

Hot Tub Hubbub

A husband makes a purchase he'll be paying for long after it's paid off [by Maureen L. Egan]

Do not go gentle into that hot tub. *Rage, rage against electrifying rub a dub.*

I have the soul of a poet. The body of a poet, too. Resting on one's laurels, or thereabouts, doesn't help when it's time to put on a bathing suit. That's why poets rarely wax poetic about hanging out in their hot tubs, but when they do — *Do not go gentle into that hot tub. Rage, rage, against deep-frying all my blub.*

My husband has always dreamed of a backyard water wonderland. Our back yard resembles a cliff, so a pool was out of the question, but I was willing to compromise. I was thinking birdbath. He was thinking hot tub big enough for a football team. Now I've been in hot tubs while on ski vacations, and I've found them loud, smelly and irritating. And then you get in there with other people who are also loud, smelly and irritating.

But hot tub hubby *needs*

The Gargantuan or The Magnum Chasm or The Monstrosity for his back, or calf, or something. He plans to transform our lovely back yard into Las Vegas or the Poconos in one expensive step. *Rage, rage against the overbuying bub.*

I'm fairly sure his interest isn't romantic. Someday he'll be very happy with his trophy wife who, in addition to her other fine qualities, will displace less hot water than I do. For now, he wants the biggest hot tub God made for the same reason he wants a king-size bed — to be as far away from me as possible in an enclosed space. What a turn-on. Which is the other problem: I prefer water that you don't turn on. The ocean, for instance. Yes, the ocean makes a lot of noise when the waves crash on shore, but that doesn't affect my electric bill like the skin-blasting bubbles do. *Rage, rage against deep-frying in the bubs.*

One day we spent an excruciating afternoon with a hot-tub salesman who wouldn't stop talking about the joys, the lights, the colors, the seating options, the piña colodas he would share with his wife in their hot tub that night, the hot toddies scheduled for the winter solstice, the children who cook his dinner when he's passed out in his hot tub, the ease of delivery to our

back yard. (He swore we wouldn't need a crane. When the first crane wasn't big enough, I swore, too. *Rage, rage against mustachioed Beelzebub.*)

Through the dogged hot-tub salesman's foaming at the mouth, I stuck to my core belief — a hot tub is the priciest and most unattractive item we could buy for our home. A two-for-one deal! But I was between a rabid salesman who wouldn't shut his mouth and a husband about to use the silent treatment on me for the next 30 years. Reluctantly, I reconciled myself to a homely looking, huge enough hot tub — The Teenee, I think it was called.

My only hope was to stash the thing in a remote part of the yard and focus on the challenge, not often

addressed in gardening books, of landscaping with gray foam. My hot-tub hubby would object to plopping a 64-square-foot piece of vinyl-covered gray foam permanently in our yard, but when it covers a plastic hot tub, gray foam is the *pièce de résistance*. I prefer plain old resistance. *Rage, rage against the soothed and sighing bub.*

At the first sign of my relenting, my husband, who I might as well mention, has the driest skin that can be attached to a person's body, and thus

shouldn't be spending his leisure time (which he shouldn't have anyway if he would do the yardwork he promised he would when we moved here) soaking in hot water, gazed upon The Enormity and fell in love.

Back home, I suggested with gritted teeth that we set up a fake hot tub in the proposed area with sawhorses and tarps and other ugly things that would approximate how repulsive the super-sized hot tub would look on site. We measured and muttered, and much to my chagrin, the virtual hideous hot tub didn't look as Mt. Everestian as I had hoped. It didn't even dwarf the house. Damn.

I was doomed. But so was my hot-tub hub, because I was about to let him have his way, over my live body. He'll be paying the price for that long after the hot tub is paid off. And he'll have to see me in my bathing suit. *Can I hide behind a really big shrub?* ■

