

## **The Sparrow Tree**

by [Susan McLean](#) in the [October 2022](#) issue

Sparrows deck the leafless tree  
like plump brown figs that bob and flit,  
hopping in random synergy  
from twig to twig. They fluff and sit,  
  
alert and restless in cold air,  
till in a flash the troupe takes flight  
into the Chinese holly, where  
they chirp like ghost birds. Out of sight,  
  
whatever caused their harsh surprise  
departs, and they resume their poses  
coolly. Inside, my mother lies  
waning beside the hothouse roses.

No one suspects the feathered crew  
is less abundant than before.  
The world is full of birds. How few  
would note one sparrow less or more.