
Reflections on Hurricane Maria

Convent High School Creative Writing



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Introduction

On September 18, 2017 , Hurricane Maria tore through the Caribbean island of Dominica as a Category 5 storm. The devastation was unprecedented and every person, every household was significantly impacted by the storm. The students of Convent High School's Forms 4 and 5 have documented their experiences through creative expression. These are their stories.

I Thought it was a Dance

Megan Luke

Mr. Sun was out and shining bright in the sky. The sea of the Caribbean was as blue and calm as ever. All of the coconut trees liked that especially Marlin. Marlin was the shortest coconut tree that found home amongst the silvery-black sand of this popular beach. Marlin was happy today because today seemed like the perfect day to come to the beach. He loved looking at the excited sea-bathers but what he loved even more was when they picked one of his sweet coconuts and feasted on it.

Marlin's excitement was slowly dwindling, because midday had already passed and not one person had come to the sandy shores or the crystal blue water. However, he tried to be optimistic because it was not too late for a sea bath.

It was sunset, and still not one person came. This brought Marlin great worry as he wondered what happened to the usual sea bathers. Had something come up and they couldn't make it today? Did the sea no longer bring them joy? All these questions and no answers was giving Marlin a nut-ache.

Night fell, Marlin was sad. He could not believe that no one had come today. A single tear fell from his eye and rolled down the entirety of his trunk until it reached the earth below. Caught in his gloom, Marlin did not notice the sudden change or he may have ignored it.

Marlin heard the roar of the sea and he was shaken out of his funk. He opened his eyes and looked out at the never ending black of the sea, it was terrifying. He looked on ahead as he saw a huge wave crash on shore and was greatly taken aback. Never had he seen the sea come so far on the shore. He felt a gentle breeze, and it slightly calmed his frightened nerves. Marlin felt his body move involuntarily, it was almost as if he was dancing. He felt like he had been slapped across the face as one of his coconuts was detached from his head and fell to the ground. What was causing these things to happen to him? Marlin did not know.

Suddenly, he heard a swoosh and he slightly cocked his head to the side where he saw the taller coconut trees in a non-stop salsa. It was the wind. It was doing magical things to them and Marlin could believe his eyes. He was going coconuts.

A Night to Remember

Grace B. Etienne

She was the talk of the show alright. Her name was all over social media, the internet, even in her mother's mouth. Indeed she had become popular in a matter of days and I heard she was coming to break David's long standing throne.

I looked at the time on my mother's petite cellphone. Only an hour had passed since Hurricane Maria started lashing Dominica with her heavy wind bands. By now, the galvanized roof of my two-story house was already half-bald. Soon, the bedrooms were a pool of water, mattresses, pillows, even clothes, all soaking wet.

The day before the hurricane was a bright sunny day indeed. After coming from church, and listening to a short sermon my father later left the island for Sweden. This following week, it would be my sister's graduation ceremony and he would represent the entire family there. Lucky for the both of them, fasting Maria's medicine was not an option on their lists.

The large table in the dining room became our haven for only a few hours. Rain from heaven continued to pound heavily in the half-gone roof, as if boulders were dropping from the sky.

My little brother had always enjoyed lying in his bed while listening to the raindrops dance gracefully on our tin roof. But now, he was shivering cold and afraid, holding tight to one of the table's wooden legs.

"Don't worry Joshua, we not going to die, okay?" I tried giving hope not only to him but to my sister and mother as well.

Then suddenly, plat-a-tat-PAW! Maria continued to weed out the galvanized exposing the wooden rafters to the enormous sky.

Water from the bedrooms had finally crept to where we were hiding, forcing all four of us out from underneath the table.

"Everybody, grab your umbrella and come sit down". My mother had arranged in circle four chairs on which we sat until the next morning.

My rainbow patterned umbrella stood proudly in one corner of the roof, water reaching it almost halfway. After grabbing it, I turned around to exit the room, then stopped. Why was there a light coming from the porch when no one was outside?

"Mammy! Mammy! All you, come and see that. I think somebody on de porch!" I quickly ran to where everyone was sitting, water splashing from far and wide.

My mother poked through my bedroom's glass window to look at the porch. She too was scared, the candle stick shaking in her trembling hand.

"Somebody outside for real wi", my mother agreed. "An angel that there mammy", my brother concluded.

My heart started to beat faster. Soon, it was racing and I was now officially afraid. This was definitely not an angel but a man, I figured. But how in the world did this guy himself in our porch?

Since my father had already condemned the sliding doors to the porch the day before he left, we discovered there was nothing we could really do to help him.

As a result, we all went back to our seats and started offering prayers unto God.

"I shall not die but live to declare the works of the Lord. If we die today, oh Lord, how will we declare your works? Therefore, do not take away our lives please". I started to recite scriptural verses which somewhat helped me to feel at ease.

We continued praising God while sheltering the rain underneath our four umbrellas.

"Grace, we have to find a way downstairs, fast", my mother thought at last.

Indeed, the clothes we were wearing were a bit wet and our toes were wrinkled from staying in water for so long. This was obviously not healthy for any of us and downstairs was our only hope.

"Let's wait for the lull", I said feeling impressed that I remembered some geography from second form.

