

# *Autumn's Kaleidoscope*

*By Cindy Rae*

*Inspired by Judi, who often reminds me that we all dream  
dreams which include each other.*



*October gave a party;  
The leaves by hundreds came—  
The Chestnuts, Oaks, and Maples,  
And leaves of every name.  
The Sunshine spread a carpet,  
And everything was grand,  
Miss Weather led the dancing,  
Professor Wind the band.*

*~ 'October's Party' by George Cooper*

"And this is an alder. And this is a white ash. There's a stand of those near the bridge. The leaves don't look like much, but the wood is the kind they make baseball bats out of," Pascal proudly showed the book containing his leaf collection to Vincent, as Devin looked on.

"Really?" Vincent asked, tracing the thin leaf with a clawed fingertip.

Devin recognized the leaves, and the stand of trees they came from.

"Oh, sure," he threw in. "It's a hard wood, but it turns easy, on a lathe. Olivia's dad told me," Devin supplied, watching Pascal add a few more specimens to his collection. A red sugar maple leaf settled itself beneath a spray of green birch leaves. Pascal was careful to keep the candle back from the pages, lest the wax drip, or his treasures get burned.

"It's so red," Vincent said as Pascal gently laid down the clear acetate on top of his leaves. Even in the sparse light, the color was recognizable for what it was. The old photo album did a wonderful job of storing his prizes.

"Yeah. They start out as kind of yellow, but by the end of the season, they're every color. And a million of them, all at once. Autumn's Kaleidoscope, my dad calls it. You should see the--" Pascal bit off his words before the sentence could come out, and Devin narrowed his eyes.

"I wish I could," Vincent said, schooling his voice so it would not sound wistful. *Wanting what you can't have is useless.* It was a lesson Mitch Denton had been repeating to him, lately. Along with a few that were even less kind.

"I'd really like to have an oak cluster with the acorns on it, but I can't put those in a book. Umm... maybe if I brought one down you could draw one for me?" Pascal asked Vincent, knowing he was a better than fair artist.

"That way, you could be in the book too." Pascal was trying to help. Vincent did brighten at the notion of being included in some small way.

"Sure Pascal. Bring me what you want me to draw. I've been working on my drawing. Elizabeth has been showing me how."

*Yes. Yes of course she was,* Devin thought. It was one of the ways they were keeping Vincent occupied while the other children went up top, to play. *Elizabeth was teaching him to draw things. Some of which he would never see, in real life. It was so unfair.*

Pascal nodded, unaware of Devin's internal monologue. "It's not like you can't ever see the trees yourself. You can see them at night," Pascal soothed. And just... look in here, for any leaves you miss. You can borrow my book any time you want, Vincent."

Devin quietly watched the exchange, as Vincent eyed a scattering of oak leaves pressed to a page. "Yes. Yes I can. Thank you, Pascal."

*Yes. Thank you, Pascal. Thanks for offering to give him what he already has, or can get, Devin thought, trying not to be uncharitable. He doesn't need to see "leaves." He needs to see what they look like now, in daylight.*

Devin knew that Pascal was a good friend. But Father's way of keeping Vincent penned in was contagious. Others were catching it, adult and child alike.

Above, Devin knew the nighttime leaves all looked black or dark brown. And tunnel candlelight was a poor substitute for sunlight. And leaves pressed into a book were a hideous substitute for a huge tree, in full autumn splendor.

"We can skip stones by the falls," Pascal said, wanting to make up for his faux pas. There were many things Vincent *could* do. There were just so many he couldn't.

"Sure," Vincent said. They *could* skip stones. They could always skip stones. They could also play marbles, toy with tunnel code, or play Tom Sawyer. Vincent was not without his amusements.

He was just aware that his friends had access to other ones. Many other ones.

So was his older brother.

Vincent didn't want to be a burden, or ruin the good mood of the afternoon.

"Bet I can skip one farther than you!" Vincent challenged.

"Betcha can't!" Pascal replied.

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"You've been quiet since the Falls," Devin said later, in their shared bedroom. "What's on your mind?" he asked.

Vincent shrugged. "Nothing. Nothing, really." Vincent picked up Treasure Island. He wasn't sure if Robert Louis Stevenson helped his sense of longing for adventure, or worsened it. Some days, it was a toss-up.

