Harvest Letter

John December
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This morning, crusted frost sequined the grass. Now it has faded and dried. The October sun scatters tons of sunlight (if sunlight could be measured) across the front porch.

I’m trying to tell you about the calves, which, after eating, wandered into the back field, and became engulfed in wheat. This is the harvest season. Combines come through, chopping. The calves were short. Andrew, driving, did not see them.

Animals die so cheaply on farms. I come into the farmhouse and prepare chicken or lamb; and even Lucy, the old cat, gave birth to dead kittens, little wrappings of twisted flesh and sinew.

I’m thinking of the summer you were here, with all the cousins, and we climbed the only tree along the west side of the back field. The wheat was shallow, and jumping and falling like apples from the branches, we were bruised and sore.

You jumped the furthest, arching into the wind. Landing, yelling up that you could catch us all, you spread your arms wide. We jumped cautiously, and as each of us hit ground, you ran to us, laughing, holding the ground still.

Now you are in another world. The harvest comes. I watch the thin vein of the river pour out past the end of the horizon and wonder: what is it, on the other end, that pulls us in?

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