

**Sit with us for a moment and remember:
Autumn**

Thank you for joining me on this bench today.
You have looked at photos of this place.
Trying to work out when they were taken.
From leaves in the trees.
The colour of the sky.
There is an image in the archive.
Let me describe it to you.
It is Autumn. The early 1930s.
Not long after the park was open.
The trees are thinning.
We see the bridge in the distance.
The island to your left.
Six children sit on the steps in front of you.
Between where the lions are now.
Looking out across the lake.
The photographer standing in the middle.
Opposite the building on the hill.
The clock tower reflected in the water.
The backdrop for those boating. On a day out.
The last week of the boating season.
One boy is leaning forward as if falling into the water.
Reaching out to touch the surface.
An older boy behind him is on hand in case.
A brother sits with his younger sister.
Telling her to behave. Holding on to her hand.
Two older girls behind them stand on the top step.
Patiently watching the boats come in.
Oars out of the water. Bows pointing to the step.
Two men, fathers or grandfathers, lean on the wall.
Wearing their Sunday best.
Tutting at the oarsmanship.
Keeping an eye on everyone.
And one boy turns to the camera.
As if to say 'I know you can see me'.
Wondering who in the future.
Will see this photograph.
Perhaps he knows he never will.
What will become of these children.
Seen but not heard. Gone but not forgotten.
Remembered by plaques on benches left behind.
Now you will meet people who know what it is like to spend time here.
I want you to imagine someone.
There is a woman who works here.
In the building on the hill across the lake.
She looks out of the window at where you are now.
She comes sometimes.
Maybe imagine she's sitting next to you.

She says she has seen this place change.
The colour palette shift.
The temperature rise and fall.
She says Autumn means the beautiful harvest season to her.
She tells you that as the Chinese saying goes...
'Spring planting, Summer farming, Autumn harvest and Winter storage'
She tells you that 'Autumn is the harvest season'
It reflects a good wish of the people.
She says it lifts her heart and reminds her of Autumn in China.
The place where she was born.
She leans towards you. She takes out her phone.
And shows you a video she filmed here
When she was sitting on this bench
Dawn. Water calm. Sky blue.
There is no one around. Peaceful.
She tells you she likes this time of year because she was born in the Autumn.
She likes seasonal colours.
Her birthday is in October
'Golden Autumn October'.
The lions in front of you come from Ningbo.
They are Chinese lions, a gift from one city to another.
She says the stone lions are usually in pairs.
Left male and right female
Traditional Chinese philosophy of yin and yang
So the lions match the balance and harmony of the whole nature.
They frame the lake
They frame the building on the hill where she works.
Where she looks out of her window at this bench.
Past the lions.
Down the path.
Through the gates.
To the statue of the man who built this.
She thinks about how this place has changed.
She thinks about the trees that have grown old since they were planted.
She thinks about the memories each plaque keeps alive.
The names of those who used to come here.
To sit where you are sitting now.
This view means harmony to her.
It means harmony between her as and nature.
It means harmony between water and the earth.
Where the lake meets the land.
Where the horizon meets the sky.
She closes her eyes and imagines she is sitting in a golden field.
Under the shining of the Sun.
She was born in the Autumn.
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