Ode To Stained Glass

Judy Davies

(Written in three parts as from inside the building, this poem commemorates the beautiful stained glass windows of St. Michael’s Church on the Gulf Coast in Biloxi, MS immediately before, during and after Hurricane Katrina)

i.
Surrounded by loveliness, bathed in soft light,
Their vibrant colors shone day and night.
Pictures in glass within my embrace,
Each tells a story of some ancient place.

Pensively watching those fragile displays,
Quietly praying, I feel the Son’s rays.
Stately glass images relate a narrative
Of selfless good works, of how we should live.

Stretching my mind and letting it wander,
What chronicles of history, what tales can I ponder?
I see sadness; yet joy, in each windowpane,
Hoping against hope, He’s not suffered in vain.

ii.
The humid day stretches before me. It rains.
Winds begin to swirl, their strength gains.
Trees bend in obeisance to the angry outburst,
Water pouring in sheets; I suspect the worst.

Run, hide, close the windows quickly,
I don’t want to see what is before me.
I peer out cautiously as people stumble,
Trees uproot, cars crush and crumble.

Sirens blare, people cling to each other
Knowing this may be their last time together.
Chairs and benches and branches of trees
Fly by in a steady stream of debris.

Houses sway, bricks, glass and metal fly around;
No match for the elements, they crash to the ground.
The howling wind continues its wrath,
The waters are rising, approaching my path.

First lapping the door; now the seeping begins,
Faster and faster as it flows right in;
Once appearing just under the door,
Now racing gingerly across the floor.

Will it stop or will I be swept away?
Will I not see from these windows just one more day?
Strong walls, majestic glass icons,
Keep me safe from weather dragons.

iii.
The force of the water slows, then retreats,
Recoiling, withdrawing, as if admitting defeat.
Water spilled everywhere, everything filled to the brim,
Destruction so massive I know not where to begin.

Wind and water surged with raw power,
Bridges and buildings crumbled like powder.
As molten lava deformed from the heat,
Twisted metal lies at my feet.

Droplets of color now rest on the ground
As the stained glass windows came tumbling down.
In place of peace, chaos survived.
The now broken windows cannot be revived.

Soaked in mildew like long hidden lies,
Shattered glass, shattered dreams, shattered lives...