

BROWN WATER BLUES

F. DOUGLAS BROWN



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I. Dead Daddy Blues

Bury me feet first so I can check on you
Let me stand so I can smoke a "J" or sip some beer or say, "hey baby"
I wanna sing blues or R&B, sass, curse and laugh
Cock my head up to the sky
Let me look through worm-dirt & grass-soil
Let all football games flicker across my forehead—TV light, high noon bright
I said, bury my vertical—feet first and head up
Let me hold you, push you to your feet
When levees fail, life quakes, when oil swamp sinks and brown water bubbles
When your old girl walks out, and your new girl walks in
Let me caress your swoon, keep you the way a pillar keeps a ceiling from collapse
My grand Mississippi grip, my southern comfort, poised and ready

II. Post Katrina Blues

Used to be a three-story nightmare to clean but it was home.
Used to belong to Mama Corrine & Daddy Ceairee, and now it belong to me.
Used to have wooden floors cut from the oak that once stood in the front yard.
Used to be built to last; Daddy Ceairee worked 'til his back buckled.
Used to have three levels because *sugar, we tryin' to be closer to heaven.*
Used to have plenty to atone for.
Used to love the sound rain made on the roof; I said, I used to love the sound—rain—roof.
Used to be safe—Mama and Daddy safe.
Used to be more than this here stoop left.
Used to have a pot to, well, you know what in.
Used to be for after meals, cooling off, quiet prayer.
Used to be no children in sight, just the two of them sitting on a stone, stair stoop.
Used to be just Corrine and just Ceairee.
Used to be plucking a guitar and humming a tune 'til the dusk light stretched its orange wings and flew across the gulf sky.

III. Post Haiti Blues

Blame wind and waves
Blame sister city jealousy
Blame work or the lack of
Blame the many mouths to feed, the many hands; good God, the hands
Blame the shapeless sand
Blame land-fill island full of juju and haints
Blame rooster's caw and cluck
Blame aboiements des chiens, barking dogs whose keen ears know rolling earth
Blame lover's sin, a consumption of sorghum red, the rouge of our flag
underneath a body of blue
Blame the way a rumble shifts and shimmies, tosses bodies, dead toward stiff ground

IV. Post BP Blues

Here's the answer to your brown water
Here's the vacation and sleep you've been needing
Here's the oiled down stork, the brown water gulls, Crisco species
Here's the cement, and here's the plug
Here's the dark skinned pier
Here's the slick and the sorrow
Here's the crude-- corruption is a starburst outlined in green
Here's the President kneeling, clinching black sand
Here's the fisherman who lost his last line, greasy nets resting on a bed of greasy grains
Here's the chef with nothing to cook and no one to cook for
Here's the child who colors her ducks in dark ink not to make a point,
but it does make a point
Here's the child whose beach has holes in it
Here's the child whose nick name is Tar Baby, and *she ain't even black*