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New Earth

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The New Earth

Mike Vanden Bosch

Nothing gold can stay. —Robert Frost

Fred sees the fall strip trees bare as an aged
belle fresh out of her nightmare. He rakes red,
orange, and gold leaves brown, but the wind whips
them, piles them, and winters them in rain gutters,

window wells, and hollows of green grass. Then
November snow paints the Indian summer white:
crowns all begonias, mums, elm and ash stumps,
and papers miles of prairies where children weave

angel wings. Fred sees the flakes bury the bay clay
of new graves, pave ecru with pearl, frost lost
cars, convert hard drivers into crossed cadavers.
He sees the cold freeze the wasting of neighbors,

freeze the sweet of gold lest it cloy the soul. Then he
sneezes into Veterans Day and hears the bugler
lauding lame soldiers and dead. Empty of maxims,
he sings Praise God and Silent Night. Nothing old

can stay but he has eternity pitched like a pearl
in his heart as he rakes and prays or merely sits
in the garden and molts. While earth pales, Fred
sees a golden glow frame the clouds in the West.

This poem was previously published as an honorable mention in the 2006 edition of *Lyrical Iowa*.