

# AUTUMN IN THE BONES

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Fifty degrees, woodsmoke afternoon,  
Clear blue October,  
And in every street  
Tiny, white-haired women stoop  
Crookedly over rakes,  
And bundle themselves against winter.

There is autumn in their bones.  
I would give each of them  
A season of strength from my body,  
So they could feel again the pull  
Of muscles turning leaf-mold  
Into rich soil, soil into  
The tender green of a laughing April.

I would have them know again  
The surprise of bending to uncover  
Buds after winter, of feeling  
Rich, thriving earth in one's hands.

But it is October, and  
Together we frown at the maples,  
Who have given up,  
Surrendering all in a golden moment.

We smile wistfully at oaks,  
Steadfast in russet,  
Every tree, on each cold night,  
Clutching its leaves,  
Waiting out the darkness.