

October and November

I like to think that October and November

Are friends walking side by side, the burnt grass of summer at their heels, a scatter of snow somewhere ahead where they can't quite see.

October clothes herself in extravagant, shimmering wraps of orange and yellow and cherry red. She dances in a swirl of leaves; laughs with squirrels and dodges their acorns; stays up late.

November stands straighter and more still. His breath puffs white in a shaft of wan sunlight. He wears stately brown trimmed with fading gold. Fur-lined gloves. Boots, just in case. A scarf to ward off the chill.

He is a little bit sad.

He is a little bit wistful.

But he smiles at October's antics. How can he not?

October, wild spirit that she is, gulps cider straight from the keg. November sips sherry from stemmed crystal.

October skips, kicking up twigs, eager and exuberant, grabbing November's hand, pulling at his sleeve

While November hums softly to himself and ambles, never in a hurry, squinting into the quiet gloom, his soles crunching on the cold ground.

He pulls the last sweet, shriveled apple from his pocket, takes a bite, tosses the core into the underbrush. October merely laughs. There are always more apples!

Inevitably, their hands pull apart. October frowns at the long shadows of the trees. November frowns too, but thoughtfully.

"Until next year, when the leaves turn," says October.

"Until next year, when the leaves fall," says November.

October flies the last dreams of summer like a kite, still skipping as she goes, and soon is lost in that blizzard of color the wind conjures down from the branches.

November smiles, hands in his pockets, watching her go, then walks slowly, crispy brown leaves up to his ankles. He savors each step despite the creaking in his knees.

Soon he will duck inside and find his favorite armchair.

He will let the hearth warm him.

He will stare dreamily at the frost on the windowpanes until he slowly falls asleep.