



The Herb Garden

by Stephen Gray

My mother before she died insisted
I should have a herb garden
Something in her English soul
amid rough South Africans
Called for the tenderness of mint 5
The old scent of lavender and sage

They arrived in soggy pages of *The Star*
With a spade taller than herself
She dug them into my backyard
Before I was ready for them 10
A cigarette tightly in her lips
Explaining chives made life worthwhile

That is how she died in her own
Garden of sweet remembrance
Very frail then with a bucket and spade 15
The size we children used for play
Always finding the sun too hot the soil
Far too dry for the gentler herbs

Today after the long heart-stopping drought
My mother's bed of lost spices 20
Has so flourished I have cut it back
And the mint is in the crevices of fingers
The sage under my very nails
And I remember her every gesture.

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