First Storm and Thereafter

By Scott Cairns

What I notice first within this rough scene fixed in memory is the rare quality of its lightning, as if those bolts were clipped from a comic book, pasted on low cloud, or fashioned with cardboard, daubed with gilt then hung overhead on wire and fine hooks.

What I hear most clearly within that thunder now is its grief—a moan, a long lament echoing, an ache. And the rain? Raucous enough, pounding, but oddly musical, and, well, eager to entertain, solicitous.

No storm since has been framed with such matter-of-fact artifice, nor to such comic effect. No, the thousand-plus storms since then have turned increasingly artless, arbitrary, bearing—every one of them—a numbing burst.

And today, from the west a gust and a filling pressure pulsing in the throat—offering little or nothing to make light of.

Source: *Poetry* (April 2011)