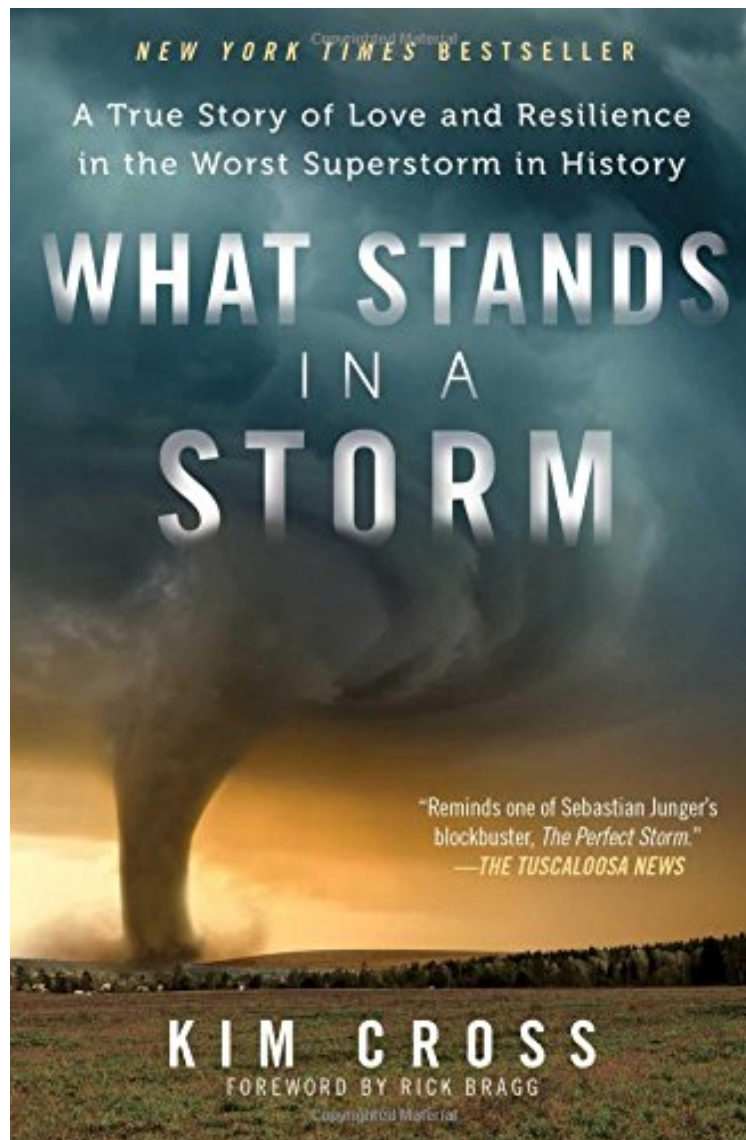


(Mobile book) What Stands in a Storm: A True Story of Love and Resilience in the Worst Superstorm in History

What Stands in a Storm: A True Story of Love and Resilience in the Worst Superstorm in History

Kim Cross

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This girl that wrote this book has a rare gift. Being from Vance Alabama, and being directly hit by a smaller tornado early the morning of April 27th, I lived through that day in shock.. at first I was hesitant to read this book because I didn't want to revisit the emotions from that day. I rarely talk about it. After reading it, I could not believe the amount of emotion it pulled from me. So much so, I believe it actually helped me heal some issues after nearly 4 years. Even if your not from around here, if you read this and don't shed tears, your not human. 14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Devestation and Grace
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By BGZapAfter slogging through several other books that were disappointing and poorly written, this was a breath of fresh air.....so to speak. Well researched, well written, I really cared about the people she chose to populate her story. I read the book in a day, finishing at 1 in the morning when I put it down and listened to the wind rising outside. It took hours to settle down and by then, it was time to get up. This book not only explains what happens when a tornado forms, but what happens on the ground when it hits. It debunks myths and unless you know all this stuff already, teaches. An excellent story, a frightening story: well written and well crafted.

