

## Reflections on a Storm

Barbara Perry-Sheldon

North Carolina

We knew Helene was coming  
But no one told us her fury  
Would change the landscape forever,  
Destroying churches and homes  
And disrupting so many lives.

Her flooding wiped out  
Asheville's arts galleries, businesses.  
She shut interstates and major roads  
Isolating workers from their jobs across state lines,  
Diverting traffic onto curvy, broken backroads.

Her wind tossed trees like pick-up sticks.  
Landslides scarred rolling hills.  
Narrow streams, now raging rivers, rerouted their channels,  
Wiping out bridges, tossing cars, homes, debris,  
Turning grassy yards to rock gardens.

Darkness mapped from space reflected no electricity,  
No cell phones or internet connections while  
She sent families from ancestral homes to homelessness,  
But more important,  
The lives lost-- the final number still uncertain.

Recovery began--volunteers building  
Temporary foot bridges to access homes.  
Supply hubs opened with donated essentials.  
Neighbors helped neighbors and  
Strangers helped strangers, becoming family

With landscapes changed, with homes swept away,  
With lives lost or disrupted,  
With the future still uncertain, uncharted,  
The mountain spirit emerged.  
We remain Mountain Strong.