

OUR TERRIER THE GALVANOMETER

Leland Jamieson

For G.K.J.

Our brindled cairn would not bed down
as usual on the kitchen floor.
Restless, he ran, and played the clown.
At last he bid to sleep top drawer
and settled on your bed. Quick snore.
You: "Let him be." I killed the light.
It was a hot and sultry night.

A flash of mid-day, daylight skies!
I heard a little rattling zip
—fan's louvers closing when it dies?
I leapt from bed and groped to flip
a light on. Dead. I bit my lip,
grabbed a flashlight and raced up the stair
to the attic's smoke-filled, pine-pitch air.

Back down. You shout, "The house is struck!
The dog leapt clear across the room!"
I: "Phone's dead. I'm next door."
"Good luck—
be careful . . ." Ankle deep in flume
of run-off, deafened by each boom,
I banged upon the neighbor's door
until I woke him from his snore.

"We're stuck by lightning. Phone is dead.
Quick, call a fire truck. Call in quick!"
"Got it . . . !" Back home, I heard the thread
of Klaxon, which came in the nick—
my fear'd made me a lunatic.
I swallowed tears of joy, a lot
like one's first shot of Scotch down hot.

The firemen found our breakers tripped.
Garage door closer, microwave,
TV and VCR were stripped
of all the chips that made them slave
Outside, the sky's now-bright clear nave
ascended to a crescent moon.

Lieutenant: “Two-pronged, that harpoon.”

“How’s that?” I asked. He aimed his light
up at the gable’s metal drip.

“You see, the lightning took a bite
—that thumb-wide hole—and with a zip
singed the attic’s siding, got a grip
on your BX, and shot to ground.
But that’s not everything we’ve found.

It charged the drip board and the gutter,
and zapped the rain-spout down to earth.”
He pointed to a joint. “The sputter
of holes it burned! That bully girth
would swallow up Fort Leavenworth.”
He smiled, let out a mellow chuckle.
I stuck my thumb in, past first knuckle.

“Why here, and not across the street?
Why not four doors, or six, uphill?”
“The ground charge, underneath our feet.
She flows and pools unseen until,
seeking a cloud-charge, she will shill
and leap to meet it—‘fore she bolts,
she’ll raise your neck hairs with her volts.”

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