

# Mother's Day 2017: The Mother Warns the Tornado



*Today we bring you a fierce depiction of maternal love, written by poet Catherine Pierce PhD- who is Dr. Kardos's sister-in-law.*

*We hope your Mother's Day is full of flowers and free of tornados.*

*—Drs. Lai and Kardos*

## **The Mother Warns the Tornado**

I know I've had more than I deserve.

These lungs that rise and fall without effort,  
the husband who sets free house lizards,

this red-doored ranch, my mother on the phone,  
the fact that I can eat anything—gouda, popcorn,  
massaman curry—without worry. Sometimes  
I feel like I've been overlooked. Checks  
and balances, and I wait for the tally to be evened.  
But I am a greedy son of a bitch, and there  
I know we are kin. Tornado, this is my child.  
Tornado, I won't say I built him, but I am  
his shelter. For months I buoyed him  
in the ocean, on the highway; on crowded streets  
I learned to walk with my elbows out.  
And now he is here, and he is new, and he  
is a small moon, an open face, a heart.  
Tornado, I want more. Nothing is enough.  
Nothing ever is. I will heed the warning  
protocol, I will cover him with my body, I will  
wait with mattress and flashlight,  
but know this: If you come down here—  
if you splinter your way through our pines,  
if you suck the roof off this red-doored ranch,  
if you reach out a smoky arm for my child—  
I will turn hacksaw. I will turn grenade.  
I will invent for you a throat and choke you.  
I will find your stupid wicked whirling  
head and cut it off. Do not test me.  
If you come down here, I will teach you about  
greed and hunger. I will slice you into palm-  
sized gusts. Then I will feed you to yourself.

Catherine Pierce

From *The Tornado is the World* (Saturnalia Books, 2016)

*An associate professor and co-director of the creative writing program at Mississippi State, Dr. Pierce has authored three books of poems and won the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Poetry Prize. She is a mom of two young boys.*