Enter the eye of the storm in this gripping real-life thriller
A Perfect Storm on land that chronicles Americas biggest tornado outbreak since the beginning of recorded weather: a horrific three-day superstorm with 358 separate tornadoes touching down in twenty-one states and destroying entire towns. April 27, 2011 was the climax of a three-day superstorm that unleashed terror from Arkansas to New York. Entire communities were flattened, whole neighborhoods erased. Tornadoes left scars across the land so wide they could be seen from space. But from terrible destruction emerged everyday heroes neighbors and strangers who rescued each other from hell on earth. Armchair storm chasers will find much to savor in this grippingly detailed, real-time chronicle of nature gone awry (Kirkus Reviews) set in Alabama, the heart of Dixie Alley where there are more tornado fatalities than anywhere else in the US. With powerful emotion and captivating detail, journalist Kim Cross expertly weaves together science and heartrending human stories. For some, its a story of survival; for others its the story of their last hours. Crosss immersive reporting and dramatic storytelling catapult you to the center of the very worst hit areas, where thousands of ordinary people witnessed the sky falling around them. Yet from the disaster rises a redemptive message that's just as real: in times of trouble, the things that tear our world apart reveal what holds us together.

The writerly brilliancethe terse dark poetryof this debut book explodes from every page. Yet Kim Cross is too much of a writer to let mere masterful writing suffice. She has enlisted her sentences in the service of her tremendous reportorial mission: to recover and make sense of the thousands of fragmentary incidents, images, voices, and glimpses of human character ennobled by loss and imminent deaththe sum and substance of the most catastrophic mass-tornado attack in recorded American history. This young writer has done the impossible: she has out-written apocalypse. A new star has appeared in our literary sky. (Ron Powers, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and co-author of *Flags of Our Fathers*) Turn off your cellphone. Call in sick. Tell your family whatever you need to tell them, because youre going to have to have eight hours of uninterrupted time once you begin Kim Crosss book. Her verbs pulsate, her narrative web sucks you in. Mostly, Cross makes you care about the people in *What Stands in a Storm*, their quirks and aspirations. You wont look at a coiling sky the same way after reading this powerhouse debut. (Beth Macy, New York Times best-selling author of *Factory Man*) "A splendid reporter, and even better writer, Kim Cross has taken a catastrophic 'act of God' that seemed to beggar description as well as explanation and rendered it as shimmering molecules of feeling and meaning. An outstanding debut." (Diane McWhorter, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Carry Me Home*) Disaster has a soul, and it is deeply, desperately, bravely human. *What Stands in a Storm* is the human spirit. Kim Cross has brought the real people behind the headlines vividly to life in these stirring pages. She is an amazing writer, a great reporter with a novelist's gifts for character and scene. (Lee Smith, author of *Guests on Earth*) Cross takes us up close to a force of nature with a poetic, soul-searing narrative that keeps you turning page after page. She shows the resilience of people who time after devastating time learn about survival as well as death. Perhaps the most important lesson of all is that we can turn bad things into something positive. This book is one of the good things. (Charlayne Hunter-Gault) "Amid so much terror and pain and death, there is an overflowing of life here, gathered together in a blessing of uncommon decency and indelible beauty. If you want to know what shape your heart's in, read this book and learn, through Kim Cross's extraordinary reportage and artistry, that stories are as much a gift as life itself. Stories, in fact, are our afterlife." (Bob Shacochis, author of *The Woman Who Lost Her Soul*) "Whether you live in tornado country or not, everyone should read this book! Kim Cross goes behind the newsreels and shows us the devastating impact that one group of superstorms had on the people of Alabama in April of 2011 and what happened long after the newsreels stopped and moved on to cover another story. Heartbreaking and heroic." (Fannie Flagg, author of *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Cafe*) "*What Stands in a Storm*" is a

