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The Chase

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Department of English,
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Abstract

The Chase is a bildungsroman novella that chronicles the challenges that Winston McKenzie faces after he is fired from Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation Television Station. It is a fictional account of Winston's dramatic experiences in overcoming his fears and chasing his dream, with the help of his two childhood friends, during 2007's Hurricane Dean. Although it is fictional, the story is embedded in research that examines the development, patterns and types of hurricanes, as well as the severity of their impact on the Caribbean islands. The research component of this story serves to strengthen the plot, deepen the characters and portray a very realistic event, while it educates the readers.

In writing this narrative, I find it important to avoid the stereotypical belief that Jamaica is just an exotic island where tourists visit to have fun; instead, this narrative portrays the everyday life of Jamaican citizens. Therefore, the main setting, the Mount Ogle community, becomes a microcosm for Jamaica and authentic Jamaican life. Some of the major authors who have influenced the crafting of this story are Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid and George Orwell.

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Introduction

The Chase is a bildungsroman novella that chronicles the challenges that Winston McKenzie faces after he is fired from Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation Television Station. It is a fictional account of Winston's dramatic experiences in overcoming his fears and chasing his dream, with the help of his two childhood friends, during 2007's Hurricane Dean. Although it is fictional, the story is embedded in research that examines the development, patterns and types of hurricanes, as well as the severity of their impact on the Caribbean islands. The research component of this story serves to strengthen the plot, deepen the characters and portray a very realistic event, while it educates the readers. In writing this narrative, I find it important to avoid the stereotypical belief that Jamaica is just an exotic island where tourists visit to have fun; instead, this narrative portrays the everyday life of Jamaican citizens. Therefore, the main setting, the Mount Ogle community, becomes a microcosm for Jamaica and authentic Jamaican life. Some of the major authors who have influenced the crafting of this story are Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid and George Orwell.

Derek Walcott

With all the clichés about Jamaica and its people, I feel that Derek Walcott is one of the few authors who depicts Caribbean life in an enchanting yet authentic way. Although Walcott is best known as a poet, he does an excellent job in capturing the

moods and actions of ordinary Caribbean people. In discussing the nature of the Caribbean, Walcott comments, “The first thing about the Caribbean is that it doesn’t just have one essence or nature...it has different cultures simultaneously. Everything happens at the same time and doesn’t develop in a linear fashion” (Qtd. in Cabrera 43). In other words, the Caribbean is diverse and its physical and cultural features are not homogenous, as many people believe. Therefore, I aim to portray Mount Ogle as a diverse community that represents the heterogeneous culture of Jamaica at large.

In constructing the dialogue, I present the majority of the characters as fluent Standard English speakers, except for the older folks. My reasons for crafting the story in this manner are to avoid the stereotype that patois is Jamaica’s standard language, and I also am aware that majority of my audience is Native English Speakers. The debate on whether Caribbean writers should privilege the use of their dialects over English (the “oppressor’s language”) is two-fold. However, I chose to emulate Walcott’s elegant style of using Standard English while infusing bits of different dialects in his works. Assistant professor of English Jason Lagapa, from the University of Texas of The Permian Basin, highlights that “Many commentators, pointing to the facility with which Walcott invokes West Indian dialect and vocabularies, also commend Walcott’s adept incorporation of Creole into his poetry“ (104). While Walcott knows that language is a part of a nation’s identity, he is not delusional; he is also keenly aware that English is the most accessible language and is a part of the post-colonial experience. Walcott’s epic poem, *Omeros*, exemplifies the brilliant use of different dialects within a poetic space. Some examples are: “of the blockorama, “This here is Gros Ilet’s / night, United Force, garcon, we go rock this

village till cock wake u!” (110), “...of the DJ’s fresh-water-Yankee-cool-Creole. He sat on In God We Troust under black almonds...” (111), “...while the DJs screamed, “WE MOVIN’, MAN! WE MOVIN!’” (112). By presenting a rich mix of dialects, Walcott affirms the Caribbean’s dynamic nature.

Walcott’s anthology, *The Bounty*, is endowed with rich languages, metaphors and similes that intensify the physical images and make the abstract feelings of love, contentment, hatred, loss and heritage more concrete. Within Walcott’s poems, there is also an observable prose-like structure that controls the action. For example, in “for Adam Zagajewski,” Walcott writes: Bound volumes echoed city-blocks of paragraphs with ornate parenthical doorways, crowd on one margin / waiting to cross to the other page; as pigeons gurgle epigraphs / for the next chapter, in which old cobbles begin... (Walcott 20). In the long single-block stanza poem, Walcott uses poetry to accentuate the beauty of prose. He accomplishes this task by infusing the prose format within a formal poetic structure, and he sustains his comparison by using a single metaphor: the process of reading a book. If one were to remove the enjambments, then the prose will reveal itself. Therefore, I have tried to adapt Walcott’s teaching on poetics and incorporate a number of metaphors and other poetic devices in my story to sustain vibrant and horrifying images in the respective scenes.

A prime example of Walcott’s depiction of real Caribbean life exists in Chapter X of *Omeros*:

Their delight was strengthened / by boys racing the Rover with half-naked
shouts, / offering them bananas, / until the bends straightened / and left them

gasping for breath against the wet trees...coiling with ochre precipices, / was like a rope that bound them, much closer even / than the hurricane..." (58/59).

In this setting, everything is lively and moving. The readers can feel the excitement of the boys playing and discern the close camaraderie that they share. With the use of active verbs, similes, extensive adjectives and metaphors, Walcott is able to fully depict an everyday event in a powerful way. Similarly, in describing the landscape and activities in Mount Ogle, I rely on some of these poetic devices to make Mount Ogle come to life on the pages of the story.

Another compelling feature of Walcott's poems that is evident in my story is his intimate portrayal of human beings and nature. The "landscape...is the tablet on which history in the Caribbean is written" (Davis 241). In "A Santa Cruz Quartet ii," Walcott explores the history of human influences on the natural resources. The speaker uses the landscape as a trope for his poem, when he declares, "Let the lines shine like the rain's wires through Santa Cruz/before they leave me" (i. 1-2). On this foundation, the speaker infuses the natural elements of the citrus farm to further describe the mundane activity of the taxi driver. Within this depiction of nature and human activities, Walcott shows his concern for the degraded environment. When the taxi driver declares, "So much o' fog, and it making so cold, dem scientist/ predict no surprise if it snow in the next fifty years" (l. 15-16), the concern becomes more evident.

In *The Chase*, the landscape operates in a similar manner as it does in "A Santa Cruz Quartet ii." Beside recreational purposes, the land provides work for many Jamaicans, especially the people who live in the rural districts; therefore, I present the

landscape of Mount Ogle as a character in the story. In describing the community in great detail and connecting it with the lives of the people, I expect to establish a communal scene. For example, the ritualistic descriptions of the rain birds leaving their sanctuary and the annual race that the children engage in create an intimacy between the characters and the landscape. As it relates to Winston, this connection with nature is necessary for him to succeed in his quest. Although he has instruments to guide him, when they fail to operate, it is his instincts that he relies on to accomplish his tasks.

Jamaica Kincaid

Annie John is one of Jamaica Kincaid's most famous works; it is considered a classic Caribbean bildungsroman novel, because of Annie's indomitable will to liberate herself from a repressive post-colonial society. Throughout her adolescent years, Annie continuously finds ways to subvert her mother's, teachers' and neighbors' instructions on how to be a lady, which helps her to find her vocation in life. All these figures of authority, however, serve important roles in assisting the protagonist to come of age, because their respective methods of repressing Annie contribute to her psychological, moral and intellectual development.

Like Annie, Winston pursues his vocation; however, he must overcome his psychological and physical struggles in order to come of age. Although Winston's parents are not directly involved in his life, he has mixed feelings about both them, and he even feels guilty for his mother's misfortune. Unlike the strict authoritative

figures who try to govern Annie's life, Pa Ben and Ta Rose become Winston's surrogate parents, who continuously help to motivate the young weathercaster to overcome his fears and become a man. Winston also learns a lot about himself, through his experience with his best friends, Gregory and Devon.

While *Annie John* is endowed with many themes, Annie's fear in dealing with death is the pervading issue. In fact, the story opens with Annie's comment on death; she says, "For a short while during the year I was ten, I thought only people I did not know died" (Kincaid 3). This theme sets the tone for Annie's close relationship with her mother. Then, by the time Annie begins to attend funerals of people she knew, her fear of being alone if her mother were to die becomes the central issue of the story. But at age twelve, Annie's mother's refusal to share stories with her causes their mother-daughter relationship to disintegrate and it does not get better until Annie comes of age. The turning point of Annie's life occurs when she falls ill and almost dies. It is Annie's understanding of death that changes her perception of her mother; instead of seeing her mother as angelic, like she did during her pre-adolescent years, Annie grows to criticize her mother's misdeeds, which becomes the motivating factor for her total liberation.

In *The Chase*, the death of Winston's mother is the underlying source of his emotional challenges. His idealistic imagination of his parents, during his early childhood years, often conflicts with the alleged immoral actions of his mother; this conflict causes him to feel guilty and react erratically toward his family and friends. Kincaid's representation of an adolescent's handling of death is very compelling,

which is why *Annie John* serves to be a good Caribbean novel to imitate in modeling my plot.

George Orwell

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* are two of his two novels, which are famously known for their political messages; but his lucid and very descriptive writing style, especially in *Burmese Days*, is equally impressive. In *Burmese Days*, Orwell develops his characters and scenes through intense physical descriptions. For instance, his thorough depiction of the jungle in Kyauktada is easily imaginable, because the clear descriptions appeal to the senses:

After two miles the road ended at the ford of a shallow stream. The jungle grew greener here, because of the water, and the trees were taller. At the edge of the stream there was a huge dead pyinkado tree festooned with spidery orchids, and there were small wild lime bushes with wild waxen flowers. They had a sharp scent like bergamot. (15)

The narrator details the precise distance, the dimension of the stream and jungle, using specific adjectives. His description moves the larger jungle to a closer observation of the smaller forms of life in the jungle, where each plant is connected with another plant by metaphors or similes. This keenest of details creates an intimacy between the protagonist, Flory, and the wild jungle. From a literary perspective, the story offers a wider range of interpretations as well.

In admiring Orwell's skill use of description, I use details in a similar manner to portray Mount Ogle, because the landscape is so important to *The Chase*. Since everything seems to happen at once, during a hurricane, excessive details of sight, sound, hearing and feeling are important in capturing the actions. In order to use this strategy well, I focus on loading my longer sentences with lots of metaphors and visceral images to slow down the pace of the story and to draw the readers' attention to the intense destructiveness of the hurricane. At other times, I use very short sentences, with fewer metaphors and adjectives to show quicker action. Sometimes Orwell uses a luminous detail instead of a lot description to make a point. For example, when Elizabeth says to Flory, "Do tell me some more about tiger-shooting" (35), Orwell does not have to explain that Elizabeth is an atypical and openly aggressive woman, unlike her passive domestic aunt, Mrs. Lackersteen.

Another feature of Orwell's writing that inspires my story is his use of dialogue in developing his characters. Like Derek Walcott, Orwell incorporates Burmese dialect into the story, as a way to differentiate those natives' identity from the British's. Between the British and the Burmese citizens, the interplay of dialect and Standard English increases the story's tension, creating another layer to the plot. An example is:

"Hey, saya gyi, sayi gyi!" Flory shouted, taking Flo by the collar to prevent her from running away."

"Ba le-de?" the Burman shouted back. There was the sound of plunging hooves and yells of bullocks.

“Come here, if you please, O venerable and learned sir! We have lost our way...” (16)

Although Flory is a European, he freely uses both Standard English and Burmese dialect to communicate with the stranger. Within the context of the novel, Flory’s use of Burmese dialect in communicating with the stranger suggests that he admires and accepts the natives’ culture. Through this dialogue, Orwell’s subversion is evident.

In another scene at the Club, Ellis’s speech is very identifiable:

That’ll give little fat-belly something to think about, eh? Teach the little sod what we think of him. That’s the way to put ‘em in their place, eh?”
(15)

Besides the insulting words, it is characteristic of Ellis to appear to ask a question, even when he makes a comment. Ironically, Ellis, who speaks broken English, threatens his Burmese waiter, at one point, not to speak so eloquently. This is another case where dialogue is used to build tension and develop characters traits.

Similarly, Winston’s manager prevents him from speaking Jamaican dialect, patois on the job. This repression leads to creating more tension between Winston and his co-workers. But for the most part, Winston speaks Standard English, with little patois Winston’s ability to use both forms of languages to communicate shows that he is not only school-educated, but he is also a product of his culture. On the other hand, Pa Ben and Ta Rose, representing the older generation, rely on patois to communicate. My intention is to show the diversity of the community, even on the linguistic level.

