

Bruce Jorgensen

## Gathering Apples In First Snow

This year October takes us sudden, breaks  
The honeylocust leaves with a parching frost  
And casts them, ashen green and clattering, down  
On sidewalks still glaring as white as summer.  
My calendar, thumbtacked beside the scarred  
Refrigerator door, spells out September.  
I lift the leaf: improvidence this first  
Year in a rented house with garden (plowed  
When I came, but unsown) and five apple trees,  
Their bearing laced (I sprayed too late) with worms.

The west of afternoon draws dark; I'm picking  
The last apples, some rotten on the stem,  
Others by birds half hollowed, good flesh ridged  
And seared. Leave those. Still on the tree some stems  
Do not give easy, and I let fall into  
A rainwarped cardboard box twigs and the bitten  
Leaves with sound fruit — too far not to bruise, from  
This muddy rung. Silence. Around me, in  
The tree, the snow starts falling, ticking like  
Sand spilled on parchment, salt on old oilcloth.