



The  
Autumn  
Poem

By Jess Dinning



To those who romanticise:  
thank you for showing me the immense fun  
and self-care found in romanticisation.  
(Indie authors and Bookstagrammers: I'm  
looking at you!)



# I

Autumn mornings settle down  
with swirls of cinnamon in fumbled chais.  
Twelve degrees.  
The trailing end of sweaty days.

And soon leafless skeletons  
will stretch their fingers into the frigid sky  
and windy notes will beat  
against binded blinds  
and grevillea pots.



Yet, for now we lie sweater-less  
in a shaft of golden glow,  
as the clouds freeze to artifice,  
and the colours leech to grey,  
and the cold prickles foreign  
against our tanned, summered skin.



## II

The Friday dawns to gold and blue  
with the smell of cinnamon in toasting  
buns.

Stocking'd feet slumber  
to five-dollar coffee stands  
and the key clicks and turns at a casual  
rate.



With the smell of story that the sun resumes,  
one revels in all the shelves  
    mooring bright frigates,  
    still and silent,  
    in a sea of a thousand furnished worlds.



# III

## *An Ode to the Maple Months*

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
close bosom-friend of the maturing sun.*

*Every leaf speaks bliss to me,  
fluttering from the autumn tree.*

*Driven, like ghosts,  
from an enchanter fleeing.*

*Go, sit upon the lofty hill,  
and turn your eyes around.*



# IV

The sun burns gold behind the city block  
weathered by weary feet at a  
silhouetted five o'clock.  
And while the days will soon dawn cramped  
and sore  
and a southerly will whistle a ghostly  
maligner,  
now you clomp up through the homeward  
traffic,  
through stocking'd feet and sweater'd  
arms,  
the cooling air foreign against ageing  
summered skin.





The early lighting of lamps.



W

I am moved by fancies that are curled  
around those odes, and cling:  
the notion of some infinitely perfect  
infinitely romantic thing.

Close your eyes and dream.  
The dregs of spice swirl down the sink:  
the trailing end of orange-leaf'd days  
slowly assuming the grave.



# Author's Note

It was a blue-sky Friday in May. The kind where wind gusts brittle leaves and cold air wakens goosebumps. The week before, my manager had presented me with a bookshop key - now, I was striding through the city towards work like Sandra Bullock in *The Proposal*. My pants were the black, billowing kind and nicknamed my 'big-girl-boss-pants'. Needing only a coffee cup to complete the persona (and craving a hot drink), I stopped by my favourite café and bought a cacao hot chocolate - apparently, I was trendy too.

When I arrived at the shop, my manager was preparing to go the bank.



"I learnt how to do that yesterday!" I said.

"Did you want to do it today?"

And so, somehow, I found myself back amongst the leaves, takeaway cup in hand, tote bag over my shoulder, striding even further through the city to cash in our earnings.

That Friday afternoon was a dream. There I was, no longer a baby bookseller, living a romantic autumn day with the sense that I had just made it somewhere. What emerged was this poem.

*The Autumn Poem* is a capsule of everything I



love about the maple months: hot drinks, bookshops, golden leaves, knitwear, lucid sunsets, bustling cities and the way in which trees shed into skeletons. The poem structures itself around T.S Eliot's 'Preludes' and includes poetry from some Romantic poems: 'To Autumn' by John Keats,, 'Fall, leaves, fall' by Emily Brontë, 'Ode to the West Wind' by Percy Bysshe Shelley and 'To Autumn' by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In including both these influences, I wasn't intending to claim their work as my own. Rather, I wanted to ease Eliot's burdens of city life through the idea of romanticisation. The original 'Preludes' cycles through a day in London; the poet is laden with the nightmarish change of the modern city. The Romantics, however, seek liberation through the



sublimity of nature. Since the beginning of COVID-19, I've felt something akin to what Eliot wrote about. I am now tied to a screen in ways I've never experienced before - no longer can life be distilled down to tangible tools and faces. More and more I'm seeking detachment in nature and using romanticisation to spice up my use of technology.

Since doing both this, I've found great solace and fun in curating parts of my day. Life in the postmodern city can feel colossal at times, like Yeats' widening gyre or Atlas holding up the sky. But finding magic in seemingly insignificant things - the autumn leaves, shelving books at work, even



writing itself - can make living life a little less overwhelming.

*The Autumn Poem* was nurtured over 18 months. I hope you find joy in it as I did.

Jess :)

- *August 2023*

