

NAMING THE STORM

It's hurricane season
where you are, 4,000 miles away.
I need to see you so I figure
I'll walk on water since flying
is out of the question.
I try to keep up with the latest,
learn each storm's name
before it fizzles out

and the next one forms,
spinning its way across the ocean.
I'll turn up with gas for the chainsaw,
help you with the shutters,
count candles, fill the tub.
We'll sit in the fuggy indoor dusk
telling each other stories
we've told a hundred times.

We'll talk about them by name –
way back to Donna and Dora
but Andrew and Charley too –
like anecdotes about crazy aunts
and uncles, the kind of conversation
every family has from time to time,
the legendary and dysfunctional,
the close calls and disasters.

But, realistically, I won't be able
to reach you. There's bound to be
some final obstacle, like I-95
is a river, and I've used up all my
walking-on-water powers
and I'm too scared to swim.
And flying, as we know,
is out of the question.

So I'll be that fool reporter,
clutching a mike while palm trees
do a frantic hula in the background.
Maybe you'll catch me on TV –
me, trying to shout
above the waffling wind,
sodden and stating the obvious –
before the power goes out.

ISLAND GRIEF AFTER HURRICANE IVAN.

All over the island is pure bacchanal.

Zinc roofs dance feral in the pitch dark
and all man jack gone wild. Everything
back in front. Crapaud smoke he pipe

tonight as shack shack trees shoo shoo
with mammy apple trees, whilst Jumbie
Umbrella macco the scene. Everywhere
is pure jab jab mass, a fierce sound clash

driving all the mongoose to run in circles
like they catch gigga. The rain fall zig
zags like fat flies, raising choirs of mosquitoes
from rivers, humming black clouds, infectious.

Yet sugarcane stalks refuse to sway
just stand like rigid salutes. Bay Leaf
and Cinnamon stop making joke
and start to pray hard until Breeze drag

off her clothes and bawl for Moonlight
to sing a lullaby, sing on and on
till her voice grows hoarse. Then Bitter Aloes
start fighting with Black Sage bush,

throwing hard cuff as dropping coconuts
thump voop vap, and it is madness
in the river-water where tiny titiree
swirl and bubble. Meanwhile Manicou

and Jack Fish lament Nutmeg's demise
as bazoodee island parrots stand numb
like statues, their claws curled
around branches of pommerac trees.

Moonlight is paged to cradle the moaning
wounded. Oh Spice Isle, let it not die here.
Oh Lord, there is pepper in the deads'
mouths and coffins fly overhead.