

LEAVES

Clenched like fists at the ends of branches,
a few leaves remain recalcitrant
above the freezing ground.

The autumn was loud with their protests
in festive reds, oranges, and yellows:
their cause was legion in the woods.

But across the lawns in the neighborhood
casualties began to mount.
The fallen were herded into piles

by the curb for the township trucks.
Blowers rounded up the stragglers.
Soon winter winds scoured the bare limbs

of the trees till they were skeletons
shaking and clattering in their palsy.
A percussive beat hardened the landscape.

Now only a white barrenness molds
the flowerbeds, the riff-raff evergreens.
A numbing cold has choked all colors.

What is the point of hanging on—
or the obstacle to letting go—
when everything else is gone?

by John Delaney