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Manhandling: *to move by human strength*

by Rosemarie Dombrowski

I've never not been flattered when a friend asked me to help her move the contents of a small Uhaul into storage. I like to carry my own grocery bags, at least six on each arm. I pull weeds because it's like suburban training for a street fight. When the trowel tunnels under the river rock, it's like gauging out someone's eyeballs with a spoon. When I heave a heavy trash bag into the dumpster, I always hope the neighbors are watching.

Soon after you move in, I fall into a paradigmatic pit, succumb to gender roles and deviations from routine. I plead with you to take out the trash. I stop pulling weeds. I forget how to google videos on how to replace the hose behind my washing machine. Instead, I prefer to watch you bend and flex, try to imagine what it's like inside your testosterone-filled blood, beg you to rage a little harder then bury your head in my breasts when you're done.

Like me, the ancient Greeks were obsessed with watching the bodies of virile, muscular men. Married women, however, were barred from admiring the twisting torsos, their genitals

swinging wildly with each movement, their bodies glistening with olive oil in the Olympian sun.

Allegedly, female voyeurs who were caught in the act of ogling were sentenced to death, probably by being drowned at sea or buried alive in a sack.

One night, I ask you to go on a scavenger hunt for recyclables. I can't stop watching as you crouch to check under the chairs and bookcases. I can see the outline of your testicles through your shorts, but since the emperors are all dead, I refuse to deny myself the pleasure.