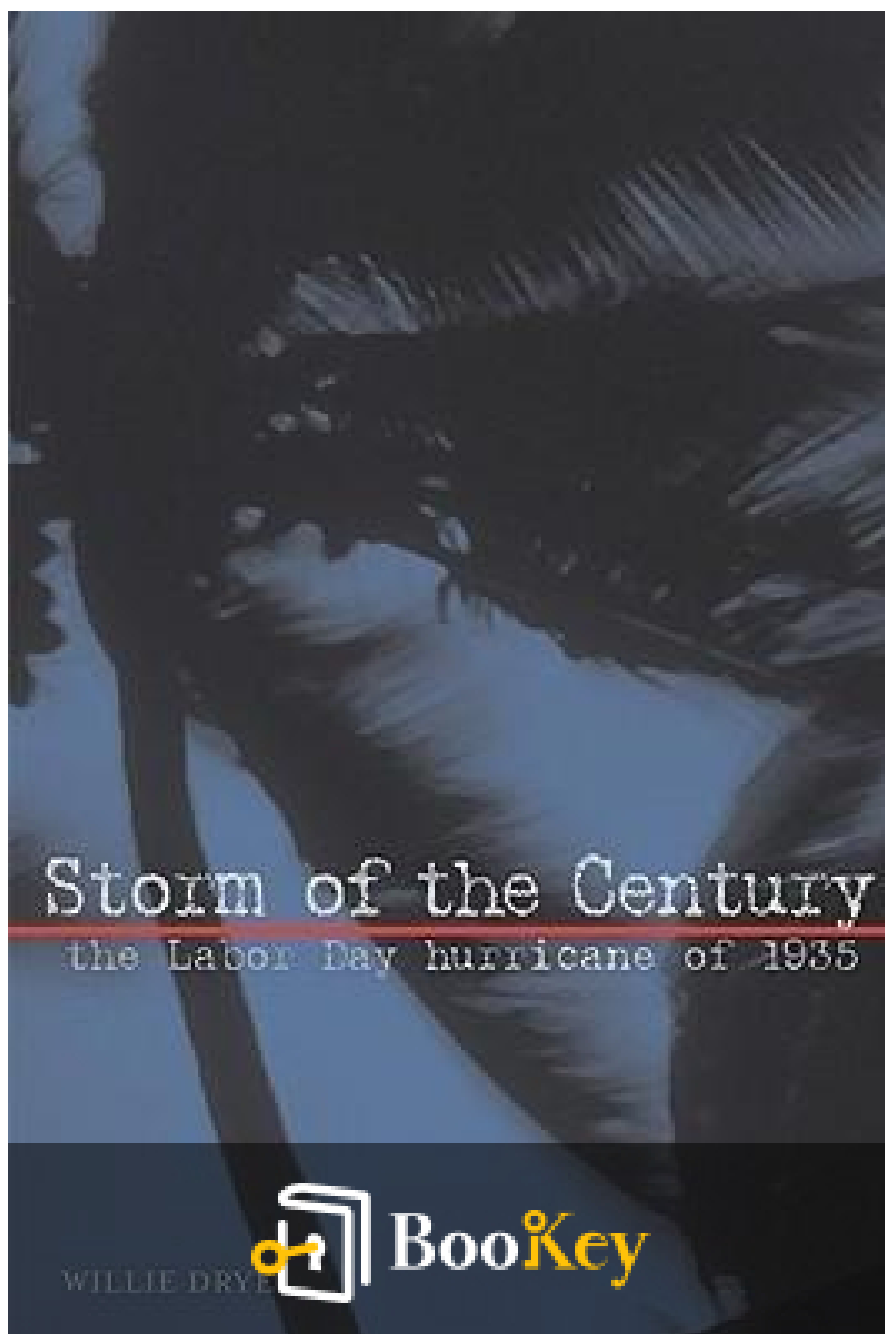


Storm Of The Century PDF (Limited Copy)

Willie Drye



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Storm Of The Century Summary

Survivors' Stories from the Devastating Hurricane of 1935.

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In "Storm of the Century," Willie Drye chronicles the harrowing events surrounding the catastrophic hurricane that struck the United States in September 1935, often referred to as the Labor Day Hurricane. This storm is notable for its intensity, being one of the most powerful hurricanes on record to make landfall in the United States.

Drye uses a tapestry of voices to tell the story, weaving together the perspectives of storm survivors, Federal Emergency Relief Administration workers, and government officials. This multi-faceted approach provides a comprehensive view of the chaos that unfolded as the hurricane approached the Florida Keys, where residents were largely unprepared for the unprecedented force of nature that was about to unleash devastation.

The narrative begins with a backdrop of a post-World War I America, still recovering economically and socially. As the hurricane builds, so does the tension among the inhabitants of the Keys, who often dismiss the foreboding warnings due to a sense of invincibility or misunderstanding of the storm's potential. The author highlights individual stories of heroism and survival, showcasing the resilience of the human spirit amid chaos and despair.

