. I waited on my porch, woozy and apprehensive. One by one they left, by car, by bike. A bus arrived. The last one gave a derisive wave and dropped a match from the window of her taxi, and there was no more oxygen in the air, and my vinyl siding melted, and I hoped they all felt better about everything.