

Wings

By Ken Woodley

From the farthest branch
of the highest limb
of the tallest autumn-leaning tree
a yellow leaf begins to end,
weighed down by
all of the gravity around it,
descending toward earth,
its ascendant seasons done and gone,
all grip on life fluttering in the breeze,
the joy of sipping sunshine communion from the sky
lost forever.

Spring has died.
Summer is following in its wake.
The fall of the yellow leaf has come
and winter waits with its epitaph.

The halcyon existence of all that the once-green leaf
has ever known
is terminally ticking away
and I find my heart and soul
reaching out toward its helpless
hopelessness,
twisting in spiraling flutters with it
downward,
except for the brief breath of breezes
that lift us into a resurrection mirage
before every grain of time's trickling sand
runs out into this desert feeling we share.

This yellow leaf and I know each other,
instinctively,
so many of my own seasons
fallen behind me, too,
with only memories of blooms left for me to wander in
among the maze-like gardens
where I become lost
in the scattering recollections
of things that were
and might have been,
and never should have.

All of my tomorrows
seemed locked in one day
that might have been yesterday,
the sky becoming more and more a distant voice,
barely articulate to me now
as the tangled earth awaits,
an embrace of intemperate mourning
among all that has fallen before us,
the yellow leaf and I holding on to each other
for dear life,
trying to remember the words of a prayer

that miraculously spreads its wings

just before we hit the ground.

The yellow butterfly and I rise,
fragile but forever,
into newness of life,
season-less and un-calendared,
toward everything that exists
on the other side of the distant mountains
within us.