*Yeah. Nothing. And William wears a dress,* Devin thought, taking in his little brother.

But he knew Vincent wouldn't talk, even if prodded. Even at twelve, it wasn't his way. He never sulked, not exactly, and he rarely threw a fit. But he stewed over things for a good long while. Devin suspected that in some ways, the puberty which was already well under way with him, was taking hold in earnest, with his little brother. Time would tell.

Devin opened up his own copy of Tom Sawyer. It was a good night for reading. And he knew that the way to get Vincent to talk was to not push, but to pretend to ignore him for a while, and let Vincent come around to discussing whatever was bothering him.

In a way, what Jacob couldn't accomplish with a harangue, Devin could, with sheer silence.

"Devin..." Vincent began before Devin had even finished the second page.

"Hmm?"

"Do you think it's all right to... you know... wish for things you can't have? To want them?"

Devin knew that this was a loaded question, for his little brother. More loaded than it was for anyone else. That didn't change his answer one iota.

"Seems to me that's the only kind of thing you *can* want, or wish for," he replied, flipping the page, still pretending to read.

"No. I don't mean just stuff you don't *have*. I mean stuff you can't *get*. No matter what," Vincent clarified, setting the book down and swinging his legs over the side of his bed.

Devin did likewise. "There isn't anything you can't get," Devin answered, with elder brother certainty.

"Devin..."

"I mean it, Vincent," Devin said. He fixed his brown gaze on his blue eyed little brother. "There isn't anything you can't get. Any dream you can't dream. Don't you ever believe otherwise." *Because once you start, you'll never stop.*

"Mitch says--"

"Mitch is an ass." Devin grinned as he said it, well aware he wasn't supposed to swear. It made Vincent laugh.

"Yeah. He kind of is," Vincent agreed.

Devin took out a tin from under his bed. It rattled with loose change.

"See this? I got a dream, too. I'm gonna buy me a knife, some day."

"Father will have a fit," Vincent said.

"Yeah. But it don't mean I ain't gonna do it." He stowed the coins back under his bed. "Once I get enough, I will. I scrounge in the ditches for pop bottles and loose change on the sidewalk. I'll get there, one day."

Vincent inclined his head in a gesture that was already common to him.

"And once you get it?" he asked.

"We'll see when it happens," Devin grinned, showing his handsome young features to their best advantage. His face was unmarred. And the shock of brown hair which fell over his forehead was regularly getting into his eyes.

"You need a haircut. Or you won't be able to see anything at all," Vincent teased, tossing a pillow at him.

"I'll get Mary to do it tomorrow. Or the next day." Devin tossed it back.

"What is it you want to see, Vincent?" he asked.

Vincent held onto the pillow, and his eyes took on a faraway look.

*There it is, Devin thought. The Vincent look. The one that means he's thinking about something he can never have. The one he's having more and more often, the one Father pretends not to see, the one everyone pretends not to see, because they have no fix for it.*

"Oh, I don't know," Vincent said cagily.

Devin said nothing. And bet Vincent knew exactly what he wanted.

"Maybe...to go to a real ball game. See the autumn leaves while they're still on the trees, in the sunlight. Ride the carousel. You know. Stuff. Stuff I'll never do. That doesn't mean I'm not happy, though," the young boy hastened to add.

It was like a reflex, Devin realized. Like he forbid other people to think he was ever unhappy.

*No, it doesn't mean you're not happy. Devin thought. It just means you're dying inside, that this place is killing you. But it doesn't mean you're unhappy.*

Devin knew that feeling Vincent was struggling with. He knew it too well, because he felt it even inside himself.

Just like the others, though, he wasn't sure he had a cure for the restrictions which curbed Vincent's life.

But unlike them, he wasn't so quick to accept just exactly what those restrictions were.

"I'm gonna read, some more," Devin declared, stretching back out. Tomorrow, I'll go up and look around for one of those acorn clusters Pascal wants. Maybe bring down some more leaves. Some better ones. Okay?"

Vincent smiled, following suit as he picked up his own book. It was good to have a big brother. "Okay, Devin," Vincent said, flipping back to his page.

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Devin did as he said he would. By evening, Pascal had a sketch for his book, and Vincent was happy to "be a part of it."

"You got the colors just right," Pascal complimented, smoothing the acetate down over the picture.

