

Contractor's Lamentation

Katherine Gaumond

He used to smoke his cigarettes on our front porch
during the rebuilding process that seemed to last four lifetimes.
I think he was mourning Katrina,
his lovely, drunken whore.

I only wish that I had been there when she ended,
when she was forced to crawl through what she had wrecked.
I wish I had been able to see her on the ground in her once-white dress,
now torn and dirty from the sheetrock dust and the strewn nails,
her filthy hair streaked across her face.
I wanted to be able to see glass blades growing out of her knees
as she dragged herself, sobbing, from my city.
She had ravaged my beloved,
but we hurt her more than she hurt us.
We weakened her to the point of exhaustion,
and there was no one to revive her after she fell to the ground,
broken and bleeding from too many wounds to count.
After her drunken rampage was done,
we cheered as the river swept her out to sea, lifeless and alone.

The stinking scoundrel lifted himself from our wrecked porch
and stubbed out his cigarette, flicking the butt at my sleeping cat,
who did not so much as twitch when it landed less than
a foot from her curled tail.
She was asleep in the shadow of the trailer that was held

GAMBIT

high above the driveway on cinder blocks,
so high that my Grandmother had a difficult time
mounting the stairs to eat dinners in our modest new kitchen.

He stood and shambled back to our skeleton-house,
burping up the last of his Burger King lunch as he went,
no doubt thinking about how he could cheat us on the price
of floating the sheetrock he and his partners would install today.
I figured that he was continuing to mourn his lucrative whore,
who had given him his new business of rebuilding what she demolished.
Sighing, he shrugged his huge, meaty shoulders
showing off his blue prison tattoos, harsh in the post-storm sun.