

## Jane Rosenberg LaForge

### All's Fair in Love, War, and Horticulture

At the end of her life, my mother grew bamboo to replace the bricks and gravel dividing the neighbor's land from her plot. She spawned the kind of forest her father hacked through as he fought a war against fascism. Once he died, she watched his football games and his stock market shows, and kept her other viewing to military dramas. In the jungle my father staked out in the front yard, he cultivated ferns and banana trees: he always did romanticize the tropics. But he was 4F on his draft card: deaf, flat-footed, asthmatic and stomach ulcers. They had nothing to do with the divorce, my mother insisted; it was strictly a matter of his incompetence.

My father countered intelligence was best demonstrated by his mother, a survivor of three countries and even more languages. But the avocados she attempted to raise, first in jelly jars and then on an indefensible apartment terrace, refused to flower, as bamboo also refrains; it's simply bamboo's nature to withhold and delay what will turn out to be pestilence. Which excuse the avocados proffered, as my father tried to summon them to no avail, I can't say, though the squirrels attracted to the brief leaves and bark might have had something to do with it. How my father hated how the old house and property thrived once he was exiled from it: the fresh paint, rose bushes, dying pine and cypress felled in the name of protecting the foundation; and the dull, brassy leaves of bamboo like military khaki, or a set of house keys made obsolete by a jumble of domestic arrangements.

**Jane Rosenberg LaForge** writes poetry, fiction, and occasional essays from her home in New York. She is the author of four chapbooks of poetry; three full-length collections; a memoir; and two novels. More work is forthcoming in *Pirene's Fountain*, *Minyan*, and *Headlight Review*. She reads poetry for *COUNTERCLOCK* literary magazine and reviews books for *American Book Review*.