

WE ARE ALL ALONE ●

Brendan Todt

This was toward the end of September. Something in the garden was blooming but I didn't know what. It couldn't have been the first year, but it was brand new to me. Maybe it was something my mother-in-law put in, but she usually makes sure we all know what goes where, how often to water it, and when we can expect it to "*beautify!*" I was and remain clueless. One of the neighbors stopped by to say something about it. I don't know why I lied, but I did. I said it was something to attract the hummingbirds, which all of us in the neighborhood were trying to lure to our yards. She asked if I was having any luck and I told her at this point it was too early to say. It's kind of a late bloom for that, isn't it? I said we were pretty much willing to try anything. What about her, I asked. Was she having any luck? She shrugged. We all wanted to have the most hummingbirds without having to admit it. Stephen's coming home for November, she said. Stephen was her oldest, most distant son. He did something having to do with the shipment of produce in Oregon. I told her that was great. I said I probably wouldn't recognize him it had been so long, which was true but I was afraid, afterward, sounded a little cold. You and his father both, she said. But a mother— she continued, but she could not go on.