



EVER SINCE ALFRED QUATTRUCCI HAD TO CUT DOWN THAT maple tree, it's been too sunny to sit in his back yard. So these days, when he's done with lunch, he comes out here to the garage to relax.

With his peacock-blue Coupe de Ville parked behind him, Mr. Quattrucci sits in a lawn chair on the cool concrete, just inside the raised garage door. A length of patterned bed sheet, frayed at the edges, drapes over his shoulders as he faces the street.

Mr. Quattrucci's gaze takes in a patch of East Providence quite familiar to him. To the left stands the two-story house he's lived in since his mother brought him, as a boy, from Italy, at the end of World War I. To the right grows the vegetable garden that he's tended for the last 26 years — since he's been retired.

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At 6 each morning he's up boiling the coffee and then outside. He's got pole beans twirling up corrugated-steel pipes; tiny cucumbers resting on a bed of chicken wire; Champion tomatoes standing within a latticework of planks, metal stakes, and electrical wire — the arm of each plant is tied with a strip from the sheet on Mr. Quattrucci's shoulders.

"Life is what you make it," he says, philosophizing in the shade. "You can make it dull as hell, and you can make it not too bad." He says that now he's nothing but happy. After all, he and his wife have raised two fine children; he still feels good and strong. "That's all there is to it," he says — be an honorable husband, pay your bills as soon as they come in, keep the weeds out of your garden, and when you're near the end of life, be thankful for what you've had.