

## Raking

*Melissa Young*

I'm pretty sure I would consent  
to consignment in a hell comprised  
of raking leaves  
forever,

the rhythmic, rustling pull  
being the only sound of tide this child  
of the desert has known.

Banish me  
to the smell of crushed summer,  
faded from its autumn brilliance  
into an unassuming,  
curled, and papery brown  
on which is written  
the leaf-strewn laughter  
of every child who has ever lived  
among trees in October.

A great irony  
that buried in this crackling decay  
is youth itself,  
revealed in the urge  
to jump  
kick  
and revel  
in fragrance.

Promise me this hell.

Give me a falling—  
a wind-fueled dance  
in descent  
to an earthy oblivion—

and I will promise  
to steal every scrap of warmth,  
get drunk on broken sunlight,  
and cheat winter  
of the delusion  
that it has won.