

Ripening

Ben Orth

ADAM kneels in a burgeoning garden patch, a profusion of vines. Everything is vibrantly green. There's a softness in the light. A riot of flowers, both weeds and vegetables. Two small apple trees flank the garden.

ADAM: We have a weed garden.

LILITH: *(off)* What?

ADAM: A weed garden. That's what we've got. I don't even know what to pull up.

LILITH: *(enters)* Just leave it alone.

ADAM: It wouldn't set a very promising precedent.

LILITH: No. But there's a lot of growth here. Why inhibit it? Besides, it looks like the vegetables are fine.

ADAM: What if the weeds choke them out?

LILITH: We'll buy produce at the farmer's market. This is nice. Let's leave it alone.

ADAM: If you say so.

ADAM is standing, beaming. LILITH is sitting. The garden is straight rows, very orderly. Tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, strawberries, asparagus; all in their place. Lots of brown, negative space. Light glares over everything.

ADAM: Now this is nice. We whipped it into shape.

LILITH: Yeah...but maybe the plants aren't thriving. It seems barren.

ADAM: We haven't fertilized yet.

LILITH: Do we have to? All those chemicals...they feel like cheating.

ADAM: Well what would you do?

LILITH: *(stands)* We could sing to them. That's supposed to help plants grow.

ADAM: Sing what?

LILITH: Something to inspire growth.

They dance instead of singing LILITH first. ADAM joins her.

The garden has grown up. It's not wild, but clearly prolific. There are many near-ripe fruit and vegetables. It's mostly green, with a little brown. ADAM and LILITH sit off to the side, on a blanket, a bowl of strawberries between them.

ADAM: I was wrong. This is nice.

LILITH: Definitely. Let's keep it like this.

ADAM: Yeah. We'll live like this forever, sitting here eating the strawberries.

LILITH: I'd like that.

ADAM: Me too. I was serious.

LILITH: Good.

ADAM: I didn't expect this.

LILITH: Me neither. This is good.

The garden is going brown. The asparagus has gone twiggy. ADAM is sitting by a Dutch oven on a camp stove. LILITH is packing vegetables into baskets. The air smells heavily of apples and cinnamon. ADAM is filling mason jars with applesauce.

ADAM: We used to do this when I was younger. We'd collect crab apples from down the road with Mom. Then we'd come home and make our own applesauce. It's been years.

LILITH: We raised ducks at my house. I'd like to do that. We'd need a pond though.

ADAM: As long as they don't poop everywhere the way geese do.

LILITH: And we could have koi too. Big orange ones.

ADAM: Big dreams.

LILITH: Always.

(ADAM screws shut the jar he's filled. He places it in a basket.)

ADAM: Ready to go to the farmer's market?

LILITH: Sure.

ADAM: I'll bet we make a bundle.

LILITH: Hey now. We don't have to make anything. We're feeding people. (pause) Let's get to it.

They pick up their baskets, two for ADAM, one for LILITH. They exit.

It's night, blue and black. All the plants are brown. ADAM and LILITH lie on the ground in big coats. Stars are everywhere above them.

LILITH: It's a shame everything is gone already. I'd love a crisp apple to munch on right now.

ADAM: Next year will be just as good.

LILITH: I hope so.

(LILITH sits up.)

LILITH: There. There went one. Did you see it?

ADAM: Yes.

LILITH: Quick. Make your wish.

(They're silent for a moment.)

LILITH: OK What did you wish for?

ADAM: It won't come true if I tell you.

LILITH: Oh, come on!

ADAM: All right...I wished for early autumn.

LILITH: And all plants and fruits and vegetables. Me too.

Offstage a duck quacks. The stars intensify. They bloom and the plants return, vibrant green, but not wild. The duck enters.

LILITH: Oh, wow.

ADAM: You said it.

LILITH: I didn't expect this.

ADAM: Me neither.

LILITH: We'll keep it like this, this time.

ADAM: Just like this.