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200 Words

### Winter Cutting

It is February, and the stems of the passion vine are brown, with brittle tendrils that, when my fingers lightly brush them, fall to the ground. Last year's summer sun wove the stems in and out of the trellis, leaves filling the empty spaces between the slats of pale wood. Now, I can see through the holes, between the bare wood and bare stems, to the other side.

Still, I take my large scissors, the ones with black handles, and cut the stems back. I am severe in my cutting so that yards of vine, once clinging to their mooring, now lie at my feet, dried of sap. They crackle as I tread over them to cut more and more.

When I step away, only a few strands of vine, like thin pipe lines, remain. For a moment, a fear takes hold. With the gray sky, the bitter air, it is easy to believe that, this time, I have cut too much. But when I move closer and carefully search the dark lines, I see a few small nubs, pushing against the skin of the vine.

Then, I hear my gardener, just beneath my fear, full of strength and promises.

by Theresa McCourt