

**Karl Plank**

**THE SOUND OF A TREE FALLING AS WE HEAR IT**

The Cat skidder wards us off our usual path down Nannie Potts Lane,  
past the rangy pines and the tallgrass  
to the Chinese hawthorn with its berries of red sun.

We are forbidden by the caution color of mustard metal and grist-  
bite of gears. Two men with helmets walk through mud,  
chain saws 4-stroking, fingers curled at the trigger.

We know what we will hear next: the hum racing, brattling, blade  
teeth engaging, the noise that blasts before the crack  
of long-leaf pine giving way at its base and the silence

as it topples through the air. We have turned back to see,  
as if the interrupting silence had called us by name  
to witness the downfall.

It takes more time than one imagines, this moment of downfall.  
The felled tree does not plummet,  
but slips through atmosphere

that gentles the descent  
of what it cannot hold aloft.  
This the grace of falling things.

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