

Tornado Alley

A name with pride, we were on the map
Duck and cover. That too meant something
Lakeside Grade School had all the drills

And then, in winter, ice storms, my favorite
School canceled, even as the storm began at night
Hearing outside the window by my bed
Bitter rain, sinister, dangerous, thrilling, my family, safe inside

In morning all was still, shiny branches, covered
Phone lines and electricity lines, thick with ice
Amazing, glistening fingers, defined by a cold sun
Breaking from time to time, as we made do inside.

Storms are adventure to a child
As mine were in Pittsburg, Kansas, and yet now
My former neighbor, Joplin, got the big hit

The pent up, angry swirling wind, obliterating all in its path
The Wizard of Oz beckoning, for travelers

Mean, beyond belief, after all those years of warnings
So much a part of the shifting weather, just warnings, you say
Clouds building, air still and green, then, usually, rain
But now, it has happened, the *I told you so* of wind

As though, ignored too long
It became a thing, a monster, destroying all who would shun it
Mercy, abandoned after all those years,, my neighbor ruined

All who survived have emerged from the wreckage, rubbed their eyes
Faced the truth of the fury that, undeserved,

Became the reason for all the rest of us
To look up, to hear the sirens
To engage the fear

And run.