He did. He did get the colors "just right." Meaning that in a dimly lit room, sketching by lantern and candlelight, the image of a cluster of acorns clutching to an oak twig, with a couple leaves still attached, was essentially, a correct one. The browns were deep. So were the greens. Touches of amber gilded the leaves.

Devin remembered selecting the bit of bracken from the ground. Remembered how much different the colors had looked in the brighter light of afternoon.

Pascal hadn't been there. He'd been working, or playing with his father in their chamber. He saw just what Vincent saw; the shadowy, dimly lit twig of an oak tree. A cluster of dark shades set against each other. A



small part of a massive and greater whole. A whole Vincent had only seen in deep shadow, and in blackest night.

"It's a good drawing. You have a talent," Devin complimented, watching Vincent's unusual fingers trace the page.

"Thanks," Vincent said, warming to his brother's praise. He kept his fingers on his picture, which prevented Pascal from closing the book.

"Thinking about something?" Pascal asked.

Vincent let his hand trail away. "I know the right shapes, for the leaves. I know some of the colors, in small pieces. I'm just trying to picture it all in bright light, a million of them covering the whole tree."

"A million million," Pascal smiled. And then that times every other tree in the park. Maybe we could go up at dusk," Pascal offered. "You know. Stand just inside the entrance of the tunnels, right as the sun sets? Stay deep in the shadows?"

*Yes. And maybe a man dying of thirst could live off an eyedropper full of water,* Devin thought, but didn't say aloud.

Vincent shook his head. Even Pascal's moderate choice was an unwise one, and he knew it. Dusk was quitting time, in the city, and the park was full of people until the light faded to nothing. "The trees are well back from the entrance. And dusk is supper time, anyway. We'd be missed," Vincent answered, already looking at the down side of Pascal's suggestion.

Devin suspected that was so no one else would have to point it out and Pascal wouldn't look any more uncomfortable than he already was.

Pascal nodded, admitting defeat. "Olivia's dad is helping Eli set up a new whetstone. He said I could sharpen the chisels as long as I was

with him. Want to come?" Pascal offered, once again offering a distraction from the realities which boundaried Vincent's life.

"Sure. Let's go bug Eli. After that, we can go practice skipping some more stones," Devin said wryly.

The other two boys were too young to pick up on his sarcasm.

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"Construction signs. The official looking ones, the ones the city uses. The ones that say "Men at Work," or "Keep out." Know where I can get any?" Devin asked Mitch.

"I know everything," Mitch sneered, looking Devin up and down.

"What do you want them for?"

*None of your business.*

"Just playing a trick on Pascal."

"That runt's no sport. No game in fooling an idiot," Mitch took a drag off a cigarette, and ground it under his heel. Smoking was his latest affectation. He wasn't good at it, but he enjoyed the feeling of rebelliousness it gave him.

"Long as it ain't for Vincent. Fang face damn near got me caught by a hobo down by the tracks, a couple months back. Father ain't give me no peace, since."

"Fang face" was the latest name Mitch had chosen to call Vincent when they were out of adult earshot. That was a score that would have to be settled later, Devin realized. But for now, he wanted something.

"Yeah. Father's tough." It wasn't an entirely false commiseration. Devin knew the only one Father leaned into as hard as him was Mitch. Mitch knew it, too.

Mitch considered Devin. They were near the same age, but Mitch was heavier, and could pass for a year or two older than he was. Devin's long legs were rangier.

"You're crazy."

"Yeah. So. Do you know of any?" Devin prompted.

"You got money?" It was asked in almost an offhand way. Devin knew it was anything but.

"No." Devin willed himself not to think of the change box that held the money for his knife. Willed himself not to give the secret away, with his eyes. His poker face dropped into place. He affected boredom.

"Liar. Come on, you got to have some. Guys like you always saving for somethin'."

He was, but Devin knew the pittance under his bed wouldn't sway Mitch, one way or the other.

Devin shrugged, noncommittally. "I got what you got. Nothing, and plenty of it. Like you don't have any idea where to get what I'm asking for." Devin turned around and took two steps to leave, all but expecting the retort Mitch aimed at his back.

"Canal Street off the docks. They're building a new warehouse there. Should have somethin.'"

"Thanks." Devin proceeded down the tunnel.

