

TREES

by Brian Bell

I

Two young fir trees in the yard
of my childhood home,
my friends and I idling around,
under and into them laughing,
a football sometimes in hand.

While mother hid in the house,
my father, the fire chief,
chained them to the fire truck,
tore them from the earth
dragged them through the town.

Past the mountains of black slag,
whipping, twisting, bouncing,
wood splinters, needles abrade,
rip from branch to wilt on street.

Wounds in earth begin to scab;
my yard returns to its flat, barren self.

II

The mystic willow slumped behind our first home
quietly, wisely indulged my youthful ignorance,
humbled by heat, rain, snow,
shadowing my house,

whispering quietly to himself,
never impressing the inevitability of pain,
of reckoning with the festering things in shadow,
waiting patiently for maturity.

Only once did he give warning.
The house muffled the storm's violence,
as limb cracked from trunk.
I heard the shriek but did not listen.

III

Four inconsiderate Pin Oaks surround this home,
they drop leaves and branches
like children do socks and coats
for their keeper to gather, collect, dispose.

No illusions of empathy,
topmost branches outstretch to sky,
bottom branches droop to ground,
growing with subtle deference to the past.

They shout with indignation,
reject their damaged parts,
to twist, dangle or drop to earth,
growing tall in spite of loss.