As the storm makes landfall, Drye paints a vivid picture of the destruction that follows. Buildings are flattened, lives are forever altered, and the

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landscape is irrevocably changed. The response from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration illustrates the struggle to coordinate effective relief efforts in the midst of such widespread turmoil and devastation.

Through the lens of those who lived through the experience, readers gain insight into the emotional and physical toll of the disaster. The narrative not only captures the immediate aftermath of the hurricane but also delves into the long-term effects on the community and the evolution of disaster response in America. The book serves as a powerful reminder of nature's might and the capacity for human resilience in the face of overwhelming adversity.

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About the author

Willie Drye is an experienced journalist whose career spans over three decades, during which he has reported on a broad spectrum of subjects, such as urban development, wedding planning, and, significantly, natural disasters. His work has appeared in major publications like the Washington Post and the Toronto Globe and Mail, showcasing his versatile writing skills. As a contributing editor for National Geographic News, Drye has developed a particular expertise in reporting on extreme weather events, notably hurricanes, tornadoes, and tsunamis. His articles on Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Gustav, and Hurricane Ike received widespread acclaim and attracted record readership.

In recognition of his impactful journalism, Drye received the esteemed Charlie Award for Public Service in 2007 from the Florida Magazine Association. This honor was awarded specifically for his thorough coverage of the potential impacts of a catastrophic hurricane in the Florida Keys, highlighting his commitment to informing the public about pressing environmental issues.

One of Drye's most significant contributions to the field is his book, **Storm of the Century: The Labor Day Hurricane of 1935**. This work is regarded as an authoritative narrative on the devastating hurricane that struck the Florida Keys, and it was so well-received that it inspired a documentary by the

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History Channel.

Drye's educational background includes a bachelor's degree in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Additionally, he served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, which reflects a diverse set of experiences that have enriched his writing and reporting career. Currently, Drye resides in North Carolina, where he divides his time between Plymouth and Wilmington, continuing to contribute to the understanding of natural disasters through his seasoned journalism.

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Chapter 1 Summary: Prologue: Sunday, September 1, 1935

PROLOGUE SUMMARY

In the summer of 1935, a weather system emerging from the west coast of Africa developed into a tropical storm as it traversed the Atlantic. By late August, this storm escalated into an unprecedented hurricane, later recognized as the most intense to strike the U.S., particularly devastating the Florida Keys.

This catastrophic event unfolded against the backdrop of the Great Depression, a period marked by severe economic distress in the United States, where widespread poverty and rampant unemployment left many—including a significant population of World War I veterans—facing desperate circumstances. The fallout from the economic crisis not only created social upheaval but also heightened political tensions on a global scale.

As the hurricane approached, the U.S. Weather Bureau struggled to effectively track the storm due to the limitations of their technology. On August 31, the storm intensified unexpectedly in the Straits of Florida, catching forecasters off guard and leading to devastating consequences.

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Key figures emerge in this harrowing tale:

- **Ed Sheeran**, a construction supervisor, foresaw the storm's threat and acted to protect his equipment but was powerless over the veterans in the nearby work camps.
- **Sam Cutler**, the assistant administrator for veterans' work camps, understood the danger posed by the hurricane and contemplated evacuation options.
- **Fred Ghent**, the overseeing administrator, grappling with worries about job security, failed to perceive the urgent need to address the storm's imminent threat.

The evacuation of vulnerable veterans from improvised camps faced numerous challenges, including bureaucratic red tape and miscommunication among officials—illustrating the systemic inefficiencies in emergency management of the time. This situation takes on added gravity considering the struggles of many World War I veterans who, upon returning home, found themselves ill-equipped to navigate both economic hardships and natural disasters.

The prologue situates the impending hurricane within a broader political context. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal was seeking to pull the nation from despair just as this natural disaster threatened to overwhelm the government's recovery efforts. The looming catastrophe foreshadowed an

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urgent federal response that would test the resilience of both a nation and its citizens.

This chapter effectively lays the groundwork for the impending disaster, intertwining the lives of fragile veterans with the larger narrative of an America grappling with dire economic and social challenges.

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Chapter 2 Summary: A Remote Paradise

Chapter 2 Summary of "Storm of the Century"

In Chapter 2, we explore the formative years of Bernard Russell in the tranquil yet isolating setting of Islamorada, Florida, during the 1930s. Reflecting on his childhood, Russell describes the small-town atmosphere where he often walked barefoot along the sandy paths to Matecumbe Graded School. The Florida Keys are depicted as a remote paradise, characterized by untamed nature and vivid turquoise waters, yet marked by a sense of isolation from the mainland.

This isolation also extends to education, as families often had to send their children to distant towns for higher schooling. During this time, Russell forms a significant bond with Laurette Pinder, a friendship that becomes an integral part of his upbringing amidst the challenges of their environment.