When the wind became quiet and the rain subsided, my mother and I finally opened the door. At first, it was very difficult to open, but the wind from outside assisted by pushing it on us. Some neighbors had come out as well, their flashlights and candles lighting up the black world outside.

"Light there for me, Grace". I directed the flashlight to where my mother had instructed. Electrical wires were dangling like vines in front of our door.

"Whoosh!" we exclaimed simultaneously.

Our yard looked like Midden Rivers in Nigeria. Gigantic logs, sheets of galvanized both rusty and new, even an old, white refrigerator could be found floating in our yard. Worse, the staircase leading downstairs was completely covered in debris. The water level in the yard was approximately five feet high. Definitely, there was no way we could have gone downstairs.

As a result, we all remained upstairs but endured like the three musketeers until the end. Lightning continued to illuminate the sky, but only for a few hours. Meanwhile, thunder boomed all across the heavens.

September 18 was indeed the longest night in my fifteen years on earth. Thanks to Maria, the strength of my anchors was assessed and I must say, I passed the test.

To some, Maria was Santa Claus; giving Christmas presents to the little children, months in advance. To others, Maria was an angel sent from heaven, granting students and teachers an extended vacation. Even to the birds, Maria was a huge traitor, which came to destroy their homes. But to me, like all other Dominicans, Maria came to leave us all "in style".



English Narrative

Bethany Vital

“Pa, where are you?” Jack cried, his heart pounding for his dear father. They were in the midst of Hurricane Maria; a category 5 hurricane, which was threatening their tiny farmhouse.

“I’m right here son, it’s okay”, Pa replied. He was outside in the storm trying to barricade their entryway, as the door had been blown off its hinges. The wind was powerful, blowing down trees and sadly, the wooden barn outside. It sounded like high-pitched screaming, whilst the rain poured down like bullets onto the ground. Jack feared for his father, as there were projectiles flying through the air. It was then that his father, came running through into the living room, absolutely soaked.

“I blocked the door, but the wind’s too strong. It will knock it down in no time”, Pa explained defeated. “Oh Lord!”- He exclaimed, his voice filled with terror. The roof was breathing in and out, lifting from the ceiling. The rain barreled down on them with such force that it hurt.

“Into the cellar, now!” he shouted whilst running down the dark staircase, his son hot on his heels. Jack struggled to close the door, eventually being thrown down the stairs by its sheer magnitude. “Jack!” his father called then raced to help him up. Together they closed the door and secured it with a plank of wood.

Jack sat in a corner, slowly keening to himself and shaking with anxiety. This slightly took his father by surprise, since Jack has always been so stable and calm since he was a boy.

“I-I M didn’t secure the animals properly and I didn’t secure all our contracts! It’s all gone and the poor animals are dead because of me!” He sobbed, as he was choked up with tears, fright and guilt.

“Shh, it’s okay son, all that matters is that you’re alive, stop worrying,” Pa soothed his son, all the while being distraught himself within. The rain and wind continued to beat down on the house, and with no roof, the water was starting to flood the cellar.

“Pa! We can’t stay here we have to move, now!” Jack yelled, but where would they go? The house was flooded and with the only way out being blocked by debris, they couldn’t escape. Pa knew their opportunities were limited, and with no hope left, began to cry.

“Someone, anyone, please help!” he cried, knowing that he won’t be heard. But it was that moment he heard something.

“Jack? Pa? Are you here?” yelled someone. Jack realized it was Beau, the farmhand.

“We’re down here!” he bellowed, relief overwhelmed him. Jack took Pa’s hand and guided him up the stairs. They removed the wood and got out of the way in time for the door to bust open.

“Thank God you’re here!” Jack said relieved that help came.

“Come on, this way!” Beau shouted and proceeded to guide them through a small passage he had made among the water... During this time, the rain and wind eased up and they left the house to go to a shelter.

Maria

Thai Jno Baptiste

“But why we have to do all that nuh? Is jus’ a category two.” Tyrella whined in irritation as she and her sisters packed CD’s into boxes. They were in the living room at their house, each bent over one box on their knees.

“Well, Daddy say to do it so we have to do it. It’s best not to argue with him”. Her older sister Chloe said. She finished packing her box of CD’s and climbed to her feet to bring it downstairs.

Tyrella finished hers shortly after and followed her sister. She waited at the top of the stairs that led to the lower area of their house with the older girl, Mia- who was their littlest sister then followed Chloe down the stairs when Mia caught up. “Old people. It’s just a category two”. She sucked her teeth.

The hour was three p.m. The hurricane was to hit at seven. For the entire day, the skies had been cloudy and grey and their father had been on everybody’s case to pack things up and bring them down. Tyrella and her sisters had so far packed up all of their school books and clothes from their room and brought them downstairs. The living room looked close to bare without the flat screen on the center table. The VCR and speaker were clothed in plastic bags from their father.

“Alright, you bring everything down?” the father asked entering the downstairs kitchen with sweat at his brow. This room was where most of his family’s vital belongings were. At the moment so were his girls.

“Yes. Now can we please go back to watching videos on YouTube upstairs? Tyrella asked in a tired voice. She was over exaggerating her fatigue. Their father had been the one doing most of the heavy lifting. All she had been doing was bringing a few of her belongings at a time down here. If anyone should have been tired, it should have been him.

