

PATRICK CARRINGTON

CONVENIENT TREES

Sometimes at night instead of chewing
through the straps, you submit
to the bedposts and listen. At first wind,

you think it's the voice of a small girl
swinging in a grove
where her father tied a tire to a maple.

The air scrapes its wet back harder
on the shakes, and then
you think it might be an angry dog

stretched to the radius of his leash
as he strangles a willow
and tries to yank it out to punish

your trespass. The ceiling fan drips
and mimics the shrinking circle
of his madness. Thunder claps, and

you think there may be a man stripped
to the waist and waving
from a hickory limb, a passion play

for a mob in the shadow of City Hall.
There is no sanctuary
when night afflicts you with urges—

to push the swing, to cut the tethers,
to participate in the butchery—
It's always the ties that bind, defined

in the fluid arc,
the taut limit,

of rope.