

Fall 1982

Autumn Equinox, Northeast Nebraska

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AUTUMN EQUINOX, NORTHEAST NEBRASKA

"A poem is the heart's last chance."

—Gene Frumkin

The old desires yeast up in this air
moist and nurturing as any morning breath in spring,
desires that roil and vex
like the sour fear in a child on her birthday
and mother flutters over the whimper with
"Hush. It's only the wanting
of your gifts."

Who speaks to quiet the trees?
Leaves, not yet reddened, ripple
as sap pushes at the places
where buds would form
and thin blades of grass pulsate
as grasshoppers rearrange their legs.
A farmer rubs the stubble on his chin
and sighs for one more cutting of hay.

We're all prepared for brittle days.
A season ago I watched a snake
draped in the lilac bush,
the feet of a nestling blackbird jutting from its mouth
in an aura of web and twigs
and mother attacked
with fluttering wings and small beak.
Hush!
I speak to quiet myself.

Some common instinct warns me
away from the wind's false promise
to breathe the private air of my house.
How heedless the heart,
disturbing and inconsiderate as this breeze
that can tease the iris into autumn bloom.
Even as I stretch to make full use of the bed
I remember feathering the hair over your temples
into fine black wings.