

I Was Mistaken — You All Look Alike

by Erma Bombeck

I just figured out if my husband paid just half the attention to me as he does the lawn, my 70-year-old mailman would never have started to look like Robert Redford.

If ever there was a valid suit for alienation of affection, it's that lousy lawn.

There is something about the ability of a man to grow a few blades of grass that contributes to his masculinity. He is either a grass grower or he is not a grass grower. I have seen virile men move into the neighborhood with tattoos on their lips, but if they have fungus on their draw tiff, forget it. They're just not one of the boys.

A lawn enthusiast has two moods: terrible and irritable. These are interchangeable depending on whether the grass is growing or whether the grass is not growing.

When the grass is not growing, my husband goes to the library to see what could be missing, has his soil analyzed, waters, soaks, fertilizes, and has the nurseryman who sold him the seed make a house call.

When the grass is growing, he runs the mower back to the store to make sure the blade is cutting, trims, rakes, rolls and makes an obscene phone call to the dog next door who overfertilized it in the first place.

There is no pleasing a lawn freak.

Some say it is normal for a man to want a pretty lawn. I don't know what is normal anymore. I sent the kids to Mother's, blew an entire food budget on steaks and wine, put a dab of garlic on the lighbulb and slipped into something that had not been paid for. "What are you thinking?" I teased, turning off the TV set.

"Did you turn the hose off?" he asked.

Is it normal for a man to call the police and report a flock of birds who are eating our grass seed? Is it normal for a grown man to mourn a brown spot for three years?

I was all set to tell the mailman about my infatuation with him when he said, "I see your husband uses a chemical fertilizer of nitrogen, phosperous, and potash. Tell him if he invested in a little sheep dip, he'd do away with that crabgrass. Is there something you wanted?"

Hudson Valley Foreground



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