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North Wind is an Old Friend

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In fall,  
as I round  
the corner of  
a squat prairie house,  
he's come uninvited, jumps  
out with a sucker punch to the gut, takes  
my breath into himself, and laughs as I gasp—  
that kind of friend. I should remember.  
The squat prairie house is built to lean  
into him slightly. We should both  
collapse were he not there every  
fall, holding us up.

Stillness is worse,  
silence  
from the four directions with nothing to  
anticipate,  
an abyss without promise of even the coming storm followed  
by reprieve.

Besides, he brings clarity,  
the absolute crystalline atmosphere, dispelling  
the cloudy-edged falseness of summer humidity, lethargy,  
and delusions of self-sufficiency—  
even the good hair days of fall.

So I lean into  
the north wind,  
an old friend with  
a hoarfrost beard who  
greets me with hacking-cough cursing.  
He's someone to rely on, to respect but  
not quite like, someone to drive against,  
lest in unforgiving friendship he find me lax or  
leaning the wrong way and put a knife  
in my back and walk away.

Over my dead body.