

## THE DANDELION

*By Stephanie Jackson*

The dandelion, it's a weed despised by gardeners who, with arrogance, with frustration, and with barely concealed rage, rip it from the manicured urban landscape; trample it underfoot; drench it with poisons; and revile it for daring to contaminate the regulated palette of their artificial world. Its jagged green leaves, edible and full of valuable nutrients to sustain both man and soil, keep flat to the ground in a feeble effort to conceal themselves among more welcome vegetation. But golden blooms make a less modest entrance onto the wide stage where nature is the director in ultimate charge, and shout the delight and determination of survival with a riot of golden petals that rival the sun's brightest glow.

We tug joyously at them muttering with emotive excitement 'he loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not,' and as the final petal flutters slowly to the ground to the murmur of 'he loves me' there's a sigh of contentment at the affirmation that nature, in her unfathomable wisdom, still holds the key to destiny.

Other flowers wither one by one; tattered, shabby, sun-shrivelled crones, their petals tumbling silently one by one to the earth that gave them a fleeting, yet glorious, existence. Their seeds arrive, created with the gentle and unseen hand of Mother Nature who crafts them with fragile tufts of gossamer down that tempt the laziest of breezes to lift them willingly into the air. They twirl and waltz in a celebration of rapturous freedom through the sun's subtle rays of light, following the unseen, yet well defined path along which nature guides them with an outstretched hand until, as the melody of the breeze dies and their dance concludes, they fall, with silent resignation, to the cool, brown, and welcoming soil below.

They wait, an interminable wait, but when raindrops ultimately fall they sigh with relief, quench their thirst, and are revived. The dandelion, the reviled weed, the invader of gardens, the conqueror of pastures and of meadows, has made its triumphant return once again.

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