

The Oval

Volume 13
Issue 2 *Staff Issue*

Article 20

4-15-2020

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Recommended Citation

Nickelson, Meaghan (2020) "Apple Trees," *The Oval*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 2 , Article 20.
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APPLE TREES

Meaghan Nickelson

Apple trees are wilting in the backyard of a woman who hasn't seen her husband in three months, and every knock at the door is a glass of sherry left lonely on the bathroom sink in the hopes of more news on nothing. Police cars were only vessels to carry phrases of grief from the doorstep to the morgue, and back then they would have no trouble pretending that leaving was the same thing as death. Oil burnt low in the kitchen lamp as dust gathered between the coffee pot and where he used to burn matches until they fell charred into the sink, scarring the white porcelain into his misshapen idea of how the world should work. She wanted nothing more than to pick those matches out of the drain and use them as a GPS because maybe the smell of smoke could waft out the window towards every motel 6 between there and Casa Grande. An empty silo nestled into a cluster of dying-orange pine trees, the same color as the ties he left hung on the towel rack, and they told her that the likelihood of him coming back was the same as the likelihood of her being able to finally wash the dishes that had migrated onto every surface in the living room. There was no way to tell how long her listless migration of everything he touched would last, because her last ditch attempt to bring him back was only bringing her closer to the realization that if he wanted to he would already be holding her, apology clearing the clutter she had made to fill his absence. The apples were still rotting in the overgrowth and she didn't make any effort to pick them up.