Conclusion

Overall, the influences of all three authors play important roles in my crafting of *The Chase*. Kincaid's *Annie John* is exemplary in presenting a strong-minded character who overcomes emotional, psychological and social challenges to become a liberated woman. Also, the novel is enriched with multiple themes that create subplots. In terms of linguistics, Derek Walcott and George Orwell both infuse dialect within the dialogues of their works to build tension, celebrate their respective heritages, and make their works more dynamic. Although both authors write different genres, they demonstrate the importance of using figurative devices such as metaphors and similes to create vivid images of characters and places, convey vibrant scenes, intensify actions, and make abstractions concrete.

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The Chase

I

The residents of Mount Ogle, Jamaica know that the hurricane season is here when Pa Ben's old rusty zinc roof starts to rattle like a tambourine at a Pentecostal crusade. The miniature hut sits deep between the crevices of Pigeon Valley, where the enormous cedar trees that crown the high banks of the valley protect it from the elements, except the elusive north-east trade winds that carve the hurricanes' paths from the lower Archipelagos of the West Indies to the Gulf of Mexico.

If these dwellers overlook that sign, then the annual ritualistic procession of the thicket of black wild rain birds dancing and dashing through the tall bamboo leaves is a certainty. Each bird takes a turn to dip into the pool of dense misty fog and re-emerges like the phoenix, where it soars over the community and waits for each link of its thread to weave magnificent designs like those on Maud's quilt¹. Then lines of frigates flutter their tiny feathery wings and gather like a flock of sheep. They are ready to fly south of the Blue Mountain peak, where they'll seek refuge for the next six months until the hurricane season ends. Some people say that the patterns are warnings of the last days, others suppose that it's the course of nature that dictates the birds' behavior; but everyone agrees on the fact that the frigates sense threatening weather.

The fresh windy mornings produce much excitement for all the children. They gather in the middle of Uncle Kenny's field, their noses stuffed with the scent of wet dirt and overnight burnt canes, where they watch the rain birds perform on the aerial center

¹ A character in Derek Walcott's *Omeros* who made a quilt of birds.

stage, off Broadway between Pigeon Valley and Gode Hill. Their slingshots, pans, pots, baskets, nets and plastic bags slap every time the kids brush against each another. After the show ends their race begins to catch the shrimps and craw fishes that are washed up on the banks of Wag Water River; while the others race down the gully toward Pa Ben's farm to hoard the last batch of citrus, mangoes, apples and coconuts.

Devon, Gregory and Winston were the three best athletes on their high school sprint-relay team who call themselves Lucky 3, from the karate movie Luck 7. Their regular plan was to monopolize the hunt by dispersing in different locations to get all the fruits that they could, then hiding their puffy bags under Pa Ben's cellar and trying to beat the other kids to the head of the river to catch the most fish. But when Devon and Gregory arrive at the banana walk to meet the third member of the Lucky 3, they notice that Winston is absent; so the two set out to the river head with the hope that Winston will be there.

Winston sits on his veranda floor, in one corner, with his head clenched between his thighs and hands coiled around his knees. His weather jacket hangs above his head like a patch of cloud. From a distance, he looks like a wet Mastiff bitch, being bothered by a fidgeting fly. Sheila, his pet dog, walks towards him, wagging her bushy white tail and occasionally licking his finger, inviting him to play. But Winston doesn't budge, so Sheila strolls through the yard and wiggles her way through a small hole in the fence to play with the neighbors' dogs, just outside that gate. Moments later, a big white *patoo* crashes into the breadfruit tree of Winston's yard, causing two over-ripe breadfruits and the rotten branch to plummet into the ground. Sheila, Blackie and Rex scamper down the

gully, in full flight and Winston jumps to his feet to see what happened. Splash! A third breadfruit almost hits Winston.

“This is frigging great! You made my day,” he curses at the poor old owl which struggles to fly away.

Later that morning, Winston’s grandmother calls him to find out if he really was fired. “Who told you that?” Winston asks, agitatedly. But from her response, it is clear that a certain neighbor started a gossip. “Pearl can’t even mind her own business,” he mutters to himself, as he hangs up the phone and goes out to sweep the yard.

While sweeping the yard, Winston sees Pa Ben trudging up the narrow path, carrying a huge wicker basket on his head and a machete in his left hand. Pa Ben is an eighty one year-old man who was one of the first inhabitants of Mount Ogle. He is about six feet even, with broad shoulders that bulge from his torso like branches from a pupil tree. Even though Pa Ben has been farmer for decade, the labor doesn’t seem to take a toll on his body, because his dark oily skin still glitters in the morning sun and it would have been difficult for one to guess that he is over forty years old, except that his age-old solitary front tooth (that gives him a lisp when speaking) and the scatter patches of gray hair indicate a man of greater age. He farmed all his life and has taught hundreds of young people, both men and women, how to be successful farmers, neighbors and parents. The residents respect Pa Ben for all the practical advice that he has given to them throughout the years.

“Good morning, Winston,” Pa Ben greets Winston as he approaches the gate.

“You hear about the hurricane thatss coming for uss?”

“I really don’t know anything, except that it’s coming.”

“What you mean you don’t know nothing?!” Pa Ben eyes grow wider and his lower jaw drops like the fork of a backhoe tractor that is about to excavate the ground. “I thought you are a professional weatherman roun’ here,” Pa Ben declares.

Why do you look so shock? Haven’t you heard that I no longer work at the station?” Winston asks. “Didn’t you hear the news? If my grandmother knew before I told her, then the whole community must have heard about the embarrassment.”

Glancing behind his broad shoulders, Pa Ben turns and crouches over the fence, clears his throat and whispers, “I kind of hear Pearl telling Misss Gwen that JBC let you go. But you know anything coming from Pearl mouth iss questionable.”

“Well, I don’t know what Pearl said to you. And I really don’t care.” Winston pauses then sighs. “The truth is that my boss didn’t like my easy-going approach. A lot of them never liked me from day one. I haven’t done or said anything bad about any of them. The only thing that I’m guilty of was to tell it like it is.”

“What? They don’t like when you go out in the storm and show the real deal, eh?” Asks Pa Ben. “I really love how you used to go the extra mile and interact with the people and talk with the on a level that they could understand how hurricaness work and how to really protect themselves from disaster.”

“Yes, exactly. They said that’s not the image that the weather station wants to portray,” Winston replies sarcastically. He continues, “They wanted me to stay inside a studio and announce the weather in the same way Janice Dean does it on FOX News. You know how I used *patios* sometimes? They don’t like when I speak the plain ol’ Jamaican *patios*. Our dialect! The manager was not always pleased with me, even though I gave the station good ratings. But was always smiling and he even told me once, “You

have a special talent for weather forecasting” So I never really expected that he would have fired me.”

”But look here, Jamaican people always want to copy everything from foreign. They want to walk, dress, talk and even act like Americans. Bob Marley was right when he said we still stuck in the slave mentality. Why we can’t feel free to do things our ways. Winston, just keep doing what you doing and I wish you the best. I am going to Maass Albert hardware store to get some nail for the roof. I never got to fix it when hurricane Ivan whooped us last year,” Pa Ben said. ”Take good care of yourself.” Pa Ben, balancing his straw basket on his head, looks at Winston and smiles, revealing his surviving tooth before he continues his journey to Albert’s Hardware Store.

As if he were going to see Pa Ben for the last time, Winston anxiously utters, ”Pa Ben.” Pa Ben turns around in time to witness the sigh of relief that exist Winston’s mouth in the form of the morning fog. ”Actually, it’s more than that.” Winston lays broom against the breadfruit tree. ”Since daddy left, I haven’t had a father-figure to give me good advice. Maybe if I had, I wouldn’t have been fired. But you have always been a respectable man in the community, and my friends told me, on many occasions that you have given them advice that paid off well. So I am going to tell you what really happened. And please tell me where I went wrong.”

Pa Ben unloads the basket from his head and sits on the trunk of the breadfruit tree. Winston sits on an empty crate and begins his story, ”Last month, my co-worker and I were arguing about his illegal use of the company’s vehicle for personal use. One day, when we were returning from Montego Bay, he gave a woman a ride to Negril. I wasn’t too happy with his decision, but he insisted that no harm could come from it. About thirty

minutes later, I saw flashing lights and heard sirens. The cop stopped us and asked the woman to exit the vehicle, and they interrogated the woman for about a half hour. The cop told us that the woman was wanted for several cases a drug trafficking and that we were lucky that he knew us. To make things worse, Kevin told me that the manager gave him instructions to pick up the girl and take her to Kingston. So I got very anger and told Kevin that that was wrong and I am reporting the incident to the police. The next day the manager threatened to fire me if I *rat*, so I taunted him to fire me. That very evening, I file a police report, and the next morning board of directors summoned me to an emergency meeting to inform me that they were terminating my employment immediately, because of insubordination. So I told them a few choice words, let them know that they are all corrupt and cowards, then I left.”

“It’s not fair at all, eh? You try to do the right by the law and you end up paying the price. When I was a bwoy, our folks used to tell us that donkey said that the world issn’t leveled. And it’ss the truth. You are going to find unfair people wherever you go in life. But remember to keep your head screwed onto your body at all times. If you sleep with dog then you will catch flee; so stay away from them old scrawny mongrelss.“ Pa Ben stands. “You remind so much of your father.” He places his hand on Winston’s shoulder, “Because he didn’t take crap from no one, regardless of who it was. Him seem to bring you up in di right way. Just remember dis, strive for ’The Utmost for the Highest.’ You are a talented young man and you just might be a better weatherman without them dogss. How is your dad doing?”

Winston shudders and manages to say, “I don’t know.”

“Winston, I don’t mean to get you upset. If I do that then I’m sorry. Regardless of everything that happened with your dad, he was a good man and he was always proud of you. Sometimes whenever people experience severe suffering, they don’t know how to get away from the guilt. And I am certain that to this day your dad feel responsible for your mom’s death and just couldn’t live with himself and cope with everything that remind him of that fateful day. Winston, I just want you to be strong and stop by my house if you want to talk ’bout anything.”

“Thanks, Pa Ben. Good word from the wise. Take care and remember to buy some bread and a lot tin food when you arrive at Massop’s shop,” Winston’s voice echoes in the valley.

II

The sky is stuffed with dense gray blobs of clouds; towards the east of the island, thick sheets of dark gray clouds hover over the Blue Mountain’s peak. From the horizon, it looks like a huge battleship. A strong gust of early afternoon wind blows scores of loose leaves and debris around the community; children chase the dirty food wrappers, magazine covers and old playing cards around. Winston tries to ignore the busy activities of the carefree children enjoying kite flying. Every few moments, however, Winston’s gaze bounces between the sky and the children like a ping pong ball. Thick blocks of iceberg clouds move sloth-like across the horizon; condensed with water vapors, they trudge through the upper atmosphere.

But once the winds get stronger, Winston's anxiety is betrayed by the quick impulsive motions of his hands, mapping various cardinal directions like a broken compass that loses its magnetic pull. He cannot keep himself from thinking about the little tricks and improvised weather instruments that his grandfather taught him to use. Shards of raindrops pour from the glass sky but Winston stands frozen with both hands stretched horizontally and absorbs the moment.

Sheila sniffs her pan for food then runs into the veranda for cover from the drizzling rain. The broom falls from Winston's hand to the ground. His mind takes him back in time when he used to make wind vanes from milk cartons, bamboo sticks and thread. The winds change directions and the patterns are so familiar to Winston that he doesn't need an instrument to know what is happening. He sets his arms in an L-formation and acute angles for brief moments. He can tell almost everything about the weather from this infinite moment, especially from the patterns of north-east trade winds. He estimates the part of the island might get the first hit from the storm, guesses how far the hurricane is and how hard it will be hit. He thinks about setting up his weather instruments but decides against it. Not even the most advanced technology can predict everything about hurricanes. Technology cannot tell which houses will be damaged or spared; it doesn't predict who will be killed and injured. But with a closer encounter with this hurricane, Winston feels that he'll be able to capture this awe and grandeur and educate people about what really happens in hurricanes. For almost half an hour, Winston paces himself around the house in constant communication with the winds, as if he were getting advice from the ghost of his grandfather or the Oracle at Delphi.

It is only after the telephone rings that Winston remembers he is supposed to visit his grandmother. He runs into the house to get the phone and grabs the bunch of keys sitting on the table then darts out of the house. He sprints back in the house and grabs another set of keys, hops in his van and speeds toward his grandmother.

A mile down the road Winton stops at a narrow intersection to let an oncoming car pass by. It is Councilman Shearer. "What's going on Weatherman?" he asks. "When is the hurricane coming?"

