

The Tree

A. E. Daly

It sounds too big, a demolition -
'Taking the tree down'
As if the crook of our window
Had contained a building
Or a fairground megastructure
Elbows of steel acrouch
With broken lightbulbs

Ceremony too, I wait for quiet
As the sky whispers of windchill
Hearth-ash and torn page
No beginning but a dazed return
Thin song of sweeping-up

I take its hands, its dry fingers
Resinless, poised to snap
I cherish them, coax loose
The gold threads like a thief
Catch and gentle every drop
Of brass, wood, glass, brocade -
Each one prism and sacrament
A lifetime's curatorial longing
In a dangled spit of light
I cradle them in tissue paper
Box them where they'll unwind
Hope-fresh next year

Limbs crack, pin-scatter rains
When I unsnarl the lights -
It's going, and I wish it flame
A fit salute, commiserations
Mourning-fire in brittle bones
Against this cold advance

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A. E. Daly lives and works in Edinburgh. She loves comic books, ghost stories, vintage cameras and abandoned buildings. She writes children's and young adult fiction and received a Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award in 2018. This is one of her first new poems after a gap of many years.

Favourite poem: He Lived - Childhood Summers by Lorine Niedecker.