


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.

Source: *Poetry* (November 2013)