

The Lawn

by Jessica Barrah



The garden meant the world to my husband Malcolm. He adored pottering around, pruning, planting, digging but most of all, he was obsessed with keeping the lawn like an expanse of striped green velvet.



I was never that interested. My domain was the house, although...



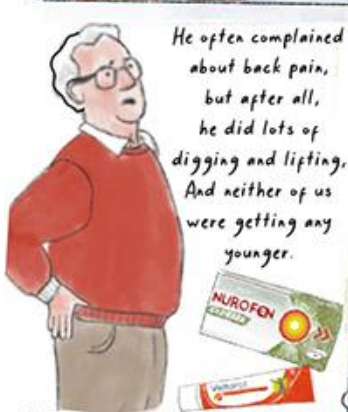
I liked the patio on a sunny day



& I appreciated the homegrown veggies



Within reasonable limits



He often complained about back pain, but after all, he did lots of digging and lifting. And neither of us were getting any younger.



His back pain got worse, but, typical man, he wouldn't see a doctor. One particularly bad day I tried to get an emergency appointment with our GP, but they said to take him to A&E.



When he finally saw a doctor it was too late



Chemo had little effect, and there was not much more they could do. In those last weeks he still loved to sit in his beloved garden.



I'll never see that cherry tree blossom again.

And when he was too weak to sit, we moved a hospital bed to the living room, so that he could look out.



Spring came again,
and even without Malcolm,
the garden came back to life.



The grass started growing too.

And kept on going.
It was all up to me now.



The shed was just
as Malcolm had left it.



I was hit by a fresh
wave of loss.
I buried my face in his
old gardening jacket
It still smelled of him.



I tried and
tried,
but I couldn't
get the bloody
mower to start.



My neighbour, Paul tried to fix it,
but had no luck.



Paul kindly lent me his Flymo.
Malcolm hated them but I thought it did a tolerable job.
The lawn looked presentable again



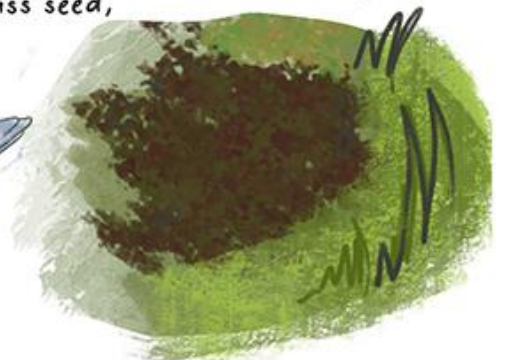
Until the family of foxes
moved into the garden



And dug several large holes
in the lawn.



I tried to fill in the holes, and sowed grass seed,
but the birds ate the seed,
and the foxes dug more holes.



I decided that turf was the way forward.



Apparently foxes are repelled by the scent of male urine.



But I didn't want to ask Paul next door to tinkle around the lawn. I ordered a sonar gadget instead.



Looking at the new turf, I felt a real sense of accomplishment.



But the fox cubs merrily ripped up the turf in spite of the sonar...



What would Monty Don do? Sod it. I'd make the hole even bigger.



I've decided to make a nature pond!

Oh yes, I saw that on 'Gardener's World' last night!

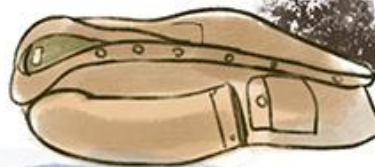


I started off with enthusiasm, but the deeper I dug, the gloomier I grew.

I missed Malcolm so much.

This hole was like the void inside me.

I kept on digging until night fell.



It grew cold. I got Malcolm's old gardening jacket from the shed, and put it on.



I lay down in the hole in the dirt.



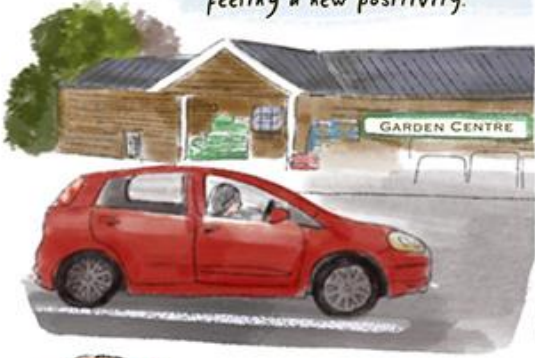
Looking up at the night sky, I suddenly felt at peace, remembering Oscar Wilde's words.



We are all in the gutter.

But some of us are looking at the stars

I woke up the next day feeling a new positivity.



Paul and his partner, Karen, helped me put down the liner,



Arrange the rocks, pebbles and sand



Put in aquatic plants and then fill the pond with water.




We christened the pond with Malcolm's parsnip wine. It was disgusting - so we followed it up with Prosecco to take the taste away.



The grass grew even longer over time and more and more wildlife visited the garden.

Some people think that butterflies are the souls of the recently departed. Whenever I saw a butterfly, I imagined it was Malcolm, saying "What have you done to my bloody lawn?"

 But I loved it. I had filled the void with frogs.