"In the next two or three days," Winston replies with his head turned in the opposite direction.

"Okay, keep on keeping on," Shearer voices his hollow encouragement like a typical politician.

He is a snake. Philistine. Hypocrite. Parasite. He spoke to me as if he didn't know that I was fired. Who is he fooling, definitely not me. I don't need him to patronize me. He doesn't know that Pearl, who feeds him with gossip, spread his business to everybody else too? She is the biggest Jezebel I know.

"Winston, hold on!" Devon and Gregory yell, as they sprint carrying two yellow buckets of fish towards the car.

"Where were you this morning? We were looking for you by the banana walk," Devon asks.

"Where have you been ever since last week? You have become scarce these days! I haven't even seen you on T.V. Are you okay?" Gregory follows.

"Sorry guys. I've been going through a lot of problems and this morning I overslept. But I am really busy now. My Old Lady has been waiting for me since this

morning and I don't want her to worry any longer. Hop in and let me give you a ride down the road."

Devon hops in but Gregory trips on the tailgate of the truck, releasing a bucket of fish and water in Devon's lap. Winston burst out into a fit of laughter followed by Devon. Winston revs the truck and a craw fish clips Devon's trousers with its powerful claws.

Gregory begins to laugh as he scrambles to pick up the flickering fish. "That's what you get for laughing at me. Help me catch the fish and put them back in the bucket."

"How can they go back in the bucket without water? Put it in Devon's bucket for the time being," Winston suggests. "And who's going to clean up the stinking smell out my car? I would have raised hell in there if I had my instruments in here."

"Just wash it out with some salt water when you get to Ta Rose's. That should kill the stench and Gregory will have some cleaning to do when you get back home."

Gregory puts the last shrimp in Devon's bucket and responds, "What are you talking about? The only thing that I'm cleaning is the bucket of fish for dinner. Just for the people who showed up for the run this morning."

"Get off my case, Gregory. I already explained what happened!"

"Cool down, Winston. He's just trying to get back at somebody," Devon intervenes.

"Yeah, I was just joking. Did I get mad at you when you slammed the brake and caused the bucket of water to spill?"

"But he's going through a rough time, Gregory. You have to understand that. That's why you get in so much trouble with people. You don't know when to draw the

line,” declares Devon. “Winston, we’re getting off at Clifton’s bar. What time you’re getting back?”

Winston arrives at the town square, “I don’t know, but I’ll link you guys when I get back from my grandmother’s house.”

“I only link girls, so watch your words,” Gregory responds.

“Yeah, Yeah Yea. Small minds think small things. Cut out that fishy business and have a good shower, because your fish cologne will not attract any girl. Later.”

III

Between each swing of the pendulum that tallies each second of the old grandfather clock, Ta Rose anxiously peers through her small louver window, overlooking the thicket of well-groomed red and green roses and hibiscus flowers, to catch the first sight of Winston. Moments later, she smiles when she sees the familiar white Toyota mounting the steep rocky hill.

The blue paint and white trim around the arched French windows give Ta Rose’s home a Victorian look. At the front, two thick square posts stand on each corner, simultaneously anchoring the house to its foundation, while the back portion is casted with concrete. Between the two fashionable banisters are thick cobble stone stairs leading to a sparkling bright red floor that Ta Rose polishes with red oak and a coconut brush every Saturday.

Ta Rose is a small round-faced woman who wears thick spectacles. When she looks up at Winston, the thin silver hair falls behind her ears and reveals a comely face

with bright bold eyes complemented by a radiant smile, exposing a crown of white dentures. She dresses very conservatively in a polka dot cotton skirt and linen blouse, beautifully adorned with a variety of embroidered flowers, roses, poinsettias, sunflowers, orchids and lilies. Although she is a small woman, she has a pair of hands that are stronger than an ox.

With a hug, she says, "Winston, I love you so much. What took you so long to get here? I was fretting for you, but I know that God would see you through. So, finish tell mi why dem fire you. What really happen? But Winston, before you say anything, I want you to think about what you say. You sounded very angry on the phone this morning and that's not how your grandma raise you."

"I want to know, who told you?" Winston enquires with a stoic look.

"It don't matter," she returns, knowing that if Winston finds out that it was the boisterous gossip, Ms. Pearl, he would certainly have another huge quarrel with her.

"I know that it's that Ole Jezebel, Pearl. She can't keep her tongue out of other people business. That's why her children dem suffering," Winston yells erratically.

"How much time I tell you don't call people Jezebel, Winston?"

"Sorry, Ta Rose. But she too nosey," Winston retorted.

"Who you think you raising yuh voice at? Me is yuh elder and I just talk to you about your rage." Ta Rose scolds Winston.

"Sorry, Ta Rose. Its not you. I'm just mad at..."

"Calm down. 'Angry words don't produceth righteousness,'" she quotes from Psalms. "God will provide for Him children, trust Him." She grips his huge hands, stares into his fiery eyes and commands, "Don't let it happen again. Come inside."

Ta Rose has prepared Winston's favorite food: rice and red peas, with jerk chicken and scotch bonnet pepper sauce; next to that are fried plantains and dumplings; followed by a bowl that contains guinep, apples, bananas, lychee, tamarind, and pomegranates; finally he sees a pitcher of hand grated carrot juice and Guinness stout.

"Let me have some of my favorite juice in my favorite mug," Winston pushes a mug towards the pitcher of beverage.

"You know that that mug is older than you? I remember when I give your mother that cup. God bless her soul in heaven. Right before she give birth to you, right in that couch, she ask for some water. As I was going to give her the water, I hear her scream out in pain, so let go of the cup and call Ta Jenny to deliver you."

"Is that how the mug got this crack in the rim?" Winston queries.

"Yes. And I almost step on it too. But anyway, you took very long to come out because you choose to come out foot first. No wonder why you can be so stubborn sometimes. That time we didn't have all these technology like now. But when you Ta Genie finally pull you out, it was a blessing to see this small five pound baby boy, look just like him father. Your mother hugged you so tight that I beg her not to squeeze the Holy Ghost out of you."

"Amen. Hahaha. What did mommy say when I was born?"

"She was very speechless. Then she break out crying. All she keep saying, "This was my baby. This is my baby." Even though she didn't know a word about parenting, she was very proud to have you. Everyday she used to take you over here to ask me how to make your nappy; it's not like these days when you can buy diapers and throw them away, we used to have three nappy that we wash right after you mess in them. You

laughing? It's very true. And you used to cry every so often; if you wasn't a baby, the neighbors would think that we have slaves in this house."

"The way things are now, I'm convinced that slavery still exist, especially when I see how they overwork and underpay people."

"You have a good point, Winston. That's why you must not worry about the riches of this world, because silver and gold will vanish but your good education will lead you to the promise land."

Winston's grows quiet for a few minutes, so Ta Rose gets his attention by asking, "How is the dinner?" She thinks that the way to get to a man's heart is through his stomach and it seems to work.

Winston replies, "Sweet to di bone. Your food is always delicious. Probably, Pa Ben can smell the pimento oozing from this jerk pork a mile away."

Thud! The thunder rolls and the drizzles grow into boulders of rain that bang on the roof.

"Lord, please have mercy upon mi poor old soul," Ta Rose prays in her usually melodramatic tone.

Winston cannot retain the laughter that gushes from his stomach.

"I'm so glad to see you laughing again," Ta Rose says. "Never show your weakness to other people, because they will use it to them advantage and get to you. And I know that even though your boss was in the wrong, I feel that your temper got the better of you."

"Ta Rose, you're right. But sometimes a man has to stand up for what he believes in, even if it means cursing a couple words," Winston remarks.

“Yes, you should stand up for what you believe in. But you have so many ways to solve your conflicts without cursing and fighting,” returns Ta Rose.

The conversation leads to Winston explaining why he was fired and that he spoke to Pa Ben, Ta Rose’s good friend. After dinner, Ta Rose does her customary cleaning up, while Winston relaxes in the big burgundy leather recliner chair, reminiscing on the good times when he used to sit in Gra P’s lap and watched series of gun-slinging Westerns.

The rain droplets create a calypso rhythm on the zinc roof. He remembers the gusty laughter and giggles whenever Gra P does the voice over imitation of the actors: “Chase those crazy bald heads outta town,” was Gra P’s rendition of his favorite line. Those were the best years and Winston still enjoys every memory, as if the membrane of the thick cedar walls of the house precipitates droplets of memories upon him. *Strips of lightning fall to the ground.* Perhaps that’s why Ta Rose never remarried; these memories keep her alive. Winston contemplates.

The only other furniture that matches the antique house is the big grandfather clock, in the living room, which stands beside the refrigerator. Its hard brown oak, imported from England still retains its luster; the gigantic round brass clock used to be the highlight of Winston’s childhood. He was always fascinated to see the cuckoo bird gliding out of its nest to announce breakfast, school, lunch, and dinner time. Other than that, he didn’t like the bird because he knew that it reminded Ta Rose to send him to shop, chop the wood, wash the dishes, get water from the well, and feed the pigs, goats and chickens, and Winston didn’t like to do any of those, except when Grand Pa did it with him.

The bulky turntable that used to electrify the house with shoo wop, jazz, blues, gospel, and reggae music is replaced by a shiny silver Bose surround sound system, with a six CD changer compartment, subwoofers and an all-in-one universal Sony remote control. *Thunder rolls!* Winston wonders whether Ta Rose can still do the electric slide or boogie woogie. A 36-inch flat screen Sony television that looks like a big photo frame hangs on the living room wall; seeing his reflection reminds him of his old job, staring at a teleprompter and reading the forecast or going outside to report, or setting up the instruments to test the weather. This was an adventurous career where job descriptions had no boundaries; he was both a forecaster and an engineer and he loved both, although he preferred to do the more risky, more practical job.

Beneath the television, there is a set of eight-track cassettes sitting on the top level of the cabinet, each resembling a volume of Charles Dickens' novel.

Winston's excitement swells exponentially when he sees a set of records tightly stacked together like a deck of cards, sitting upright on the bottom level of the cabinet. He creeps across the fluffy rug to take a look at them. He plucks each shiny black Frisbee-sized disc from the cases and reads the list of albums that he grew up listening like Bob Marley's 'Natty Dread,' 'Survival,' 'Exodus,' 'African Herbsman,' and hundreds of hit songs from legendary Reggae artistes ranging from Jimmy Cliff, Leroy, Peter Tosh, King Tubby, U-Roy, Prince Buster, John Holt, Dennis Brown, Judy Mowatt, Ken Booth, Maxi Priest and Shabba Ranks. "I can see clearly now/ The rain is gone..." Winston sings a few lines of his favorite songs. Each album, each song evokes myriads of mixed emotions accompanied by the memories of people he loves and adores; none is more provocative than the Freddy McGregor's Album that Winston holds and reads like

a Sunday hymnal, concentrating all his energy on the very words that rocked Pauline to and fro for hours on the dance floor with Dadz. They were the talk of the town every Saturday night at the dancehalls, and nobody had energy and chemistry like Pauline and Dadz. He wishes that he could play the albums but the turntable has been broken for years, and nobody sells or repairs them anymore.

“Winston, why you look so sad?” Ta Rose enquires.

“I’m not crying,” Winston replies.

“I wish you could play them records and bring back the wonderful memories. But the technology is getting better these days. They leave our old records and eight track cassettes behind; now they making CDs, DVDs, computers and I-Pads. What else dem go mek? Turn on di television and cheer up. I soon come back,” Ta Rose states.

“It’s an iPod, Ta Rose, another type of music player that works with cassettes or CDs,” Winston corrects his grandmother.

“I-Pad, I-Pod, doesn’t make a difference to me. Just turn on di TV and enjoy yourself. Drink some more juice.”

“Okay, Grandma.”

Winston replaces the records and turns on the television to Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation just in time to catch Matlock and the announcement of the verdict, but before the result is announced the show is interrupted by a breaking news. Winston suddenly freezes as if he sees a ghost. It’s that fucker who fired me, that dick, Charles Tomlinson. I wish that his dentures or toupee could fall and expose the ugly son of a baboon he truly is. I hate the sight of that short stocky stone-face frigger. Winston’s eyes are buckled to the television, despite his strong hatred against the broadcaster who conspired to get him

fired. Winston's pupils expand as his thoughts swivel between the condemned stratosphere inhabited by Mr. Tomlinson and the announcement of 2007's first hurricane, "Hurricane Dean."

With the slightest mention of Hurricane, Ta Rose hurries to get the update on Hurricane Dean, but strays from the conversation, "You know that man?"

