

Trickery

by Paul de Denus

The outside world wasn't very bright. Overhead, the clouds loomed and rolled, ran with a spiking rain that soaked through the back terrace. She didn't sense the sun; she hadn't in weeks. Dr. Quenville had urged her to allow time to heal. Things would eventually look up. What did he know? Maybe it was a trick of the gloom. She blinked her eyes and stared. It was real; the fence that hedged along the back yard had moved three feet forward. She tweaked the blind, slid her eyes to the side. The neighboring line of tall pink oleander had also moved closer, encroaching on her property line. A glance upward verified the overhanging oak tree, once twenty feet in height, had dropped lower, its branches almost halfway to her rooftop. Two days ago her television had stopped working. The radio too. She had wanted to find out about the weather; the weather found her first. It had poured all night while she was digging. So she had dug faster. There was more rain to come. The sky said so. She tweaked the blind again; the fence was waiting on her patio. Above, a spindly branch screeched along her roof, a blackened fingernail on metal scrap. Its dripping canopy hung low, a gauzy spider's sack. She went down to the basement. The shovel was jammed in the heap of dirt that inched near the ceiling. She spit twice on her filthy palms and started digging again. She knew she was right. Dr. Quenville had been wrong. The only way to go was down.

