

Dandelions

Not long after retirement, a dad hosts a family barbecue on a flawless lawn with diagonal mow patterns. His granddaughter toddles barefoot, her pink soles cushioned against an endless sea of green, but he is too distracted to notice. He is disappointed with his son. *You can't quit a job because you're frustrated*—he says. *You don't understand what it's like to be trapped in an environment where nothing you do makes a difference*—the son says.

Over the next several weeks, dandelions sprout across town, indiscriminately infiltrating well-manicured and overgrown lawns alike. No one is spared. The once joyous act of mowing, laboring, toiling over the dad's lush space becomes a Sisyphean task. Fertilizer with weed killer and direct sprays, they only last for a moment. A slight breeze carries new dandelion seeds, and the battle begins anew. The only way to overcome the dandelion epidemic would be a concerted attack from every homeowner on his street. And the next one. And, maybe, the next. But many don't care about the invasion, accepting things as they are and always will be. His lawn is his domain, but he has no authority to tell anyone else what to do with theirs.

No longer does the dad look forward to early summer mornings, the air sticky and sweet, perfect for mowing. Driveway chats about the best products and yard rivalry are just a memory. He averts his eyes when he walks past an open window. It no longer brings him joy.

Years later, when he is no longer able to give his home the care it deserves, the dad packs up his things. His son, older and wiser, comes over to help. The dad gazes at his lawn, traces of its former beauty still evident despite the over-chemicalization that has led to yellowed patches and bare earth spots. *I'll be glad to let someone else take care of this yard for once*—he says. *You did your best*—the son says.

The son will never tell him who spread the first dandelion seeds all those years ago, as a lesson in how devastating futility can be. He had been a fool to believe his father didn't already know.