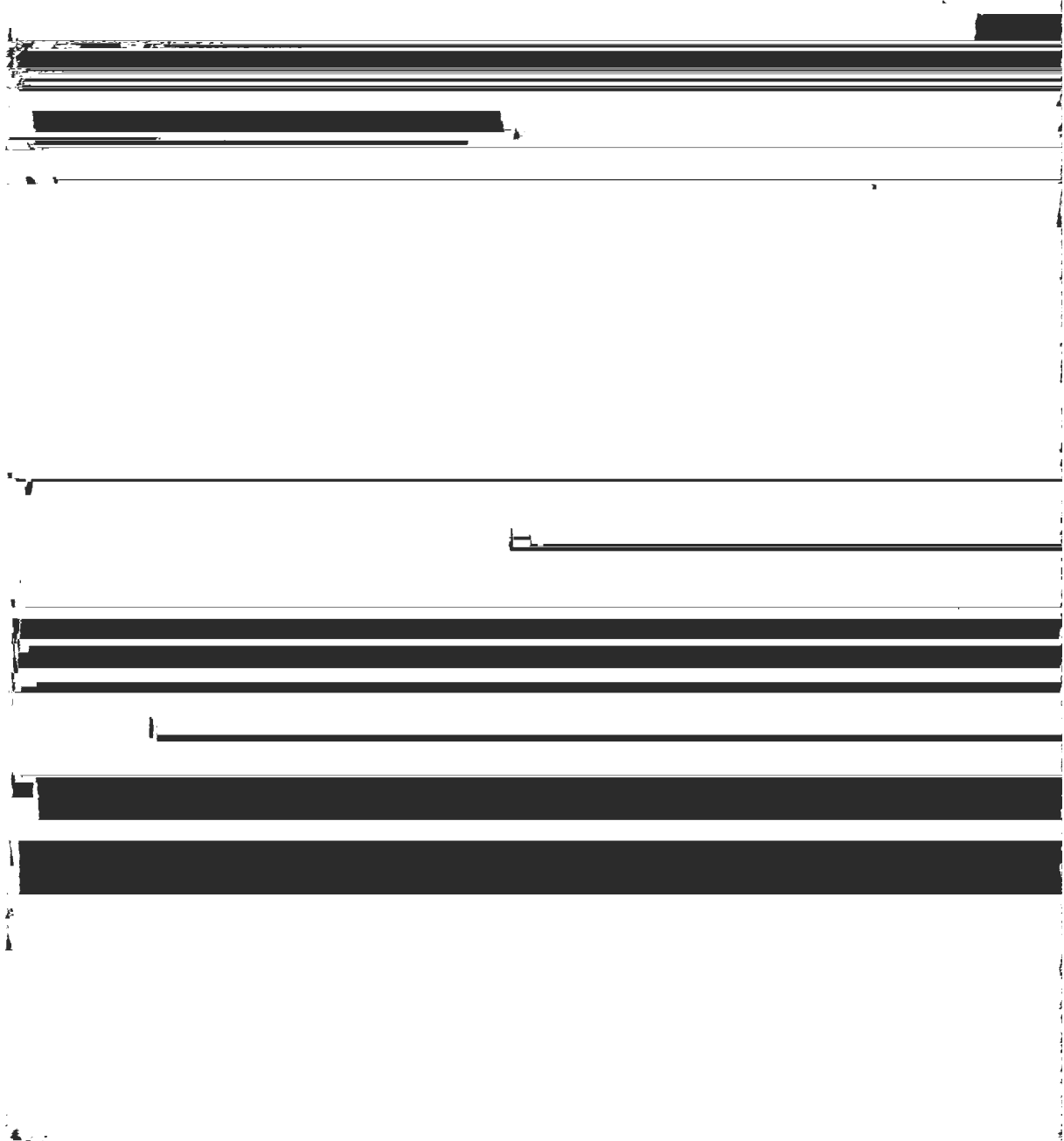


TITLE: The Tree

AUTHOR: Matthew Fields

STANDING: Undergraduate

Carrie loved her father. That never changed. During the move, he had been a symbol of security for her and Noah. As their surroundings changed, their father's rimless glasses and hairy



children to the back yard and showed them the adolescent tree. Camie saw the thing sitting in

small mound of dirt, small and bare, and asked what it was.

"It's an apple tree," her father said.

"There's no apples," said Noah.

"It's not all the way grown up. It's going to be a couple of years before it starts growing."

She groaned. "There's bugs."

Worry crept onto Noah's face. "What?"

"Yep. Bugs. Ones that bite. I don't want you to get bit."

Noah retreated slowly into the living room, muttering something about bugs and TV.

Carrie retrieved her shovel and walked onto the forbidden ground. She went to the space in between the tree and the fence and lowered the shovel to the grass and pushed down.

The blade broke through the grass and sank into the soil below. Using the shovel, she cut a square into the grass, then picked up the patch and placed it nearby. She began digging quickly out of a vague fear of her brother seeing her or her father coming back early. A few feet down

Carrie cried out, dropping the limb and scrambling out of the hole. For a time, Carrie stared into the hole, wide – eyed and unbelieving. A wind blew and the leaves hissed. The sound made her feel nauseous. She picked up the shovel and began to pile dirt back into the hole. When the hole was full, she placed the patch of grass back onto the dirt and patted it down with her foot.

~~She left the shovel on the deck and washed her hands in the kitchen sink. She returned to~~
~~her brother on the couch and watched television with him.~~
~~“You stink,” he teased. When she didn’t react, he returned his attention to the television.~~
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Cergie smiled back. The wind blew and she sank her teeth into the skin of the apple.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]