Despite some modernization, with electricity sporadically available, many residents maintained lifestyles reminiscent of earlier generations. The Florida East Coast Railway serves as a vital connection to the mainland, creating a crucial lifeline for the local communities.

Daily life is fraught with challenges, including limited resources, outdoor

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toilets due to water scarcity, and the ever-present threat of hurricanes.

Residents often relied on their knowledge of natural signs and barometer readings for storm predictions, a skill honed by generations living in this vulnerable landscape.

The bounty of the Keys, particularly its seafood, plays a significant role in the community's survival during the hardships of the Great Depression.

Gardening and fishing become staples for families, contributing not only to their sustenance but also to the local economy through produce and sponge harvesting.

As the chapter progresses, the looming shadow of the Great Depression is felt intensified by the influx of veterans returning home in search of work amid rising unemployment. President Herbert Hoover's denial of the crisis exacerbates the struggles faced by these veterans, culminating in protests in Washington, D.C., highlighting their plight.

The political atmosphere shifts dramatically with Franklin D. Roosevelt's ascent to the presidency. His New Deal policies aim to support the "forgotten man," responding to the urgent needs of both veterans and the impoverished. The chapter portrays this pivotal transformation in American politics, emphasizing FDR's commitment to addressing the struggles of the disenfranchised.

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Culturally, the narrative contrasts the lives of affluent visitors reveling in the tropical beauty against the stark realities faced by locals and veterans. The chapter concludes on a somber note, hinting at an uncertain future for those who had flocked to the Keys in search of hope and assistance, setting the stage for the challenges yet to come in this warm but tumultuous era.

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Chapter 3 Summary: Forgotten Men

Chapter 3: Forgotten Men

Introduction to the Setting

On July 7, 1935, a powerful thunderstorm unleashed its fury on the Upper Keys. John Ambrose, a war veteran from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, took notice. He was one of many unemployed veterans sent to the Florida Keys as part of a New Deal initiative designed to provide jobs building a bridge linking Key West to the mainland. This project was a crucial government response to the rampant unemployment and economic struggles of the Great Depression.

Life in the Work Camps

By the summer of 1935, the makeshift work camps had grown into small villages where camaraderie developed among the veterans. Here, they produced a weekly newspaper, *Key Veteran News*, with Ambrose contributing as a cartoonist and columnist. However, the storm's severity stirred deep-seated memories of the war within the men, amplifying their internal battles and sense of unease.

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Struggles of the Veterans

The veterans, many of whom had returned from the war significantly changed, grappled with feelings of alienation and insecurity. The oppressive grip of the Depression only deepened their struggles. They faced profound disconnection from civilian life, often turning to heavy drinking as a coping mechanism, which led to conflicts within their community. The isolating environment of the Keys, already strained by economic downturns, further complicated their attempts to regain control of their lives.

Economic Landscape of Key West

Once a vibrant hub of industries such as marine salvaging and cigar-making, Key West had fallen on hard times by the late 1920s. As these industries collapsed, residents were left mired in poverty, and the arrival of veterans added both a hope for labor and a strain on the community's already limited resources. Local governments found themselves overwhelmed, unable to manage the influx effectively.

Federal Intervention

To address the crisis, the Florida Emergency Relief Administration (ERA) stepped in to oversee the veterans' labor. The highway construction project aimed to provide much-needed employment, yet the miserable conditions in

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the camps remained a source of discontent. Camp supervisors, often ill-prepared, struggled to address the psychological and emotional needs of the veterans, resulting in resentment and unrest.

Challenges with Camp Management

As the camps continued to swell with new arrivals, the poor living conditions provoked demands from veterans for better treatment. Unfortunately, camp authorities frequently dismissed these grievances, only worsening tensions between the veterans and their supervisors. The lack of response highlighted the systemic neglect veterans faced—an oversight reflective of broader societal indifference.

Rumblings of Change

By March 1935, however, new leadership began to instigate positive changes, promoting team sports and community engagement among the veterans. This shift offered a spark of hope, yet the personal and financial challenges that characterized each veteran's life remained entwined with the greater economic landscape of the time.

Crisis of Authority and Imminent Threat

As summer progressed, the threat of hurricanes loomed ominously. Though

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administrators had been warned about potential storms, a combination of miscommunication and misplaced confidence left the camps ill-prepared. The prevailing focus on authority and management among camp supervisors only intensified the precarious situation.

Concluding Remarks

Sam Cutler, the individual responsible for the veterans' welfare, faced the daunting task of understanding the risks posed by the impending storm while trying to maintain order among the increasingly restless veteran populace. The clouds of an approaching hurricane mirrored the brewing tensions within the camps, forewarning of the trials ahead. As preparations for the storm continued, both external and internal upheavals hinted at a pivotal moment, elevating the stakes for all involved.

