

SAMUEL PEARSON

IN EVENING LIGHT

A MAN STOOD in his veggie patch. A solitary figure, a silhouette, against a darkening sky. His lined face, the picture of years spent in the sun. Each line, twisting and turning like life's random course through time. He stood there, quite alone, staring up into the sky where stars begin to come out and play. His veined hand rested tenderly on the rough wooden handle of his spade.

A sparrow flew across his un-focused field of vision, as he remembered countless hours spent surfing at the beach with mates. Like the sparrow soaring with ease through the deep blue of the evening sky, he too had once soared with ease across the waves of the deep blue, their foamy tops tugging at the edges of his newly waxed board. He had reached out to touch the wall of water to his side, just one more inch . . . and for one second the power of the ocean's fury was in the palm of his hand. The board tipped, and the moment was lost amid a tangle of arms and legs.

He took a soiled finger, and rubbed the corner of his eye. To the left lay a tangle of weeds amid the pumpkin vines. Behind them stood the tomatoes, as straight and as tall as his aged and withered mates at the RSL club. To his right, ten neat rows of carrots, broccoli and cabbage. He stood there, quite still, smelling the aroma of vegetables, compost and soil. He wrinkled his nose, and lit a cigarette.

The sun slipped a little further beyond the roof tops of suburbia; his shadow lengthening inch by inch. His coarse hands gripped the spade's handle, and on he dug, hoping to finish the eleventh row before daylight's end. In the distance the faint hum of traffic, the clatter of a train over tracks and the odd dog barking.

Like his cigarette's soft glow slowly disappearing, the sun's golden glow gave way for the shadows of night. Out they crept over yellowing grass, streaking into every nook and cranny and crevice.

The soft thud of spade into soil disturbed the stillness of the twilight, and signalled the end of one's day of labour under the sun. The man stood there, surveying his surroundings and his work, squinting in places where shadows tugged at the garden's edges.

A man stood in his veggie patch. A solitary figure, a silhouette, against a darkening sky.