

The Last Leaf

Shadows strained eastward as the yielding sun,
In solemn salute, frosted Nebo's peaks
In glowing hues of squash and melon and
The last leaf dropped. Like fine pink sugar spun

At county fairs, a cotton candy puff
Of cloud, adrift in a periwinkle sky,
Had lingered with a patient reverie
Until the maple tree could finally slough

Its last leaf. No breeze stirred the home-made swing
Of rope and plank hung from the sturdy limb
Where pig-tailed pixies touched toes to the sky
In carefree giggles back when pale green Spring-

Sprung helicopter seeds speckled the grass
Beneath dragon fly ballets. The alchemy
Of green to gold complete, no breath of air
Cajoled the leaf to fall. It just fell. As

Is requisite, earth's axis foreordains
The fall of maple leaves when Autumn wanes.

No sparrow requiem paid tribute to
The fallen leaf, just sharp staccato taps—
A woodpecker's last supper for the day,
Some tree-killing bark-beetles to pursue

While hopping, inverted, on the gravity side
Of the naked branch, somehow cheating the fall
That pulled the last leaf to the still green grass
Below where it would peacefully abide
The white shroud of the seasons' eventide.

—Ben de Hoyos

This poem was a finalist in the 2022 BYU Studies Poetry Contest.