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Chapter 4: A Wind Stirs in the Atlantic

Summary of Chapter 4: Storm of the Century

Chapter 4 of the narrative delves into the complex process of hurricane formation and the events leading up to an extraordinary storm that struck the Florida Keys in August 1935. It begins by explaining the scientific underpinnings of hurricanes, which typically arise in the Atlantic Ocean when sea temperatures exceed 80 degrees Fahrenheit. This warmth initiates rising currents of air and creates a low-pressure area, leading to a circular motion of winds. As the storm feeds on the warm water, it can escalate from a tropical disturbance into a powerful hurricane, although many similar storms fade away without causing significant impact.

On August 31, 1935, a tropical disturbance emerged near The Bahamas, where the water temperature reached a balmy 86 degrees. Under favorable atmospheric conditions, what seemed like a minor weather event began to intensify unexpectedly, capturing the attention of meteorologists. Given that past disturbances seldom evolved into major hurricanes, this sudden strengthening raised alarms among experts.

Meanwhile, as Labor Day approached, the locals in the Florida Keys were preoccupied with holiday preparations. Residents, including newlyweds,

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teenagers, and fishermen, were blissfully unaware of the impending danger as they engaged in their festive routines. While the storm traveled west-northwest and increased in strength, responses varied. Some community leaders recognized the impending threat, but many residents remained skeptical or indifferent.

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Chapter 5 Summary: It's Blowing Like Hell Down Here

In Chapter 5, titled "It's Blowing Like Hell Down Here," the tension escalates as a hurricane aggressively approaches the Florida Keys, prompting a frantic evacuation of veterans in the area. F.L. Aitcheson, the FEC assistant superintendent, receives urgent instructions to arrange a special train for the impending evacuation. As preparations begin, the storm's arrival is more imminent than initially believed.

Fred Ghent, monitoring the situation from Jacksonville, is initially optimistic about the evacuation timeline, believing that they have sufficient time to safely relocate everyone. However, the reality on the ground is starkly different; as the storm's winds intensify, residents and veterans are increasingly affected, with damage already visible to structures in the Keys.

Key figures such as Etta Parker Sweeting and Joseph Fecteau express their growing alarm over the escalating wind conditions. Some veterans display a false sense of bravado, underestimating the hurricane's threat until they are confronted with its harsh realities. Amidst this turmoil, a series of relay calls are made to ensure the evacuation train is swiftly prepared in Miami, but delays arise due to the storm's increasing ferocity.

As panic mounts and conditions rapidly deteriorate, the evacuation efforts become more urgent. The residents face relentless winds and torrential rain,

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causing buildings to collapse and heightening fears. Ed Sheeran and Ray Sheldon take charge, effectively organizing the increasingly chaotic evacuation process.

As the hurricane reaches its peak strength, the chapter portrays a scene of bedlam at the weather station and among the veterans. The narrative captures the harrowing experiences of those caught in the storm: roofs are ripped from structures, emergency sirens wail, and desperate attempts to secure safety ensue.

With the evacuation train finally departing, the urgency amplifies as the storm looms closer. Emergency measures are enacted while the characters grapple with the terrifying realization of their predicament. This chapter vividly conveys the mounting sense of urgency and dread as each character battles their fears in a race against time to escape the hurricane's full fury.

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Chapter 6 Summary: In the Heft of the Hurricane

Chapter 6 Summary: In the Heft of the Hurricane

Train in the Storm

In this gripping chapter, George Branch bravely pilots a rescue train through the relentless assault of a hurricane. As debris flies and winds howl with ferocity, Branch and his crew confront obstacles, including a large cable entwined around the train. This complication, compounded by the need to evacuate refugees, understandably delays their departure due to the emergency brakes being engaged.

Evacuation Attempts

Amid the chaos, Branch and a fellow crew member make a courageous decision to save a desperate father and his frightened daughters. However, the father ultimately chooses to remain behind with his children, prioritizing their bond over safety. With the train still immobilized, the crew enlists the help of local veterans and residents who form a human chain in a collective effort to free the train and aid in the evacuation.

Storm Intensification

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As night approaches, the hurricane's ferocity escalates, with winds soaring past 160 mph. The danger becomes palpable for the low-lying Keys, where homes and shelters are ill-prepared to withstand such surges, especially at elevations of just 18 feet above sea level. With the train delayed for over an hour, the imminent threat of the hurricane looms closer, creating a precarious situation.

Chaos in Islamorada

In the nearby town of Islamorada, destruction unfolds as the hurricane dismantles buildings and forces residents to seek shelter. With traditional refuges becoming unsafe, many scramble for alternative safety, finding themselves in a boxcar as seawater begins to encroach—a desperate plea for survival amidst the rising tide.

The Moment of the Surge

As the storm reaches its zenith, catastrophic collapse becomes a grim reality, thrusting inhabitants of makeshift shelters into harrowing dilemmas: stay and risk drowning or venture into the wrath of the storm. The chapter paints a vivid picture of despair as individuals are swept away by the relentless forces of nature, contributing to the horrendous death toll.

