

## Tunnels

Marty watched as the moving company lifted his belongings through the entrance of his new home. His gaze moved around the facade of the house, grumbling to himself at the sight of the cracking paint on the exterior walls and the crumbling roof shingles. As he walked closer to the front door, he noticed the cobwebs lining its crevices. Marty groaned, lamenting the idea of having to deal with pests in his house. This house was supposed to be a space exclusively for him. Still, he stepped inside. The smell of dust and faux leather permeated the entrance, and the overhead lights flickered sporadically. At the end of the front hallway, Marty could see the house's yard. In stark contrast to the disheveled interior, the yard looked to be well-manicured. Yet, Marty frowned, for gardening was not his forte. Years without proper exercise gave him a top-heavy frame and faulty joints, and he was well aware that he'd have trouble maintaining the yard's picturesque composure. Breaking his gaze from the yard, he glanced down at the documents in his hand, ink smudged from the paper soaking up the sweat from his hands. Marty felt a twinge of grief in his chest, this paper was all he had left of her. Looking back at the yard, it glowed with the same radiance that the love of his life once had, calling to Marty in a familiar, comforting tone. The grass almost looked as if it was smiling with the same warm smiles that his children had once given him. The gap between Marty and his family suddenly felt shorter than ever, like he was inches away from being with them again. He had to take care of it.

The following morning, Marty stumbled into his living room, hoping to catch a glimpse of the radiance of his yard. He yearned for the grass to shine again, yet, in the corner of the yard, there was an imperfection. A flaw. Someone—no—something had pushed aside the dirt and dug a hole, creating a small, but noticeable brown patch in the grass' chartreuse beauty. Marty's brow creased and his lips curled down into a scowl. Some *pestilence* had the *gall* to make a flaw in his

lawn's beauty. Grumbling, Marty slipped on his beaten shoes, and set out to kick the dirt back into place.

Once again, Marty awoke in the morning, hoping to catch a glimpse of the morning sun as it shone through the dewdrops clinging to the grass. He desperately hoped the hole from the previous morning was a fluke— his feet were aching from trying to shove the dirt back into place. He once again gazed out at the yard, and was immediately befallen with anger. Not one, but *three* new holes had surfaced in the grass. Marty felt the blood rushing to his head, his face red with frustration. Thoughts raced through his mind— Was this sabotage? Had his estranged wife sent someone to torture him? Who, in their right mind, could want to take away the one joy he had left? Marty slipped on his shoes again and grabbed the rusted shovel that had been precariously resting against the exterior wall. Fueled by his frustration, he pushed his creaking joints through the pain as he packed the loose dirt back into the holes from whence they came.

On the third morning, Marty sprung out of bed. He felt the aching of his back and arms from pressing dirt into the ground, but he continued on, shuffling worriedly into his living room where he could examine the yard. Upon looking out the window, his eyes widened. A bead of sweat rolled down his forehead. He could feel every bone in his body rattling under the pressure of his rapidly building rage. Before him, an apocalypse had occurred— the lawn was *littered* with holes. Innumerable mounds of dirt choked the once-vibrant contour of the grass. Up above, the clouds had gathered to cast a shadow on his house, coating the sky in an empty gray, leaving the sun nowhere to be seen. In his mind, Marty's impulses screamed. He ran to his kitchen and grabbed a knife, before hurrying outside once more. Marty could only hear one thought through his anger— he was going to *kill* whatever was making these holes in his once-perfect yard. Marty

approached one of the holes, and bent over it, knife raised and ready to strike at a moment's notice.

And then, he saw them. Small gray balls of fur, squeaking and peaking their heads out of the hole Marty cowered over eagerly. The wind picked up around Marty, and he locked eyes with the rabbits. He could feel a raw, almost sadistic urge to snap his knife-bearing arm down on them and finally eliminate the foul beasts that had torn up his yard. The rabbits, now staring back at Marty, shivered in fear at the sight of the old man posed like a cat above them. One of them whimpered, slithering back in hopes of escape. The rest began to follow suit, and at that moment, time almost seemed to slow down. Gazing into the eyes of the rabbits, Marty swore he could see the face of his wife in their beady, quivering pupils. Their timid squeaks and whimpers morphed and distorted into the cries of his children, their screams piercing his frail eardrums. As the rabbits continued to crawl away, Marty's mind flew into a whirlwind. He realized that his obsession with his yard's perfection was driving them away again. His children, his wife... they had cared about him so deeply, and yet he could never see past their holes, the mounds of dirt they dug up in his heart. He began to choke as he forced back the hot, ugly tears that welled in his eyebags. His arms locked up, and despite being so intent on killing the rabbits, he couldn't move. Through stinging eyes and burning cheeks, Marty could scream only one guttural word—  
***“FUCK!”***

And the rabbits scurried.