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New Earth

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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.

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