"The storm is picking up speed over the Atlantic Ocean. It has obliterated the Lesser Antilles and west-south-west of St. Kitts & Nevis. Two people have lost their lives and plenty are left homeless and without food. Dean has developed into a category-two hurricane and has caused extensive damage to two neighboring islands, and we are expecting more destructions as Hurricane Dean heads towards Jamaica," Tomlinson announces.

"What do they mean by category one and two hurricane? Every hurricane is the same, they cause the same damage no matter what category," Ta Rose interrupts.

"Hold on, hold on," Winston replies in an exasperated tone.

Dean is expected to hit Jamaica within the next 24 to 48 hours. The residents, especially those in the low-lying areas are warned to relocate to higher grounds or to the designated emergency shelters. The weather broadcast swaps places with Matlock, leaving the verdict unknown. The citizens are advised to prepare their emergency kits, including water, canned food, clothes, battery-operated flashlights and radios. Prime Minister Patterson gives his general speech, beseeching all Jamaicans to exercise their better judgment during the pending disaster; the Prime Minister is followed by the Minister of Emergency Management, Scott Jones, who repeats the emergency

procedures, contact numbers and wishes everyone to be safe. Some passers by are also interviewed by the reporter; most of them seem to take the warning serious.

After the news, Winston reclines in the chair, as if someone has just loosened a noose from around his neck. He gets a glass of Guinness stout and a slice of potato pudding when Ta Rose asks the question again, "But I don't understand these category talks."

"Ta Rose, professionals who study hurricanes measure their top speeds with an instrument called a barometer. From that measurement, they can tell the type of damage that the hurricane may cause. Depending on the level of the hurricane's destructiveness, the forecasters categorize it in five sections, so a category-five hurricane is the hardest but may not be the worst. Right now, Dean is traveling between 96 and 100 miles an hour, roughly the speed at which these crazy bus drivers travel. This speed is strong enough to knock down trees, blow off roof tops and even wash big cars away," Winston explains, using the players on the chess board as illustration, as if he were teaching a Geography lesson. "But even at this speed, Hurricane Dean can be more dangerous if it travels very slowly over land." This subject excites Winston, "There are still lots of things to be learnt about hurricanes, and that keeps me wanting to risk it all to find out. But it's now a dream deferred."

Even though Ta Rose does not understand, she nods affirmatively. "So why they have to name the hurricane, Dean?" she asks. "Well, the best thing they do is to name it after a man..." She replies to her own question, "...because men are so destructive. And you can't even find a good man. Not even the pastor son setting any good example for the

community; him get two girls from church pregnant and didn't even marry one of them. I have to pray for him this coming Sunday."

He is a bit annoyed by her stereotypical remarks about men. But Winston continues to explain that hurricanes are named alphabetically in order to make quick comparisons through data analyses.

"By the way, hurricanes are also given feminine names like Chatal, Karen, Katrina and Wendy. So what I am trying to say is that you shouldn't be too quick to condemn men," Winston rebuts confidently.

"Winston, you so witty. You got that gift from Grandfather? And stop the smirking too," Ta Rose smiles. "Is that why Kenisha is now two months pregnant for George?" Counteracts.

"Why did you have to go there, Ma?!" Winston voice sharpens. "Every time I come here you have to find a way to talk about that girl. We are no longer together. I agreed with you that I can't keep good relationships, just to let things go. Can't you leave it alone?"

"Winston, you need to talk 'bout it if you going to get over her. You have to learn to love and let love go. And the best t'ing to do next to prayer and fasting is to talk to your grandma about it. I love you, Winston. I want to the best..."

Winston interrupts his grandmother's statement, "The best has come and gone. I don't need to have a wife to be happy. Just forget about it. Will you?"

"Take my foolish advice, you are a young man. Not even thirty. You are so handsome. Look at those deep dimples from your mom. There are many good girls out there, who might not match what Kenisha have, but they have things that will suit you

beta in the long run. You have a lot more break heart to get. Most times the relationship you start with will not be the one you end with, and that's a fact. Only a handful of people I know who married their high school sweethearts. Look at me, it took three abusive relationships and one divorce, before I met your grandfather. I don't regret the day I met him because he brightened my life like a light bulb. I loved him all mi life. I still love. I will never get in another relationship."

"But you're too old to be talking about relationship, Ta Rose."

"Don't laugh, bwoy. I still have some swing in my hips," Ta Rose laughs.

"Let me see you dance. Do the skank fore me," Winston plays the Bob Marley CD. *Easy skanking. Skanking real slow.* "Come on, Ta Rose."

"I rebuke the devil out of you. Don't tempt me," Ta Rose chuckles. "But seriously, you need to talk about your problems so that you can get over them. By the way, I was telling pastor 'bout how them fire you and he prophesy that good things are in store for you future."

"Well, I hope so. I have to get back down the square to meet Greg and Dev. Give me a kiss. Thanks for everything."

"No problem. Take good care of yourself."

"Ta Rose, can you pack your belongings and allow me to take you to the church shelter? I wouldn't feel comfortable knowing that you'll be here by yourself in a hurricane. I'll wait for you. Get your things."

"It's okay, brother Cliffy coming to pick me up later. Him say him on his way. I really want to give a hand to the people at the school, but I can't walk too far these days,

so I have to just go what I can do at the church. Thanks for your concern but your friends are waiting for you. Here, take some food for you them boys.”

...Excuse me let me light my spliff...Spliff—

Oh Lord, I need to take a lift Lift!—

Easy skanking take it easy...

“Be careful, Winston,” Ta Rose says.

IV

When Winston arrives at the town’s square, he meets Devon and Gregory by Massop’s bar. They drink a few shots of rum and cola then head to Winston’s house. Winston shares the food that his grandmother gave him with Devon and Gregory and brings out the dominoes and the little square table and crate of beers.

“So Winston, what happened this morning?” Devon asks.

“He probably met Miss World in his dream and didn’t want to wake up.” Gregory interrupts.

“Haha, hahaha. The only dream that should stop me from waking up is if Miss Universe is in it.” Devon responded.

“Well, I’ve been dreaming a lot lately, but It’s not the type of discussion we should be having now. Anyway, I know that Pearl told all of you that I got fired. I am so pissed off at the heifer, but I’m trying to get over that. The whole story went down like this...”

“Deuce-blank, game blocked. I count 4.” Gregory yells.

“Six for me,” Winston declares.

“A-B-C, 1,2,3, is all I count,” Gregory giggles.

“That can’t be right! Hahaha, the game is coated. We have to play a new game, so you can’t win, loser.” Winston grins.

“I’m a born winner. Virgos are naturally born winners. Right, Devon?”

“Riiight! Anyway, so what were you saying about the whole story?” Devon enquires from Winston.

“You remember the thing that went down at the station? Well, I told Kevin that I didn’t like the scheme because I’m not going to prison for any dealings with drugs. Then he and the boss threatened to blackmail me if I report the incident to the police. They claimed that I will lose my job for using the company property for personal use, even though they very well knew that they were the ones who was smuggling dope. But I went to the police regardless and I got fired for insubordination.”

“That’s *frigged* up. I am sorry about your misfortune, but you did the honorable thing in reporting the case to the police. Winston, one thing I respect about you, and your father too, is that you guys stand up for what’s right. It is more than I can say for a lot of people I know, living right here in Mount Ogle,” Devon declares.

“That’s true,” Gregory adds. “Do you remember when the other students used to beat upon you, because you always tell the teacher the truth? I can’t forget how many times Devon and I had to defend you. You were much weaker and skinnier back then.”

”But the most handsome. All the girls used to flock me like a herd of sheep, waiting to be led to the valley of the still waters.” Winston replies.

“It’s only because your mom used to teach there why you gained popularity. Mommy’s boy, that’s all it is. Let’s call a spade a spade. All the teachers believed that you were an angel, but little did they know that you were one wily wolf decked out in sheep’s clothing,” says Devon.

“Not only that, it’s because he used to do homework for all the girls. You realize we couldn’t find him in the mornings, before the school bell rang?” Gregory interjects.

“Who got the best-looking girl to march with at graduation?” Winston smiles proudly and tries to divert the attention from his more embarrassing moments. “And Devon is talking about me being in sheep’s clothes, are you calling my linen suit sheep skin? I looked so dapper that day, with Sudah by my side.”

“And here daddy over your back,” adds Gregory.

“Ha, ha. Oh what a night for Winston. You really drew a blank! But Gregory, who was the only person who got a kiss?” Devon boasts.

”Keep laughing. Let’s see who has the last laugh now. This Domino game is over, done and like yesterday. Blessed are the losers,” Winston points on Devon and Gregory. “For it is they who determine the winner,” Winston grins.

V

Rise to the occasion...

The inspirational charge of Sizzla blasts through the 12-inch Bose speaker boxes that sit in each of the four corners of Winston's room. This has always been his morning ritual before he goes to work; but without a job, he stares at the white ceiling, counting every sunbeam that peers through the nail holes, hoping to vaporize the boredom that pervades his mind; his tactics proves futile, which is evident in the involuntary swallowing of unsavory lumps of memories that flow between his brain and his heart, until he sets his eyes on the words, "Happy Birthday, Winston, from Dadz," engraved on the cover of the weather instrument set that his dad sent from England. Winston's father is a British immigrant, living with his new family. How is daddy doing? What's his new family like? Does he think about me? Does he feel as guilty about mom as I do? Why can't he call me? I really want to talk with him about it; I want to know the truth. No, I don't want to? How can I escape this tribulation? All these thoughts float around Winston's mind, like soap bubbles locked in a glass cube.

There seems to be something mystical about time: the more time passes, it creates enough space for people to face the trauma that happened in their lives. It's like a fence that gives a child a sense of protection to confront the most feared dogs in his neighborhood; they are close enough to tease the dogs, but it is the fence which creates liminal space that empowers the child. Winston pulls a shabby letter from under his drawer that his dad gave him before he went to live in England. His father explained that he couldn't function after death of Winston's mother; he was haunted by nightmares,

couldn't bear passing the place where he last saw his wife; so Ta Rose encouraged him to relocate and she would take care of Winston. Throughout the letter, Dadz expressed deep remorse, offers much encouragement and asked for Winston's understanding. Like Dadz, Winston never spoke much about his mother's death. It was too much for them. His father felt that Winston was better suited to be around his grandmother.

As a child, Winston loved to farm with his dad; he was six feet tall with skinny legs, but he had the strength of a polar bear. He wore long dread locks, because he believed that his strength was in his hair, like Sampson. Like Ta Rose, he had a broad smile and white teeth; but his teeth were real, except for the pair of gold plated canines that marked the popular fashion of his youth. Winston and Dadz used to chop thick grass with their razor-sharp crooked-head machetes, a set of Samaria Ninjas, clothed in black pants and old Khaki shirts, flattened acres of grass and shrubs, like Bruce Lee battling a school of Monks in the Charlin Temple. Afterwards, they drank a huge mug of water, followed by a shot of Wray and Nephew white rum or some whiskey, to nullify the pain in their exhausted muscle; Dadz frequently dabbed his head and hands and sniffed a little of the alcohol to revive his spirits. Winston remembers his father's favorite quote, "Everything is every ting." Throughout his adolescent years, Winston didn't understand his father's motto, *You have to be strong*. But why wasn't he strong enough to be here for me? I know mom didn't have the best relationship with him before she died, but they always tried to work things out. Why did he run away? Only time will tell, Winston ponders.

Another breaking news report about Hurricane Dean, from the neighbor's radio, interrupts Winston's thoughts. Dean has increased to 150 miles per hour (category three

hurricane) and is currently traveling on a lateral path that will directly impact Jamaica. Currently, St. Lucia is experiencing high winds, with gusts of 30 knots and wind pressure as low as 1013 millibars. If this low pressure continues, then Jamaica can expect a higher gust of winds that is strong enough to uproot large trees or utility pole, possibly a category four or five hurricane: one that Jamaica has not experienced since Hurricane Francis of 1952.

As if he were late his flight, Winston lunges out of bed to get his instruments. In his case, he has all different sorts of instruments: thermometer, compass, barometer, anemometer, psychrometer, weather balloon, flashlights, scotch tape, jack knife, and a whole lot more. Winston takes out his water-resistant, 3.5-inch black Sony camera, along with its titanium tripod stand and leather case. It is a one-on-the-island instrument, Winston thinks. "Thanks dad," he whispers. Winston flips the switch on, gazes through the optical lenses and aims it through his bedroom window, where he sees acres of lush foliage bracing against the ferocious winds; the lanky palm trees stick out like a sore thumb, occasionally kneeling to the winds and praying to be spared.

