

Watering

by Maryanne Stahl

Late afternoon in a small-town garden in high summer I stand watering. The soil drinks like an infant while the air stills, subatomic particles of space.

Earlier, in class, one of my best students complained, "Sometimes when I feel the urge to create, I don't know whether to grab my paints, my camera, my guitar or my pen."

"You could have sex," her friend, sitting in the desk next to hers, joked.

Not make love, not express your affection and desire in imaginative ways. Have sex. In other words, though I doubt she meant what she was saying, procreate.

The fat white daisies perk immediately; the drooping roses take a bit longer. The lavender doesn't seem to notice: some plants prefer life dry. I move on to shrubs, then grass. I water as though emptying my mind through the hose that snakes round my ankles like a mute animal.

"Oh, sex," my multi-talented student had replied, "that's too easy."

The class laughed and moved on. Moved with the ease and certainty of youth in high summer.

In my garden I continue to water. I don't think about babies, about embryos lost in blood and time. I don't think, I just breathe and water. I water and the spray evaporates from my skin, becomes clouds, becomes rain, becomes everything.