"Sure. And Devin?" Mitch stopped him from leaving, a heavy hand on his young shoulder.

"Yeah?" Devin turned.

"I got expenses. Next time, information's not for free. Next time we meet up, it will cost you."

Devin had no idea how true that was.

"Sure. Sure, Mitch," he said offhandedly.

Devin sauntered away casually, until he'd rounded a corner and was out of Mitch's line of sight

He broke into a run. Canal Street off the docks. He had work to do.

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It wasn't that Devin thought taking the official signs was a risk-free idea, or that this was even a well-planned scheme. It was that he was surprised how easy it was, all things considered.

Five o'clock quitting time having come and gone, the padlock which held the storage shed doors closed was barely even a challenge.

Still, a certain amount of teenage complaining was to be expected, and Devin was good at it.

"This would be easier to pick if I had my knife," Devin said to himself with certainty, as he applied one of Mary's nail files to a ridiculously easy to open padlock.

The metal hasp gave way in his hand, and the portable storage unit full of construction supplies was Devin's for the ransacking. Caution tape. Barricades. Even a pair of weighted bases with poles stuck into them, the kind used to cordon off an area. The poles could have a rope or a message strung between them, and would be perfect for blocking off a sidewalk.

He even found a couple of dimes on the floor, left behind by a worker with a hole in his pocket. He picked them up to add to his loose change collection.

"Come to Papa," Devin said, tugging out what he would need.

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"You're insane." Pascal said.

"Yeah. I get that a lot. So. You gonna help me? Or not?"

"I didn't say whether I wasn't gonna help you. Or not. I said you were crazy. Devin..." Pascal's voice had a worried tone.

"It's his one shot," Devin said, indicating his pilfered bounty with a wave of his hand. "We set it up in the morning, before the park gets really full. City work crews don't hit the construction site until nine, nine-thirty. We got time."

"You stole this stuff." Pascal looked at Devin's odd collection of items. Signs for "Wet Paint," "Wet Cement" and "Keep Out! Men at Work!" sat piled in one of the access tunnels.

"Borrowed. I'm gonna put it back." Devin set a wooden placard which declared "Area Off limits" against a stone wall.

"You're going to put it back? That's almost crazier than taking it in the first place! No!" Pascal refused, listening to his fear, not to mention his timid nature.

"Fine, then. I'll do it myself," Devin declared stubbornly. It had taken no small amount of work to get the supplies this far. It looked like he was going to have to carry them the rest of the way, as well.

He began gathering supplies. "Gonna section off that area to the left of the drainage tunnel, just past the second rise. There's a big stand of trees there. It will be easy to do, and Vincent will love it"

"You need a lookout," Pascal argued.

"Then look out for me," Devin returned, stuffing a roll of bright yellow caution tape into a backpack.

Pascal rubbed a head he suspected would one day be bald, if his father's appearance was any indication. Light brown hair skewed whichever way his fingers sent it. "Devin... Look, I get it..."

Devin all but rounded on him. "No! No, you don't! No one does! Because no one wants to." Devin sounded angry. He often did, when he was defending Vincent.

"If we all keep him stuffed down here, keep him pretending he's happy with what little he gets, nobody has to see how miserable he is, or do anything about it."

He began stacking the signs so that they could be easily carried over his shoulder. "By the time he grows up they'll have him... accepting all of it. Just like all the grown-ups do. Just like Father d--

"This is not about your fights with Father." The quarrels between Jacob and Devin were already somewhat legendary.

Devin shrugged at that. "Nah. It's about everybody's fight with Vincent. They all need him to be happy because he can't have the things they can have, and it makes them feel guilty."

Pascal raised an eyebrow at Devin's very adult assessment. Devin caught the skepticism in the look.

"I just want him to win, Pascal. Just a couple rounds. Just ... as much as he can."

Pascal looked at the mess, wondering how many trips Devin had had to make to get it this far. He sighed.

"Okay," Pascal said, picking up the weighted poles. "But if Father finds out, he is going to kill us."

Devin smiled his winning smile. “That’s why Father isn’t going to find out. Grab that ‘Detour’ sign.”

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“Keep your hands over your eyes. That’s right. Now just... lean forward and climb up,” Devin told Vincent.