Winston stacks all his weather and emergency kits in the back of his Ford van. When he opens the door, Sheila hops in but Winston doesn't stop her. He runs back in the house and returns fully covered in a waterproof suit with a big bag of food in his hand. "I look more like an astronaut than a weather man. Wouldn't you agree Sheila?" Winston pats her on the head. "Of course you'd agree to anything to get a bit of this chunk bread." He places the bag of food in a tight corner to prevent the dog from sniffing or pawing the bread, and then he goes back in the house to lock the shutters. Sheila looks up each time she hears the din of the hurricane shutters. The door slams and keys jingle.

VI

After a couple miles of driving, Winston makes a U-turn causing some buckets and pegs to topple over. Sheila scampers around in circles like a frightened race horse before crouching between the two big boxes. He wants to stop by to see Gregory and Devon to find out if they wanted to help him take live footage of the hurricane. Through his rear-view mirror, Winston observes Sheila, in the back of the van, hurdling and dodging objects. They are entertained by the dog's athleticism.

"Hey Gregory, I have an idea; it's going to be risky but worthwhile. Hop in and let me tell you all about it," Winston invites Gregory.

"I wish I could, Winston. But right now, I have to get all these chickens to higher grounds before the Hurricane comes," Gregory replies.

"What else do you have to do afterwards? I'm willing to help you?"

"That's should be everything," Gregory replies. "My mom and pop have secured the house, and the other animals are secured in the pen."

"Alright, If you agree to help me, I will give you a hand. Where are we taking these fowls?" Winston asks. "Gregory, have you realized that you have some resemblance to this fowl? Look."

"You think it's still funny. I have news for you, that joke is stale like the bread we made you eat at the bakery." Gregory counters.

"That was good bread. Fungi are helpful bacteria. But anyway...I have this great idea that will help me to make a name for myself, if I pull it off. But I need some manpower," Winston explains to Gregory.

“What rocket science idea you’re proposing?”

“I want to capture the hurricane directly and follow it through Mount Ogle...”

“What? Are you crazy?!” Gregory interrupts. “Do you need me to check your temperature or bathe your head with some white rum? Next to tornadoes, floods and hurricanes are the most dangerous disasters that Jamaica experiences. Do you see how those sheets of galvanized zincs surf the wind for miles? That’s crazy!” Gregory exclaims. “I’m keeping it safe and I suggest that you do the same.”

“You have a point. But without risks, we can’t expect great rewards. Look at national heroes: Bogle, Garvey, Gordon, Nanny, and Sharpe. Do you think that they didn’t know the risks involved escaping and fighting those slave masters? They knew it and they made up their minds to die fighting. It is from the indomitable will of the human being to survive that we gain extraordinary courage to fulfill our dreams or to fight against injustice. I want to achieve the ‘Utmost for the Highest’ and to prove to those mongrels who work at station that the good man will be the last standing.”

“Winston, have some lime and water. Your head is hurting you. Or maybe you were watching too much Hollywood movies at work. This is reality. In this country, there are two types of people: winners and losers who never win. I am sorry that you’re your job, but you can apply for another and wait just like the rest of us. That’s the way life goes, Winston. There is no self-made opportunity in Jamaica; don’t think you are Frederick Douglass or Horatio Alger...”

An oversize chicken escapes the coop. Winston and Gregory pursue. Around the corner. Over the fence. “We have to get that one, it’s too fat to escape,” Gregory yells. Then without thinking Gregory pursues the speedy fat fowl that takes off flying. Gregory

leaps over a ten-foot high fence, over a deep gap in the earth from the 1994 earthquake, in pursuit after the bird. Then he lunges at the fowl, that's now in full flight, but Gregory's grasp misses the tip of the feathers by micro-inches. He, however, is fortunate to grab the fowl's left foot; then he cuffed the bird's neck, both fall in a thick patch of grass, crashing like a piano thrown from the top of a building. Gregory crouches in the bush, frazzled, breathless and in pain; he clutches the fowl in one hand and grabs his ankle with the other, spitting feathers and leaves from his mouth.

Winston runs around the safer side in the precipice to help Gregory. "Are you alright?"

Gregory whimpers, "Yeah." But the cherry-like bruises reveal that he is in excruciating pain. "I think I twist my ankle but I'll be fine. Here, take this and put it in the coop. Then bring some rum and a glass of water. The rum is on the counter in the kitchen."

After fifteen minutes of dabbing his cuts and bruises with rum, Gregory gets to his feet. Winston asks, "Which *duppy* got into you to jump that old rusty fence? You could have been killed! Do you know that?" Winston asks.

"When I realized how hard my parents work to raise those chickens, I had to get that one. Do you know how much we would've lost if that fowl escaped?"

"I'm glad you that you can see that importance of your livelihood to you; it's the same way the weather job is to me. It's not about getting any available job. Your motivations did not deter you from leaping over that fence like Chuck Norris. So why you think I shouldn't take my chances in Dean? Are you're helping me or not?" Winston asks.

“Look, Devon is down the road, let’s pick him up,” Gregory replies. “But don’t tell him about what happened today. Okay?”

VII

When they arrive at Morant Point, Winston is shocked to see such a familiar place seem foreign: the land is paved with deep narrow ruts and the grass is not taller than foot. This is where Winston’s backyard estimation predicts the hurricane’s first stop and if he is right, he will be the first weatherman on the island to capture up-close and live footage of the hurricane’s first impact. JBC and their image can go to hell, he thinks. But I am getting into this hurricane to show the people what they want, lots of action or “Di real deal,” as Pa Ben phrases it.

Gregory and Devon unload the equipment from the van, while Winston sets them up from different vantage points. First he finds a flat patch of land to anchor the weather balloon; later he will release it into the air to measure the hurricane’s atmospheric pressure. Then he climbs to the canopy of a big mango tree and ties the anemometer to a large branch. While doing so, a cloud of sadness precipitates on Winston as the wind speed measuring instrument drags his memory back to when he was explaining the different categories of hurricane to Ta Rose. He wonders what it would be like being back at the station. Although he did not like some of the employees, a few of his best friends are still there. This thought condenses into deep remorse, but evaporates before tears could overflow from his eyes. Before Winston gets off the tree, he picks a few mangoes and flings one at Sheila who scampers around the car. Then Winston picks a

dozen mangoes for his friends. Winston laughs at Sheila's cowardice. Never had he owned such a cowardly dog and he wonders what compelled him to take her along with him.

By this time the wind torrents grow more intense. The usually endless blue sky is no longer polka dotted with patches of puffy cumulus clouds which means the warm sunny days are gone. The sky is now morphing into a unitary slab of thick gray clouds blocking the splendor of the heavens. Winston's anemometer is at work, spinning faster and faster like a slot machine. He then grabs the end of this safety net and hauls it over an old tree stumps like a fisherman does at sea. When the four corners are strongly secured, Winston sighs. That hurricane is going to be very rough, he ponders as he walks back to his van.

They open the tailgate to see Sheila taking a nap on his camera and they chase her. "Get off of this you lazy dog!" Winston yells. "Co- Come off!" Gregory follows. But Devon tells them to leave the dog alone.

Sheila's fright forces her to crash into the back van's door. "You think your shit can buy this?" Winston continues despite Devon's plea.

"Why do dogs always choose the most expensive things to sleep and piss on?" Gregory asks rhetorically.

"You better return to the van before we leave you out here," Winston shouts, as he sets up his tripod to set his camera. He asks Gregory and Devon to set up the safety nets around, secure the van and to check the emergency supplies and food.

Morant Point is a good vantage point because it offers a panoramic view of the Morant Bay Sea and the entire Mount Ogle Community. Winston decides to zoom in on

his community almost a mile away. He magnifies his view by increasing the optical zoom to capture the activities of the people preparing for Dean. He sees Pa Ben's old hut jutting from the side of the hill, the zincs are flapping their wings but the house refuse to fly. Winston remembers that this old hut has survived many hurricanes, getting little or no damage. There is nothing special about the architecture; it only survives because Gode Hill protects it from the turbulent winds. Hardly any wind catches it, so whenever the stronger June winds start to rattle the zinc roof, the people know that a hurricane is in the making. Winston's first encounter was with 1989 Gilbert; he was six years old, but the memories are still profound in his mind.

It was the last time that he saw his mother before the ravenous torrents of Wag Water River engulfed her. They were living in Tom River district by the Wag Water River. Winston remembers his mother asking his father to leave, fearing that the river would overflow its banks flood the house. But his father decided against evacuating the house. Instead, he climbed on top the roof to fasten loose sheets of galvanized zinc while his mom stood in the back room covering the furniture with plastic and securing important documents; when suddenly, the house jerked as if there were an earthquake. It wasn't an earthquake. Water seeped under the door, through the crevices of the wall and windows. Winston shudders at the moment when he remembers the panic in his father's voice yelling, "Pauline get Winston and move out of the house now! The river's rising! Get out! Get out!" I tried to get to the back room, Winston thinks. But he slipped on the wet wooden floor and banged his head on a chair handle. Dadz jumped off the roof, barged into the living room and hurled Winston's unconscious body over his shoulder; Winston's hands hung against the back of his father, lifeless as a slaughtered cow. The

house slid from its foundation. Dadz threw himself, with Winston's upon his shoulder, through the window and tangled into wild vines. The ravenous water engulfed the house, with Pauline inside. Dadz could not stop to look because the water rose too fast and debris were orbiting the area. Survival was the key, so Dadz took Winston to Golden Valley School shelter, where Sister Jenny resuscitated him, while the other women treated Dadz for hyperthermia and shock.

Immediately after the hurricane, the neighbors sent a message to the police to call rescue workers to search for Pauline. They men made two makeshift beds, padded with sheets and two saggy pillows, on which they transported Winston and Dadz to the military chopper that was awaiting the victims on top of the hill. Another set of rescue workers searched several miles along the river, but they failed to find Pauline's body and decided to end the search. Pa Ben broke the news to Dadz. Despite his obvious heartbreak, Dadz shakes his head and walks away.

This is one memory that has haunted Winston and his father for year. The last and only thing that Winston recalls his father telling him that Pauline was not coming back. Did she hear dad's cry to leave the house? Why didn't Dad listen to her? What was the last thing she thought about before her last breath? Why did it have to be my mother? These questions flood Winston's mind, causing tears to trickle from his eyes and his clouds the lenses of his camera.

Winston camera suddenly falls out of focus. He cleans the lenses, increases the digital zoom in time to capture an incredible event, one that the Lawrence Tavern Police will be happy to witness. He records two of the community's most notorious thieves breaking into Mr. Albert's Hardware store. There have been six breakings over the past

year and the police had no evidence to tie Puss and Clive to them. But the neighbors knew that they did all of the burglary because some the same neighbors bought the stolen items at a much cheaper price, claiming that Albert's inflates his prices. As Winston tapes the event, he smiles knowing that he has empirical evidence to put these two hypocrites away for a long time.

"I've never liked a bone in you," Winston mutters with a menacing countenance.

He sees Puss climbing up a skinny ackee tree like a monkey in the Amazon forest and a hacksaw which hangs from his pants loop that looks like a stiff tail. Upside down, Puss hangs from the ackee tree and saws the protective steel bars. "I told Albert to cut that tree down a long time ago, but he never listens. And all this time those fools have been breaking into the store from the same tree that everybody used to hang out and cook under." He looks around in time to see who is coming but it's only Sheila. When he returns to the scene, Puss leaps through the hardware's window. Winston calls Gregory and Devon to witness the crime.

"Who is that?" Gregory asks.

"I don't have to guess. It's Puss, uh? That's how the kleptomaniac got his name in the first place. He has been stealing since high school days. I don't know who he did steal from," Devon says.

From the window bags of nail, cement, electrical supplies and even lumbers fall unto a patch of sawdust to muffle the sound. Clive, a short stocky man, who is new to the neighborhood, picks up the stolen items and stocks them in a red wheelbarrow which they stole from Temple Hall's store two months ago.

“I didn’t like that man from the first day he moved in,” Devon remarks. “Now I know why. What should we do, Winston? Let’s try to stop them?”

“No, no, no. I have everything on tape. We have enough evidence to enroll them into jail, and perhaps make them cell mates.” Winston responds.

“Puss should be locked in a box, because that man can easily squeeze his was through those jail bars,” Gregory enacts his scenario of the escape.

“The show is over. The sky is really overcast, which mean Dean will arrive any moment. Look the rain is already drizzling Can you guys finish setting up?” Winston asks.

While crooks help themselves, other neighbors scurry to prepare for the impending disaster. Winston sees little children chasing the chickens and roosters to lock them in safe place; he remembers the dramatic stunt that Gregory performed which causes him to snicker. Mas Joe and Miss Lacso sell the last couple rain coats and head home in their donkey cart. Mr. Ricky and his son strap down their zinc roof with nail and 6-inch thick blocks that they brought home from their factory; the house looks like a castle or the statue of liberty with crowns of concrete block on her head. Winston wonders why they didn’t make a concrete roof since they owned a factory, but making a concrete roof is out of the question now.

