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Skunkweed Among Sassafras and Wild Spearment

JOE BASCH

Nestled in the nearby, swampy wood
near the pond we found 8-foot snakes twisting through,
grows half an acre of garbage:
kitchen and household appliances of every shape and kind
spanning five decades,
sprouting like skunkweed amongst sassafras and wild spearmint.

My sister said it was like we had found a buried treasure,
except that it was above ground.
Our eyes came to tear,
our imaginations multiplied and stacked on top of each other,
and our young minds could hardly contain them
as we began to rummage for the gold we might find.

First we tried to bring things to the house:
a rusty vacuum with sod clinging to the wheels,
a kerosene heater stuffed with robin feathers and crumbles of their
eggshells,
an old rotary phone without the cord.

Mom said 'don't bring your trash in here'
so we fashioned a fort across the street,
in view of my neighbours rickety ranch.
We hung the phone on a tree,
dragged car seats, sagging recliners, and a booster seat for furniture.
We entertained guests,
brought our records, and pretended to play Neil Diamond for the forest
dwellers:
a squirrel camp,
a darty crimson fox,
a family of raccoons.

One day, Mom called us to dinner,
but I yelled back that I'd just made spaghetti:
a pile of sticks and crusty leaves, topped with wild onion petals.