“Okay. Go ahead.” The man had his eyes on his watch. “I have a feeling they might take lights soon. Enjoy yourself. Water already go. He looked busy once more and began rushing up the stairs. “Bathe before you start eh”, he advised.

The three girls exchanged looks of exasperation.

“Mia go and bathe.” Chloe ordered now heading out of the kitchen then up the stairs.

Mia complained shortly then complied.

All girls found themselves upstairs shortly after.

At six p.m. the rain began to fall.

Tyrella was looking out her window at the way the road appeared to be flooding already. The electricity had been cut-off so she was in partial darkness in her sister’s room. It was where all of her siblings were. “Hmmm...” she said. The rain was heavy.

“Everybody okay?” A voice asked at the door. It was their mother. She was smiling.

“Yeah”, Mia answered for all of them. She was lying. Her stomach ached. She felt nervous by the rain.

Their father’s voice sounded from outside. “The wind is starting to get strong. Look at the way the trees are bending”. He appeared in the room doorway next to their mother.

Chloe and Tyrella gave each other looks of mild annoyance. They then giggled. Their father looked kind of excited about this.

“Okay, I’m going to bring Rover inside”. The mother walked away. Rover was their dog.

The father stayed. “By seven we should be seeing some action.” He was the only family member who had not bathed. He had been too busy to do so.

“Hmph.” Tyrella said. She laid back. In her head she did feel a little nervous though. The last update had said that the hurricane was a category four. That was the number before the worst.

Seven p.m.

“Oui bodye.” Their father exclaimed shinning a flashlight out the window to the darkness. Their front gate had flown out its socket. It lay in front of their yard now.

Tyrella bit her nails nervously. She was sitting next to her dog, stroking his back. His heart was racing clearly from fear. Her heart was the same.

“Honey look. I just get word that says that the hurricane is a cat 5.” Their mother said entering the living room. She had to shout over the sounds of the strong winds. They sounded like screams of banshees.

“Category five!” The rest of the household exclaimed.

“Uhhh...” Chloe stammered. She did not look as worried as her younger siblings.

“Okay umm... we need to go downstairs. I can hear the galvanize shaking over us.” Their father let his daughters run ahead of him to reach the staircase before they all went down.

“Mommy it’s wet!” Mia said stepping in a pool of water once she reached into the dark world of their downstairs. She shone her flashlight into one of the rooms. The door that lead to the porch had a deep pool of brown water showing through its glass. It looked like it might burst. The rain was loud all around. “Mommy...” She said nervously.

“What? That is some heavy rain.” Ronald said catching sight of the water. He whistled low. “ Okay Dorothy, go and get the kerosene lamp upstairs because if that roof go we in trouble.”

Their mother left quickly.

Tyrella gulped. This was getting too real.

Just then a loud sound of something bursting open sounded and then they heard glass breaking as well as felt wind popping their ears. The younger girls screamed and ran further into the downstairs region.

“The roof go.” Their father said looking up at the dark upstairs.

More noise came and water fell from the upstairs.

“Mommy!” Tyrella screamed. Her mother was still up there.

“We need to get the mattresses. Chloe come. The father began running up into the darkness with his elder daughter on his tail.

Mia and Tyrella hugged each other and whimpered. They wanted everyone where it was safe. This was terrifying and the wind would not stop.

Another hour and all family members were safely downstairs in a room praying. The wind was still blowing and the noises of things breaking above scared them but they were giving God thanks.

“Amen.” They all said.

Ronald exhaustedly sat and sighed. The family was afraid that he might faint.

“We have a long night ahead of us.” They said.

Everyone gulped. They could feel that it would truly be terrifying.

Hurricane Experience

Oreanna C. Shillingford

The day was going normal. I had no worried since it was announced on the radio that Hurricane Maria will be a category 3 upon passing over Dominica. It started raining heavily like after 5 in the evening and I just stared outside to kill some time. Suddenly I grew tired and fell fast asleep at around 6. I was in my tenth dream when I felt the house shaking. I woke up frightened because my house does not sway that easily. I rushed into the joining room and missed a fall because the entire floor was wet. “Come child! Set right here and stay calm!” shouted my mother.

I did what she said and remained calm. The sound of the wind lashing the windows was scary as it grew stronger by the second. Also, the torrential rain sounded like hail on the roof for it was pouring heavily. More and more water came inside. My feet were freezing cold and I was a bit worried as to what will happen next. Suddenly ‘BOOM!’ went the door flipping in the air. Coming right towards me. I was so horrified. I just stood there with my eyes wide opened. My mother then grabbed my hands and pulled me under the kitchen sink as the door was about to hit me. I began to scream “Help!” “Get me out of her! I want to gooo!” A lot of water came into the house as though it was a giant pipe giving off water. The wind came blowing inside as though it was furious and ready to kill. The fridge fell, the couches were playing games in the air everything was flying all over the place. I couldn’t believe my eyes because to me these things only happened in the movies. We then ran into the bathroom. That was when the roof started to lift up and go with the wind piece by piece. Then I watched the sky, the entire scene was like a horror movie. “What did I do to deserve this?” I asked myself.

