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The Lightning Storm

by Wulf Losee

He looked forward to the big storms of summer.
He could sense them brewing in the heat.
The days were smothered by the drone of cicada.
Their chorus of tymbals cycled in and out of phase,
expanding the volume of song at the hottest hours of day,
then a pulse of dry lightning in the afternoon haze.
Tomorrow latest, the storm would come.

The summoning whistles of lifeguards
ordering everyone from the lake, the air thickened,
the sky darkened by swollen thunderheads,
and the shrieks (sharper than lifeguard whistles)
of knobby-kneed girls shuffle-running in flip-flops
to their cars, his mom urging him to hurry, keep up!
She remembered her own lightning storms.

The weather came to a simmer,
pelted a few clumps of rain, hesitating,
as if it were a car’s ignition turning over, then over again,
then the storm’s engines kicked in, reached a full boil,
spray danced on the road, chasing the car,
and wipers beat time time time to his heart,
a wild friend that sang in an ozone frenzy.
He was a little god sitting in the passenger seat.
His thoughts leaped and jumped in a dance,
a double-bolt strike, then a triple strike
echoed under the cupped hands of the sky.
Strobes of adrenaline lit up his blood,
multiple exposures on his mind’s camera.
Then the overlapped lines of flash blindness...

that faded from his retinas behind the waterfalls of rain.
During a lull his mother stopped at the dairy stand.
The two of them ate ice cream while the parking lot steamed.
At dusk the sky cleared to the patter of dripping trees,
rain gutters clucked and chuckled into the green night,
and the liquid rhythms of katydids and crickets
flowed into the rivers of his sleep.