Mary Catherine Mohr

September

It is almost impossible to be truly lost in Central Minnesota. You could try to do it, I suppose, but I think that your attempt would only end in failure--human cultivation makes logical, geometric patchwork of the flat plains. From above everything looks ordered. The earth is a living circuit board; each tree has its place, each road intersects with another, and all rivers aim for the sea—only the clouds seem unreliable. They come and go with the casual unease of wandering ghosts; their shadows dancing in spotted waves over the wind-pressed grass.

Right now I’m sitting in the time people romantically call ‘early autumn’, though in reality this is not Autumn, this is an in-between time, a time of transition. From this place I can watch August relinquish the stage to September (she’s thin and nervous, but quite beautiful, with hair like a wildfire and eyes the color of spiced mead). Her clear, cold voice is everywhere, harmonizing with the rich, hazy alto of Summer. If I listen closely I can hear her in the air and in the trees and in the birds. They call through the sky in organized Vs, discussing, I imagine, the intricacies of thermals and the challenge of finding food in deep water.

The weather makes me nervous. September is a strange and fickle month, prone to fits of sunny heat and windy cold-- rarely does she see fit to announce her intentions. It may or may not rain today, it may or may not be hot. I cannot predict the habits of wind and weather any more than I could understand the secret, muddy words of a common toad.

This place is troubling, but also very exciting. Whenever I go outside I feel a little confused. Today the air smelled like snow, but I know that the grass is still green, and will remain that way, even after the first frost has dusted the empty cornfields with ice. I want the season to change, but there is something satisfying about transition. It’s surprising, and I like being surprised.

It is easy for me to sit still and watch closely as a spider weaves her web between two blades of grass. She’s black and yellow and fat from a feast of mosquitoes and monarch butterflies. She is content with her plenty, and I am content, impressed by the graceful curve of her abdomen; rounded and brilliant like the eye of a crow. I note how the twist of her web is like foreign calligraphy; that she weaves a sonnet into the fabric of the field. I wonder if I could ever create anything quite as beautiful.

Sitting and watching is what I do best, but sometimes I feel I must be going crazy. It is odd to think that I might be losing myself in a place where getting lost is nearly impossible. Why else would I stay in an open field for an hour, watching spiders and trying to learn the language of September?