“We waited too long,” Pascal fretted, as the three boys made their way to the spot Devin had spent the pre-dawn hours roping off.

“No we didn’t,” Devin said so Vincent couldn’t hear.

“The sun’s coming up!” Pascal whispered nervously to Devin as Vincent carefully negotiated the rise.

“I know. That’s the point.”

“You said you wanted him to see the leaves. Light, I get! But not this much—“

“Shhh! You’ll scare him!” Devin commanded, hiking over to where Vincent was emerging from one side of the ditch that led to the drainage tunnel. He put a steadying hand on Vincent’s back.

“Good. That’s it. Walk straight ahead. Twenty paces or so...” Devin lifted up a yellow swatch of caution tape. Vincent went under, missing bumping into a park bench by the brush of a knee. The Hawthorne hedge behind it would block the boys from view, as long as they stayed away from the edges of the territory Devin had claimed as “theirs.”

“I smell the sun coming up,” Vincent paused.

“I know. But it’s all right. I swear it’s all right. You’re safe.” Guiding hands moved him forward, again.

“We still have time?” Vincent asked.

“We still have time.” Devin promised. “Just walk forward a little more.”

Vincent did so, creating distance between himself and the other two boys.

“Devin. We waited too long,” Pascal worried.

“No we didn’t. He can’t see the colors if there’s no light,” Devin declared, putting a restraining hand on Pascal’s arm. A smile tugged at the older boy’s face. Light was poking through the tops of the trees. This was perfect.

Pascal wasn’t so sure. He decided to call the whole thing off.

"Vincent! Vincent come ba--"

"Shh!" Devin cut Pascal off. "We'll cover him, if we need to."

"But he's... His hood isn't even up!" Pascal exclaimed, gesturing with an outstretched hand.

"I know it isn't," Devin smiled more broadly. "Leave him alone, Pascal. Let him have it. It's little enough to ask." He turned back to watch the only brother he would ever claim step forward into a clearing Devin had secured just for him.

*Just a few more steps.* Devin thought. *Just a few more, and it will be... perfect.*

“You can uncover your eyes, now.” Devin called.

Devin stayed well behind his little brother, Pascal just a bit behind him.

And Vincent dropped his hands from his eyes, and stepped in to wonder.



He was so awestruck, he forgot to keep stepping forward, at times. Forgot to breathe. Forgot that he could keep going as far as Devin had told him he could. The blaze of color crashed into his eyes with such a force Vincent swore he could feel his pupils trying to dilate, trying to take it all in.

The familiar sounds of leaf fall crunched beneath his booted feet. Familiar, yet not familiar. He'd only ever done this at night, and only near the drainage tunnel. He'd only ever dared.

The damp dew of the morning grass still clung to the fallen leaves, still... weighted them, somehow. They clung to the bottom and sides of his soft boots, and the ridiculousness of a huge maple leaf stuck to his big toe made him laugh.

*Look down. Look up.* Vincent didn't know which direction was more right. The leaves were everywhere, in both places.

Then the sunrise made that decision for him.

Vincent's sensitive eyes took in the subtle shifts of the morning light. Scattered rainbows caught in drops of dew and they scattered prisms before his awestruck gaze, clinging to pine needles and jagged leaf edges. The sheltered section of the park Devin had cleverly blockaded looked... *green. Yes, green, that was what this color truly was.*

So different now, out from under candlelight or torchlight or a lantern's unsteady beam, or a park light's stingy, circular incandescence, at night. *Green. That's what that was.* And brown, and gold, and dark grey and shades of yellow which went over to orange.

*Autumn's Kaleidoscope. A view of many colors.*

Vincent swallowed past a lump in his throat. “Green” was never going to look the same again. “Green” was an utterly different color than he'd ever identified it as being. And so was everything else.

Bright sunlight glistened on a crooked-trunked pine, and Vincent swore he could smell the tar on the needles. Pascal's acorn clusters weighted an oak branch down, and a morning squirrel sat near the trunk, enjoying breakfast. Vincent's fingertips trailed along the thick top of another Hawthorne hedge and he realized how blue a Douglas fir looked, in the right light.

And for all its wonder, none of it called to his eyes like the maples did. Because the true range of color ran up there. *Ran. Could colors run, against a blue sky?* Vincent now knew that they could.

He couldn't look down, again. That left him nowhere but up.

