

The gardener stood with her hands on her hips, beads of perspiration inching down her spine.

By midday her upper lip tasted briny and her knuckles were caked with soil.

Nests of lettuce leaves huddled in rows all around her, cherry trees in the distance.

The leaves fluttered like twirling dancers in the soft wind, occasionally kissing their edges.

Ants and worms carved speedways into the ground, deer flies flew like airplanes above.

At nightfall the scarecrow whispered lullabies to the garden as it patiently listened.

Blanketed by stars, the plot of earth filled its lungs with sky and grew quietly.

Behind a window, the gardener slept beneath her quilt.

She dreamt of celery stalks like trees, and beets like baseballs, and peas like emeralds.

Her vision was that of a vegetable carnival, with tents of corn husks supported by bamboo beams.

When the sun bled into the sky, she rose to water her garden.

She saw the green blades unfurl and shake under the sprinkler, and how the prickly stems grew latter.

And farther, by the edge of the cherry trees, she heard the faint echo of applause in a carnival.