dramatic and carefully reconstructed account of nature's unexpected and explosive power and the strength of humans to bond together in its destructive wake." (Peter Stark, author of *Astoria and The Last Empty Places*) Armchair storm chasers will find much to savor in this grippingly detailed, real-time chronicle of nature gone awry. (Kirkus s) A powerful book, unforgettable in its recreation of a horror that swallowed entire communities. Kim Cross brings to life the soul-searing experience of people standing prostrate as a monstrous storm tears their lives to shreds. But there joy in this horror. She shows us how ordinary people in the worst-hit areas discovered what they and their communities were made of as the sky fell around them. (Winston Groom, author of *Forrest Gump*) "Gripping chronicle...Detail-oriented reporting anchors a novelist's flair for drama. Horrifying depictions of the monster storms...make other accounts...tame by comparison." (Publishers Weekly) "A searing testament not only to the raw ferocity of nature's destructive power, but also to the no less awesome power of human beings and human narrative to transcend destruction and to emerge, on its farside, shattered yet strangely complete. Kim Cross is gifted, whirlwind of a writer who weaves coherence, meaning, and yes, even beauty from chaos." (Kevin Fedarko, author of *The Emerald Mile*) "In total effect, the book resembles not only the best recent models of storm reporting, but a nearly 70-year-old masterpiece that covered an entirely different sort of disaster: John Hersey's *Hiroshima*." (Knoxville News-Sentinel) "Stories of those caught in tornado outbreak churn with power... Powerful new book recreates a three-day nightmare... At the core of *What Stands in a Storm* are the people, brave and noble in unimaginable situations, eager to help in the post-storm war zone, aching with loss when the depths of destruction are finally measured." (Dallas Morning News) "What Stands in a Storm has every chance of being a best-seller. Cross's book reminds one of Sebastian Junger's 1997 blockbuster, *The Perfect Storm*, in which Junger described to his reader the atmospheric conditions that combined to create the giant nor'easter, and then personalized the meteorology by telling of the fate of the crew of the *Andrea Gail* ... Cross does a splendid job of educating her readers about tornadoes, the sometimes dangerous myths and lifesaving scientific truths, and brings the story home emotionally with a superb job of reporting on individuals caught in climatic catastrophe. In his foreword, Rick Bragg rightly praises Cross meticulous re-creation 'of the drumbeat of horrors of that terrible day.' (Don Noble Tuscaloosa News) Kim Cross made me cry. Or rather her book did. *What Stands in a Storm* is subtitled *Three Days in the Worst Superstorm to Hit the South's Tornado Alley*, but I read it in hours, gripped from the very beginning. What a powerful and poignant book. (Nancy Pate *On a Clear Day I Could Read Forever*) "Kim Cross could teach a few novelists about how to tell a gripping, spell-binding, heart-wrenching tale... Painstakingly pieced together from interviews with survivors and meteorologists, news reports, public records, and even social media accounts, *Storm* is a superlative piece of journalism that also is written in such a masterful way that it rivals high fiction in its use of language, plot and suspense." (Jim Ewing *Clarion-Ledger*) "Cross weaves these disparate storylines together, building a tapestry of loss and survival out of the chaos of the storms coming and going. The narrative remaining is so seamless, it's easy to forget it took her 'more than a year of research and one-hundred-plus hours of interviews with responders, meteorologists, survivors and the families of those who died' to put together." (Anniston Star) About the Author Kim Cross is an editor-at-large for *Southern Living* and a feature writer who has received awards from the Society of Professional Journalists, the Society of American Travel Writers, and the Media Industry Newsletter. Her writing has appeared in *Outside*, *Cooking Light*, *Bicycling*, *Runners World*, *The Tampa Bay Times*, *The Birmingham News*, *The Anniston Star*, *USA TODAY*, *The New Orleans Times-Picayune*, and *CNN.com*. She lives in Alabama.

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What Stands in a Storm CHAPTER 1 RACING THE STORM 3:44 P.M., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2011 SMITHVILLE, MISSISSIPPI Patti Parker watched the dark funnel grow until it filled the whole windshield, blackening the sky. Its two-hundred-mile-per-hour winds were furious enough to blast the bark off trees, suck the nails out of a two-by-four, and peel a road right off the earth, and it was charging at sixty miles per hour toward everything she loved most in the world: her children, her husband, their home. She was racing behind the massive storm, down the seven-mile stretch of rural highway between her and the life she knew. Smithville, Mississippi, was much smaller than Oxford, the postage-stamp of native soil that William Faulkner called home. Too tiny to appear on some maps, it was a 1.5-square-mile speck of a town about ten miles west of Alabama and twenty miles southeast of Tupelo, where Elvis was born. Set on the banks of a dammed river some locals believed tornadoes would not cross, Smithville was a place where women put on makeup before going to the Piggly Wiggly, planned dinner around choir practice, and took their families to Mels Diner for fried catfish and the town's late-breaking news. It had one stoplight and five churches. Smithville's earsplitting tornado siren, just fifty feet from Patti's house, had been screaming so often this spring that she found herself sleeping through the warnings. A high-pitched, lugubrious wail, it sounded just like the air-raid sirens of World War II. When people heard it, they would run into their closets and bathrooms, although many would pause first and go outside to stare up at the sky. The sirens had interrupted Patti's work again today in the neighboring small town of Amory, Mississippi. The executive director of the local United Way, she had been at her desk answering e-mails and reviewing disaster plans. When the sirens screamed she sighed and joined her colleagues in the stairwell, pausing by the coffee pot along the way to pour another cup. Tornado season hovered like an unspoken question over every spring in the South. It was just part of living here. But this time, when someone opened the metal doors beneath the stairs to peek outside, Patti noticed a sinister shift in the wind. She had told her husband she would wait it out and come home when the warnings expired, but she felt the

