

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/4

Michael Phillips

Tending

The year we lost our way
Your garden thrived.
Tilling, digging, planting...
You gave the ground purpose.
You dulled your nails,
took to wearing hats,
wore your knees threadbare.
Then came the long wait till harvest—
to test your devotion.
You lugged the green watering can
from the spigot, balanced high on your hip,
and monitored the sunlight and rain,
apportioned so unequally.
You pruned and weeded,
nurtured every sprout and flower,
and waged war on rabbits and beetles.
Barred from these ceremonies of evasion,
I'd often pause at an upstairs window
and catch your lips moving while you worked.
Maybe songs or prayers, complaints or pleas.
Maybe things you couldn't say to me.
Sometimes I'd talk back,
beyond your hearing,
before passing from the window
and fading deeper into the empty house.