

I watched each hand rise in unison
from those sunburnt arms

A scene—like the smoke—unfurling from the curing barn
Such beautiful hands
as tough as the hide
of the brown boots she wore....

Come evening, I would caress
those paining Black hands
for what I thought that day/if only she could
hear me say—
So beautiful are your hands
they organize in such a different way—

BLUEPRINT (FOR ALEX)

Tall, thin carpenter man—
building things—beautiful things
with your carpenter hands

Reminding me of:
my granddaddy who died
a broken man—he too was
a tall, thin carpenter man

Granddaddy drank a whole lotta
white lightning, talked trash
schooled his sons and daughters too
at eight taught me how to shoot
his twenty-two, left grandma and at
one time ran off with a beautiful

Cuban woman—my grandpa was
a tall, thin carpenter man

Like you, he too didn't take no shit
no white man could keep him down
ran a sawmill, cut all the wood
for every house in his town
my grandpa was a tall, thin carpenter man

Tall, thin carpenter man
the earthy aroma of you
blends so well, with all your
other sweaty worker smells.

Tools weigh down your hips each day—
the hammer has made a contour where your
lovers lie—besides the essence of you
getting high had been your trip
your arms reveal the scars
of that nightmare—which almost
obliterated your beauty
your being
and life itself, but you emerged
from that living, endless hell

And now you build
such beautiful things
tall, thin carpenter man

Like my grandpa, who taught me once
I have learned some lessons from you
/too...

that a junky can emerge a man
to have overcome that is as powerful
as the shot that rang from my grandpa's
twenty-two! Only he died of alcohol

Heroin lost the bout
with you, tall, thin
carpenter man—keep
building, my grandpa left
a lot of plans....

Before he died, he said to me

"I fell, because oftentime
I fought alone, a drink was
easier to obtain—after the
daily battle with the racist
white man—let my words be
lessons to you—organize even
a few, you will never be alone
unity is necessary to defeat
him who throws the first stone"

Ah, yes, fighting alone, against him who
throws the first stone, has caused the
death of many a Black man heroin,
alcohol and cocaine are all the inventions
of the capitalist plan—

Tall, thin carpenter man
I give you my grandpa's
dreams, his unfinished plans
the dreams of the working class

Keep building beautiful things, with your
carpenter hands...