The rising sun bushed a painterly hand across the tops of the biggest stand of maple and alder the park had. As light hit the topmost branches, the leaves burned an almost glistening yellow, giving way to gradations of orange, red and brown. Green clung there, too, spotted across the leaves on the higher branches. The leaves the sun still caressed the most, as the waning daylight shortened the tree's exposure to light.

Vincent turned in a circle. And dashed away a tear, not from sorrow, or even joy, but from the extreme mix of colors he was trying to take in, from the incredible difference the rising sunlight made.

Morning shadows crept across the ground, and each retreat revealed more splendor to his pilgrim's eyes.

Devin was still, and well behind him, sensing Vincent needed the space. And even reluctant Pascal knew this had been the right thing to do. One look at Vincent's face told them both all they needed to know.

"I've never... how many kinds of yellow *are* there?" He whispered to no one, unable to answer his own question, and perhaps not needing to.

Elizabeth's paint box, for all its variety, was a simpleton's palate, compared to this.

The fall wind tossed the topmost branches of the highest trees. As they shook their bounty down, Vincent stood in a rain of bright, falling leaves.

"There are so many shades of *red*," he said, craning his neck back to stare up a grandfather oak as far as he could. There were so many shades of red. Like a gradient rainbow, every shade of "red" from barely pink to deep damson travelled through Vincent's eyes, and locked themselves into his memory.

"So many shades. So many... colors..."

He turned in a small circle again, trying desperately to take it all in, knowing the light of the sun was both benediction and curse. He shouldn't be here. He shouldn't *be* here, and he knew it.

*I should be nowhere, but here.* He knew that, as well.

So did Devin.

The two brothers exchanged a distant look, an expression of deep love passing between them.

There was a coolness to the breeze, and it seemed like every time it shook the branches, more leaves came down.

The sun climbed higher.

"Devin..." Pascal warned.

"Let him have it, Pascal," Devin repeated.

"There will be people here, soon. Other people."

There would be, and Devin knew it. But there was only one sidewalk that led into this area, and they'd already taken care of that. For as long as the ruse held.

*Let it hold*, Devin prayed, not considering himself a praying boy. *Just... just for a while. Let it hold.*

"Yeah. There will be people." Devin allowed, glancing back the way they'd come. So far, so good.

He watched Vincent catch a maple leaf out of the air, and bring it right to his nose to smell it. He traced the jagged edge with furred fingers, then laughed his pleasure, and let it go, reaching for another one.

"But for right now, it's only him," Devin said.

Pascal peeked around a tree and looked down at the empty sidewalk. It was a pretty morning, but it was still early, yet.

He set aside his worries long enough to enjoy the sight of Vincent, standing amid newly falling leaves, laughing.

*Laughing.*

It was then he realized how right Devin had been to take this gamble, for Vincent.

"Yeah. Yeah... it is," Pascal said, as nature's bounty came down around their friend and brother.

"Him... and every color on a rainbow," Pascal whispered, stepping up to stand closer to Devin.

Vincent laughed again. Not the reserved half-suppressed sound he was teaching himself to adopt thanks to Mitch's teasing about his fangs and an adolescent's natural wariness of being different, but the full, joyful

laughter of discovery, of astonishment. The laughter that often accompanies an utterly unexpected pleasure, or a new realization.

The laughter of inclusion, and of childhood.

Devin felt Pascal's hand settle on his shoulder, and the two friends stepped nearer, just in case Vincent needed them.

Vincent kept his head back and blew a stray willow leaf back into the air, trying to keep it up until the wind whipped it away, and carried it onward. He snatched an impossibly orange oak leaf out of the sky, tipped his head back again, set it on his unusual lips and then blew it upward, playing a game of his own making.

His hands stretched up and outward, touching a rainbow-hued heaven's bounty, before it fell to earth.

The open, happy smile refused to leave his face. He could smell the entire park, opening to the sun. He could smell the pair of chipmunks, skittering in the branches of a gloriously red sugar maple. He swore he could even smell the sap, still moving in the mottled trunk, and more than smell it, he could *see every detail* of the tree it came from. The grey and brown mottling of the ridges on the trunk. The crown of splendor, shifting through its branches, shedding itself, to the ground.

He could see it.

He could see it all.

