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## Autumn, in Grand Forks

Grant Macmillan

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# Autumn, in Grand Forks

This brief photo-text collection aims to meld the visual and textual into a poetic expression of one person's experience of Autumn in Grand Forks. The photos and poems herein are meant to reflect and explicate each other—each component is simultaneously supplemental and integral to the other. Place is at the center of the collection. Whether the subject at hand is the impending extinction of a species or instructions on how to bake squash muffins with friends, each piece is inextricable from the writer's new home: Grand Forks, North Dakota.

*Milkweed and Monarchs*





*Midwestern milkweed fields, decimated  
by urban sprawl, climate change, herbicide  
—abrupt devastation.*

*Monarch caterpillars eat nothing  
but leaves of Milkweed.*

. . . . .

North America's Monarch Butterflies,  
migrating from great plains of prairie to  
oyamel fir forests of Central Mexico.  
In 1995 they cover 21 hectares of mountaintop.

Conservation biologists saying 6 hectares  
of mountaintop coverage is their *extinction threshold*—  
the critical value at which a species  
will slowly, but surely, cease to exist.

They go on living but their end will be inevitable.  
The name of this phenomena: *extinction debt*—  
the future extinction of a species  
due to the events of the past.

North America's Monarch Butterflies  
migrating from great plains of prairie to  
oyamel fir forests of Central Mexico.

In 1995 they  
cover  
covered  
21  
hectares  
2.8 hectares  
of  
mountaintop.  
of mountaintop.

In 2019 they

Conservation biologists said that 6 hectares  
of mountaintop coverage was their *extinction threshold*—

*extinction threshold*  
—the critical value at which a species  
slowly, but surely, ceased to exist.

*extinction debt*  
—the extinction of a species  
due to the events of the past.

. . . . .

*Monarch caterpillars ate nothing  
but the decimated remains of Milkweed.*

*Their end is inevitable...*  
*(was) —ABRUPT DEVASTATION.*

Works Consulted

Arnold, Carrie. "We're Losing Monarchs Fast—Here's Why." *National Geographic*. December 21, 2018. [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)

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"Milkweed." *The National Wildlife Federation*. 2020. [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org).

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*September Ford—October Ford*





*Honey Locust*





Honey Locust—  
60-80 feet tall,  
prefers direct sun.  
Broadly pyramidal,  
strong trunk,  
won't kill lawn grasses,  
tough.

*Honey Locust—  
with broken tooth,  
and little snow bits in their  
hair, braiding  
prairie grasses,  
fingers broken once*

*(or twice) before  
and palms—  
tough and broad,  
but not very pyramidal, I say.*

*and the little bits of Honey  
sprinkled in  
their laugh that  
I can nearly taste.*

#### Works Consulted

Grant, Amy. "Skyline Honey Locust Care." *Gardening Know How*. 2020. [www.gardeningknowhow.com](http://www.gardeningknowhow.com).

*Vegan Squash Muffins (last harvest)*



### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. blended squash
- 1-1.5 tbs ground flax-egg
- ½ cup melted non-dairy butter
- 1.5 cups flour
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ tsp salt
- 2.5 tsp baking powder

### Instructions:

This is how you make vegan squash muffins.

Pick the large green squash. That one sitting in the back-left corner of the cart. The top will be a little mushy but the rest will be firm. Be sure to thank Sherry and Virgil for their hospitality before you leave. Stop on the side of the highway to watch a thunderstorm roll across the prairie on your drive home.

The rain will be snow by next weekend. Point your camera at your friends and ask them to smile. It's too dark and the picture won't come out at all. Ask them to smile anyway. Put the squash in the fridge when you get home. Let it ripen for two more weeks until the rain has turned into snow. Chop the mushy top off and make sure the rest is still firm. Invite your friends to come over and make paella and squash muffins for dinner. The squash won't mash down—don't fret. Okay, fret a little bit. Now stop fretting. Dump the chunks of squash into your blender. Press the button that says *pulse*. Notice how good the paella smells. Combine the blended squash with the flax-egg and the melted butter. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Mix the dry ingredients together in a separate bowl. Stop picking every single song to play—your friends like music too—ask them what they want to hear. Fold the squash mixture into the dry ingredients. Hum shyly as you stir. Grease a large muffin tin with non-dairy butter. Pour the batter into the large muffin tin and place it in the oven. Dance lightly as you pour. Prick one of the muffins with a fork after about 15 minutes. If the prongs come out dry, the muffins are ready. Unstack three plates. Place the apricot jelly you bought at the last farmer's market of the year on the table. Scoop the paella onto each plate along with two squash muffins. Eat the paella and the two squash muffins. Smile. Send an email to Sherry and Virgil thanking them for the recipe and the squash. Ask if they need any more help on the farm next weekend.

This is how you make vegan squash muffins.

## About Grant McMillan

Grant McMillan moved to Grand Forks from the Appalachian region of Western North Carolina. Among those green-sprawl mountains, he began to observe how indebted people are to the landscapes in which they live. By melding photography and poetry, he seeks to capture in portraiture the instinctive ways that people and landscape intermingle to form Place. He is a first year PhD student in UND's English department and is delighted to observe this new landscape and its people.