

Nicole Caldwell

My Dad Appreciates a Steens Lightning Storm

I hear the crash before he does.
Leaping to the window,
flashing cracks in the night air,
backlighting drifting clouds
and bats stunned by their own visibility.

A mad rush to the dimly lit door,
chipping paint flies
into the onslaught of mosquitoes.
He turns down his hearing aid,
laughing.
The next fissure washes the valley
in swatches of twilight.

I stumble behind,
phone flashlight on gopher holes, briars and dry grass.
He leads surely, moon glare reflected in glasses,
eager for a light show to crack
the swampy air.

Rickety picnic table and crickets,
talking about my dad,
growing up in Lebanon with nothing
to do but get drunk
and jump off bridges.
We count the growing seconds
between flashes and crashes.

It's behind the mountains now.
No one else would be able to hear his disappointment.
He turns to me and ruffles my frizzy hair,
content as I have ever seen him.