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In Gardenland

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In Gardenland

Eric Orosco, Editor-in-Chief 2018

Summer's suckled Steelhead Creek into a trickle
absent of thriving greens and white herons, of
murk-water catfish and lulls of a current —
Perennial tents and tarps huddle against trunks
of trees, residents trekking levee inclines
spotted with purple needlegrass.

Gravel-top walkers
cruising north along the levee's curve salivate
at memories of food and drink: mother's fingers
flipping tortillas over an open flame, ice
cubes floating in Dollar Store cups of Sunny D,
potatoes slow-cooking under blankets of garlic,
onion, and ground black pepper. Home pulling at
some magnet buried just below the second pair
of ribs.

On his way home, a fag
considers the time he bussed to Grass Valley
to meet a guy who dreamed of becoming a porn
star. The guy mounted him in an attic bedroom
and came quickly. Thank you for being nice, the fag
said and the guy replied: I'm nice to all the boys —
Compares the attic to the apartment off Watt
where it was easier to say nothing than to
say no another time. Conjures a Venn diagram
and shade the middle oval in gray.

Twilight stitches
a blanket over the tree-lined horizon.
The air is warm and sweat collects in the fabric
that hugs the fag's body. He pauses and says a prayer
for lost innocence, for the years before the only
time he took his shirt off was for a man. Like a baby
spider riding a strand of silk, the prayer moves
in some direction decided by outside forces
until it tangles around a dry blade of grass.