urgent need to be with her kids. If she left now, she thought, maybe she could beat this thing to Smithville. Driving on the road was quite possibly the worst place to be in a storm, aside from a mobile home. But the pull of family overcame logic. And now here she was, caught behind a mile-wide tornado that was rushing immutably toward the center of her universe. At home in Smithville, Patti's son, Johnny Parker, one day shy of his seventeenth birthday, was leaning into his computer, peering at the radar maps. What he saw made him prickle with fear. Severe thunderstorms were popping up across the state, dotting the screen with red and yellow tie-dyed splotches marching steadily northeast. He knew some of these storms were pregnant with tornadoes. A student of the weather since the age of four, when a storm nearly crushed his house with a toppled tree, he studied the maps, searching for patterns and clues that might foretell what the sky would do. His fingers flew over the keyboard, dashing off an e-mail warning to the hundred friends who followed his weather dispatch, which he always typed, because cerebral palsy hijacked his words somewhere along the path between his mind and his mouth. Johnny could type a blue streak and you would never know, reading his forecasts, that he struggled to speak. Johnny's concentration was broken by the sound of his father yelling, calling him and his fourteen-year-old sister, Chloe, to come out and look at the sky. Together, they stared up at the terrible beauty: steel-colored clouds that whorled around like dishwater circling a drain. Johnny turned his head, and all he could hear was the terrible roar. He knew without looking what it was, and that it filled the Mississippi sky. Get inside! yelled his father, Randy. Johnny and Chloe raced to the innermost hallway, where a parade of tiny handprints on the wall, growing bigger through the years, marked the passing of their childhoods. They knelt and tucked themselves into balls, covering their heads with interlaced fingers, just as their teachers had taught them during tornado drills. The roar turned deafening, so large and loud they could feel it rumbling inside their chests. Their ears popped with the sudden drop in pressure as the walls of their home began to shudder. And then, in a moment most meteorologists will never experience, Johnny's house came apart around him. Four miles away on the two-lane highway, Patti pounded the steering wheel, stuck behind a slow-moving pickup truck. Rain and hail were sheeting down, and wind gusts were shaking her car, but this pickup was creeping down the two-lane road as if the world was not about to end. She wanted to pass, but through the curtains of rain she could see the silhouettes of falling trees, huge and ancient pecan trunks crashing across the road. The truck went around them, and she followed its blurry taillights through the sluicing rain. And then the truck stopped dead in the road, blocked by live power lines and mountains of debris. Patti stopped the car, flung open the door, and ran to the driver's window. An old man looked at her mutely. Her auburn hair snapped like a flag and her green eyes squinted into the wind as she heard her own voice, as if in a movie, rising in pitch with panic. I've got to get through this! I've got to get home! The old man watched her as she started running, guided by some primal compass through a splintered landscape that, stripped of all landmarks, didn't look anything like home. She ran through the mud, hurdling limbs, dodging live wires, and finding her way through the shredded remains of homes she had passed that morning. Her heels scraped on the asphalt, her stride abbreviated by her pencil skirt, her jacket flapping like frantic wings. The storm had roared on into Alabama, leaving in its wake an eerie quiet that amplified the muffled cries emanating from broken heaps. It registered that these were the voices of friends, of neighbors, of people who desperately needed help of people who might be dying. But her legs would not stop moving under the directive that looped through her mind: Get home! Get home! Get home! The house on the corner was mostly gone, but the piles of yellow brick signaled she was close to home. A neighbor crawled out of a gutted house and called out to her, and Patti yelled back, but could not stop her legs from running. As she approached the spot where her home once stood, she screamed for her husband. Randy! In her hand, her mobile phone lit up with a message from Johnny, the last thing his friends and family would read before the long silence. Get to a safe place NOW!!