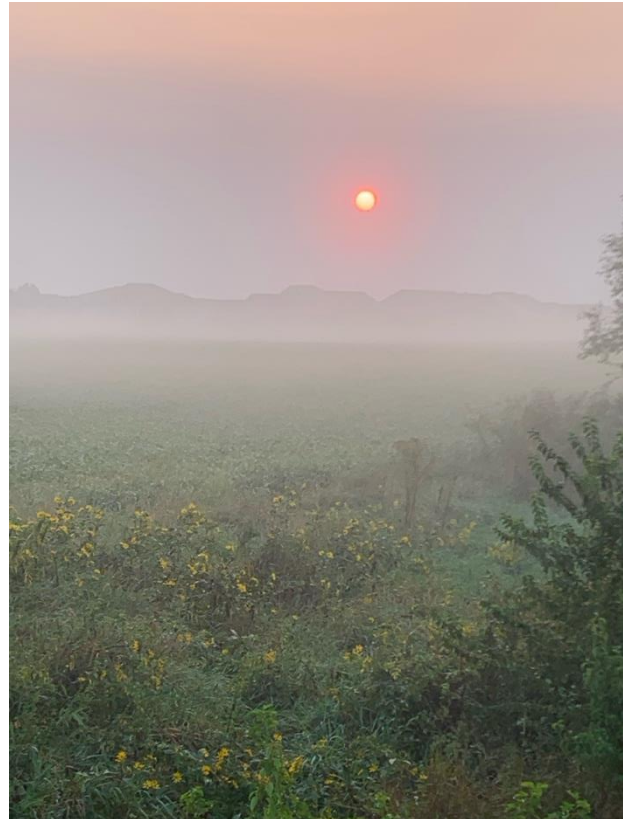


In the Fog **By Ken Rummer**

Fog fills the world beyond my window this after-election morning, cold autumn air raising the ghost of recent rains. Behind the curtain of cloud, shadows loom where trees lately stood, and all the colors of the world shift toward gray.

Carl Sandberg wrote that the fog “comes on little cat feet.” I’m not seeing any cats, but I just caught a glimpse of a small bird launching from a bent prairie stem like a pole vaulter flexing the fiberglass.

One central truth about fog: it makes it hard to see. The weather folk describe its severity in those terms. Less than a mile visibility. Less than a quarter mile. This morning I’m guessing the visibility is less than a hundred feet.



The densest fog I ever drove through arose from warm air passing over late winter snow in the dark of evening. The center line on the highway was only visible as a dash followed by nothing followed (hopefully) by another dash. I needed the headlights, but they hurt as much as they helped. More light meant more glare and less vision.

The fog was so thick, I drove right past my exit. Couldn’t see it. I had to take my cue from the Christmas magi, and travel home by a different way.

Fog renders visibility variable. At times, I’ve seen the road stretching ahead, with the fog no more than a haze on the horizon. At other times, the fog was so close I could barely see the white line edging the highway.

I find the future is like that. Some days I can see the future stretching out ahead of me with what feels like assurance and clarity. Other days, the future hides behind the fog, unknown and unknowable.

This foggy, morning-after-the-election morning is one of those latter days. What happens now? How will the future unfold? The fog has settled in and visibility is low.

I've run into this a time or two before. The future I imagined, the future I had made my peace with, suddenly torn from my grip. What I learned then, and am reminding myself now, is that I don't know what the future holds. Never did, really.

The future I see in my mind's eye turns out to be a work of fiction, an act of imagination assembled from fears and hopes and present trends continued. Sad to say, the actual future, what takes place tomorrow or next week or seven years from now, may be very different from the future in my head, or yours. What will it be?

The crystal ball is cloudy. We're in the fog, and it's hard to see ahead.

We may have to slow to a shuffle, at least for a while. Feel our way along. Send out sonar pings like bats and listen for the echoes.

At least until the fog fades and we can see the road again.