

The seasons, it is said...

by Sally Houtman

It is said they met in autumn, with the shadows at drowsy angles, in the clearing where the field sloped steeply towards the hidden creek. She caught his eye in the curious light, kneeling in the clover, thick curls hooked behind one ear. Perhaps it was the gentle way she clipped the roses that made him want to know her, who she was, how she thought. He approached her, bashful, grinning, buttoning and unbuttoning his jacket, blunt-nailed fingers fumbling slits. A glance of sideways approval and he was smitten. He received her smile like a gift.

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In spring they wed beneath the petal trestle. She gave him a paintbrush with squint coral pigments. He gave her a drainpipe and a tarnished gong. At home she managed book and leger, kept the teapot full. He worked on conduit and woodpile, hollowed pits for seedlings in their broad backyard. Winters came with heavy footsteps. Summers lingered, long in stride. Twenty years his senior, he knew one day she'd leave him, as all breathing things will do.

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It is said the day she died the clocks ran backwards. Starlings wrestled with their warbles. The skies filled but gave no rain. Decades later, some say that you can see him at the window, a silhouette of shadows, searching for her in the hinged wing of the sparrow, in the twisted branches of the cypress tree. He is there, forever watching, waiting for the seasons to cycle back around again.

