

2022 Excellence in Poetry State Award Winner

Annie Johnson, Dublin Coffman High School

“Inspiration”

The Question:

If lightning never strikes
twice in the same place
then how am I supposed
to live again? I've been
chasing this fire in my
tendons since August.
My muse's name is
Narcissus and he
hates me. It's a bit
of a paradox in all
honesty. He died in
the water and I will die
in the rain dressed in
tinfoil, mouth open,
waiting for inspiration
or drowning or both.

The Answer:

You never believe me
when I tell you that
everything stays. You
don't need that second
bolt of electricity, the
first one is enough. It's
still inside you, you know.
I can feel it humming
through your veins. It
sounds
like the fluorescent lights
you always shied away
from beneath cold palms.
Thunder does not travel
with lightning, it takes its
time.
The boom and crash, the
echo of things forgotten.
Even flashbulbs long gone
still
leaves traces.

Stop screaming
for the sky to blind you
and wait.

Listen.
How does that old saying
go?

Any port in a storm?