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## This Last Leaf

George L. Hoffman

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# GRANDPARENTS

## THIS LAST LEAF

by *George L. Hoffman*

He doesn't cling to life,  
this patriarch of nearly one hundred  
years.  
Life clings to him and won't let him go.  
The bud from which he came  
was too strongly bonded where it grew,  
and the bough that holds him fast  
won't release him to the wind.  
Through all his days of sun and rain,  
heat and cold, drouth and flood,  
his leaf grew tough and bitter  
to the tongues of those who thought  
to test his will.  
He took the wind and rain  
and curled to the sun.  
But now he shakes and flutters  
to make small rasping sounds  
against himself, his greening faded,  
his fluids slow, reluctant rivers  
in his veins.

He knew of Holmes' last leaf,  
for in his youth he read of him  
and doubtless smiled to think  
that one should grow so old.  
But carefree youth can't see  
a hundred years, nor can the tender bud  
of spring ever know the last sad leaf of  
fall.

I don't smile to see him here  
alone upon his bough.  
His shriveled leaf can never green again.  
His spring, his summer, his winter,  
are all gone.  
But he wants no hothouse shelf to shelter  
him,  
no magic elixer to hold him to his limb.  
I pray that he may fall some quiet evening  
and float gently on the wind  
to that dark place to be as one  
with those whom once he knew.  
Even as he waits, I listen  
for the whisper of his fall. ■■



illustration by *Lisa Bradford*

*GEORGE L. HOFFMAN*, of Clackamas, Oregon, was  
reared in the Custer City area.