



On the threshold

by Brian Mackenwells

As I step into the cold outside,
the outside cold steps into me.
It fills and holds my lungs
as tight as a sapling grips the soil.
My next breath nurtures it quickly
into a vast oak,
stiff branches reaching out,
its dry leaves rustling
as the air crawls by.
No deeper exhalation
to be found
in this
clutching
forest.

It
holds
my
breath.

I need an axe
to fell this tree,
so I reach into my pocket
for the blue plastic L,
smooth in my hand.

Two puffs, and the tree inside turns back into
what it used to be – just air and sunlight.
I am released to climb the kinder tree in the park ahead.
Both of us outside, where we belong.

