

The Flowers and the River
at the Walking Bridge

by [Charles Hughes](#) in the [September 2023](#) issue

Late-season black-eyed Susans, stooped but tall,
Their softening evening yellows well-worn velvet
In the low sunlight, acquiesced to fall,
Still six weeks away. Not so the river, smelling
Of heat and life—of summer's miracle.

The season, over at last, had not gone well.
Games lost went home with him to other losses.
An error, a slump; at home, a silent spell.
His cooling ardor (something others noticed)
He didn't countenance but couldn't quell.

Pedaling his bike across the bridge like mad,
Now overtaken by close scents, the sweetness,
Forgetting who he was, forgetting sad
And happy memories that hardly mattered
Now: losing now so much he never had.

Flowers, like those behind, sprang up ahead,
As if to vouch for some primordial promise.
He'd stop short, and the past would not be dead,
Nor would the flowers—in their imperfect beauty,
Imperfect guides to where the river led.