

THE WIDOWER

poem by Nick Bertelson



Leaves like grief
skulk through shadows.
Slubs of them swell
and stew, ground
to dust by dust,
death's currency.
I watch him
—my hangdog neighbor—
coax them into piles.
He wields his
nightmarish rake,
eventually setting
the dead leaves alight.
Burning for a cold
moment, they whisper
and cackle as they did
when the wind
blew through
the boughs
they've now abandoned.
Truth is:
I have no neighbors
and I live a long ways
from everywhere.

Image: "Nature People #8" by Bruce McClain. "The Widower" was written by Nick Bertelson for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, December 2021, and selected as the Editor's Choice.