Over the other side of the community on Salt Spring, the Roberts relax on their posh veranda and observe the poor preparing themselves for a big storm. Nobody likes the Roberts because they think that they are better than everybody else, although it is corrupt money that supply their bourgeois lifestyle. The name Salt Spring, as Winston remembers it, results from the Roberts’ moving into the community and causing a lot of

bad luck. So people started to say that once the Roberts' cross that spring to live in that house that the community has been unlucky or *salt*.

Winston is fascinated with the way the people prepare for hurricanes. He sees himself like a scientist using the micro-lenses of his camera to dissect the people and the community, something that has never been thought of.

Of course, not all people believe the warnings. While everyone is busy securing windows roofs and doors, Clifton sits in his old wooden house and passes ridiculing comments. Winston remembers Clifton doing the same thing before Hurricane Felix hit: Clifton almost lost his life when a sheet of zinc flew off his own house, circled the house in a whirlwind, plummeted through the flimsy window, and shaved a few of his locks. After the hurricane ended he credited his survival to Haile Selassie, his Rastafarian god; he doesn't believe in technology, since he claimed that technology is evil. Again, Clifton paces his small wooden house and swings wildly his hands at the neighbors and shouts. He waves his hair wildly, strand spreads apart to form mane of a lion. Then he waves his hands while pointing at people. Winston has a good idea of what he is saying. Perhaps it is the monotonous chant," Bun a fire on Eden. Jah is I and I provider. Lighting and thunda fi all devil worshippa..."

VIII

Beyond the thick canopy of trees, the red weather balloon absorbs rounds of turbulent punches from the wind, continually jerking and jolting the cable that anchors it to the earth. As the wind loses its temper, it lands quicker and harder punches on the balloon. To the excitement of the rustling leaves, the balloon swift movement - left-right, right-left- aggravates the raging wind, so much so that it changes course, attacks the spectators in the canopy, chasing the leaves from the branch and causing fruits to plunge to the ground. Winston captures the occasion with his lenses- a magnificent moment. But without warning, the splendor changes to awe when the entire community hears the tremendous clamor that sounds like two gigantic aluminum pot covers clanging each other. Blaaaaam! Blaaam! Strike! Thunder and lightning slap the earth, creating widespread pandemonium that ripples through Mount Ogle.

Despite flirting with danger, Winston chuckles as he imagines Clifton scampering for cover at the sound of the thunder, as if Winston's thoughts about Clifton precipitated the action. Another series of lighting flashes and carves a temporary iridescent fissure in the black puffy cloud. Suddenly a barrage of rain, as large as marbles, beat upon the wavering trees that hover over community. Winston cradles his camera and breaks into a run toward his van. As he sprints down the side of the mountain, he twists his left ankle on a mango but regains his balance. "Shit! It's a good thing that this camera didn't break," he tells himself. Then a bolt of lightning strikes one of the metal poles that held the nets in place. This creates a deadly explosion that almost deafens Winston. His

adrenalin surges rapidly. He looks like a world-class sprinter- with the camera cuddled in one hand and the other hand propelling him down the rocky mountainside.

Meanwhile the gusting winds and rain get harder and heavier. Astraeus' swirling undercurrent tries to protect the plants from Zeus' ruthless shower. Winston thinks. As the wind and the rain wrestle each other, they snap brittle trees in pieces like match sticks; fold the banana and plantain trees in fractions of halves and thirds; scythe the arms of larger trees, leaving them limbless; uproot the neighbors' crops; and drown the saplings. Blam! BlaBooom!! Stri...Strike! More thunder and lightning echo thought the valley, increasing the commotion.

Winston hops in his van and instructs Gregory, who seems quite apprehensive, to speed to the foot of the mountain. As soon as Gregory gasses the van, he realizes a problem. Suddenly the wind rips a branch from a tree's trunk and flings it on top of the van. Sheila yelps. She tunnels her way between Winston's empty case and the van's seat. Winston and Devon crash into each other. And Gregory ducks for cover, under the steering wheel, folding into the fetal position with his hands protecting his head. The scuffle in the van continues for minutes. Only a few square-feet of metal and glass protect them from the zinc, cans, leaves, branches, drums, chicken coops, troughs, shoes, plastics, tarpaulins, plants, and other indistinct debris that are flung through the air. A barrage of lightning strikes a lonesome palm tree, causing its boughs to burn and shed like dog's fur.

"Stay away from all metal and dodge for cover. The lightning's going to strike for a couple more minutes," yells Winston.

The van sways to the right. It begins to slide. Running water, snaking its way down the patchy hill, erodes the spongy earth beneath the van's wheel.

"Oh, frig!" Winston exclaims.

"What?!" Gregory and Devon asked simultaneously.

We are sliding down the hill. Look! The trees look like they're moving up the hill. Gregory, do something. Anything!"

Before anyone reacts, the wheels of the van tangle in a web of wild vines. Nothing can be done but to watch the hurricane beat upon their van. They hope that whatever stops the van will hold out for at least the first round of winds and rain. We can still do this, Winston thinks.

"We'll use the tow rope in our emergency kit to make a pulley around some trees and pull it up the hill," Winston tries to encourage his crew.

"Are you crazy, Winston?" Gregory utters in an exasperated tone. "We almost got killed by a branch and you want us to go outside to haul this heavy van up a hill? Look, we're on the brink of death! Why don't we wait till the rain stops and run to the nearest shelter?"

"You can go! I have a mission and nothing is stopping me from doing this. I'll do it with or without your help. We can get this van back up that hill, I promise you," Winston retorts.

Devon interrupts, "Hey, stop all of this quarrelling. We are here now and aren't dead. We are already in the fire, so we may as well deal with it. But we have to be patient and practical about this." Devon stresses.

“I never come so close to death, and don’t want to die like this. No hurricane is going to k..,” Gregory utters.

The tension in the van rises. Before Gregory finishes his thought, Winston lounges over the equipment case and hurls a vicious punch, between the two front seats, that misses Gregory’s ear lobe by inches. Gregory then grabs Winston in a headlock position and with a guillotine hold, constricting his air tube.

Gregory’s rage increases simultaneously with the ravenous winds and rain of Hurricane Dean. “What the fuck you think you’re doing Winston?!” Winston, barely able to breathe, struggles to release himself from Gregory’s chokehold. Winston uses his arms as a lever to escape. But the harder he struggles he finds it more difficult to breathe and gives up.

“Stop all this shit!” Devon commands his friends, as he tries to pry the two a part. “We didn’t come here to bullshit and fight like mongrels.” Devon manages to break the two a part momentarily. “Winston, you need to calm down! I don’t know which ghost possessed you, but you need to come back to your senses. And Gregory, calm yourself! It’s not time to fuss or fight. You forget that we are walking on needles; this van can break away anytime.”

Winston is again released from Gregory’s restraint. He gasps heavily for air, as he searches for a seat on the van’s floor. He looks like one of Gregory’s chicken that struggled relentlessly to escape being butchered. He rubs his swollen red eyes and tries to conceal the tears. Then Sheila comes out of her burrow and rests her head on Winston’s shoes, but Winston pulls his foot away, shrugging her off. Sheila goes back to her little hole with an embarrassed glance. Suddenly a small tremor passes under the van, as if

there were a slight earthquake. They freeze. All of a sudden, the vines' muscles give way to the dead weight of the van and breaks. Gregory begins to steer the wheels against the sliding motion and gasses the van, but the centrifugal force continues its pull. So Gregory panics and revs the van, causing the wheels to rotate at blinding speed which causes the van to slip even faster.

“Apply the brakes, put in it neutral and activate the 4X4 gear!” Winston instructs Gregory. So Gregory applies the brake and puts the vehicle in neutral.

“What should I do?!” Gregory asks rhetorically.

“Try to steer it against some trees!” Devon replies.

As the van slides, small bits of debris beat upon it and create rhythmic dings and dongs. The wind gets louder and louder. The back window pane slips from the panel, creating a powerful vacuum that tries to engulf Gregory, Devon, Winston and Sheila and the equipment like dust particles. Then the rain beats leaves, sticks and plastic bags through the open window. Devon and Winston cover the equipment with tarpaulin. Sheila shivers from the blasting cold water and wind. She scampers to another corner, behind a piece of crumpled linoleum. The van gradually transforms into a coffin, as sinks into the soft muddy earth. Winston quickly grabs a piece of cardboard and duct tape, slowly and carefully inching his way to block the gaping hole to seal the window. While Devon secures the equipment using copper wires and a pair of pliers, the four drift to their fate: three young men and a dog in one casket.

Fortunately, the front wheels of van get stuck in a trench that marks a property line. Gregory plasters his faces against the windshield to inquire. Although happy that he is not dead, Gregory is horrified at what he witnesses outside.

I'm glad that I didn't try to bail out of this van. He thinks to himself. But how are we going to get out of this? I've never seen so much water rushing down a hill. It must have been the water pulling the van like a piece of paper. "Hey Winston, Devon, look at this," Gregory yells. "Look at the dead black puffy cows and stiff pink pigs floating down the hill!"

"Damn! Who those belong to? Probably it's Maas Carlton; because he always let his cows eat grass on this mountain." Devon guesses. Two large black and white cows, swollen and stiff, sail down the mountainside like a raft pitching through the rough eddies of a white river. "You think they are pregnant? Look at how that one is fat"

"This is nothing compared to what I see, when I used to work at the station. One day I was Trelawney and I saw a horse, one of those top notch race horses, stuck between the live wires. It was fifteen feet in the air, hanging from its hind legs. But wait, to make things worse, the legs were fried to the point that the bones were sticking out. I don't know if it got electrocuted or if its weight caused the skin to peel off, but I was speechless for about three minutes. It was so bad, that I asked Leslie not to video it. Trust me. These winds are wicked! I don't think that the cows were pregnant though. I feel that the winds blew them over the hills and they broke their feet. Then they laid there helplessly until the water rose and drowned them- so they might actually be bloated," Winston elaborates.

"It's a pity all that beef is gone to waste," Devon states sympathetically. "I could do well with some roast beef and yam now. But seriously, the owner of these cows is going to suffer a great loss for the next few months- or even the year. Because you know that these politicians are going to fix the rich people's houses first. Then they give us the

left over to pitch patch our little community. I remember after '89's Hurricane Gilbert, we didn't get light or water for six straight months. I was glad that we didn't have to go to school then, but times were rough. It was Uncle Cliffy's little jalopy that we used to transport water and food from town. Do you remember when Massop was selling the animals that died in the hurricane to us?"

"Yeah, that's why I stopped eating meat. My mamma asked me to buy two pounds of beef for dinner; but when she cut it up, we saw about a dozen nasty maggots crawling from out of it. I never knew that my grandmother's voice could grow so loud. She flung the meat off the table and shouted and screamed on the top of her lungs. Then everybody run to see what was happening...." Gregory explains.

"How could we forget that?" Devon interrupts Gregory. "The whole community marched up to the shop and started a big protest. Peter had to restrain Clifton from butchering Massop. That day he was lucky. Winston, what's wrong?"

"Nothing. I was just listening to you. You can continue your stories." Winston replies.

"Winston, I know when something's wrong with you," says Devon. "It's about your mother, isn't it?" Winston shrugs his shoulders and holds his head down. "Look Winston. We have known you for years. I remember when you guys moved into this community and I helped you to move your furniture into your house. Back then you were very skinny and shy; but once you got you of your shell, I realized that you were a cool person and not a snob. We have been more like brothers ever since. I know that you lost your mother in one of the worst possible ways; but you can't keep it inside. In order to move on, you have to come to terms with the fact that she is gone. She wouldn't want

you to be grieving like this. Winston, when you imprison your grief, frustration and anger, you are building a cemetery inside your mind: you are corrupting your imagination and your talent with the rotten memories. I know that's not what your mother would have wanted for you. She was one of the most empathetic people in this community. I miss her too. I remember when she used to give me lemonade and bread with butter for dinner, because my old man didn't have anything to give us to eat. But you have to talk about it, Winston! Otherwise, you'll be trapped in your misery.

“Just leave me alone! It's easy for you to say all this nice stuff; but you would never understand how this has fucked up my life. Yes, she was nice and all that, but were you there when she blamed me for my father's absence? Where you the one who she couldn't look at, just because I reminded her of my father? I didn't ask them to bring me in this world. When dad was home, I used to pray for them to stop fighting and yelling at each other. I was tired of crying, of running and hiding, of pretending I didn't see them whacking each other, and I had to be the goddamn referee in their scuffle. You don't know how all of that feel? Gregory. Do you? All that you guys see is the happy, athletic and smart Winston, living the grand life. Even though mom and I had a love-hate relationship, she didn't have to go like that. Everyday I wonder what her last thoughts were. Did she struggle or did she give up? Was she unconscious? Why did God have to take both of them?”

