

October Days

by Adam Sifre

The first days of October are ordinary in the way that milk just hours away from spoiling is ordinary milk. You can baptise your cornflakes with it, but part of you knows the whole thing is just shy of almost right.

Always there is the false heat - the October afterbirth that lingers for days. The lake walkers swarm one last time, feigning ignorance. Defiant in t-shirts and shorts, they stroll the paths with strollers and dogs, ignoring the soft scrapes and rustling of the dead, masquerading as fallen leaves. In the end, though, the dead always show their true selves.

The rustling of leaves on schoolyard pavement brings a taste of Bradbury and memory of dandelion wine.

It is the time of dares and false bravado. October is filled with moments, hidden like dark Easter eggs, when you find yourself standing in front of the abandoned house, a child of eleven or twelve.

The afternoons start to surrender, and the long night opens in previews. Under the bright kitchen lights, something stirs. Well fed and clean, small parts of us yearn for black and white, and the unwelcome touch of a cold strangers hand in the small hours.

Later, October becomes dull. Drab. It is that fifth spoonful of chocolate ice cream. You begin to lose the taste for it, but you keep plodding along, until the bowl is licked clean. The wind sips at the small provisions of joy left over from summer's carnival, leaving only grey and ice chips on your plate.

Near the end, moonlight rushes in like the tides and we begin to howl. The old tales, fully awake, are drawn to the campfires, the best parts staying just beyond the orange light. Will you dance to the music of creaky doors and footfalls on frost?

