

Speak

By Phillip B. Williams

A storm and so a gift.
Its swift approach
lifts gravel from the road.
A fence is flattened in
the course of the storm's
worse attempt at language —
thunder's umbrage. A tree
is torn apart,
blown upward through a bedroom
window. A boy winnows
through the pile
of shards for the sharpest parts
from the blown-apart
glass. He has
a bag that holds found edges
jagged as a stag's
horns or smooth as
a single pane smashed into
smaller panes that he sticks
his hand into
to make blood web across
his ache-less skin flexing
like fish gills
O-lipped for a scream
it cannot make.
He wants to feel
what his friends have felt,
the slant of fear on their faces
he could never
recreate, his body configured
without pain. When his skin's
pouting welts
don't rake a whimper
from his mouth, he runs
outside, arms up
for the storm, aluminum
baseball bat held out
to the sky
until lightning with an electric
tongue makes his viscera
luminescent;
the boy's first word for pain
is the light's
new word for home.



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