“Them?” Gregory and Devon echo each other.

“Yes, she was pregnant. The night before she died, she and dad were arguing about the pregnancy. Dad blamed her for screwing around. When I heard that I couldn't

believe it. I didn't want to believe that about my mother. I don't know if it's true. Why did it all have to go this way? Why..."

A dead cow slams into the back of the van, interrupting Winston, almost causing the vehicle to slide out of the trench. "What's that?!" the three echo simultaneously. Water seeps between the crevices of the door and under the tailgate of the van. Winston and Devon hurry to brace against the door, while Gregory uses old newspaper and cloth to seal fissures.

"The eye of the hurricane is passing over us now; so, we have to get out of this gully now." Winston declares. "Gregory, brace against this door and keep all the water you can keep out. Devon can you give me the towing cable, lug tool and your gloves? I am going outside to get rid of whatever hit us."

Winston removes the cardboard and duct tape from the back window and crawls through. He rests his hands on a smooth soft velvet-like surface. This is weird. He ponders. Halfway through the window, Winston realizes that it is bloated dead cow that caused the commotion- he is on top of a dead cow that is swamped in water. "You won't believe this!" Winston exclaims.

"What's the matter?" Gregory asks.

"I'm on top of a dead sticking cow!" Winston utters. "Devon, you'll have to help me roll this heifer from the van. But you have to be careful. The water current is heavy."

Winston and Devon use the buoyancy of the cow to their advantage, bouncing the corpse like a tennis ball and shoving it into the strong water current. But the rope, still around its neck, is tangled around broken branches. Devon asks Gregory for the knife to cut the rope, while Winston hold up the cow's horn. After the rope is cut, the animal's dead

weight jerks the van, but Winston and Devon muscles it off. The cow floats down the hillside, banging its body into obstacles. Both stand in the brown murky water and watch the strange objects floating by: cans, bottles, clothes, fruits, twigs, T.V. remotes, old buckets, shitty baby diapers, hangers, dead puppies, stuffed animals, just to name a few. The hurricane tapers and the ebbing water recede significantly- from waist to ankle height.

After relieving the cow from the van, Winston passes the cable through the back window to Gregory. He instructs Gregory to lock it onto hook located under the seat. Meanwhile, Winston and Devon trudge up the slope to wrap the cable around the trunk of two star-apple trees. Just before he gets to the tree, he loses his footing and slams in the mud. He gets up, wipes the dirt from his face and inches his way toward the tree, where he hooks the rope firmly to the root. In the mean time, Gregory makes an inclined plane from a pair to two-by-four planks; he places each board under the van's wheel and stamps heavily on them to keep them in place. When the pulley is complete, Gregory starts the van, but its engine sputters. He tries again, but the engines dies. On the third try, Gregory hold the key in the ignition until it the engines rumbles, but fades. He tries again and again until the van starts.

“Gregory, when I give you the signal, put the gear in reverse and rev it. Devon and I will be pulling on the ropes to prevent the van from slipping.“

The first attempt fails when the front wheels skid from the planes. They try again unsuccessfully. After fifteen attempts to get the van up the hill, Devon and Winston rest at the root of the tree. Without warning, lighting illuminates the dull sky with a single

flash. Thud! Then shards of broken crystals of rain and ice begin to bombard the earth.

Winston and Devon scamper to the van for cover.

“Oh my G--! Is this hail? I have never seen this before!” Winston exclaims surprisingly. The sharp chunks of ice crash and explode on the van. “Get my camera! Get my camera!” Winston demands.

Winston sticks the neck of his camera through the back window, using a piece of sheet metal to protect the lenses. The sky is blocked with ice and rain. The wind is absent. Rain and ice are dumped upon the earth. Each chunk bounces off the top of the van and bashes the windshield. Gregory turns the wiper on; each blade scoops a load of ice from the windshield. The ground is battered. Boulders of ice careen down the mountainside. The trench is filled. Old empty containers are filled to capacity. Continuous downpours of hail create a white blanket of hail that buries the dead cows. Can the ice preserve them? Devon ponders. Half dozen hoofs stick up through the bed of ice. All around the dead cows and debris, the naked trees stand helplessly against the barraging hail. The mercury in the thermometer drops to an unusually low- 47 degrees. Winston eyes bulge from their sockets at the sight of the chilling temperature.

“It has never been so cold in Jamaica, ever!” Winston exclaims.

After an intense beating, the hail storm trades places with the rain and wind.

Winston checks his barometer. The wind pressure is stifling.

“Oh *frig!* A hundred and eight five miles an hour? This is a category five hurricane!” Winston shouts.

“What! That can blow this van away like nothing. Winston, we have to get out of here now. By the hook or the crook!” Gregory exclaims, as he shifts the van in reverse.

Without warning, the front of the van hoists into air, about two feet high, then slams into the watery earth. The tremor causes the cable to loose from the star-apple trees, where it was tied, causing the van to mower its way down the hill. The cable whips and slashes tree stumps, limp lifeless grass, and everything else in its way. There is absolute chaos. The frightened friends tumble about in the van, bruising their heads and limbs. The cameras, thermometers and barometers take on a life of their own, as they records the pandemonium both inside and out of the vehicle. Uprooted trees, tumbling landslides, flying debris and gushing water are all captured from the camera that's wedged between the back doors. The van plunges into a soft puddle of mud that's supposed to be the main road. It scrapes against the retaining wall. Gregory, electrified with fear, launches the van into gear and rummages through the muddy water and debris towards the community.

"This isn't going to get us too far," Gregory exclaims. The van sputters but labors patiently against the murky road, flying debris, pelting rain, and ferocious winds.

"Come on. Come on!" Winston encourages the van to take them to the nearest shelter.

IX

The wind surges intermittently upon the dark deserted land, blowing tiny dots of rain to the west and against the left side of the van. All the plants and shrubs are broken, battered and submerged in muck; yet a few stubborn trees, leafless and naked, withstand

the ordeal. Except for the few standing trunks, the rain, the winds blows through bare air; small bits of debris are submerged in the swamps all around while the van motors on.

A half mile from the Golden Valley School, Winston says, "Something's strange."

"Yes, hail just fall in Jamaica. Jamaica. Now, that's strange!" Gregory responds. "If my granny was alive, she would be convinced that the world is coming to an end."

"Yes, asked if the world will end in fire or ice. Right now, it's ice!" Devon expostulates.

"That's strange too, but where's Sheila." Winston asks.

Devon responds sarcastically, "You forgot that you scared her to death? I kept begging you to leave the dog alone. She's probably dead by now. It'll be a miracle if anything outside survives this disaster."

"I only hope that she is fine," Winston expresses. The van sputters louder with smoke steams from the engine and the muffler. "Come on! Come onnn!" Winston encourages the van once more. But the speedometer's needle slowly rolls back pass twenty five, fifteen, five and rests on zero kilometers per hour.

"It's dead this time," Gregory declares disappointedly. "What're we going to do now? We can't get to the school. W can't fix the van. And can't go out in the middle of a hurricane. What're we going to do? Any idea?"

Winston is the first to reply, "Well, we have to abandon the van and get to the school as quickly as we can."

“What the hell? What’re you telling me, Winston? I’m not going out in a hundred-plus miles per hour hurricane. I don’t want to be dead like those cows. I’m not leaving here,” Gregory retorts.

“Gregory, you were the one who wanted to run out in the hurricane earlier, but now you want to stay in the van. I hate to agree with Winston, but this van will flood before you know it. Plus it is more dangerous in this van, especially when the water gets into the electric circuits. Do you know what could happened, Gregory? We could be instant toast. So you choose your poison.”

Gregory agrees reluctantly and eases his way around to the back of the van, where Winston and Devon loosen the wires that bounded the equipment case. Gregory spots Winston’s camera sticking under the back door. He carefully braces the door outward to release the pressure from the camera’s neck, and then pulls it inside. He wipes the camera against his shirt and cleans the lenses with the palm of his hand. The camera fascinates Gregory; he randomly clicks knobs and switches, peers in the eyepiece and aims it around. Suddenly he snaps his head back in terror, bumping it into the side of the van, causing a loud bang.

“What the heck?” Winston turns around to see Gregory holding his head with one hand, and the camera in the other.

“You have to see this,” Gregory states. “I guess it was recording the hurricane when the van slipped down the hill. That cow frightened the hell out of me. I was testing if it was working and saw this close up image of a dead cow.”

“Wow! This is good. This is good! This is goood!” Winston exclaims. “But we have to get going before it gets worst. I think that heavy winds were the beginning of the

second phase. Let's cover the cameras with plastic bags. Gregory, put this clear piece over the lenses. Devon, throw everything else in the case; we're going haul it to up to the school. Let's go..."

"Alright, I'm ready. Everybody pray for protection. Let's go." Winston commands.

After several attempts at kicking the van's door open, Winston asks the others for help. Both doors swing open like the doors of a saloon bar. Pieces of newspapers and drenched clothes prop from the crevices and plop into the stagnant water. From the broken window, two long strips of duct tape dangle their tails into the swamp. The newspapers and clothes, along with the other debris float along the swampy road before sinking. Winston steps out of the van; he carefully plants each foot at the base of the swamp before moving. He uses his foot as a cane to lead him through the shallowest part of the swamp. Gregory and Winston use the light from their cameras to see where they are going, while Devon holds a flashlight in one hand and a portion of the equipment case on his shoulder; Winston, Devon and Gregory wade through the water towards the school, about a half mile away. Winston and Devon look like pall bearers in a procession, carrying the black cases over their shoulders with the utmost care. Winston looks back toward his van for the last time. Its two headlights are still above the water, but the back is almost covered. Winston's recalls the close encounters with death: lighting bolts, careering van and hail storm. He loses his balance upon turning around, but quickly regains it. Then he sees a bamboo raft trapped between two trunks, however, he decides against using it as a boat to transport them to the community. It's too dangerous to take that chance, he thinks.

The darkness grows thicker and the rain gets heavier. Winston hears a beeping sound coming from his weather case, "That's not good! Hurry! We have to hurry. The turbulence is coming quickly!" Winston shouts. The three wade through the water faster. Blaaaam! Thud! A momentary shock hits all three. Lightning brightens the dim sky. The three hurry even more. Devon slips. The dead weight from the momentum drags Winston down, causing two big splashes; but Winston manages to keep his camera above water. Gregory assists both. Winston grabs some gadgets from the equipment case and leaves the rest behind. Winston now wades limply. The rain gets heavier. A branch breaks. It hits Devon on his head and he staggers. He falls backward into the water. Winston and Gregory help. More thunder rolls. Lightning follows. Winston and Gregory place Devon in a sitting position and quickly tap their fingers on his face. Gregory opens his eye lids, but they flip and close like a toothpaste cap. They begin to panic. So Winston asks Gregory to help move the body to the school. They wrap each of Devon's arms over their necks and lift him by his thighs, but he is too heavy. So they drag him a few yards through the debris, until they encounter a huge broken tree that blocks the roadway. Now the wind increases in intensity. They place Devon alongside the tree and crouch to avoid the heavy winds. Then a sheet of zinc flies through the air, slices the bough of a coconut tree and lodges into the trunk of a breadfruit tree like an axe. The school is in sight. Fearing the imminent danger they hurry as fast as they can toward the school.

Winston calculates they are two hundred yards from safety. As they make their way through the yard, the winds slam the three against the old school wall. Devon recovers immediately and asks, "What is...?" Winston covers Devon's mouth. Again they crouch low to avoid the heavy winds. The winds resurrect bits and pieces of loose

debris from the murky water. An old rusty drum rumbles towards the guys, but misses them by inches. An old refrigerator tumbles down the street and smashes into a neighbor's veranda. Then the boys hear a cracking sound above them; it is a tall wooden light post swaying to and fro like a joy stick. All three break into a run. Suddenly the light post crushes the wall that the guys used for refuge. They have no choice but to get to the school. They sprint toward the school and hurdle the obstacles down the obstacle course. The winds resist the guys' best efforts to surge forward, creating a slow motion. Like three world-class sprinters locked in top speed, racing to break the world record, they grimace as they exert extra energy to power through the wind; their heads stand as firm as posts, and their eyes focus on the school. In the most vigorous manner, they pump their arms almost in synchrony, alternating hands with feet, and hurdling old drums, tree branches, dilapidated tables and chairs, smashed television sets, loose wires, and deep puddles of water. The winds beat the rain against their bodies, stinging their faces, blinding their eyes, ripping their clothes from them and attacking them with painful punches. But they persevere and muscle their way through the thick dark and pressuring winds, towards the silhouette of the three-tiered building illuminated with flickering lights from the kerosene lamps and candles. A twenty-second sprint now seems like eternity.