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Desperate Struggles and Loss

Survivors emerge from the storm with harrowing stories, battling not only the raging elements but also the emotional weight of loss. The narrative shifts between families and individuals, showcasing their courage and selflessness amidst turmoil, while some face the agony of losing loved ones against all odds.

Aftermath and Survival

As the winds begin to die down, a somber realization of the devastation settles over the survivors. Amid the remnants of their homes and lives, reflections on loss and the will to survive surface, illuminating the resilience of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming adversity. The chapter concludes with a powerful testament to the strength required to endure the aftermath of nature's fury.

This summary encapsulates the critical moments of Chapter 6, weaving together action and emotion to portray the human experience during a catastrophic storm. If you would like further adjustments or a different focus, please let me know!

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Chapter 7 Summary: A Terrible Sunrise

Chapter 7 Summary: The Devastation After the Hurricane

The chapter begins with a haunting depiction of the landscape as dawn breaks after the hurricane, casting a somber light on the destruction around. Although the storm has weakened, its ferocious winds and heavy rains leave a trail of havoc. Survivors, including John Russell and his family, huddle in a derailed train, anxiously contemplating the fates of their relatives lost in the chaos.

Amidst this turmoil, the struggles of various survivors are depicted. Edney Parker emerges from the rubble to witness his home displaced, a testament to the storm's overwhelming force. Meanwhile, the Butters family finds shelter at a local filling station, highlighting the desperate measures people take as their neighborhoods spiral into chaos.

The devastation is palpable, with the landscape transformed into a ghostly scene dotted with debris and tragic loss. Key community structures, such as the Matecumbe Methodist Church and local schools, lie in ruins, symbolizing the loss of sanctuary for many. The narrative captures the profound grief experienced by families searching for missing loved ones, underscoring the human toll of the disaster.

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As the storm recedes, survivors begin the urgent quest for refuge, food, and clean water. Reports reveal that veterans' camps, homes to many who faced battles overseas, have been demolished, amplifying the tragedy as countless veterans are lost. The collective grief and confusion among families intensify as the search for the missing grows increasingly desperate.

On a broader scale, emergency responses from outside the devastated area lag behind the unfolding disaster. News outlets start to cover the situation, yet a glaring disconnect emerges between their coverage and the grim reality faced by survivors on the ground. The Weather Bureau's initial misjudgment regarding the storm's severity starkly contrasts with the widespread devastation, further compounding the survivors' anguish.

In conclusion, this chapter vividly captures the horror and disorientation following the hurricane. As survivors congregate in makeshift shelters, the daunting challenge of recovery looms before them, a testament to human resilience amid overwhelming destruction. The narrative poignantly illustrates not just the immediate chaos but also the slow, painful realization of the profound impact of the disaster.

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Chapter 8: Just a Catastrophe

Chapter 8 Summary: Storm of the Century

Introduction

On September 3, Fred Ghent, along with his team, headed to the hurricane-wrecked Florida Keys to assess damages and assist in rescue efforts. At this point, the full extent of the disaster was still unfolding, and their mission was critical.

Road to the Keys

As they traveled, Ghent faced significant obstacles, including blocked roads due to downed trees and debris. Recognizing the severity of the situation, he contacted his superiors to report the conditions and request additional assistance. Meanwhile, an evacuation train carrying veterans was halted when the tracks were washed out, underscoring the catastrophic impact of the storm.

Hurricane's Impact

Though the storm had weakened, winds still exceeded 130 mph, wreaking

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havoc and resulting in numerous casualties. Reports began to surface, including the tragic death of a veteran who died in a bus accident during the storm.

Arrival in the Keys

Upon reaching the Keys, Ghent and his colleagues, including Roy Hurley, were met with devastation—homes were destroyed, and bodies were being discovered amid the wreckage. Despite the grim developments, Ghent reassured officials in Homestead that the situation could be controlled, even as news of increasing casualties poured in.

Rescue Operations Initiated

As the winds calmed, the Coast Guard mobilized for rescue missions. Survivors gradually emerged, sharing harrowing tales of loss and resilience, illustrating the profound human impact of the hurricane.

Mountain of Dead and Disarray

Reports revealed entire families had perished, leading to emotional turmoil among survivors grappling with massive loss. Chaos ensued as more individuals sought refuge, creating a scene of disarray that overwhelmed local response efforts.

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Government Response

In the wake of the devastation, the federal government rushed to respond, evaluating the failures in systems designed to protect citizens, especially veterans. Questions arose regarding the effectiveness of hurricane warnings and evacuation protocols, prompting a climate of blame and urgency.

Media Coverage and Public Reaction

As news outlets disseminated information about the disaster, discrepancies in death toll estimates emerged, with figures ranging from tens to hundreds. Public outrage mounted, especially targeting government officials perceived to have neglected their duties during the crisis.

Tension in Leadership

As the situation escalated, U.S. officials undertook emergency coordination efforts, driven by fears of public backlash. Senior administration members devised plans to manage the aftermath and ensure that survivors and the families of victims received necessary support.

