

# November 2001

*Robin Russell*

You notice the smells first, more spring, or even summer, than late fall, the stale-clean scent of wet sunlit streets after last night's heavy rain, the musk of soaked dead leaves, humid decay in a season usually dry, a shining solstice sigh through open windows, suspended on a candent morning breeze.

U.S. military planners think insurrections encouraged by U.S intelligence operatives will pressure the Taliban into . . . for the first time in many years, a woman strides freely through the ruined streets, her face uncovered, the burqa thrown back like a superhero's cape.

His eyes bright with fear and resignation, his captors in felt hats and heavy flowing robes, an old man has his beard torn out in fistfuls before he is shot through the head in a jagged, burnt-bone sparkle of matted and bloody hair, his mouth still pleading after he is dead.

Tracking brittle leaves into the house, finally  
autumn comes with them, blustering through  
the rooms and settling darker colors and cooler  
air everywhere. Now, it is just a moment from  
snowing, and in shadowy places, huddled in the  
coming cold, winter snaps, just out of sight, waiting  
to dress the land. Silent, scarred, peaceful.

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ROBIN RUSSELL received a B.A. in philosophy from Brigham Young University. His poem "History of the Church—Part One" was published in *Dialogue* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2000). He currently works as an administrator at a charter high school in Minneapolis, Minnesota, while writing poetry and slowly preparing the journals of a distant relative for publication.