The cameras swing back from the shoulders of Devon and Gregory, in the direction of the wind; both capturing the scene, frame by frame, from a panoramic view. The red lights blink, shutters run, and tapes roll, capturing all the obstacles being hurdled. Each camera sways in a fluid motion, like a ribbon being blown by a fan. Both sets of

lenses capture the awe of the hurricane, on this dark miserable night. The three crash into the classroom's door and bang forcefully for it to be opened.

"Is that someone outside?" Sister Jenny jumps up and peers through the fancy blocks. "Yes, I see a shadow. Mikey, please open the door quickly!"

"Yes, ma'am!" Mikey releases the two 2 by 4 boards that braces the door.

The three stagger inside the classroom breathlessly, huffing and puffing for fresh air. Again Devon drops to the floor like a swatted fly. Mikey hurries to help Devon from the inch of water that settles on the ground. He places him on the top of four desks, which the other neighbors used to form a table. Sister Jenny, the matron, performs CPR on Devon, while Gregory and Winston hang over another desk, like prisoners waiting to be flogged. Their cameras hang loosely from their shoulders. Mikey carefully removes the cameras and drag them from the plastic cases. Then he hands the cameras to Miss Lasco and Pearl, who stand on desks closest to the counters. Pearl attempts to peek at the footage from the camera, but Miss Lasco nudges her to put the camera away. So Pearl climbs to the highest table, tips on her toes, and pokes her neck over the crowd to witness the happenings. Mrs. Jones, a retired school teacher and part-time nurse aide, prepares two cups of rehydrating fluids made of water and salt. She approaches Winston hastily and gives him the liquid to drink, but he is too weak to help himself; so Massop, who is busy fueling the lamps, comes over to assist Mrs. Jones. Then Pearl finds her way through the crowd and approaches Winston and Gregory with two plush blankets in her hands. Massop takes one of the blankets from Pearl, folds it in half, and covers Gregory. Pearl does the same to Winston. Then she takes a warm damp cloth and gently cleans the dirt, leaves and sweat from Winston's face. Winston tries to push her hands away, but she

holds his hand and tells him to relax. She isn't just a worthless gossip as I thought, Winston thinks. He looks up to her sheepishly, chastising himself about how wrong he was about Pearl, not considering that she talks about others because she cares. Winston's eyes meet hers, at the moment of his epiphany, creating awkwardness, like a teen accidentally seeing his parents naked. This moment is interrupted by Pearl's deliberate smile: but for the gaps separating her strong white teeth, Pearl has an alluring smile, Winston thinks. After she cleans Winston's face, Pearl notices a strip of blood stain on Winston's pants, so she rolls the foot of his trousers, until it is above the knee, to tend to the cut.

"O Lord," Pearl exclaims. "Massop, alcohol quick. I gotta kill the germs from this cut." Massop hands the antiseptic to Pearl. "And I need the suture kit, Massop."

Winston's neck's muscles tenses upon hearing suture.

"Relax, Winston. If you wanna be better quicker, I gotta stitch this gash; it's a bad one."

Winston relaxes his head and rests it on the small pillow. With utmost care, Pearl sits on the desk and places Winston's injured foot in her lap. He flinches and moans. So she release Winston foot and massages it with some cream. Afterward Pearl hold Winston foot firmly, with one hand, and with a handful of alcohol in her other hand, she dabs the wound. Winston sudden flips upright and yells, "Ahhhhhh!" But Mikey calms him down. Pearl binds his wounds. Winston falls asleep. Then she attends to the swollen ankle. First, she tests the tenderness of the swelling, then she wraps last tray of ice into a towel and applies it to Winston's ankle. Rest. Ice. Compress. Elevate, she thinks out loud.

Pearl had been a licensed nurse since she left high school, but she decided to stay home to raise her children to ensure that they got the attention and care that they needed. Then one day Kenny asked her to keep his child while he worked, and not before long, other neighbors followed, so she started a day care center.

Winston looks around the dim room. His eyes meet Devon's and they share a smile. Both look at Gregory snoring heavily. Three scrawny dogs huddle together under the desk. Winston briefly thinks about Sheila. Sister Jenny and the other women and men sing hymns and praise songs deep into the night, until everyone falls asleep.

Early next morning Winston wakes up to buzzing voices. Young children bickering for canned and boxed food, some neighbors engage in prayer, others talk about the hurricane, Massop and the rest of the men yell instructions from outside. Winston notices that Gregory and Devon are missing. He quickly sits upright.

"Good Morning Winston," Sister Jenny greets Winston with a warm smile. "Did you have a good night's sleep?"

"Yes, Ta Jenny," Winston yawns. "Where are Gregory and Devon gone?"

"Well, Massop and Cliffy took Devon to the hospital early this morning, since he had a concussion. And Gregory got up, way before dawn, to see if his dear family and chickens are fine. So I gave him some crackers and a mug of cocoa tea. He looked very beat up, but was too stubborn to listen to me rest, so I let him go. What were you guys doing out in the hurricane last night?"

"It's my fault. I asked them to help me to capture live footage of the hurricane, so that I can make a documentary to educate people about the dangers of hurricanes," Winston explains.

“Isn’t it ironic that you almost paid for it with your life?”

“True. I hope that Devon will be fine. It’s just that I was compelled to do so, regardless of the consequences; I felt that I had one opportunity at shooting the hurricane, so I tried. It’s like missing the last bus on a late night and having to wait until the next day to get home, unless you choose to walk or hitchhike. So I guess that I chose to walk. But all in all, I think that it worked out for the best. In fact, I have some of the most surprising video to show for the effort. Hold onto your bible when I tell you this,” Winston chuckles, “Have you ever seen hail falling in Jamaica?”

“But Jeez...what are you saying to me? Hail? Real rock-hard hail? I have to see it before I believe a word of what you are telling me,” Sister Jenny exclaims. Winston uses his lips to point towards his cameras on the shelf. “I really want to see it when JPS restores the electricity. Ta Rose is going to very proud of you, Winston.”

“Yes, she has always supported me. Even when doesn’t agree with me, she finds a way to come around,” Winston says. “Speaking of her, I should go by the church to see if she is alright.” Winston hops gingerly, on one leg, from the desk.

“I’m not even going to stop you. You young men of today are more stubborn than a mule, like Gregory. But perseverance can be a good thing, if you use it to motivate you in the right way. Have a slice of bread and some cocoa before you go,” Sister Jenny urges Winston.

After Winston eats breakfast, he requests his camera, checks the battery, and then he heads toward the church to visit his grandmother. As he leaves the classroom, he enters an unfamiliar world of rubble, murky water and stale air, the product of Hurricane Dean. The bold morning sun hangs high over the Blue Mountain peak. It emits crisp

crimson rays upon the ravaged earth, burning through the dead foliage, and warming the dense black earth. The scent of the warm dirty air rises from the earth into Winston's nostrils, like steam from a freshly baked bread. Winston begins his paramount journey by inching his way through small puddles, where children used to play hop scotch. Then he climbs over a pile of banana trunks that came from Uncle Joe's farm; under the rubble, Winston observes the first sign of life: a swarm of flies hovering over a dead carcass, perhaps of a dog or young goat, being eaten by a host of fat yellow round maggots. The stench corrodes the rims of Winston's nostrils, compelling him to plug them with his pointer and middle fingers.

After carefully negotiating his way over the banana trees, Winston encounters a huge pool of filthy water saturated with reels of tissue, bloated menstrual pads, shattered glasses, and small lumps of shit floating around, like lazy alligators on a hot summer day. Winston is aghast and quickly changes his course. This time he chooses a sanitary, but more dangerous path: he climbs on the enormous trunk of a mango tree and uses it as a bridge to get over the cesspool; he carefully plants his foot between the naked electric wires that tangled in the branches, trying to avoid possibly being electrocuted from any current stored in the nearby transformer.

He breathes a sigh of relief for his successful maneuver and limps up the muddy path. Across Pigeon Valley he sees men with saws, hammers and nails mending their roofs, while the younger boys and girls clear tree branches from their yards. A huge chunk of the hillside, which was once saturated with dense green foliage, is now bare. A few straggly trees lean downward; only threads of their roots keep them from toppling over. At the foot of the hill, the landslide blocks the stream, creating a murky dam.

When Winston gets to the town's square, he sees Corporeal Ramsey taking statements from residents. He joins the crowd, with a tape in his hand, as his sworn testimony. He makes his way through the crowd of witnesses giving testimonies of who they saw looting the shops; he patiently waits his turn. Then hands Corporeal Ramsey the tape. That part is done. He says to himself, as he goes towards the church.

Just after he departs the crowd, Winston hears a loud hollering. He looks to where the sound is coming from. A woman's bellowing voice echoes through the community. Winston looks towards the place where a crown of trees once protected the valley. The voice gets clearer.

"Pa Ben! Pa Ben dead! Whoaa, help Pa Ben dead!" the frightened voice broadcasts.

Winston limps much faster toward Pa Ben's house. Neighbors hustle to the scene. "Maxine, Pa Ben dead," a neighbor declares without knowing the fact. "Call the police!" two young boys exclaim. "Jesus Christ! Have mercy on us. Why Pa Ben? Why?" A familiar voice laments. That must be Ta Rose, Winston thinks. He takes a shortcut down a slippery slope and trips over an old truck tire. He lands on his chest and skates down the hill, like a baseball player hustling to steal a base. Short cut draws blood, he thinks. He gets up, spits dirt from his mouth and brushes the extra layer of mud from his body and his camera. Then he scrambles around the corner, grimacing in pain, toward the shocked crowd.

When Winston arrives, where Pa Ben's house was situated, he is horrified by the sight and smell of the place. Thirty or forty neighbors gather around the body. Winston could hardly see, so he climbs a leafless almond tree, which is already inhabited by little

boys and girls, trying to see over the crowd. The mournful neighbors struggle to restrain Pearl's tugging on Pa Ben's flattened corpse. One woman holds her from behind, while two others hug her tightly, but they fail miserably to keep her from hollering Pa Ben's name. Mikey, Massop and three other men struggle to lift a cedar tree from Pa Ben's chest, but their effort proves futile. Ricky, who always demands money before he works, generously cranks his power-saw and cuts the cedar into small chunks.

"Him dead?" asks a curious young boy from the tree.

"Of course him dead," replies a slightly older girl rather sarcastically.

Although distraught, Winston records the sad moment- this is his way of commemorating Pa Ben's life. He holds the camera tensely, trying to overpower the shiver that runs through his body; but the tremor of his hands causes the camera to shake vigorously. A fleck of a tear, shimmering in the sunbeam, runs down his dirty face, as he records the event. After two hours, the men succeed in removing the cedar tree from Pa Ben's body. Pearl immediately faints after seeing the flattened corpse. Two women lay her on the ground and ask for water to revive her. But no water is available, so five women and a boy carry her away to the nearby hospital. Meantime the crowd gets more rowdy and tightens the circle on Pa Ben's body, each person lurking, like vultures, over the grotesque corpse, to catch a glimpse. Pa Ben's face is crushed; shards of bones are scattered throughout the thick lumps of blood that mold pieces of skin to his face. His lonesome front tooth is wedged between a coconut shell and a cinderblock. The men cover the body, hoping to prevent the sweltering mid-afternoon sun from roasting the corpse. But the heat, trapped under that sheet, expedites the decomposition.

Fascinated and awed by the event, nobody in the crowd wants to leave. They temporarily forget about their problems- broken roofs, flooded homes, mildewed beds, lack of electricity and water, destroyed farms- these displacements will affect them for the next year, or even years to come; it depends on how fast the government acts- Mount Ogle will be on the lower quarter of the government's priority list; but the Mount Ogle residents' foremost concern is Pa Ben.

It is only after the undertakers come to transport Pa Ben's body to the morgue that the members of the congregation begin to depart- a duo, at the back of the crowd, march away solemnly, still discussing the incident; a lone boy remembers that he had to go to the shop, and darts over the hill, occasionally looking back at Pa Ben's crumpled body and house. Two other children toil with a bunch of bananas that they left in the nearby bushes. The remaining disciples dutifully follow the body to the hearse, where they trickle off, in different directions, to tend to their postponed problems. Winston and Ta Rose are the last to leave; as they plod through the half-baked mud, he continually consoles Ta Rose with a hug or a rub her back. They cross a small stream that is teeming with young fish and tadpoles; and pass an old shoe stuffed with mud, where a single sprout of grass basks under the warm glow of evening sun. Winston stops to record the little signs of regeneration but Ta Rose urges him home. They disappear down the hill, but their heads reappear, before they turn the corner for home.

END