The Hermit’s Face
from Katie Makkai’s “Pretty”

I’ve lived out here alone since my great loss.
“I have not seen my own face in ten years.”
It flashed at me once when I stepped across the gap between the rowboat and the pier.

The face was mine, although I only caught a glimpse of grey-white hair and sagging jowls. Avoiding it became a skill I taught myself: to brighten looks and stave off scowls.

Today I row across the lake to watch— just like I did one year ago today— the sun descend the vernal equinox and lose the light of summer’s longest day.

If I can’t keep my face from getting old I can take in a summer evening’s gold.

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