Continuing Aftermath

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Rescue operations intensified amidst ongoing reports of fatalities and injuries, highlighting the devastating consequences of the hurricane. As the scope of the loss became clearer, emotional distress in affected communities grew, prompting widespread humanitarian initiatives and inquiries into disaster management practices.

This chapter illustrates not only the immediate effects of the hurricane but also the subsequent national response and the complex interplay of heroism, loss, and accountability in the face of tragedy.

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Alex Walk

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Chapter 9 Summary: An Act of God

Chapter 8: An Act of God - Summary

This chapter delves into the aftermath of the catastrophic hurricane that struck the Florida Keys on September 2, 1935, scrutinizing its impact through the lenses of media coverage, government accountability, and public sentiment.

Hurricane's Aftermath: A Media Frenzy

The Miami Beach Daily Tribune spearheaded reports detailing the hurricane's devastation, spotlighting rescues and the staggering death toll while also implicating government neglect concerning the veterans stationed in makeshift camps. Graphic accounts of suffering and loss flooded the media, claiming a cover-up regarding the Weather Bureau's failure to issue adequate evacuation warnings despite being aware of the imminent storm.

Confusion Among Rescuers

Major publications, including The Washington Post, reported conflicting casualty figures, indicating a death toll that ranged from 500 to over 800. The chaotic rescue efforts further clouded the situation, with military

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personnel arriving and uncertain leadership complicating operations. Editor and Publisher magazine commended local journalists who risked their lives to bring the tragic story to light, even as allegations surfaced regarding contradictory orders and political manipulation during the crisis.

The Weather Bureau Under Scrutiny

Federal investigators began an inquiry into the Weather Bureau's actions, attempting to clarify the warnings issued and decisions made. Conversations among officials revealed a complex web of conflicting narratives, ultimately leading to the conclusion that the Weather Bureau bore significant responsibility. Lawrence Westbrook, a key figure in the discussion, described the storm's impact as "an act of God," deflecting accountability from the authorities.

Political Repercussions and Emotional Toll

As the hurricane continued to wreak havoc along the East Coast, politicians, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt, began to address the implications of the disaster. The president announced that the deceased veterans would receive burial rights at Arlington National Cemetery. However, challenges arose in the recovery and identification of victims, necessitating the cremation of some remains, which added to the emotional distress of families and communities grappling with their losses.

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Rising Outrage and Calls for Justice

Public outrage intensified, driven by the Greater Miami Ministerial Association and other organized groups demanding accountability for the veterans' deaths. The media speculated on potential political consequences for the Roosevelt administration amid the brewing scandal, prompting official inquiries to investigate the decisions preceding and during the hurricane.

Honoring the Fallen

In response to the tragedy, a memorial service was organized in Miami to pay tribute to the fallen veterans, complete with military honors and participation from public figures. Emotions ran high as families and communities mourned collectively, facing the profound grief of their losses and the societal implications that accompanied these tragic events.

Conclusions and Society's Reflection

The chapter concludes by highlighting the interwoven nature of the disaster's aftermath with political ambitions and administrative decisions. It underscores the urgency for a comprehensive investigation into the choices made prior to and during the hurricane, reflecting on broader issues related

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to the treatment of veterans and society's vulnerability to natural disasters. With public outcry echoing the need for accountability, the stage is set for deeper discussions on the implications of such tragedies.

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Chapter 10 Summary: Regret to Inform You

Chapter 10 Summary: Regret to Inform You

In this chapter, the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of a tragedy that struck veterans stationed in the Florida Keys during a devastating hurricane, spotlighting the fallout from the Veterans Administration's (VA) role in delivering the painful news of loss to families across the nation.

Blame on the Veterans Administration

The chapter opens by illustrating the deep sense of grief and distress experienced by families receiving telegrams that began with the haunting phrase "Regret to inform you." These notifications not only conveyed the deaths of their loved ones but also intertwined sorrow with a sense of betrayal, as the public began to associate their anguish with the VA—the messenger of their heart-wrenching news.

Response to Death Notifications

The scale of the tragedy was vast, with telegrams dispatched across the country to relay the deaths of numerous veterans. The public's reaction was a collective wave of outrage and sorrow, leading to demands for

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accountability from government officials whom many blamed for the apparent negligence that led to these preventable fatalities.

Identity Issues and Missing Persons

Compounding the tragedy was the harrowing reality that many bodies could not be identified upon arrival due to the hurricane's devastation, thwarting families' efforts to find closure. Some veterans remained missing, leaving their families engulfed in an echoing uncertainty and deepening their grief.

Public Outcry Against Roosevelt's Administration

Discontent was soon directed at President Franklin Roosevelt's administration, criticized for failing to ensure timely evacuations from the hurricane-prone keys. A wave of letters flooded in, voicing outrage over perceived government negligence that had dire consequences, threatening the political support that Roosevelt had historically enjoyed.

