

"Marcescence"*

Holding on for dear life
like this old oak outside my bedroom window
If I just hang on—
like this leaf—
If I can just make it through another Maine winter
I'll be a winner
A warrior.

Contemplating my next steps
Conserving my energy
Creating a plan
of succession
Abscission**
Detachment.

Waiting, wondering, worrying. . .
Watching
until the last possible moment
the mastectomy ahead of me
the leaf finally falls from the old oak branch
as lilac and rose bushes bud,
robins and red-winged blackbirds return,
marcescent March Madness gives way to April's
scented flower-shower

And my season has changed
in an Equinox moment,
a spring awakening,
in 90 minutes of pruning
removing the fruit that is overripe
abscission
detachment.

The bare tree staring back at me in the mirror.
One less branch
One less leaf
One less succulent fruit
to be picked
One less body part to flaunt,
to feel,
to fret about.

Now free and clear
as the butterflies flit
and bees bumble and buzz
and gather nectar.

* "There are a few species of trees that hold their dead leaves, Oaks, hornbeams, and Beech trees. This is a phenomenon called marcescence. The abscission layer on these trees does not completely form until spring, which allows them to hold on to their leaves much longer."

** "Abscission is the shedding of various parts of an organism, such as a plant dropping a leaf, fruit, flower, or seed. In zoology, abscission is the intentional shedding of a body part, such as the shedding of a claw, husk, or the autotomy of a tail to evade a predator." [Wikipedia](#)

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