

"Seasons"

by John Mahaffey

Cheerful bells in the air, the sound of laughter.
 With light step and wide smile, dances a boy.
 "This is life, to love and laugh and learn," whispers an unnoticed voice.
 Bright sun and soft grass, his face caressed by wind.
 Happiness in motion, in his heart a childish song.
 Dangling by a strand, but held secure to the branch, he is a leaf.

Stepping out, standing up, a sheltered life he leaves.
 Faces come, smiling toothy smiles, the air is filled with laughter.
 With joy he explores, and learns the tune of this world's song.
 Wide eyed he meets the world, much beguiles the boy.
 Comes the weather, come hard times, the leaf dancing in the wind.
 Much escapes his understanding, cruelty in their voices.

Jeering. Taunting. Mocking. A new tone in the voices.
 Scratching. Clawing. Pulling. Their heat withers the leaf.
 Clinging to the branch. Enduring the eroding wind.
 Tears not of joy. Now, to hide the pain he laughs.
 "Stay strong, hold tight, there is more to life than this, boy."
 The wind is harsh, the voices cruel. Minor notes fill the song.
 He leaves the voices. A solo now, alone he sings.
 Faces pass him by, he turns from them, finding solace in his own voice.
 He is changed. Less than a man, more than a boy.
 Green flees, reds and yellows color the leaf.
 Tighter he clings, louder he sings, he can't drown out the laughter.
 His strength fails, plucked from the branch by their wind.
 Spinning, twirling, no longer dancing. Screaming against the wind.
 He has nothing, no place to call home. Terror fills his song.
 Fallen to the ground. No longer moving. Tears drowning laughter.
 "This is not the end, there is more to life," whispers a voice.
 He clings to the voice, and follows it as it tells him this place to leave.
 The old path abandoned, something new is born, dead is the boy.

He walks a new path. Now a man, searching for the boy.
 Standing in his own strength, he smiles into the once harsh wind.
 The end of the path. His own to forge, known ground he leaves.
 The faces he meets, the voices he greets, he joins in their song.

“This is life, to love and laugh and learn,” whispers a well-known voice.
“There is much to do, there is much to see,” the man laughs.

Boys are still leafs, to the branches they still cling.
The man is now the voice, his song is on the wind.
“Love and laugh and learn, that is the meaning of life.”