Undress

By Ruby Robinson

There is an ash tree behind this house. You can see it from our bedroom window. If you stare at it for long enough, you’ll see it drop a leaf. Stare at it now, you said, and notice the moment a leaf strips away from its branch, giving a twirl. Consider this.

The ash tree unclothes itself Octoberly. From beside our bed, fingering the curtain, observe the dark candles at the top of that tree, naked and alert, tending to the breeze. A sheet of ice between the rooftops and this noiseless sky has turned the air inside out. Black veins of branches shake against the blue screen on which they hang. Small mammals are hibernating in pellets of warm air under ground. But, in spite of the cold, this ash tree does not shy from shrugging off its coat, sloping its nude shoulders to the night. So, you said, undo, unbutton, unclasp, slowly remove. Let down your hair, breathe out. Stand stark in this room until we remember how not to feel the chill. Stand at the window, lift your arms right up like a tree. Yes — like that. Watch leaves drop.

Source: Poetry (October 2014)