

After the Rain

Rain filling up the clay cisterns and the dog howling.
Rain cleansing hackberry, maple, and oak.

Covering the river stones.
Stout boulders scattered in the watery, black flow—
rooted in their own age past time.

This morning the sky opens in a rattle and song.

I'm reading Montag's *After the Flood*,

Studying the disasters of water.

Mastering its terms: high level, crest, sandbag, power, light—
and the importance of liquids
in turning air to drops.

Outside, the Pawnee of hard rain dance past—
head dress tall, eager and strong.

This poem was a finalist in the 2025 BYU Studies Poetry Contest.

Will this really help you
 puddle your way out of a cool evening walk?
 the horizontal rain—

Des Moines, then west,
 Skillet Creek burial grounds pop out, dampened—
into bookmarks,
 simple lies and the plotting of birds seeking a way out.

It won't even help you to use a bail bucket now.

 I think of repairing the roof next summer; now too late.

Forget this and that
 when I'm here alone,
 interim silence is the language the rain and I speak clearly.
I have the grammar down by heart.

 Words fall easily, drop by drop, in its own time.

Tomorrow,

a morning fire smoldering in the grate, now flaps its wings,
 wind rocking,
 the window sashes and sills in a loose rhythm.

And on the plains, lightning divides the sky from the pending sun.

—Will Powley