

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

George Eyre Masters
Autumn in Maine

On that autumn afternoon,
Late in season, the tide had turned.
The Maine coast wore its threadbare tweeds in silence,
Rampant dreams of color muted,
Resigned it seemed and waiting for winter.

While walking Jack, I found myself stepping on words.
Words all over the ground,
Like leaves on a windy afternoon,
They blew and tumbled, scuffed and talked,
Some laying wet and plastered, one upon another.

Taking the notebook from my pocket, I wrote what I heard.
Jack stopped to sniff and I wondered if he were picking any of it up.
Lifting his nose from the grass, he looked at me and cocked his head.
Words became sentences, became paragraphs and pages.

The leaves along the path made murmurs,
Whispered rumors and laughed in delight.
A father and son conversed in Spanish,
A gangster dialogue in Chinese,

Then,
Lovers ordering off the menu in Italian,
A Frenchman lying to his wife,
Three Russians arguing on a train,
An Irish priest praying in Latin,

You get the idea.
But the best part,
If not the strangest,
I comprehended languages I could not speak.

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Looking closely, I saw perfectly painted words hiding in the grass like Easter eggs.
And then a great cheering erupted from the woods.

And I heard it again,

Before a wind breezed up off the ocean and tugged at my cap.

Gusting and sweeping,

This sea wind gave flight to the words;

Somersaulting yellowed leaves, the reds and browns,

It dispatched them all to frolic elsewhere.

And now the cheering arrived as echoes,

Words and voices faded into hush,

Losing one another and finally themselves,

In the expiring and sighing,

Earth-laden smells of Autumn.

Jack's velvet ears stood guard.

Wagging his tail, he barked at the trees and looked back at me.

"Bless my soul," I said aloud.

Kneeling to smooth his ears, I kissed the top of his head,

And breathed his fine sweetness.

Taking in the expanse of woods, I ran a hand along his flank.

Feeling Jack's hammering heart, I understood his consternation.

So many words lay about that all the trees were stripped of leaves,

And above us, seagulls circled like great white gliders.