I was soaked and trembling trying to hold it together praying that we escape this house safely. Every move we made to go out the wind came rushing in. It had us trapped. Each second I checked my phone and it seemed as if time was on a pause. Then about after ten the rain gave a little ease up and we made a move. I couldn’t see anything. Pitch darkness with raging winds and rain as background music. The rain felt like bullets and the wind was fighting with me. I missed a step and literally rolled down 12 stairs. I received a sprained leg but I couldn’t let that stop me from trying to get to the neighbor’s house. It was very painful, I felt my soul leave my body for a second. I tried to look out to see where my mother was through the impenetrable darkness, but it was no use doing so. Then lightening flashed and I saw her rolling down a little hill below my house. I began to cry because I didn’t want to lose my mother. Another huge wind came again and I hugged the pillars tight will my feet was up in the air; just like in the cartoons. My mother was holding on to a pole which fell on the house. The neighbor’s house is not so close to ours, so it took like 10 minutes to get there. Then we arrived safety laughing at what had just happened to us.

Hurricane Maria

Alleysha Abel

Crashing, screams, sounds of strong flowing water was already an occurrence by 8:00 p.m. on Monday 18th September 2017. The impact of Hurricane Maria, though only just beginning, was bringing about a noticeable difference to the community of Canefield. By 8:30p.m., never before seen, neighboring houses were now exposed for all.

From the windows of the living room, my cousin and I were quickly soaking in the views from the outside, panic seeping into our minds at great speed as if it were a huge crack in the wall allowing the negative thoughts to rush in. Staring at each other with great dismay, the two of us decided to move from our location into my father's room. Upon swift arrival, we immediately regretted the decision as the sight of my mother and brother holding on to the door in attempt to keep it from opening. It was at that point I realized my feet were drowning in water, coming from both the ceiling and the porch door. My cousin as if automatically moved in to assist them, while I on the other hand began to cry. From that point the wind grew stronger as if it were angry trying to cause as much damage as it could. At least two houses had past but we were all in the same positions. It was at the point where the door burst open that we were forced to get out of the room.

Now standing in the hallway we all hurdled together trying to decide our next move. After about two minutes, my brother suggested that we head to the downstairs of our house where my two sisters lived. In no more than 30 seconds we were all walking down the steps, hand in hand, trying our best to avoid any kind of harm while in turn calling out to those downstairs trying to get their attention. Almost from the first call my older sister Allison opened the door in a manner of panic and we all rushed in. Their living area too was flooded, but more bearable than that of upstairs. For the next couple hours which reluctantly felt like decades, we came together praying for the best outcome.

At the end of the storm, which we all impatiently longed for, I peeped out the window and saw an area I now could not recognize. Every tree that stood tall was now down, broken or battered. Roofs of my neighbors were gone, vehicles were turned over. It was then that I went to the chair, closed my eyes, thanked God, and then unexpectedly fell asleep.

Pani Cow Toujour Frashé

Allyna Mari-Agn Bernard

Only a few days before her arrival,
Our dear daughter spiritually praying for her safety.
Buildings flooded with the nations blood that refused to settle down.
The staions warned and warned as her winds drew near
Near to this isle, this land, our daughter.

As she approached her fury increased, but, her emotions stayed within,
And Witikubuli, with no clue, laid
She laid there like a passive waste
With no clue... no protection...
No sun... no hope
Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
She knew not, she , kubuli
Of the massive, furious, she devil
The female. That female
Coming closer, drawing neaer,
To the land she despised.

Soon from the West of Mother land, she was ready,
To put this country, our land, our daughter in serious agony-y-y.
She was finaly ready to cleanse the evil
Cleanse the one... the one... she despised.
Pani Cow Toujour Frashe

Then she came! Hury fury now unleashed

Upon this land, this beauty, our daughter, our ...home
SHE turned metals into paper
Forests of beautiful foliage into naked wastelands

Citizens roamed the heated streets with fear in their hearts,
As if programmed that way.
Had they not been warned in advance?
Calling with pointless remarks and outbursts about what's to come
Isn't exactly what we define as making preparations, redundant?
Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
Everyone's skin settled under the very same temperature
Like slaves they were forced to endure,
This vicious eat her sister refused to take up.

"Alas Irma, ebeh ou sot"
Her whistles sounded out
"I will be victorious! I shall take this woman
This forgotten woman.
Tall is her body, well down she shall crumble

Domnichey te ni pou coutay!
Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
This she beast, Maria, gave one final push
She took some time to look over the land, with her on single eye.
She spanned across to see where she had missed
To see who was running under her time of rest
Then she hit again
Am I a joke to you?
After I spared that container in Jimmit, filled with tissues,
To wipe the tears you weep?

Did it not hurt when I came for your children,
And the books you worked so hard to give them?"

Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
For hours she broke and broke
With every moment her destruction unlocked the inner demons
Despite their bodily homes being shook
And turned them into costly minions
The job was done.

Out came the people
The parents and owners of this land, their home, their daughter,
They were shocked, they cried
They stole, they suffered, they wept
Even long after mamzel Maria had left.

Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
They complained, they drew guns
Maria's wrath, humans inner demons
They, oh so possessed
Could not find peace to settle their inner unrest.

"My roof is gone!"
"My rations yet to come"
"Bonjai gimme a generator!"
"Why government abandoning this nation?"

Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
Few stop to reflect and actually take time to thank God,
Jehovah for the life they still have

You, me, us , humans
So built up, so angry
We place our own selves into mental slavery

Listen! Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
Only one sausage
Tantie toujours malcasay
Have no internet?
The little relief isn't there yet?
Ma popo ca malparle?

Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
Celebrate this vibrant culture.
Celebrate it with one another.
Cat a little, dance a little
Don't get your mind, your soul, int a pickle

Have a one pot at night
Ring games under the moonlight
A little tin tin bwasesh
Work hard, come together, unite
And above all thank God above for life!

Pani Cow Toujour Frashé
Don't worry about the little things in society's vast wilderness,
That would leave you temporarily helpless
To Maria's demons, her outbursts her feelings
Instead, think of something positive of this country
Think positive of yourself... nou toot!

Remember...
Pani Cow Toujour Frashe
Pani Cow Toujour Frashe
Cow
Toujour
Frashe

Maria

Debbie Daway

A brought uncertainty as day eclipsed into a murky night, and the once still winds grew signaling Maria was close. The air seemed to suffocate all life. Every man and child had bunked down and the birds had seem to cease their hectic flight from earlier. Only the trees stood tall and proud on the rugged mountains of laudat. Looking brave as if they were the ones who would withstand the calamity that very few knew would come.

She didn't rush. She took her time, sipping on the warm Atlantic, mustering her energy to ensure that one would forget her name. Night echoed through the dense forest and the winds were marching in mercilessly. The trees humbled at each blow, bowing to her strength, but she wasn't even here yet.

The time came for Maria to sweep over the land; an unexpected cleanse she didn't care who was rich or poor what was wild or tame not what was mahogany or fern, she emptied her rage with little remorse, screaming like a witch that had been shot down. Her intensity raffled the earth and bared the trees that had trembled in the down of her presence. She three tin foots around like an angry man with a toothache and played games with the lives of many which she won. No one would ever forget her name.

When she was done and day come, destruction covered the land and traumatized people. Animals came from their havens to witness her fury. The land looked as if it was set on fire, a scene from an apocalypse.



Narrative on Maria

Michelle Morancie

An ordinary, overcast afternoon led up to massive loss and devastation in the small island I call home, Dominica, the sky was swarmed with grey clouds. It was approaching nightfall when heavy torrential rains followed with thunderstorm, not the island. A long with the rain came winds with a force of what was perceived to be more than 200mph.

The house began to sway in wind. The heavy rain palled against the galvanize roof. My family and I sat on the floor in the living room when suddenly, everyone looked at each other. The air pressure in the room caused our ears to be filled with air. My mother rushed to nearest window and swung it open. The curtain flew out the window as the trapped air dove out the room. The roof began leaking were droplets of water soon began filling the room with water.

The feisty winds continued to tug on the roof of the house, as if it wanted to rip it off but the only thing it did was cave a hole even the living room allowing the house to be flooded even more. Hours began to feel like minutes, and minutes fell like days as I stood there helpless as this hurricane decimated my island home.

Category Five!

Jaiee Pacquette

“Hurricane Maria is now a category five hurricane! I repeat a category five hurricane!” Exclaimed the radio host. It was said that Dominica was going to receive a direct hit from this catastrophic hurricane. Meanwhile, Michael and his younger brother Sam, were playing in the living room not bothered by the slow approaching hurricane. The boys lived alone in an old wooden house on the top of a hill, above their village. Michael and Sam considered themselves to be brave, but nothing had prepared them for the events which were about to unfold.

The wind had already started to pick up and the sudden creaking of the house had gotten the boys attention. Sam was looking around worried. Ever so often when a gust of wind came the boys could feel the house tilting to one side. The groaning of the house caused the brave little Sam to cover in fear. Michael, on the other hand, was not shaken up yet. The red and white flashes of lightning could be seen even inside the closed house. Michael squinted because of the blinding light. In the split of a second a strong gust of wind came in and stole the roof off the boys' heads. They could now hear a catastrophic sound all around them. The wind sounded like animals, babies, and even the sheiks of witches flying in the night. Michael and little Sam were frozen, the lightning made them seethe houses that were being burned by the lightning and the raging river carrying trees and even houses into the sea. This destruction could be seen clearly from the top of the hill where the boys stood, eyes glossy with tears. Michael thought this was the end when he heard a loud snap! He spun around and saw the mango tree next to their house falling towards them. There was no time to move, the tree fell on the two boys, leaves engulfing their slim bodies.

Early the next morning villagers came up to where the old wooden house once stood. Screams and sobs could be heard when the tree was lifted. Michael and Sam lay there breathing quickly and shivering from the cold atmosphere. Michaels arm was over Sam protecting him. Such a heartwarming sight. The boys were taken to safety where they recovered.

Not an Ordinary Day

Kaymah Joseph

What began as an ordinary, gloomy day, became the worst experience of my life. The afternoon the sky was fairly overcast and the horizon could barely be seen. With a hurricane approaching, it had been cloudy all day. My mind was filled with curiosity and excitement as I had never experienced a hurricane before and just like everyone else, I completely underestimated the strength of this storm. At about 6pm, the monstrous wind began singing loudly through the air. Also, torrential rain joined the wind and created a rather unpleasant duet.

