

# WHEN THE STORM

**CHELSEA  
DINGMAN**

The leaves do not say  
dead. Not unclaimed. Strewn about  
silver sewers like socks  
from a clothesline. Sky,

a skinned rabbit, drags its belly  
over sawgrass. Slanted rain  
slashes houses, a dead-end  
street. In this womb, is time not

measured by what falls? Thick grasses  
lace the surging water's surface,  
a Queen palm's headdress nailed  
to the clouds. How the sky sounds—

not of thunder, but bare rims  
scraping the street. Wanting to be seen, wanting  
not to hunger. My son  
splashes next to a moldy mailbox, red

flag sagging. His face glitters. Cars pass,  
windows black. A river now, the road  
rushes into a turn. Mud  
eddies around us. The Southern sun,

clenched in my hands. I pull  
the sky down. Sip the spit of filthy  
rain. Only leaves float  
up. The sidewalks are gone.