

## Leaf Bats

One winter, clusters of the browned leaves  
of a Japanese maple just south of my house  
stayed attached to their twigs, their branches.  
Months of blowing snow sleet,  
two weeks of polar cold  
could not dislodge them. Scads of their peers  
had duly released their hold starting in October,  
wafting downwards onto grass, driveway, flower  
beds. But a surprising number of the maple's leaves  
stubbornly remained aloft,  
resembling a colony of massed bats, wings folded,  
hibernating.

In March, I hauled out a stepladder  
and climbed up to prod one of a group  
huddled along a branch I could reach.  
“You awake?” I asked. “What gives?  
How come so many of you are still here?”  
The leaf opened one eye. *Because we're not  
suckers*, the leaf declared. *Go away*.

“What do you mean, ‘suckers’?” I said.

“In any event, you can’t keep clinging to your perch much longer. New green shoots will be along soon. You need to get out of their space.”

*We gave up believing that crap, the leaf said, opening the other eye. We’d always been told we have to leave the tree, move aside for the newcomers. Instead, we intend to hang around and enjoy next summer.*  
I heard a rustling as some nearby leaves shook themselves—I guess at the noise of our conversation—and resettled into sleep.

“What you say is ridiculous,” I protested.  
“Lots of your compatriots followed the rules. I was raking them this fall and—”  
*Do some research, the leaf cut me off. Check out who benefits by having us disappear every spring. I can direct you to some websites. Don’t just swallow the lies. No evidence exists why we can’t remain in place.*

## Poetry

“How can you claim that?” I countered.  
“The natural order is that you photosynthesize  
for seven or eight months, then pack it in  
to make room for your successors.”  
*We’re changing all that*, the leaf declared.  
*Those of us who investigated the truth*  
*realized there’s a better possibility.*  
*Science backs us up.*

“What science?” I wanted to know.  
“I’ve never seen a tree by June that has  
both old and green leaves on it.”  
*Until now*, was the response. *Like it or not,*  
*we’re permanent. So get lost.*  
*I want to nap some more before it’s time*  
*for us to rev up the chlorophyll*  
*and return to work like the old days.*  
The leaf shut its eyes. None of the other leaves  
stirred. I stepped down  
to the ground.