

# October on 52nd Street

Category: Gratitude

written by Elizabeth Null | December 1, 2021

Not so far away from cornfields ripe for harvest, the pinnacle of Nebraska's beauty unfolds each October around a two-lane crevice through a section of Omaha. It is the envy of all streets in the Happy Hallow neighborhood, yet it is not boastful. I do not reside on it, but I get to enjoy its bounty nevertheless. In summer, kids play football in yards and sell lemonade and rocks. While other seasons offer their views—spring with its purple blooms and winter with its holiday fanfare—it's the October evening air that bestows a magical weightlessness.

My running loop starts with a walk up a hill from my apartment on Mayberry that intersects with 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. I check my watch, lace tennis shoes and lower my sunglasses. Peach trees near the patio seating of the neighborhood restaurant have retired for the season, but patrons and neighbors sit outside under Edison lights eating seasonal dishes, laughing and drinking wine together. Distinct bits of conversation are heard as I jog towards a crossing to carry onwards towards kaleidoscopic foliage.

Timing it just right, I curve left onto Jones and onto 53rd before descending down Jackson as the not-yet-setting light coalesces into an orange-yellow ombre. I pass charming homes reminiscent of cottages, feeling a chill, and clipping a faster pace as I head downhill, weaving through neighborhood cross-streets and waving at dogs and humans that recognize me now until reaching the plateau of Happy Hallow Boulevard. A clockwise turn back up another hill brings an anticipated finale: the stretch of even ground that is 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. I become part of the street, the community, immersed in it, and attune to sensory input of shoes crunching leaves, the smell of woodsmoke, and visions of family silhouettes eating dinner through glowing dining room windows.

52<sup>nd</sup> Street guides my tired eyes home from long shifts at dusk, at dawn, at exhaustion and at elation. In all seasons, my tradition is unchanged. Leaving the hospital, I head east on Dodge and curve right onto Farnam. Another quick right leads into that familiar funnel of trees that guide me towards food, shelter and rest. On foot or by car, this street provides a spiritual centering, a redirection toward gratitude, and a space to welcome in forthcoming days of extended darkness and "hygge" – a Danish term for comfort, coziness, conviviality and contentment.

Thank you, 52nd Street, for your bountiful month filled with moments that are exclusively ours: strides not at work, breaths not in haste, and senses renewed.

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