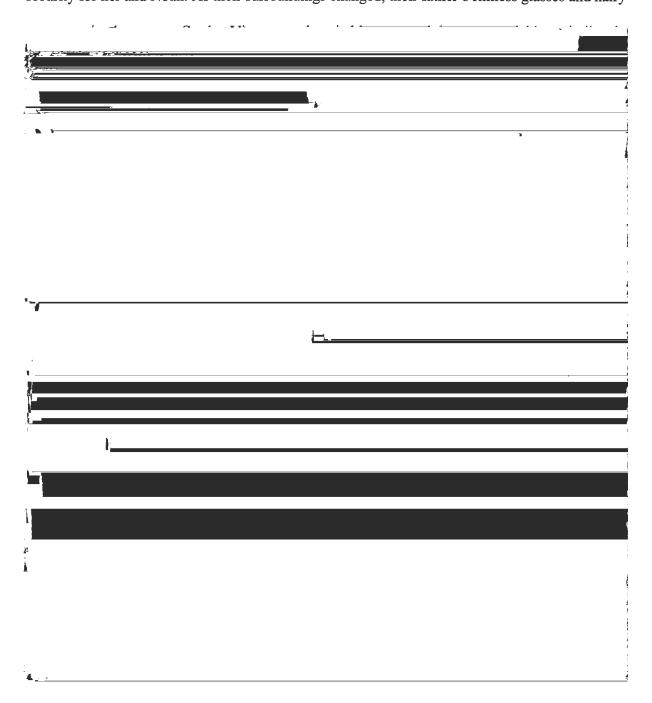
TITLE: The Tree

AUTHOR: Matthew Fields

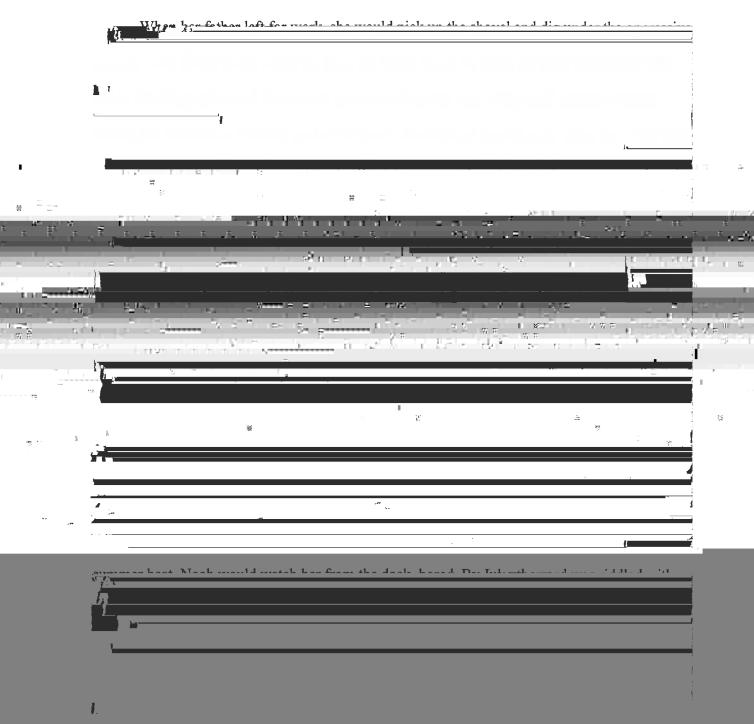
STANDING: Undergraduate

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



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nall m	ound of dirt, small and bare, and asked what it was.	
•	"It's an apple tree," her father said.	
6	"There's no apples," said Noah.	
4	"It's not all the way grown un. It's gaing to be a sound of years before it ato-	4 <u>2. ~~~~~</u>

"The roots are delicate," he explained, "and if you hurt a big root with that shovel, the whole tree could die. And we wouldn't get any apples." Carrie agreed to follow these rules and her father planted a kiss on her forehead.



She groaned. "There's bugs."

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

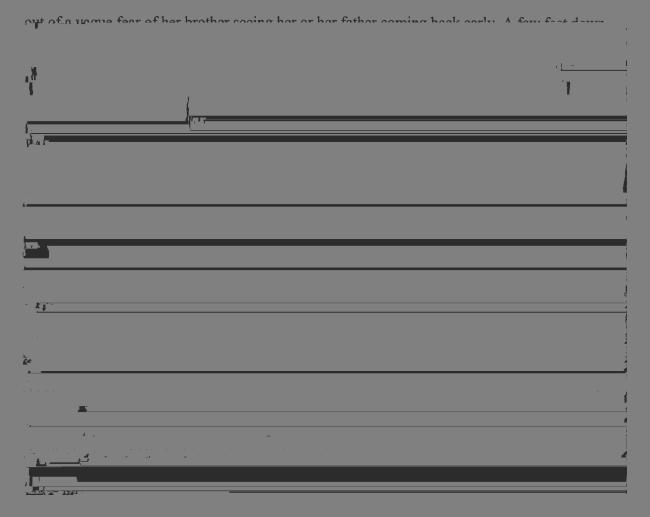
"Yep. Bugs. Ones that bite. I don't want you to get bit."

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

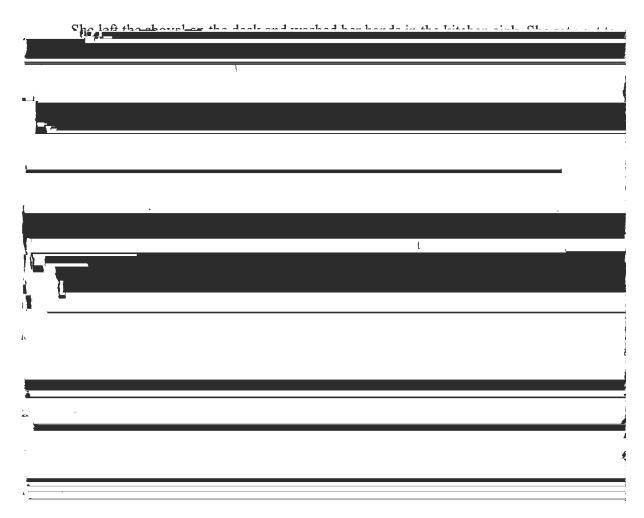
Carrie retrieved her shovel and walked onto the forbidden ground. She went to the space in

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



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.



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.

Carrie never told anyone about what she saw. She wasn't sure who it was that had been down there or exactly what had put them down there, but she had an idea, and it was too awful to

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