Investigation and Accountability

As investigations were initiated by VA officials to examine the circumstances surrounding the tragedy, a cloud of bureaucratic tensions loomed. Officials hesitated to assign blame, and the inquiry quickly garnered skepticism, perceived by many as a mere pretense rather than a genuine

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attempt to seek accountability. This presented an unsettling picture of systemic incompetence within an organization meant to protect its veterans.

Survivor Testimonies and Ongoing Anger

Interviews with survivors painted a grim picture of the decisions that led to their comrades' deaths, revealing deep-rooted feelings of negligence. As these accounts emerged, public anger only intensified, underscoring the broader repercussions of the disaster.

Conclusion About Leadership and Responsibility

An investigation led by Kennamer revealed unsettling truths about the inadequacies in response and communication among key officials, including Ray Sheldon, Fred Ghent, and Conrad Van Hyning. Kennamer attributed the deaths of over 250 veterans to administrative failures, highlighting a lack of decisive action and leadership. Yet, he acknowledged the public's divergent views on where accountability lay, encapsulating the complex emotions surrounding the disaster.

Impact and Aftermath

The fallout from this tragedy extended well beyond the immediate events, fracturing public trust in government agencies dedicated to veterans' welfare

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and influencing future political landscapes. This chapter effectively illustrates the intersection of human tragedy and bureaucratic failure, showcasing the lasting emotional scars that emerge in the aftermath of disasters exacerbated by systemic negligence.

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Chapter 11 Summary: For the Record

Chapter 11 Summary

Overview of Congressional Hearings on Veterans' Deaths

In April 1936, a significant congressional hearing took place before the House Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation, concerning the tragic deaths of veterans during a devastating hurricane that struck the Florida Keys on September 2, 1935. Chaired by Representative John Rankin, the committee's mission was twofold: to investigate the causes behind the veterans' deaths and to oversee compensation for the affected families.

Sheldon's Testimony and Experience

One of the key witnesses was Ray Sheldon, who described himself as an expert in meteorology with extensive experience regarding hurricanes in Florida. During the hearings, he recounted the storm's sudden onset and highlighted the lack of predictive indicators that could have warned the veterans and camp administrators about the impending danger. This crucial testimony raised questions about the preparedness and reaction of the

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authorities involved in managing the camps.

Political Motives Behind the Hearings

The hearings were not solely focused on seeking justice for the veterans; they were also heavily tinged with political motives. As the looming election approached, Republicans sought to exploit the tragedy as a means to critique President Franklin Roosevelt's administration. In a bid to fortify the administration's defense, Rankin orchestrated the hearings to suggest that there was no culpability for the deaths, framing the incident as an 'act of God.'

Conflict Between Parties

Tensions came to a head as Representative Edith Nourse Rogers, a Democrat, aimed to inject accountability into the proceedings. She vociferously questioned the evacuation efforts and pressed Rankin for a sincere inquiry into the administration's actions and inactions. However, Rankin frequently interrupted, diverting the focus and controlling the narrative to craft a perception that absolved the government of wrongdoing.

Manipulation of Testimony and Evidence

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Throughout the hearings, Rankin employed selective witness testimonies and evidence to solidify the administration's defensive position. He strategically excluded or downplayed testimonies that posed a challenge to the narrative of inevitability surrounding the disaster. This manipulation was aimed at reinforcing the conclusion that external forces, rather than administrative failures, were responsible for the unfortunate outcomes.

Final Outcomes and Legislative Action

Ultimately, the chapter concludes with the passage of a bill intended to provide compensation for the families of the deceased veterans. Despite numerous criticisms regarding accountability and negligence, the successful manipulation of the hearing's narrative led to the upholding of a favorable political stance for the administration. This event not only impacted the immediate victims but also influenced the broader political landscape as the nation prepared for the upcoming election, highlighting the interplay between governance and public perception during crises.

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Chapter 12: The Illusion of Remoteness

Summary of Chapter 12: The Illusion of Remoteness

Introduction

On September 7, 1936, the Grooms family, led by Bascom Grooms Sr., makes a poignant return to Key West, still mourning the loss of their daughter, Rosalind, who perished in the catastrophic hurricane that struck the previous year.

Reminders of the Past

As the family drives through the Florida Keys, they are confronted with vivid reminders of the hurricane's devastation. They pass wrecked cars and dilapidated homes, which serve as stark symbols of the recent tragedy. This prompts discussions within the community about establishing a memorial for the victims, highlighting a collective desire to honor and remember the past.

Eerie Discoveries

During their journey, the Grooms family discovers a rusted car identical to

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the one Rosalind had been in with her fiancé, George Pepper, when the storm hit. This striking resemblance compels Bascom to stop and investigate. He retrieves a part from the car, symbolizing both a painful reminder of their loss and a haunting connection to that fateful day.

Life After the Hurricane

As they navigate their grief, the Grooms are not alone; other survivors, including Bertram Pinder and his family, return to face the reality of their changed lives. The Pinders struggle with extensive agricultural losses and the deep emotional scars left by the storm, each family member finding unique ways to cope with their trauma.

