

## Excerpt 7 - High wind in the bush

"...and as you just heard in our latest update, Hurricane Greta is due to make landfall in Belize at approximately five o'clock this evening."

Jordan looked up from his toys in surprise as his mother leaped off her stool and flew out the front door. "Max!" Alexis yelled at the top of her lungs. "A hurricane is coming. Come quick. It's on the radio!"

"...also we urge you once again to stock up on nonperishable foods, candles, and first aid supplies..."

Hearing her cry, Max came running down the path from the goat house. In his haste, he had spilled half the milk from the bucket, and arrived breathless at the door. "Did you say what I think you said?"

"Quick! Yes, a hurricane! Listen!"

"...Don't forget that any loose objects in your yard can become projectiles in the high winds," the weatherman cautioned, "and if your house has a tin roof, be sure to throw ropes over the top and stake them into the ground. Remember to leave a window open opposite the blast of the wind. This will prevent implosion. Make sure all your family members have a piece of plastic or raincoat for cover. Keep plenty of dry clothes on hand, wrapped in plastic, and be sure to prepare some food in advance. The hurricane is packing winds of up to one hundred and twenty miles per hour, and is expected to lose very little strength when it makes landfall near the town of Dangriga. Play it safe and don't take chances. This Hurricane Greta advisory comes to you on Radio Belize, courtesy of the Caribbean Weather Service."

Max's face contorted with worry. "I wonder how long they've been warning people already. Maybe it's been on its way for a long time and we only just found out." Later, his suspicion would prove correct. The rest of the world had known of the direct threat for over eight hours. Being out of touch was only part of the darker side of paradise.

Max and Alexis did everything possible to prepare for the storm that would arrive in a matter of hours. Jordan was aware that a big wind was coming, but he was more excited than afraid. He watched his father secure the wooden shutters over the glass windows, throw ropes over the house, pound stakes into the ground, and then helped drive the goats and chickens into their respective sides of the thatched coop duplex. Such buildings were able to withstand high winds because they allowed the air to circulate through the open eaves, and often stood a better chance than conventional housing. But it was anybody's guess. The hut was twenty years old. It would either stand or fall.

Just shortly after five-thirty, the rains began in earnest, the first hard gusts coming from the southeast. As darkness fell, the gale force hit the house so hard, the water seeped through the tongue-and-groove siding

and dripped inside the house. By the time the hurricane winds rotated to the southwest, a fine spray was blasting into the room, right through the walls. In the flickering lamplight, Max was forced to drag the newly-built double-bed into the center of the living room and began to shove their plastic-wrapped possessions beneath it.

Alexis held Jordan as he screamed and cried with fear, as the roaring wind rose to a terrifying level. Conversation became impossible. Large branches and other debris began to tear loose from the surrounding jungle and crash against the sides of the house. The monster storm continued its circular motion, and by eight-thirty the rain was driving from the northwest, rattling the sheets of tin on the roof as they tried to work their way loose from the nails that secured them to the rafters.