

**Storm**  
**by Nicholas Ruddock**

Hurricane off Cuba  
coiled, spinning counter-clockwise,  
muscling up the coast  
juiced on anabolic steroids,  
on drugs spilled from the bodies  
of weightlifters, athletes,  
others prone to excess,  
on by-products of this illegality and that,  
on ritalin, cocaine, methamphetamine,  
oxycontin, percocet, fentanyl,  
party-time hydrocarbons,  
date-rape chemicals swirling down  
toilets and shower drains,  
percolating through groundwater,  
spouting into towering clouds of microbes  
catalyzed by seawater too hot, too hot,  
the Gulf Stream shying away  
from Florida, from the Carolinas,  
from estrogens, contraceptives,  
testosterone, no-cal sweeteners,  
breath freshener, caffeine,  
bodywash, SPF 30,  
lead, mercury, hexavalent chromium,  
plastic bags blistered on chainlink,  
iceberged chunks of styrofoam,  
acid oozing from batteries  
lime-green and fluorescent,  
9 volts on the skin  
of alligators, muskrats, watersnakes,  
rain drumming down  
on container loads of contraband,  
guys with acne scrambling for higher ground,  
faces on TV saying "shipwreck,"  
"mountainous waves,"  
multinational sailors on flags of convenience,  
ballasts shifting,  
teenage migrants  
tiptoeing like acrobats,  
tankers tipped, pallets busted,  
splinters of steel, wood, composite,  
stormwater bubbling up through sewers,  
E. coli, typhoid, windows ex- and im-  
ploded, food banks shuttered,  
mothers pushed down in beds and alleyways,

children standing in cribs,  
tenements, condos, ruptured kitchens,  
downtown hospital supply rooms vandalized,  
saline, surf, surge, sandbar,  
shorebirds battened down,  
spartina flattened in Chesapeake Bay,  
lobsters holding tight, bug-eyed,  
Hudson River porpoises moving out  
to Gaspé, Baie-des-Chaleur, Port aux Basques,  
this tropical storm coiling  
out of Cuba of all places,  
Castro, Guevara, Communism,  
the thin and hungry ones,  
fruit rotting on the ground,  
rafts on the beaches,  
Russians, the Bay of Pigs,  
AK-47s strewn through bracken,  
detritus of corporate welfare,  
hedge funds, looters, computers,  
Putin, Blair, the Clintons,  
anti-vaxxers,  
and we should have known about this  
last week, last month, last year,  
before we put the babies to bed,  
before the lights were turned out,  
the recoil,  
we should have seen it coming,  
felt the kickback in the mangroves,  
Katrina, New Orleans,  
anywhere south of Miami,  
voodoos in Port-au-Prince  
suspecting it all along,  
eyes as quiet as Zen,  
fingers palsied,  
hell to pay,  
water rising,  
fury fed by everything  
we did and didn't do,  
isobars twitching on the maps  
we drew in high school,  
the Aztec, the Maya,  
the Spanish swallowing molten gold,  
murderers, murderers,  
the dodo, the auk,  
shark-fin soup in restaurants,  
elephants sun-bloated for their tusks,  
conceit, control, primacy,

the India-rubber ball  
thrown hard against the wall,  
No, we didn't ask for this, not directly,  
aquifers of poison being sucked skyward  
but here we are,  
the weather made for us and by us,  
courtesy of Newton's Third Law, 1787,  
two hundred and thirty years  
of pushing, pushing, pushing,  
and finally this,  
this screaming,  
this wind.