

Sooner Rather Than Later

James watches the news report on the vintage wood- encased floor model TV his father had given to him. He looks around the home they were building together. Their wedding photo hangs over the marble mantel of the fireplace. The color swatches stick to the walls that have yet to be painted. Their honeymoon photo album lies on the mahogany coffee table where he rests his feet. Memories of the life he wanted to build with her fill this house.

“A storm is brewing in the Gulf of Mexico with wind speeds close to one hundred miles per hour. At the rate this storm is progressing, it could be considered a category three or four hurricane by landfall, and the storm surge alone could cripple the city if the levees don’t hold,” said the meteorologist on WDSU. “We are recommending that everyone evacuate the city as soon as possible, or seek shelter at any of the available storm shelters around the city. The storm is scheduled to make landfall soon, and some local parishes are reporting flooding,” said the meteorologist. James doesn’t want to leave the only piece of Amy he has left. He resolves that if he dies, then at least he will get to see the love of his life sooner rather than later.

James hears the limbs of the old majestic oak trees crashing around his home. He hears the sound of the gale force winds rustling the leaves and branches hitting the roof. The rain beats the storm shutters, and the floodwaters rise. A beautiful symphony of nature lulls him to sleep. He awakens to the chill of cold water at his heels. The vintage TV sparks, and James knows he’s dangerously close to being electrocuted. He hurriedly

looks around to survey the damage and decides to grab their honeymoon album. With the album in hand, James retreats upstairs.

The water rises fast, and James tries to find a way out. He peers through the hall window and notices his neighbors on the roof trying to flag down the rescue helicopter. He pulls the cord to the attic stairs and rushes up the steps. James searches for something, anything that will allow him to puncture the roof. He finally finds an old rusty red axe left by the previous owners amidst the pink insulation.

With all his strength, James plunges the old axe into the roof. Repeatedly, he slings the axe until a single ray of moonlight peers through the opening he creates. He punches his way through the hole. The rainwater rushes in and splashes James in the face. He screams at the top of his lungs, “Help!”

James makes his way to the rooftop. From his vantage point, he sees the unearthed oak trees and the flooded cars. Damaged power lines flicker in the water below. Nothing looks the same as before. Nothing will ever be the same again.

James sits on his rooftop thumbing through the pages of the album. He reminisces about the first time he saw Amy. She stood across the street, and he could not take his eyes off of her. She had the most striking green eyes. Her eyes were the reason he bought her an emerald engagement ring.

He remembers their wedding day and how beautiful Amy looked in her ivory gown. James was so happy that day. He loved her beyond reason. His heart aches as he thinks about the day Amy died. She had been complaining about a headache for weeks, but dismissed it as stress. James insisted they go to the hospital, but it was too late. Tears fall as he thinks about the last time he gazed into Amy’s green eyes.

The rescue helicopter hovers over his home. James reluctantly looks up and sees the safety harness descending. He wipes away the tears and grabs the harness. He secures himself and is lifted to safety. James looks down and sees the album on the rooftop. He wants to jump out of the helicopter. He wants to tell the pilot to take him back to the rooftop, but he decides to just let go. He takes one last look at the album and whispers, “goodbye, my love.”