

And Now This

for Edwidge Danticat

Sometimes it must feel like
your fight for independence
will never end, that liberty
will keep eluding you like
a goat that runs into the sea.

The preacher says it is your
voodoo that is killing you,
that keeps you scraping and
digging and having to subdue
the enemy in your own house.

But who can deny you your
home, where even in hunger
your mouths sing and drums
beat the sweetest ra-ra, eh?
Where your soldiers once

marched over the cliffs to
their death in the sea. And now
this, your roof falling in while
you were combing the children's
hair, sending them off to school,

while you were opening your stall
to sell the few grains that still
manage to grow, here comes
this rain of rocks upon your head,
this shaking of the ground , as if

God does not know his own
strength, as if He were dancing
carelessly in his house above
the mountains where your cries
could not reach. But who

could pretend not to hear
such
a breaking up of earth,
such
a split

run all the way from Petionville
to Jacmel, down through
the belly of Port au Prince,
that where it ended it seemed
it could never be joined again.

A whole new island I tell you
is what you need, new roof,
new flooring, new everything,
new hills, new flowers new
yard, with no fence to say

this is yours that is theirs,
someone forever claiming
what you work so hard for.
A place you can bring all those
Boat People back to

and make a huge bonfire of
all the bad memories, of Papa
This and Baby That, the furry
slippers of their madams. But
never mind my wishes,

this is where you are now. This
is your sweet and sour, your
grief on top of grief, your little girl
dancing to show the amputation
was a success. Amazing how

you sing through your sorrow,
how you still fling your behind
in the Carnival when it comes,
and say your prayers however
you remember them, whatever

sacrifice you must make-
chicken, goat, your own blood,
saying, *Not me, not my Haiti,*
blood coming out of her pores.
Her mountains march naked

up and down beside the river
that divides the island as you
put it back together, the plate
that shifted the day the world
broke into a million pieces.