



THE BEGINNING AND THE END

By Dina Greenberg

The sky is brilliant blue. I feel powerful as I begin to run. I close my eyes to feel my own sense of balance. At the bottom of the hill I see a landscape truck and a middle-aged man lifting a mower from the flatbed. He pushes it across the street to the lawn where he is working.

As I run past, I almost miss the old man who is slouched in a lawn chair on the driveway, just beyond where the truck is parked at the curb. His head is cocked to one side. The man's skin is tanned a golden brown, his balding head an even darker shade. It is only early spring.

I wonder how this man has come to be in the lawn chair, staring out beyond the precisely trimmed lawns, the banks of brilliantly hued flowers, all set in gentle, curving mounds of earth-brown mulch. Perhaps this man has grown old loving the slow, deep promise of spring. Perhaps he has passed along this loving to his son, who runs the edger, bags up the dry, curling leaves, clears away this last remnant of decay so that each sprig of new growth bursts forth unencumbered.

I look into the old man's eyes, hoping to divine a spark of something. I want to pass on to him some of the power and health that I am feeling; I want him to have this gift. He looks out from blank eyes. There is nothing, and I am grateful to the old man's son who cares for him. There must be something strong between them, I think. The younger man knows that inside walls reeking of old age and sickness, surely his father would forget how spring comes with the first soothing yellow wands of forsythia or the cool, new-birthing scent of fresh-cut grass. The son moves his father about with him while he makes the rounds of his daily routine, constant like the changing seasons. He knows the old man will take some final pleasure in this alone.

At the end of my run, my breath still comes easily. When I stop, my lungs feel cleansed and satisfied. Standing still now, I feel the solid earth beneath me, yet I know this will not always be.