

in the oddest places and in the wrong seasons.

Bill and Lucy noticed it first.

Uncle Bill had always taken Lucy for walks – she was the oldest dog in King County and rumor had it, so was he. “It was like watching Alice fall into the rabbit hole when Lucy disappeared. A beautiful black Lab of 101 years old, gone just like that.” That’s how the papers reported it, even though Uncle Bill had told them that that wasn’t how it happened. He’d even called the editor of the Issaquah Times himself.

“Somebody’s built a tunnel or road or something I’m tellin’ you. That is where Lucy is. Isn’t that illegal, no signs or anything?” No one called him back. No one seemed to investigate. He left more messages. “She’s lost in the tunnels, I’m telling you. I know my old girl. She knows the scent of all these woods. She knows my voice.”

It was the rust that gave it away when Uncle Bill was taken to Overlake Clinic, with his arm slashed open. “All the trees are sculptures. I’m telling you. Metal, bronze or silver—supposed to look like moss when they oxidize or like aspens or alders.” He was hysterical they said. “Poor man, he loved that dog, he’s old, and he’s gone mad,”

but

It was the rust that gave the trees away.

The rust that infected his cut,
The rust that poisoned his blood,
17 years since his last tetanus shot.

Lockjaw
Cause of the death.
There was an investigation.
We sued the hospital.
They won.
How could anyone be expected to believe that
The trees were bronze.
Our team of lawyers found the tunnels.

“New earth lungs” is what the times named them. New Earth. The machines had large HEPA filters and they “breathed out” of the tunnels stacks. They were designed to look like evergreens, Hemlocks—wispy needled arms, the lead always bent.

A climax species.
We had finally figured it out.

*homeless, hemlocks touch
highways—green fingers bend to
reach humanity*

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