He laughed out loud again, unrepressed joy in the sound, and Devin knew in the sound that this risk had been worth the taking.

"Thank you. Thank you, Devin." Vincent grabbed his brother in an embrace that was half-tackle. Even though he was shorter, Devin knew Vincent's muscles were already firming up. He developed at his own pace. He'd be strong, some day.

"You're welcome. Pascal helped," Devin said, sharing the credit, as it was due.

Vincent then grabbed Pascal. He didn't want to stop looking at the leaves. But he didn't want to not thank his friend and his brother for this incredible moment.

Pascal accepted the hug a bit awkwardly, but with pleasure.

"Devin made a leaf pile for you," Pascal said, jerking his head toward just that. It sat just beyond a stand of spruce "Want to take a jump?" Pascal prompted.

"Do we have time?" Vincent asked, knowing they were out here too long, already.

"We have time," Pascal assured him, not caring what the angle of the sun was trying to tell them.

Devin gave Pascal a conspirator's nod. *Now you're getting it.*

"Prob'ly just a couple times, right?" Vincent asked, eyes sparkling with a boy's sense of adventure.

"Probably just a couple times," Devin confirmed, knowing they should already be heading in. The sun was casting radiance on a stand of distant alders now.

"You want to go first?" Vincent asked, aware that Devin and Pascal had done all the work, when it came to cordoning off the area, and raking up the huge leaf pile before them.

Devin and Pascal stepped backward, and almost said it together.

"Not on your life."

Vincent's smile grew impossibly more wide. With a rebel yell that flushed a blue jay out of a spruce, Vincent went tearing for the pile, his

booted feet lifting on the jump, his entire body landing in the gathered leaves.

Pascal went next, but Devin hung back, keeping watch.

Neither boy had to tell Vincent when it was nearing time to go. His instinct for self-preservation did it for him.

The three boys achieved the tunnel entrance just as a woman pushing a stroller came down the sidewalk, encountered the blockade tape, and turned around.

"We need to go get that stuff off," Pascal panted to Devin, as he and Vincent sheltered inside the shadows of the drainage tunnel.

Vincent knew didn't need to be able to see the trees to look for nature's bounty, at the moment. Bright leaves were utterly tangled in his hair.

*Some more for Pascal's collection,* he thought, pulling a resplendent oak leaf out of his blonde tresses.

"Yeah. We do," Devin agreed.

As Pascal loped back toward where they'd been. Vincent put a restraining hand on Devin's shoulder.

"Thank you Devin. This was... amazing. It was a dream." Vincent's joyous smile would not leave his face.

Devin patted Vincent's hand.

"You're my brother. No matter where I go. What I do, how old we are, I promise you. I *will* dream dreams that include you."

"Even if we can't always do them together, you keep dreaming them, okay?" Vincent said, understanding that such an oath was necessary, between them.

"I swear," Devin said. "You go in. I got to go help Pascal. You can help us carry the signs back to Canal Street."

*Canal Street?* Vincent laughed again as his big brother ran to catch up with Pascal. *Of course. Canal Street. Because Devin would have to have stolen the signs and caution tape from somewhere, and the warehouse district was as likely an area as any.*

Vincent looked out through the narrow hole that was his viewpoint to the world, a viewpoint now framed by dirt, a grassy rise on each side, and a distant strip of buildings and blue sky.

It didn't matter that there weren't trees in it, anymore

In his mind's eye, he knew he still saw Autumn's Kaleidoscope.



*October's Party*

*By George Cooper*



*October gave a party;  
The leaves by hundreds came—  
The Chestnuts, Oaks, and Maples,  
And leaves of every name.  
The Sunshine spread a carpet,  
And everything was grand,  
Miss Weather led the dancing,  
Professor Wind the band.*

The Chestnuts came in yellow,  
The Oaks in crimson dressed;  
The lovely Misses Maple  
In scarlet looked their best;  
All balanced to their partners,  
And gaily fluttered by;  
The sight was like a rainbow  
New fallen from the sky.

Then, in the rustic hollow,  
At hide-and-seek they played,  
The party closed at sundown,  
And everybody stayed.  
Professor Wind played louder;  
They flew along the ground;  
And then the party ended  
In jolly 'hands around.'

No matter where you are when someone includes you in their dream, I  
wish you love,~ Cindy