

## Summer's Departure

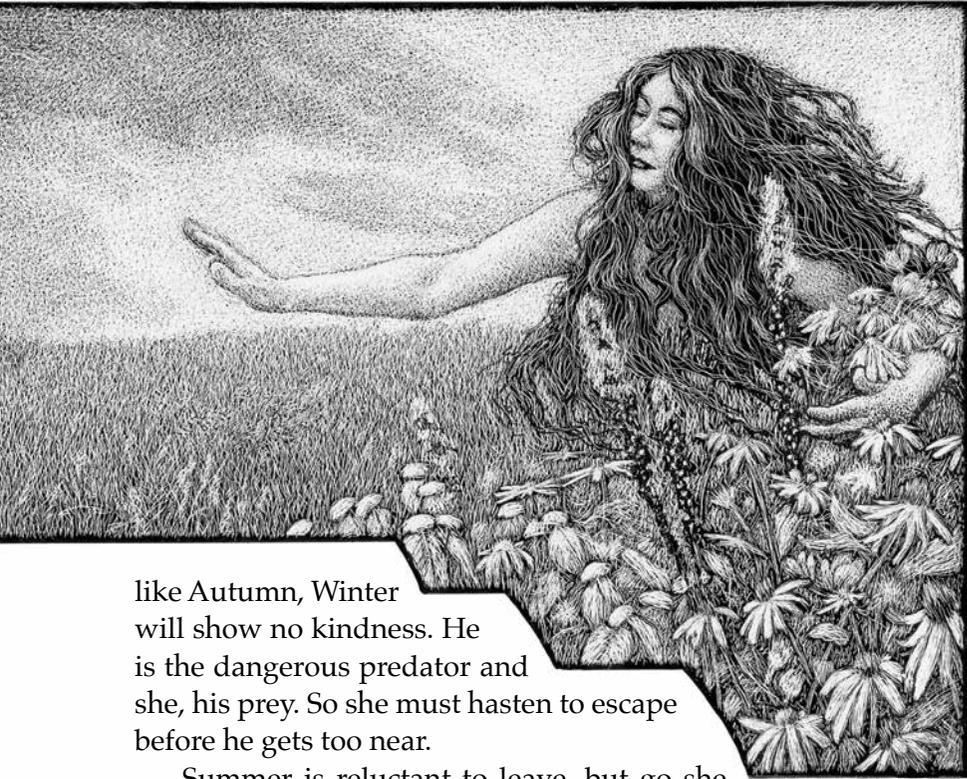
*And promised return.*

*By Lisbeth Ann Williams*



Autumn is knocking at the door of Summer. She—Summer—does not want to open the door. But she knows that, if she ignores his knocking, soon enough he will beat down the door, and there is nothing she can do to stop him. He has Wind on his side, and she is well aware that she is no match for the two of them. Winter follows closely at Autumn's heels, so Summer does the only thing she can do: she slips quietly away and goes in search of her friend, Springtime.

Before she goes, she urges her flowers to complete their tasks of fruiting and setting seed as quickly as possible, and to don their Winter attire, which will see them through the long, cold months. The sun will not be able to warm them after Winter moves in, pushing out even Autumn's sometimes compassionate nature. Un-



like Autumn, Winter will show no kindness. He is the dangerous predator and she, his prey. So she must hasten to escape before he gets too near.

Summer is reluctant to leave, but go she must. Autumn's knocking will only grow louder and more intense, causing the trees to shake and the flowers to quake. She will hold out for as long as she can, savoring each warm ray of sunlight and drinking the raindrops before they are turned to ice. Once she leaves, it will not be safe for her to return for many months. But she *will* return. This is the promise of life, the cycle of life. Autumn is closing the distance between them as she heads out the back door, pausing for one last wistful glance at her flowers. She will see them again, but right now that day seems far away. A long time from now, they will be reunited for another exquisitely sweet time together. Her friends the butterflies, the bees, and the hummingbirds will return, as well.

She turns away now, head down to hide her sorrow, silently uttering a prayer for the flowers she leaves behind. She carries with her a provision of hope and the promise that, in time, Spring, her faithful friend, will bring her back. ❖