

Autumn

By Steven Hager

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My shadow is long now. It is late in the afternoon and the sun is moving low in the sky. The air is crisp as it is a gorgeous fall day. Squirrels are scurrying about, burying nuts and other food items to be stored for a later time when little else can be found.

As I walk down the quiet little street past many old homes, I come to a lot where an old house had been demolished and a new one is being raised. The buzz of busy workers plying their trades, combined with the incessant barking of the golden retriever next door, assaults my ears. He informs the workers of his disapproval of the goings-on next door, which he has done since the day work began back in March. The workers are quietly annoyed, tired of telling him to shut up.

Out in the street some boys are kicking a soccer ball and playfully yelling obscenities at each other. The boulevard trees are very tall and wide and cast a shadow so deep on the street below that the boys are playing nearly in the dark.

A few doors down, on the other side of the street, a man is in his driveway at his car. Both the hood and trunk lids are open and he is staring into the engine compartment with a very bewildered look on his face, scratching his head. He is clearly confused about what the devil is wrong with his car.

Just then I feel something brush against my leg and look down to see one of the neighborhood cats out looking for affection. He thinks I am a good prospect for giving him some attention.

As I pass the construction site, another sensation strikes me. I detect that nearby someone has decided today would be a great day for a barbecue as the aroma from sizzling steaks enters my nostrils and invades my thoughts. Yum! I wish I knew who was doing this and that I had been invited too. As I allow these thoughts to play out in my mind, I start to imagine that I have been invited and am enjoying the marvelous steak along with zesty potato salad and roasted corn on the cob. After the main meal is eaten, there is dessert: a perfect peach cobbler a la mode.

In the dim light of the setting sun, it seems the light from the barbecue fire is in competition with it. In the cool evening air we began telling stories, and everyone enjoys the discourse for some while. Then, as it begins to really cool off and everyone is sleepy from the fine meal, the gathering starts to break up. I thank the hosts and insist that next time it will be my turn to entertain the group.

As I walk down the lonely street, I begin ruminating on the sensory experiences of my day. After several impressions flit across my mind, a huge smile grows across my face, and I feel very serene.

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