

Two Poems · *Karen Kipp*

WORKS

The clamor of timber tearing down through the underpinning is a hard sound in November, in a numbing mist of a pale dawn, when the woods are as fragile and naked as the failed suicide gaining consciousness after two days He's shaky. His bones are still bland with the purity of the unmoving. He's not wanting to be touched, still he sees the linemen leave the yellow trucks like antigens, to swarm the arteries of the branching trees the chain saws swinging at their hips—or bucking back when the tail is pulled—and snarling like they have a duty to rip through the soft inner workings of a life that has dared to live too close to power lines The men are just there, at his boundary line to the main road

Up above them, the thick cables click, pulse, and hizz soft blue noises like a hum The lineman with the steel claws strapped to his inward turning feet, seems a kind of slow bear His grace is that of gravity; his immense slow-witted respect for it. He's sixty-two years old, and he is whole except for the hollowed, intensely pink heart of his right palm, where the electricity touched, and held him burning him its three degrees before he fell into a summer river and floated in the most delicate unconsciousness until unwillfully dragged from it, screaming, and holding his right hand out in front of himself as if he were swearing an oath

The man leaves the window to call into work to tell them he had a fever so bad that he must have passed out He tells them he won't be in today, but he'll be back tomorrow; he'll be back Thursday The man showers. The man shaves. He puts on cologne. He selects a shirt so white and simple

that it reminds him of a blank piece of paper
He puts on wingtips with designs so delicate, they're like filigree
The last thing he adjusts are his cufflinks, pale silver with onyx centers, and he holds their coolness
to his temples for a moment. He seats himself at a desk in front of the window to practice. He's practicing being
at work. He's so light, that he feels himself being lifted by the shoulder blades
to be set on a vast celestial meathook
The man's terror is like vapor, like thin poison, but he tells himself it is nothing, so he concentrates
on the clean creases of his trousers, and finds himself settling into his desk like ash
But soon he is looking out of the window again, forgetting to be practicing being at work. He has undone
the hard knot of his tie. He watches the lineman lop the solid limbs off the tree at the end of the drive
Soon he is weeping, sitting at the small desk and weeping, but trying to make himself believe it's more
for the shaggy sycamore, than the job he swore that he'd left for keeps

CONTAINING THE COLOR BLUE

From the fuzzy interior depths of deep cobalt sleep, I wake into a more brilliant Curaçao hangover
I hear the furniture sounds from the neighbors upstairs, and the sharp ping of the crib-side locking
There is the whimpering, 6 in the morning, baby-blue sound that babies make
Sounds so soft, it's like a symphony of *shhh*, so when David's short hair ruffles against the blanket
it is a distinct solo in the silence
I sit up feeling insubstantial, waterless, as if the blue element in my blood had evaporated from me as I slept
But it is not a bad hangover, more the spiritual sort of wandering, a weightlessness