

Joe Cottonwood

A Month of Storms Like Holy Wrath

Saturation. Land is liquid. Hills flow.
Trees ease onto highways
where they stand, roots and all,
like stubborn jaywalkers.
Houses slide. Roads dip
as mountains shift, shrug,
slough away the works of man.

Our gurgling crawdad stream
rushes with logs, eats the soil,
snatches a cabin, sweeps away
a full-grown man filling his lungs
with mud, breaking his body
to dump him among driftwood.

Wind whipsaws a Douglas fir
until thirty-six inches of solid trunk
snap with a sound like a bomb.
Roof shatters. Walls pop.
Upstairs become downstairs.
A skylight takes flight like a Frisbee
and lands unbroken in mud.
Clothes hang on branches.
Fir needles fill the kitchen sink.
The refrigerator lies on its side,
food sprawled over the splintered floor.

How fragile the works of man.
Yet somehow inside the crushed house
a telephone is ringing.
Who, dear Lord, is calling?

Joe Cottonwood has built or repaired hundreds of houses in his day job as carpenter/contractor. Nights, he writes. His latest book is *Foggy Dog: Poems of the Pacific Coast*.