My family and I sat in the corridor of our, what seemed to be strong at the time, house while the wind continued howling. In the blink of an eye, the two large white doors surrendered to the strong wind, and flew into the kitchen, allowing the wind to destroy everything in the house. We swiftly made our way to the closet and remained there until the wind decided to remove the roof to allow the rain to enter. With the water knee-high, we struggle to make our way to the laundry room. The wind and rain duet performed for hours, until the calm of the storm arrived.

We moved to the empty apartment downstairs in less than no time. I felt a sense of calm come over me, but I was also distraught as I had just witnessed my house being destroyed in mere minutes. The strength and viciousness of this hurricane was unbelievable and I wish to never experience anything like that again.

September 18

Sherissa Henderson

It all started with the news reports concerning the new and upcoming hurricane that was heading straight for Dominica. Apparently, this hurricane was supposedly a category 3- or so they said. Approximately at 8 pm, Monday 18 September 2017, the havoc causing, hell-raising Hurricane Maria was said to hit Dominica. On the actual night of the hurricane, at 10pm loud piercing screams from upstairs were heard amongst the loud clattering of galvanized hitting against each other and the strange, agonizing howls of the wind.

My neighbors were crying out in help, my step father instantly shot to his feet and rushed to the door. As soon as he opened the door, he was drenched with water from the downpour of rain and the assault of the wind.

“Hurry!” he shouted at them, stretching out his hands. Running down the stairs, the two trembling figures appeared at my doorway and dashed inside.

He quickly closed the door and attention remain focused on my neighbors; a mother and her son.

They were huddled together on the couch, trembling and whimpering. Twenty minutes later, the five of us – my mother, stepfather, my neighbors and I – were sitting together in the almost flooded living room.

From what I recalled, this went on for eight hours. Eight hours of no sleep, eight hours of constantly up on your feet moping water and eight hours of repeatedly questioning, “when does it end?” when day finally replaced night, we were finally able to go outside to observe the damage. As expected, it was devastating; fallen poles, collapsed houses, roof scattered across the neighborhood. It was truly a sight for sore eyes!

Damage Done

Shalian Shaw

It all started from 6pm when the lights went. I could hear the wind and ran outside. It all didn't bother me that much at the time so I decided to go to sleep. I was awoken at about after 7 by water coming through my window and drenching the foot of my bed. My father came to fix it and told me not to worry, not knowing how big of a problem we would later face.

After a while of just listening to the wind and rain my parents decided to come into my room firstly, so that we could all be together and secondly, because of how unsafe their room was, as trees from above the house have fallen after Tropical Storm Erica other times when there were strong winds and rain. We sat talking for a while until they decided that if the winds got stronger we would have to go under the bed in the back room. Then, the kitchen, living room and my parents room began to flood and after scooping out water for what seemed like hours, we had to give up and go to a safe place. I secured my books and some other things as much as I could and just as I was closing the bag I heard rattling above me. One minute I was looking at the ceiling that had sheltered me all my life and the next all I saw was the sky.

My parents rushed me under my bed where we were to lie for what seemed like an eternity. For that whole time my main concern was to make sure that my mother who had surgery over a month before, was comfortable as she could be and not in any type of pain. After about two hours of being there, water began seeping through the mattress and everything on top of it and onto us under the bed. The room began flooding and the remaining time there we had to try pushing out water and also keeping our heads above water which was there. We prayed and prayed all through that time that three of us would make it out safe.

At 3:00am, when things seem somewhat calmer outside, we came out from under the bed to find the driest place to sit. When I looked around I saw pieces of wood on the same bed which we were under, branches and all sorts of debris. Every single place in the house got wet. We had to climb over many things which had fallen in my parents' room where the roof was still on. We changed out of the dripping wet clothes and made ourselves as comfortable as we could on the third of the bed which was not as damaged as the rest and that is where we sat listening to the rain until day break when we could properly see all the damage. The home which I had known all my life looked so incredibly different and from that I realized how bad this hurricane was and how different things would be for me afterwards.

Hurricane Maria: Aliyah's Love Story

Quisha Pascal

Aliyah twisted and turned in bed as she hugged her comforter and cuddled with her husband of five years now, Jaiden. Smiling to herself, she looked at him while he slept. Lying there she remembered their first encounter almost ten years ago.

It was six in the evening of Monday 18th September 2017 and Aliyah was at home with her parents and her Nana. She didn't have any school that morning due to a hurricane heading for her island, Dominica. Looking out the window in her bedroom, the sky was dark and gloomy and there was not a star in the sky that she could see. With her area still having lights, she took the opportunity to finish up some assignments and homework given from school. While doing her work, the lights went, and she let out a heavy sigh as the rain started pouring down.

Grabbing a flashlight on the nightstand, she made her way to the living room where her mom instructed her to pack a small bag of clothes and her essentials, not worrying to ask why, because she already knew that she must do what she was told. Her mom didn't want to stay in the house with the galvanized roof since she had experienced running in Hurricane David when the roof of her house had been blown away, when she had been only five. After packing, the wind started with a rage. Aliyah sat in her room dressed, waiting for the wind to calm down for her father to drop them by her aunt higher up the hill, since he decided to stay home and "weather the storm".

