

UNWANTED

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Words by Mariya Kruglyak

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Growing through the cracks are all those things we attempt to weed out and destroy. That which is not right, not perfect, opposing all that we have been taught to cultivate. Yet, it persists. For every time it is cut down, it returns, at first unnoticed and then bolder and stronger. Relentlessly resisting any adversaries it crawls its way back, blooming proudly. Sometimes it takes over, covering the landscape, muting all other growth. Sometimes it barely holds on, as a solitary weed in the wind.

Weeds seem to have this all-too-human quality about them. As a metaphor they stand for the ability to live on in the worst of climates, to survive the most dreadful situations, to bloom on seemingly infertile ground. Here, they are given the spotlight and the beauty in their solitary simple existence on the edge is shown in full flare. These are melancholy images of that which is unbidden, unloved, unwanted. What does it

mean to be unwanted? Who decides, and how does this change when we recognise the beauty of that which is 'unwanted'? Is there perhaps a deep-rooted desire in us to secretly hold on to that which has been labelled unwanted and superfluous?

Asking myself these questions and flicking through the photographs took me back to a childhood memory I had long forgotten. You see, I grew up at the edge of the city center, next to a massive field that teemed of life. Weeds, trees, bushes, and rabbits co-existing in what seemed as a small slice of wilderness amidst civilisation. As soon as it rained (and it rained often), the field became a marsh, almost impossible to walk through without rubber boots. Eventually, the council drained the land, cut down the trees, planted fresh grass and built a skate park. They put up some swings and topped it all off with a bunch of abstract sculptures. Suddenly the field

teemed with new life; people were walking, skating, playing games. The town had reclaimed the space. Although the by-then 15-year-old me loved hanging out in the skate park, I missed the rabbits, the smell of damp wild grass, the feel of uneven edges and soft moss when I let myself fall on my back waiting for the ground to embrace me. On this new field, it would hurt to fall like that.

Soon enough it seemed as if it had always been like this: clean-cut, cultivated, and modern, so I kept quiet, because surely there was so much more use of it now and it is not as if I missed the weeds because, really, why would I? And the rabbits, well, they kept getting hit by cars, so surely they were better off now. Just as we were all now better off having weeded out the land — although if truth be told, we had not quite succeeded, because some summer days the grass grew faster than it was cut and at night it became a little scary and I ran

across it like a shadow, breathing in its freedom. Even the cultivated, cleaned field had some cracks through which the unwanted plants could grow.

This nostalgia for the beauty of the uncultivated, that which emerges in weeds creeping up through the cracks, solitary and unbidden — am I the only one to have it? Or is there perhaps a universal desire for that which springs up unasked for, that which persists although unwanted, that which predates the cultivated and blooms although unloved? Is there not something very human in this desire for unpolished edges and unweeded fields?

Do you never long for days when you ran across fields of weeds and truly believed they were the most beautiful flowers? Tell me, can you see their beauty here, on these pages?

Maria Kruglyak