Weathering the Storm

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Weathering the Storm

News of the tornado
sent most of them to their stifling cellars.
hunkered down, ears to the gossipy transistor.
The announcer's pause, the pop of static proof:
the village was about to fly apart.

We went upstairs to bed.
Friends worth having would survive the storm,
break through the twister's veneer.
We'd been through weather before.

It was worse than we expected,
but also better.

The siding clapped the house,
mortar clattered down the chimney.
We tucked the wool blanket
tighter under our torsos
as the roof lifted off,
the wind sucking at our rings.

We watched the space where the ceiling had been.
Broken glass, twisted metal whirled by,
but we were solid enough
to hold down the mattress.
We could shield our eyes
with our hands and marvel
at the horizontal rain of harmless bricks,
colored pencils, dinner invitations,
pedestals, cicadas, and cans of tuna.

Julie Fiedler is a poet, clay sculptor, and painter, and teaches English at Hope College.
Soon we were covering our mouths out of politeness at this serious storm. The sky was throwing tantrums of brooms, daffodil bulbs, hairpieces, rodents, brushes full of housepaint, housetrailers, and Mexican folk art.

I was so glad to have you, so glad for a laughing witness. No one would believe what we had seen. wouldn't even ask as they ascended from their chambers into the exhausted, open air.