

# Contentment, Part II

## Emma Solomon, Semester 49

*Editor's note: Emma (known as Savannah within her semester) wrote this essay in response to the question, "Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?" She is from Hastings-on-Hudson, New York.*

If only I could go deeper. If only the earth would delicately pull me down into the world below where dirt would fill not just my nails, but my ears, my nose and the ridges of my spine. I would swim beneath the swells of brown, paddling along earth packed down by generations before me. I smell the richness of loved loam. Just like us, a soil that is cared for will return the favor.

I kneel in the dirt and try to feel the smooth granules moisten the surfaces of my body. Legs splayed in a "W", I feel the back of my feet, knees, calves and thighs pressing down into the firm soil below. I grab a fistful of soil and squeeze it as if all of its nourishment could be released into the surrounding air. Like faithful moles, my two fingers burrow into a soft indentation, creating a perfect shelter for what is to come. I grab a bulbous, weathered garlic clove and feel slightly offended. A petite, four-foot-eleven teen, I am frustrated that our artificial selection allows only the bulging, voluptuous cloves get to pass on their genes. I envy that garlic clove, safely secure in a dirt palace, covered with jewels and beads of soil. In perpetual motion, I shimmy down the row, first taking, then crumbling and finally rebuilding. Only at the end of a completed row do I allow myself to smell my hands. Under the tip of the fingernail is where the most potent scent hides. If to smell, is to breath, is to live- the stronger the smell, the more alive. A balanced perfume of savory garlic scapes, metal, sulfur and sweet grassy manure. In it lies the potential for growth, birth, decay, support and a fragrant pasta sauce. It is the subtle smell of power.

Garlic rows planted, I look towards the place where the farmland meets the edge of the sky. I lift my sore butt off the ground and sit up straighter as I genuflect before the grand white wind turbine. The air is characteristically cool and dry, nothing concealed in the azure sky. Round and round the three bladed propeller spins, like a whirling dervish hoping to fly. We gave that great turbine its brawn; built its wings and chose its home.

Though we once owned it, we are now at its mercy for the light and heat it generates throughout the day. Like me, it is both fragile and tenacious; made of thin, light material, but nonetheless unrelenting in its quest for power. We are comrades, that turbine and me, together creating energy from what the earth offers.

I drop my heavenly gaze and look behind me towards my next project. Masses of turnip greens silently peek out, eager to show their purple bodies. I drag my bare feet across the soft mulch and grunt with effort as the wheelbarrow resists my tug. The wheels are not as fond of the dewy ground as my soles are.

I bend over and gingerly seat myself among the vegetables. A yanked turnip is an unhappy vegetable. Like rich old ladies in a warm bath, they prefer to be gently eased out of their tranquil sanctuary. I abide by its rules because I understand not wanting to be removed from the dirt.

I am always wary of keeping the turnips roots intact. We are nothing if we don't remember where we came from. Hairy white roots on bottom to verdant leaves on top, I attempt to keep the whole plant intact. Sometimes I am too rough and the fibrous greens are ripped off, leaving a floating violet orb submerged alone in the underground world. I don't rescue her because she now rests where I would want to stay forever; right beneath the thin blanket of topsoil, full from abundant nutrients, warmed by the glare of the sun and cooled by the icy water beneath. No artificial intimacy, no foul play and no regretful vengeance; just me and that earth, down and dirty.