

## Tiny Trees

I adore the little trees that sprouted in my lawn when I let the grass grow wild out of laziness and desire to save water in the worsening drought, and to see if the foreign turf would revert to something that wasn't imported across the humidity line from the other side of the continental divide — there must be 75 starts or more, mostly ornamental crabapples smaller than six inches high that grow better than weeds. In fall, they are wine red like crushed cochineal, in pleasing contrast to silver stickers of junipers in miniature, and bonsai oaks with amber serrated leaves the chestnut brown of powdery rust.

My boyfriend at the time was disgusted, repeating exhaustedly, *you don't need to let grow every little seed that blows into your yard*. (But really, doesn't an errant seed on the random wind know better than I do where to land?) Another bolus of wisdom he liked to offer was, *Poor people have poor ways* — he was full of such hard-edged gems, which respectable people *maybe* used to say out loud and nowadays don't. Really, he was just looking out for me and meant well, but couldn't be associated with my self-defeating habits, afraid that if he gave into chaos, it might not be clear what was good or bad, or simple to discern what was nice from what was ugly — possibly he'd have to admit that beauty is often a mix of both, and success involves a lot of chance.

I think of him almost every day and laugh, hearing in my mind his tired platitudes — he had a brilliant comic way of saying them, tongue in cheek with an affected antique speech like verbal quotation marks, a dual valence of irony that mocked the cliché, and didn't — it was charming and irksome, both. I'll carve his name into the trunk of the grandest tree, if any survive to full size and I am alive to see them, and if I still remember him then.