

Raspberry Memories

by

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I watch him plant raspberry canes in the side yard.
He digs into the black earth.
His tools familiar with the task,
comfortable in the dirt.
She designed the borders, and
he still plants them.
He unrolls the cotton string
and runs it between the hooks to keep the canes in check.

The wicker basket waits.

He hangs his laundry as she did:
shirts, shorts, socks, and sheets.

The lines dip low to the lawn, and
he props them with an old pole
kept for just that purpose.

Rain threatens in the afternoon.
He moves slowly, and
I hurry to help.
We fold together,
his eyes grateful above the sheet's edge.

Later, on my back step,
I find a jar of jam.
He made it from her recipe.
Hand picked raspberries, warm and plump,
I watched him gather them earlier in the summer.
Old arthritic hands moving along the canes, carefully choosing.
A few stolen for his breakfast, the rest saved for making jam.

The jar sits quietly on my shelf.
It is all I have left.
The canes have not been tended by the new neighbors.
They must not know the secrets of fresh raspberry jam.