

# Being old in autumn

**Jill Dwyer**

**First prize, Poetry: 2025 Marysville BookNest writing competition**

Sitting as this autumn lingers  
air still touched with warm, garden drizabone.  
Day after day of muted sky,  
a little hazy and pale china blue.  
'What a lovely day!' 'If it wasn't so dry.'  
Even the grass, tired out, declines to grow.  
I'll tell the cat to put his winter coat on hold.

I see my hands, old paper, mottled brown.  
Think of the parody of itself my body has become.  
After eighty-two rotations of the year  
who knows how many seasons I am due?  
So I'll stay calm when draining heatwave days  
reduce me to a limp and sweaty rag.  
Midwinter hands, too cold and stiff to write,  
will find a warming cup.  
My store of springtimes must be winding down  
and each one must be savoured to the full.  
Inhale the mild – delight in new and tender green.  
Find time to watch the fledgling leaves emerge,  
tiny, but perfect, cut to designated pattern.

This Indian summer soon must run its course  
and winter come in frosty as ordained.  
But perhaps, beyond my time, I fear  
the quarters of the year will merge,  
become one blurred parade of changeless days  
and 'once in a lifetime' just the commonplace.  
Fires could rise up hungry in July  
and searing dryness reign in what was spring.  
Then the timid, nascent leaves  
will stay clenched tight within their buds,  
afraid to face the mocking winds of change  
that probe and scour and rasp beneath their breath  
'I told you so.'