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Ice Out

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ICE OUT

As late as yesterday ice preoccupied the pond—dark, half melted, water-logged. Then it sank in the night, one piece, taking winter with it. And afterward everything seems simple and good.

All afternoon I lifted oak leaves from the flowerbeds, and greeted like friends the green-white crowns of perennials. They have the tender, unnerving beauty of a baby’s head.

How I hated to come in! I’ve left the windows open to hear the peepers’ wildly disproportionate cries. Dinner is over, no one stirs. The dog sighs, sneezes, and closes his eyes.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

A postcard arrives from a friend visiting the Great Wall of China. “Life couldn’t be better,” says M.

I was there once, in March. Unkind wind bore down from the north. Mongolia . . . How steep it is! In places even presidents are forced to drop down on all fours.