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)