

KATHY ENGEL

After the Storm, Praise

To the split mimosa, still standing, pink-tan bark fleshy in the
odd aftershine.

To the man who answered the storm info number at 4 a.m.:

Miss, you can sleep now.

To the women and men who lift branches from the roadside in
dark, wave cars to detour
in fluorescent jackets, and those who leaning out of cranes—tap,
pull, bend—work wires.

To the people who can't get to jobs and to the King Kullen cashier
who stowed a towel

in the car to shower at her friend's. To postal workers sorting
mail by kerosene lamp

and the poet, basement three feet deep in water, wading through
poems and letters.

To the children playing with worms in sudden backyard rivulets,
and to mud.

To the farmers upstate, crops wasted now by giant balls of hail,
and the farmer up the road who lost a week's business.

To the mother who insists on staying home with her dog and a
flashlight,

to the gaura whirling butterfly now burnt by salt and wind.

To the hibiscus saved, its lush yellow petals.

To the battered birdhouse and the scattered birds.

To criss-cross corn stalk, potato sog, ocean rock and whip, and to
this family, and to these friends, gathered at the table, where we
begin.