



Blood Dazzler

Patricia Smith

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In minute-by-minute detail, Patricia Smith tracks Hurricane Katrina as it transforms into a full-blown mistress of destruction. From August 23, 2005, the day Tropical Depression Twelve developed, through August 28 when it became a Category Five storm with its “scarlet glare fixed on the trembling crescent,” to the heartbreaking aftermath, these poems evoke the horror that unfolded in New Orleans as America watched it on television.

Assuming the voices of flailing politicians, the dying, their survivors, and the voice of the hurricane itself, Smith follows the woefully inadequate relief effort and stands witness to families held captive on rooftops and in the Superdome. She gives voice to the thirty-four nursing home residents who drowned in St. Bernard Parish and recalls the day after their deaths when George W. Bush accompanied country singer Mark Willis on guitar:

The cowboy grins through the terrible din,

And in the Ninth, a choking woman wails

Look like this country done left us for dead.

An unforgettable reminder that poetry can still be “news that stays news,” *Blood Dazzler* is a necessary step toward national healing.

Patricia Smith is the author of four previous collections of poetry, including *Teahouse of the Almighty*, winner of the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award and the Paterson Poetry Prize. A record-setting, national poetry slam champion, she was featured in the film *Slamnation*, on the HBO series *Def Poetry Jam*, and is a frequent contributor to *Harriet*, the Poetry Foundation’s blog. Visit her website at www.wordwoman.ws.

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