Reaching her aunt's home not long after the rain and wind had subsided, she sat in the living room with her aunt's children talking and listening to the radio on the progress of Hurricane Maria. Right after having something to eat, the wind started howling. Through the windows, water started flowing into the house through the beams of the house. The door was being pushed by the force of the wind. The wind sounded like people laughing, crying, even arguing. She helped her mom and aunt push a grand piano to block the door. While wiping up the water, a window broke causing everyone to be frightened and run into a room.

With her aunt's children crying, she comforted them while lying on the bed until they fell asleep. The concrete roof started leaking like a waterfall in every part of the house. Sweeping out water through the door, throwing out water into the tubs and toilets took hours, but the rain still poured incessantly. Aliyah went to lay down until 5:30am the next day. In the morning, she left her aunt's house with her mom to view the damage caused by the hurricane and to check on her father. While walking down the road, she saw members of her community she never knew before. Not watching where she was going, she almost tripped on

fallen wire, but she was caught by a guy whose name was Jaiden. After introducing themselves the two became close friends as the years had gone by.

Smiling to herself, staring at her husband, she kissed his forehead thanking God for their first encounter.

Maria, The Calm, The End

Aliyah Jean Jacques

Noise.
So much noise.
I think my neighbor must have been angry with us,
For it couldn't be the wind
Knocking, pounding against
My door.
Somebody must have
Thrown rocks and broke my window
For it couldn't be the wind,
I won't believe it was the wind.
An earth shattering crash!
But it must have
been an earthquake
This surely can't be a hurricane.

Time.
Seven hours.
A full nights sleep,
But surely no one was sleeping then.
For if I even suffered to blink,
My brother would pry my eyes open.
And no, I swear it was not the wind.

Tears.
The floodgates were open.
Maybe I had cried the river,
That left my home broken.
Maybe I was to blame, maybe I was
The hurricane.
My mother,
Her heartbeat
As erratic as mine.
Her voice, a whisper
Above all the noise.
She told me of another
Hurricane named David.
I thought for sure that Maria,
Was his daughter.
Maybe she had come
To lay waste of not just the land,
But her father's legend

And to create a legacy of her own.
The knocking had stopped,
But my windows were still broken
My hope was still lost.
I could still hear the stones
rolling, crashing
from the strong current
of a river my tears had created.
This couldn't be the eye.
This couldn't be the calm,
I don't feel calm.
This had to be,
The beginning of the end.



Photo Credit: Chad Ambo

Maria

Sergeline Michel

I am Maria
A woman underestimated by many
They believed I was calm
Probably die in the sea
But ever since the announcement of my arrival
I grew
More and more.

I became the supreme ruler above rulers,
Meteorologists and all those who thought
They could track me.
I fought with a woman who was cherished and loved.
Waitikubuli, the greenest isle of the Caribbean
Dominica.

I turned her upside down with all my might.
BOOM!
I took what belonged to her
People, trees, rivers,
They all washed away.
I could not control myself
Ravage I did was all in my power.
How would they rebuild?
What would become of Waitikubuli
Her people!

I beg the almighty for forgiveness
Hoping it will help in fixing my doings.
Though I am remembered for the bad woman
That I was.
And the tragedy I caused.
I truly do want Waitikubuli to rise again

Mr. Smith and Maria

Chelsea Bertrand

he 18th of September, 2017 was like any other day for the children of the smith residence. Just an ordinary Sunday morning which began with the shouts of Mr. Smith to his children to get ready for church. Incessant cries rang through the household, much to his children's annoyance.

The three children of Mr. Smith did not want to go to church. The weather only a small reason behind it. As the rain poured heavily the eldest child was worried about the upcoming hurricane and how their house would be able to withstand it. You see the roof of the house had flown off before when she was just a little girl and this experience traumatized her greatly. She worried about the lack of preparations taken in regards to food and water; what would happen to them if the land slide prone village was blocked off from access to supplies. As she got out of bed she shook her head trying to get rid of her thoughts. She was tired of being the on to worry, she had voiced her concerns about the safety of the house and precautions that needed to be taken months before this but they fell upon deaf ears.

Mr. Smith was a man who never listened. His arrogance and ignorance prevented him from hearing the voices of his family. He only listened to outsiders as if the same opinions would somehow be different from his colleagues.

As the eldest smith went about her day she could not help but feel that she was right about the dangers of the rapidly escalating hurricane.

The day had finally arrived, the hurricane, Maria, was now a category five and the eldest smith could not have been more correct. As night fell and the wind speeds increased the smith children (who had taken shelter in the downstairs bedroom) could hear the aggressive winds pulling at the roots surrounding them until finally Mr. Smith ran downstairs stating what the eldest smith had feared all along, the roof was gone.

While the hurricane continued to ravage the community, the eldest smith sighed as water began to drip from the ceiling and the cries of her younger siblings grew louder. She realized that she had once again been out in a situation where she found herself whispering, "if only he had listened."

Hurricane Maria Hits

Jalliyah Antoine

The night of 18th September, took everyone by surprise. No one was prepared for the catastrophic event that was going to take place. "Maria", such a sweet calm name to give a monster like that.

It started around six in the evening. The sky was dark, the air was thick, yet no one was afraid. Leaves began peeling off their branches and animals proceeded with screams of fear. The time flew by quickly, but suddenly slowed down as the eight o'clock hour stroke. Yes, Maria was a category five hurricane, carrying winds of over 160 miles per hour. It took a real toll on the infrastructure of our beloved Dominica.

