

## VISITATION AT KILL DEVIL HILLS

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*David Essex*

I had watched with the snake's deaf  
fascination for the moving flute,  
as the spout's tubeworm hulaed  
across the water, evolved upon landfall  
into a trunk, the rest of the celestial  
elephant somewhere up in the thunderhead.  
Live as a wire, haphazard sliced blindly  
across the island, flaying the Orville  
Motor Hotel, leaving the interior untouched,  
the beds neat as the maids could make them,  
mirrors and watercolor seascapes staring  
from theatrical flats.

In the cathedral-quiet aftermath,  
sound siphoned up to the silent sky,  
the phone poles and the high-tension lines  
were hung with spuncandy-pink insulation.  
Ambulance gumballs winked 'Interesting . . .'  
as they crept lightly among  
the dumbstruck lucky, who came out now,  
like night crawlers on a watered lawn.

Barbecueing in the power outage,  
we talked of Oz and God's macabre fondness  
for mystery, for the ambiguous object lesson.  
The tornado's one fatality was a local lady  
who was reported, probably apocryphally,  
to have turned eighty that day. She'd done,  
we agreed, as any of us wisely might have,  
and still the freezer fell a thousand feet  
and found her huddled in the ditch.