

## **Trimming Trees**

by Joshua Siegal

Several things about trimming trees - sometimes you'll clip a branch at the same moment a gust of wind comes along and shivers the leaves. Just under your breath you'll say "sorry" as if you had clipped your dog's nails a bit too close. If you look down at just that moment (something you're not supposed to do but everyone does), you'll see the loose branch descend past the limbs like a fallen soldier passing back through the ranks. If the branch is light enough, the wind will billow a bit underneath and set it down gently to rest. If the branch is larger, it will hit the ground and groan as it becomes still.

It's strange work, trimming trees. When I took the job, I'd thought it would be a perfect antidote to the eerie, fabricated atmosphere of the cubicle world and its mottled attempts at calming the worker's natural impulse towards escape. Maybe it works on most, but the mauve and grey burlap carpeting on every surface made me gag. I developed a reputation for careful, pensive consideration of all my business projects, but really I was just standing by the window with a coffee cup in my hand, pining for fresh air.

It's not always a picnic up in the trees, though. If it starts to rain while you're belted in, you have to shimmy back down in a hurry before the bark gets slippery. The tree perks up and rejoices as you retreat back down. It's like falling off your bar stool after losing an argument. When your boot touches soil again you want to pat the tree and tell it to drink up.

You've been trimming it down for the benefit of the black electric lines draped on their smooth barkless poles or for the little cars crouching nose to tail on the curb, but among the branches there's no escaping that you're in the tree's arms, and that you're clinging to it above the tiny ground, and that its leaves shade you from the sun above even as your saw roars and the tree pretends to ignore the biting of that oily mechanical instrument.