

The Mittenleaf Tree · *James Reiss*

Then he hid behind the tree
and showed her his gizmo.
But she looked elsewhere; she
gazed over the lake
at the fire-blackened hotel

where men were already busy
repairing the dock—
she could almost smell the fresh
two-by-fours and taste paint
remover on her breath.

Then while he was skinny-dipping
behind a rock
she grabbed his blue bermudas
and one red sneaker
and sprinted up the trail.

Well, I've been wondering all these years
what's become of them: is he a clerk
or spot welder? And what about her
toothpick legs? We all know
dry wood snaps.

But what if she is a ballerina
as she wished, and he
is a neurosurgeon? Does this
make them happy?
I'd like to think of them smiling

over margaritas, not split
by a thousand miles.
I'd like to think of them elsewhere,
making love under a quilt
of mitten-shaped leaves by a lake

with bullfrogs like wolfwhistles
and, hammering in the distance, workers
who straddle the August shore
as a glove
straddles all five fingers.