

Let's Talk About It: Picturing America
The Work of Freedom: Individual and Communal

Poetry Selections

“Tornado Child” by Kwame Dawes

I am a tornado child.

I come like a swirl of black and darken up your day;
I whip it all into my womb, lift you and your things,
carry you to where you've never been, and maybe,
if I feel good, I might bring you back, all warm and scared,
heart humming wild like a bird after early sudden flight.

I am a tornado child.

I tremble at the elements. When thunder rolls my womb
trembles, remembering the tweak of contractions
that tightened to a wail when my mother pushed me out
into the black of tornado night.

I am a tornado child,

you can tell us from far, by the crazy of our hair;
couldn't tame it if we tried. Even now I tie a bandanna
to silence the din of anarchy in these coir-thick plaits.

I am a tornado child

born in the whirl of clouds; the centre crumbled,
then I came. My lovers know the blast of my chaotic giving;
they tremble at the whip of my supple thighs;
you cross me at your peril, I swallow light
when the warm of anger lashes me into a spin,
the pine trees bend to me swept in my gyrations.

I am a tornado child.

When the spirit takes my head, I hurtle into the vacuum
of white sheets billowing and paint a swirl of color,
streaked with my many songs.

From the book *MIDLAND: Poems by Kwame Dawes* published by Ohio University Press,
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