Yesterday, he was watching his wife from the kitchen window. She was outside pulling herbs from their stems. He watched the way a smile would build, tug at the corners of her mouth and fall. She would lean forward and he would reach, as if to catch one, before it disappeared forever. They stayed this way for half an hour.

He fled at four in the afternoon, running into the furthest paddock from their home. He dashed and ducked between branches, searching for nothing in particular. A gush of blood spilled from his toes when he hit the remains of a bird in his path. Kneeling, he clutched the skull between two trembling hands. What kind of victory was this?

He made this journey every day, as if he could out run it all. The marriage spent behind windows, the shortening breath, and the knowledge that he was now seventy-four and there was nothing at all stopping him getting older. The claustrophobia of living a life outnumbered by days.

Gripping the skull tighter, exploring the eye sockets with quivering fingers, he looked around him. For a moment, he felt figureless. He was the tree that suffered four hundred years of weather, he was the sun being swallowed by darkness, and he was the cracked skull in his hands – a fading feature of the land.

He ran home.

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