Trees were being uprooted were shaken and doors were bent to the test. The sounds that were coming from the outside, were, loud, petrifying and frightening. Some say it was the souls that were released from graves that made those sounds, yet others claim it was the cried of people that were being noticed of their lives by Maria. It only took one galvanize and suddenly you had no roof, luckily most houses have downstairs.

Morning broke and Maria left us with what was left of the nature isle. It was brown lifeless and of course lacking the zest we originally possessed. Roseau was drowned and blown away. Rivers came from nowhere and left huge pieces of wood which crushed walls, building and lives. Mud and stones were everywhere! Another fifty years, they say it going to take Dominica to get back to its feet.

It was indeed a bad experience one no one would ever forget.

Shock and Awe

Michelle Daniel

The events on the night of September 18, 2017 have been deemed one of the most historical yet tarrying occurrences of my life. Upon hearing the previous day that a hurricane, Maria, was heading in the direction of the lesser Antilles the next day all schools were to be cancelled and work places closed by 12 pm in Dominica . By 4pm on the day of the hurricane, it was projected to be a category 2 weather system. There were light showers of rain and cloudy skies and my father and I decided to take a walk to the Dayfront on Danie Eugenia Charles Boulevard. At this time the winds were varying in gust strength and at one point while walking my umbrella blew away but I got it back soon after. Upon reaching the Bayfront To our surprise, we noticed how the water began receding and all the sand and rocks could be seen. At this point my father predicted that a surge would come later that night.

By 6pm, it was announced that hurricane Maria was heading straight for our little island as a category 5 weather system with winds at 165mph and gusts at 220mph. electricity was taken by this time and many of the streets and houses were left in darkness. Luckily for me, my house also runs on solar energy so during the storm we still kept sense of normality in having one light on and an extension to charge our phones. I am not going to lie, I was excited at the fact that I was about to experience my first major hurricane but also anxious and terrified at the amount of damage it would cause.

By 8pm, after closing down all our windows and doors with hurricane shutters, all we could hear was the rain beating against the roof of our house, the wind howling through the air causing our window shutter, which we could not access, to continuously hit against the wall. I could hear galvanize flying away from neighboring houses and landing on the road. At one point there was a loud crashing noise and my father assumed that our porch probably fell down. At the peak of the hurricane, the sheet rock on the ceiling of my bedroom fell in and water was dripping and flooding the room.

Thankfully, none of the building's galvanize ripped off but water still was able to seem through and flood many rooms. My mother took this chance to hurriedly pack away all my books, clothes and other necessities into large garbage bags, later doing the same for herself and my father for himself. When the sheet rock in the kitchen ceiling fell down, I was seriously scared since we thought it was the roof which came off. My father being he curious person he is, went down our stairs to the main door and to our astonishment found muddy water, about 5 feet high, spilling onto the steps through the crack in the door, at this point I started crying and my parents started comforting me. We all were so shocked by this and believed that the Roseau River broke its bank and came down out street.

The Villainess

Jeania Giraudel

She swiped across the Atlantic basin strengthening quicker than expected, as if she was a body builder on steroids. The way she slowed down made it seem as if she was second guessing her attack on Madam Dominique. When she finally decided to strike, her first phase of whippings made it seem like Madam Dominique was a slave being punished by her master. Maria whistled, laughed, screamed and cried thirsty for Madam pride.

Maria was a mixture of 'Ursula,' 'Malificent' and 'Curela devil' put together or maybe even stronger. Madam Dominique could not take it. She was cashed from head to toe. Maria attacked from every angle as defenseless Madam Dominique remained unmoved but surely touched. With none of her brothers or sisters to stand with her and face this hardship, Madam Dominique trembled like a wet, cold puppy as Maria brought her to heel.



Overcoming Maria

Dainisha Eusebe

Hurricane Maria developed into a Category 3 on Sunday, September 17th, 2017 and rapidly turned into a Category 5 the next day. She was the most tragic hurricane Dominica has ever experienced. On that same Sunday evening, there were slight showers of rain and at this point all radios were on to hear the latest updates. People were cautioned and told to move to hurricane shelters. School as well as other Government services were to be closed as the hurricane approached Dominica.

My family and I ensured that we were prepared and well-secured for the hurricane. The next night, it began raining heavily as Hurricane Maria was about to hit us. I looked out my window and I could see mist making itself onto the mountain tops. A few hours later was when it really started. The rain started falling like hail on my roof top and eventually began to leak through the ceiling. I began feeling scared and concerned as I heard loud noises and materials pounding onto my roof top. There were gusts of winds that brought debris onto my porch. At a certain point, the wind entered my garage by busting the door open. The wind tried to enter the kitchen but my mother and I held the door shut the entire night so the wind could not open the door. That night, I never slept but I knew it was worth it.

The next morning, my neighborhood was not itself anymore. There was debris on my porch and in my backyard. Light poles fell and most of the lines were scattered. The whole environment was terrifying. I could not believe my eyes. There was no more greenery.

Most people were homeless and some lost lives of loved ones. Hurricane Maria did some damage one way or another in Dominica. I must say I am grateful for life and for a roof over my head. Dominica will rise again and we are resilient people. We can overcome anything.

