

The Fractal Lawn

Dolores sloped into the deck chair under the pavilion's awning and welcomed the sun. She lay, slim frame sickle curved, gently but firmly held by the chair's rough blue and white stripes.

Already a flaw marred her pleasure. Beneath the chair's left runner a fissure ran through the concrete slab supporting the pavilion. Started perhaps by shoddy construction, or, Dolores thought briefly, the beginning of a global subsidence that would end in total collapse. Despite her efforts to remain inert, the chair rocked infuriatingly over the telltale crack. To the ants, busy in its dark and inviting recesses, it offered opportunity; security in a hostile world.

Dolores stretched, feeling her skin reach greedily for the sun, absorbing it, consuming ray after ray; longing for more. As the arid soil around the edge of the lawn longed for rain, fresh and invigorating, the life-giver. Rain that would flood the ants' nest, frenzied beneath the fissure, eroding still further the pavilion's vanishing foundations. A hard rain.

Across the tangled rooftops, overlooked from the pavilion in Dolores' garden, grey and richly flecked with lichen, unsteady in the heat, a church clock struck twice. Echoes harried amongst the chimney stacks; it was two o'clock and Time vanished with the last notes of the chime; she'd half an hour, the family was due at two thirty. A slight movement of the deck chair caused it to rock over the crack. Ants, in twos and threes at first, but then in greater numbers, emerged in turmoil carrying impossibly large flecks of soil, monoliths of gravel. Dolores abandoned herself to the sun, but before closing her eyes, she stared at the lawn, which lay, green and puzzling in front of the pavilion.

It's shape, brazenly imprecise, suggested the rectangular, but one beyond the scope of any formulae. With gaping bites of gardencare and thyme, arcing indents broke it's rectilinear pretensions, making room for plants and ants; lebensraum for grey and desiccated soil. And where no conscious act had shaped it's eldritch form, ravaged edges dipped, weaved and twisted turning in and out. Smoothly revealing on, closer inspection, each cove itself by coves was formed.

Dolores gazed at the double breasted indent directly in front of the pavilion. Sweeping curves, gloriously irregular, bulged away from her feet. Overhung by matted grass, approaching and receding in tangled weave; smooth to the eye, masterly deceiving greensward. She lowered her eyelids, blotting out the light, though still aware of a blackened green disc lingering on her retina.

On the lawn, threading tirelessly in and out of it's interlocking blades, foraging ants made their inexplicable way back to the fissure beneath Dolores' deck chair. Passing, en-route, tiny signal red mites, pointless in the megalopolitan landscape below the grass tops.

Before the half hour chimed, Dolores awoke to the sound of a drawn rifle bolt as, away to her left, the side gate opened. On the surface of it's anodised mild steel bolt, corrosion, patient and relentless had taken hold. Rust, darkening from red to brown against the lifeless grey metal, pitted and raised it's surface. Peak and hollow, tooth and cog grated in atonal sharps and flats. Tortured by friction, single cells of ferric oxide tore from the substrate.

Dolores' uncle, Jean, tall and dignified by age, ran a crooked finger over the bolt. Felt warm metal, soft to his touch; smooth under his jaundiced parchment skin.