

November 5, 2022

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The flowers in the garden lob their last bit of loveliness as America totters toward another election, requiring yet another trip to the polls to save the shambling world, at least until next time, when things will be far worse. The yellow mums don't know its hopeless. Neither does my dog, whose resolute cheerfulness is a thing to watch. His clipped nails tap the back door, wanting out. If I let him out, he will jump onto the green-and-white striped chair, knock over my drink with his tail, and cause this poem to stop. Sun shines through the branches of the cherry tree, which holds half its leaves in golden glory. Leaves cover the glass-topped table where we like to eat in summer, one cane chair tipped forward, like a falling pensioner. The faint floating sadness I always feel in fall has fled for the moment. Early this morning I brought French toast and champagne to my wife in bed. It's not a bad way to start the day. Resea came to this house eight years ago and sat at the glass table with the tipped chair while I carried salads from the kitchen. Later we sat in lawn chairs and admired the cherry tree, which was pink with buds that April. We decided to marry, a good decision, as it turns out. I read somewhere that most love affairs and marriages perish evenings between seven and eight o'clock in Paris, the hour of rain and no taxis. The light just shifted, and the sun throws its slanting rays on my jacket and warms the skin of my freshly shaved face. Resea will be home soon. I'm not sure the country will make it.

Newly engaged, we left the backyard and the cherry tree and drove to a church, where light glanced off the blue slate tile. Someone snapped a picture of us. If happiness can be captured, it was that day. Resea is at the hospital now, which is why I am in the yard alone. She took her mother to see her boyfriend. Her mom has Alzheimer's and will not remember that she was there, or that she leaned over the bed to kiss him, or that her sweater is red, or one day the name of her only daughter. Memory seems sturdy to me sometimes, and then I recall poor Hemingway, who pulled the trigger of a shotgun when he realized he could no longer remember, the worst thing that can happen to a writer. Or a country. Memory is what ought to prevent you from buying a dog after the first dog dies, but it never does. Maybe autumn is sent each year to tell us you can begin, but not begin again. I'm going to get up and let the dog out.