

Dear Rhode Island,

Summer's done. Here and gone. No more 'I'm going to the beach next week'. Next week came and went. We lose the sun a few minutes after six. Dark at seven. Less daylight each day, the sun angled now, low in the sky, the shadows long.

The leaves on the older maples have turned already. Their seeds are hanging in whirligigs by the hundreds of thousands, the wise old maples sensing the end of their days and the need to replace themselves, the little green tops turning brown, ready to drop and spin to the ground with the first cold wind.

We'll have the first frost in a month.

I felt a certain wistfulness in early August, even before I had to face summer's end, when the light began to change, when the corn was ready, the apples ripened on the trees, the peaches and melons came on and the apple orchard up the street opened for the fall.

But now we know for sure. You can't deny it. We hope for a long sunlit fall, but after summer comes fall, and after fall, winter. After sorrow comes joy. After joy, reflection.

I feel like I never know enough, do enough, or feel enough. Always miss the mark. This is the best of all possible worlds and life *is* beautiful, but *damn*, it could be so much better.

I'm still in love with this crazy place and all its people. The challenge is how to be true to all of them, one at a time.

You know the drill – vaccinate, mask and test. Maybe we will get the right answer this time, once we've tried all the other ones. Maybe we'll finally learn that you can't fool the virus or Mother Nature, which both seek their own level and both restore balance, each in its own way. Whether we like that balance or not.

We've got to do better than this. We can. We must.

Michael