

## Excerpt 6 - Rainy season

On the sixth day of June, the rainy season began. What started as a gentle breeze soon became a stiff wind that blew up the river valley, flipping the leaves upside down to expose their silvery undersides, and bringing the sweet smell of ozone that signaled the coming storm. Soon the torrential rains began their assault on the hard-baked earth, and within two days everything changed. The brittle forest of dead crunchy leaves became soft and receptive. The branches of the trees relaxed, gratefully opening their arms to the sky as they drank in the life-giving moisture. The ground transformed into a sea of mud.

Green and more green. Alexis never knew there could be so many shades of green – surely God's favorite color. There were the deep blue-greens of the distant pines scattered over the peaks, and the true forest-green of the high bush. Nestled in the river valley were innumerable varieties of bushes and plants in greens of every imaginable shade: spring green, jade green, dusty olive, brilliant chartreuse, kelly green, bright lime, dark bottle green, and shining emerald.

High in the mountains, the loose soil and debris of the dry season washed from the hillsides in the onslaught of tropical rains, sliding into hundreds of small springs that divided the valleys. Springs became streams, streams merged to become the Rio On, the primary branch of the upper Macal River. Restricted by the narrow canyon, the turbulent water churned, cutting between jagged rocks and boulders. Through miles of untamed jungle, the volume of water continued to race its course. At last, the flood reached the part of river valley where the Lord family lived.

From the house, Alexis watched the level of the Macal rise steadily as the water raged. Within the course of the morning, she had seen it rise twenty-five vertical feet, spill its banks, and spread across the lower pasture to twice its usual width. She knew it was dangerous to go closer, but felt the magnetism of its power. Walking down the hill to the edge of the surging floodwaters, she listened to its roar and felt vibrations deep in the earth.

A great crashing brought her out of her reverie, and Alexis stared dumbfounded as a giant tree came floating down the river. Over a hundred and twenty feet long, its enormous root mass came downstream first, bobbing up and down in slow motion like a sea serpent, its tremendous trunk and canopy of sodden branches trailing behind in majestic counterbalance. Suddenly as the forward mass of roots bobbed downward, they caught on some unseen obstacle under the surface. Unable to be restrained in the awesome force of the flood,

the tree up-ended into the air and struck an arc of one hundred and eighty degrees across the sky, literally tumbling its leviathan canopied crown over its submerged foot. Breathless, Alexis watched as the monster tree continued its journey downstream.

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