

SPRING

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The snow takes its time. It lingers far past spring's due date. Across the road the field is white. It keeps the winter close. Maybe the snow will last forever. Maybe May won't come this year. But near the house, brown is revealed a little each day. The process is slow. The snow begins to melt. Memories of autumn are still frozen against the ground. The boot feels the crunch of last November under foot. Dried leaves are stuck to the earth. I am of two minds--wanting the snow to melt and not able to bear the thought of it. Every year it's the same.

The stem of a once mighty leaf blows in the wind, its body attached to the ground. It clings to the embrace of winter, desperate to hold on. The leaf had grown safe in the folds of winter's embrace. Perhaps it wonders where the blanket of snow has gone, the warmth of the weight. It seemed it would last forever.

My puppy sniffs the leaf.

"Don't touch it," I say. "Let it be."

It's inevitable, though. I know the truth. I know that the earth will warm. The leaf will not be able to hold on. The wind will finally take it.

Will it fly away into the sky? I won't know where it will go. I won't know if it will land somewhere else or disintegrate into the ethers.

“I should look that up,” I think. “I should ask someone.”

“Where has the leaf gone?” I should ask. But I don't. I don't ask.

The boot crunches across the field. The puppy takes in smells of a new season. She is energized by what she discovers, what she anticipates. The whole world is coming alive for her. She has never known spring. Her spirit is hardly contained within her seven-pound body. She runs and chases and lifts her head to the warming breeze.

I want to say to her, “Just wait, it only gets better.”

But I don't. I don't say that. I am still of two minds.

There is an inexplicable joy that comes with spring. I know this. I remember feeling the expectation of summer on spring's warming breezes. I long for it, but turn away. My puppy jumps from frozen ground to snow to mud. We stand by the stream and listen to the water rushing across the rocks, mad with excitement, vital and raging and new.

The dry leaves on a tree quiver in the breeze. Their color so pale, they are almost transparent. I don't know why they didn't fall in the autumn, why they've held on. They make a rustling sound and my puppy looks up at them. She barks as if they are alive, as if they are speaking to her.

“There's nothing there,” I want to tell her. But I don't. I don't tell her that. Perhaps the leaves have caught our attention on purpose. Perhaps

they want to say one last thing before they are pushed off the branch in the thunderstorms of April. Soon it will be May.

We think we know the ways of nature. We think we know when it is time to freeze, to sleep, to awaken, to die. We think we know what time means. Everyone says, "Time heals." But it's just something to say. Time keeps us locked in the place between two minds. It makes us unable to give ourselves over to the anticipation of something new, something warm.

"I just want to see one more summer," he had said.

The ground near the house has softened. My puppy and I watch the leaf. It has pulled away from the ground. It had to.

"Nature deemed it so," some would say.

I look up to the sky.

"Where have you gone?" I ask.

I want to notice the crocus sticking her tiny head out of the ground. I want to feel the warm air, let it invigorate me, let it make me jump from frozen ground to snow to mud. But I am of two minds. I feel the anticipation of an unbearable moment. It always feels the same, as if it's not a memory, but a thing that happens just the same every year. The melting of the snow, the warming of the ground, the untethering of love. May.