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Hurricane Litter: A Eulogy

Mary Dengler

A tattered leaf bag lying
on the road, discarded trash,
its flapping corners whispering
mysterious burdens
to a thousand shuffling feet—
their own sadness heavier than floods—
remains a fortnight undisturbed.

A finger slipping through a tear
evokes the ceiling truth of Michelangelo—
connects its decomposing pointer
to the mind of God and passers, lookers-on,
and elevates to realms of light
its rotting sod.

A pair of feet emerging helpless, worn—
in parody of breach-birth death
from standing helpless when he couldn't use his head—
could not sustain their walker
from Canal Street
to another sense of place.

I see him totter his first steps, or led,
toward arms outstretched and sparkling eyes,
like Ponchetrain mid-day,
to laugh at God's reflection in a pool,
then see him walking youthfully toward school,
where limitations meet and tie him in to words,
not pushing him beyond
the mirrors of the lake
but stopping his reflection on a cloudy, lost, or struggling prince of tides
in Others' eyes.

How far did adult footsteps take him
from the truth—
did isolation rob him blind
or poverty distort God's image with its lies?
Or had his feet slowed down to push a broom,
or had those feet grown quick to run
with criminal intent and other fools
toward drugs to satisfy a starving soul?
Or had they carried music like a quiet flame
from bar—with dignity and power—to bar
to make the listeners whole?
Or did he dream inventions to the wind Divinci-like—
an Archimedes Screw and helicopter plan—
that might have saved his land?
Or had they merely wandered aimless
from familiar hosts in anger,
like Beloved's ghosts?

When Hurricane Katrina took the levies down 2005,
those tired, quick, lost, or rhythmic feet,
too poor to claim a credit card, a car,
too proud or wise to shelter in the Dome,
took an unaccustomed journey to a higher ground.
No plane or bus slowed down to chair
the aging bearer of a pre-ordained,
unchosen life.

Exhausted, first he sat, then crept a ways,
then slept,
abandoned on the crowded road until
his finger met a corresponding Touch
whose magnate draws the nameless
from their concrete bed
to work in heaven's throbbing gate
and gives them back their name and place,
erased
in walking through this waterworld.