The Roots of Life

Riley Kinder

University of the Pacific
A few memories emerge:
A straw hat slowly unraveling,
Dirty gloves,
And a man, still like stone.
Except he wasn’t stone.
He was a tree, tall and magnificent.
He swayed with the wind.
In every memory I have of him,
He is in the garden
Tending the fruits and vegetables:
The rising cucumber vines and brushes of strawberry gold,
A protective defense of lemon and orange trees
With their prickly trunks and outreaching limbs.
He gave us shade in the summer and peaches in the spring.
He belonged out there in his garden, as much as he belonged with us.
No matter how much I search,
Desperately,
I cannot find one memory of the garden without him in it--
Which is why when he was gone, it went as well.
Now it’s just
Overgrown, patches of brown, neglected and
dead.

The Roots of Life
Riley Kinder