

Green Interlude

By Molly Charboneau

One day as I was pruning to help nurture city trees
I met a man on duty with the power utility.
“Excuse me, what is that tree there?” he asked as I drew near.
“Why, that’s a common street tree known as a Callery pear.”

He nodded, then continued, “Yes, but what does that tree do?”
“It cleans the air, holds nests for birds and shades the sidewalk, too.”
“I’m Jamaican,” he went on, “and we use plants traditionally.
So, trees and shrubs, and flowers and herbs, they always interest me.”

I smiled and thought, well here’s my chance to ask a question, too.
“So, tell me what’s your recipe for cooking callaloo?”
“Sauté is best – releases iron and cuts the bitter taste.
You chop the plant up, leaf and stem. That way there is no waste.”

We talked about a dandelion in soil beneath the pear,
Then pointing down the block I said, “Do you see that tree there?
It’s called a linden and it makes a lovely, mild iced tea
To help you sleep on those hot nights when there is no AC.”

He laughed at that, since his job was electrical repair,
While mine was helping nature keep our urban climate fair.
Then I returned to pruning, he to tasks he had to do,
Continuing our vital work to keep our city cool.

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