Search for Missing Veterans

Amid the ongoing devastation, families of veterans actively search for their missing loved ones. The Veterans Administration is involved in addressing this crisis, reflecting the broader efforts to document the casualties and support affected families.

Political Ramifications and Reports

In the wake of this tragedy, politicians and various organizations delve into the causes and effects of the hurricane. Investigations reveal government

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negligence, with key figures like John Abt and David Kennamer leading discussions about failures in communication during the crisis, emphasizing accountability and the need for improved disaster management.

The Legacy of the Storm

The narrative expands to reflect on the wider implications of the Labor Day Hurricane of 1935, prompting officials to advocate for better preparedness against future storms. Public awareness grows concerning the substantial dangers hurricanes pose, underlining the need for enhanced safety measures.

Cultural Shifts in the Florida Keys

As tourism burgeons, the Florida Keys transform from a secluded paradise into a bustling destination, raising pressing concerns over emergency management and evacuation protocols in light of natural disasters. This shift marks a significant cultural change in the region's identity.

Conclusion

The chapter concludes with a sober reflection on the lasting impact of the hurricane on both survivors and the community at large. It foreshadows future storms, particularly Hurricane Irma, and illustrates how personal tragedies intertwine with broader societal shifts, emphasizing the delicate

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balance between growth and vulnerability in the Florida Keys.

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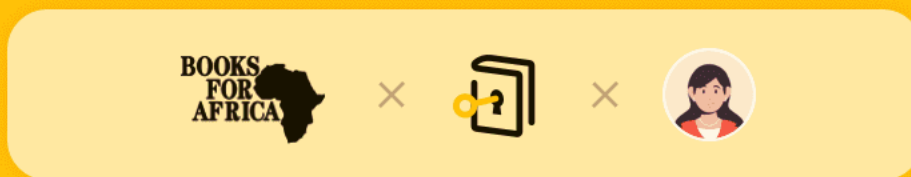




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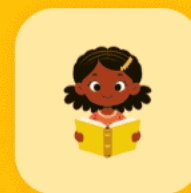
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Chapter 13 Summary: Time Borrowed from the Wind

Chapter 13 Summary: Storm of the Century

Patrick Garvey's Ambitious Project

In late summer 2017, Canadian social worker Patrick Garvey devoted himself to revitalizing Grimal Grove, a neglected fruit grove on Big Pine Key. His commitment, supported by volunteers and a modest grant, had started to attract attention, despite his attorney's warnings about potential challenges ahead.

Approaching Hurricane Irma

On August 29, while Garvey celebrated the progress of his project at a local restaurant, alarming news emerged about a brewing storm. The devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey in Houston was still fresh in public memory. Shortly after his dinner, this developing weather system intensified into Hurricane Irma, the ninth hurricane of the Atlantic season, known for its formidable strength and threatenings.

The Strength of Irma Grows

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Irma rapidly escalated, reaching winds of 180 mph. Evacuations and emergency alerts were prompted in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Florida Governor Rick Scott urged residents to take the impending storm seriously. What initially seemed like mere chatter transitioned into real fear as the fullness of the storm's threat sank in.

Impact on the Caribbean and Florida

As Irma wreaked havoc across islands such as Barbuda and Saint Martin, inflicting serious damage to properties and infrastructure, Florida residents grappled with difficult decisions regarding evacuation. Many chose to stay behind in a bid to protect their homes, revealing the deep emotional connection many had to their communities.

Irma's Approaching Threat

With the hurricane barreling towards Florida, mandatory evacuations were enacted. Fear and anxiety spread like wildfire as the predicted destruction loomed closer. Reports of gas shortages and traffic jams painted a dire picture for those attempting to flee the storm's path.

Personal Accounts of the Storm

As the storm's arrival drew near, many shared their preparations and fears.

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Patrick Garvey and other community members ultimately opted for shelter rather than evacuation, finding solace in prayer and gathering at local places of worship, such as the basilica, acknowledging the enormity of the threat that Irma posed.

Landfall and Damage Assessment

On September 10, Hurricane Irma made landfall, leaving a path of devastation across the Florida Keys and surrounding regions. Emergency management quickly initiated damage assessments, reporting extensive losses in both property and lives. Despite the overwhelming destruction, the community held onto hope and resilience.

Long-term Recovery

In the hurricane's aftermath, the community embarked on the arduous path of recovery. The assessments revealed severe structural damage and a lengthy recovery process ahead, underscoring critical issues around housing and infrastructure as residents mourned the impact of one of the most powerful hurricanes ever recorded.

Final Reflections

As weeks went by, the memories of the storm continued to haunt the

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residents, illustrating that although Irma was no longer a threat, the challenges remained daunting. The urgency for recovery underscored the Florida Keys' vulnerability, leaving the community aware that they were still "living on time borrowed from the wind."

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