

Aftermath: Hurricane Sandy

I'd been sleeping for weeks on an air mattress
on the floor at my nephew's house
and with no heat
it felt like the cold had seeped into my bones.
Then today I'd bushwhacked through
and climbed over
piles of downed oak and locust trees
strewn across my blocked driveway,
dodged the hanging wires near my side door
to get inside. I stepped into the kitchen,
took a deep breath,
and looked out my back window.

Shards of glass and cracked terra cotta pots
covered the ground in between
pieces of splintered branches
A smell of rotting leaves and dead Autumn lingered in the air
along with the snarl of chain saws nearby.
The huge fallen trees
were sharp and jagged like weapons
where they'd split or been upended,
and those that had smashed the deck,
lay in tangled piles,
brown and black without leaves,
dark, foreboding.
It felt like the terrain of a hostile planet.

Maybe because the whole sky was drifting
above the bleak woods,
rushing, almost, toward some unknown purpose,
or maybe because there were so many clouds visible
and suspended overhead,
out of the corner of my eye I noticed those clouds:
mounds of clotted cream,
little islands of brownish-gray,
chunky boat shapes,
ovals.
Others looked like hunks of felt

interspersed with scraps of blue,
and they seemed to travel
as if they were messengers,
poised to drop more bad news
or announce something else brewing,
another terrible phase of this ordeal.

Yet,
there was nothing else I could do
about the mess in that moment,
except observe
the little stretches of pale aqua
floating gently
behind,
or in between,
the dark slate parts, and
with the sun still out,
the whole expanse
upstaged the devastation
and shimmered,
backlit with an orangey glow.

Looking beyond all that surrounded me,
I appreciated
that unusual sky
how the light seemed steady,
how the smears of grays and blues ,
the shades of white and copper
softened the moment,
looked like Monet might have
painted them.