Tears Dancing with Rain

L. S. Fisher

The Night of the Storm

My brothers and I shielded ourselves under the table as the windows shattered across the kitchen floor.

“It’s gonna be alright, we gonna make it through the storm!” Elijah yelled, covering Jr. and I. I don’t know where Ma’ma’ is. She left earlier and hasn’t been back. I pray she’s ok. Elijah said don’t worry about her and she’ll be home after the storm.

I remember Ma’ma’ said she only cried when it rained. She said that’s when God cried, and she felt like she was crying with him. I really think it’s because no one can see her crying. She can mask her tears, hiding behind pain and sorrow.

\*\*\*

Pancakes, eggs, sausage, grits, and bacon waited for us in the kitchen. Just about every morning Ma’ma’ would have breakfast waiting for us. It didn’t matter if it was just some grits, a biscuit, a piece of pork, and a cup of ice water, she made sure we ate.

Her name is Rose Mary and she was as sweet and gentle like a rose when we were younger. She started changing on us as we got older and problems with her and Charles started brewing over the years. Money and food started getting scarce from Ma’ma’s little pay checks and Charles unreliable work schedule. The bills weren’t getting paid either so my brother, Elijah, got a job as a butcher, at Mr. Chester’s market, to help put food on the table. He’d even bring slabs of meat home sometimes to cook or for Ma’ma’ to cook.

I’ll never forget that summer of 1967 when the storm hit. It was the summer everything changed for us. Elijah had just talked Ma’ma’ into making sure the house was insured the year before. He’d hear men, down at the barber shop, talking about losing property and ways to claim money from damaged property. Elijah smart but they never listened except something dealing with money. That was one time she actually listened to him and got insurance on the house and anything on the land.

Charles had just got back from being gone about 8 months. He thinks he can leave and come back whenever he feels like it whenever him and Ma’ma’ would get in an argument. We hated him so bad, except for Jr., who would go back and forward between hating and loving him.

Charles Sr. was our younger brother’s, Charles Jr., real Dad. Elijah and I have different Dad’s. He forced us to call him *“Dad”* maybe about three years ago. Say he the only father we know and need to respect him. He’s just a mean bastard who likes to control us. He’s always trying to teach us some lesson that made no sense. Although, that never stopped Ma’ma’ from loving him more than anything in the world. Even herself. I guess somewhere in her mind someone being around meant they loved her.

Elijah’s my older brother. He’s 18. We all just two years apart from one another. Nothing can come between my brothers and I. I’m the knee baby, as Ma’ma’ likes to call it. I was sick as a baby and came early so I’m a lot smaller than my little brother even though I’m older. I never let that get me down in life. I can do anything just like the rest of the kids. Hell I’m actually better.

My 16th birthday had passed a few weeks ago. I was finally old enough to get a job and help Ma’ma’ out with the bills since that son-of-a-bitch can’t hold one.

“You fed them dogs boy?” Charles said coming out the kitchen with a beer.

“Yes sir.” I said walking out the front door.

I hated that man more than anything in the world. He always try to find ways to get under our skin. He sleeps with other women, drinks, and has a temper like a bull at a rodeo. He works little jobs here and there but hell even I can do what he does. He can’t keep a job more than a year because he’s so hot headed and feels like folks should just bow down to him.

“Where’s Jr.?” he said following after me.

“I don’t know. Maybe he out back playing with the dogs.” I kept walking and didn’t stop, hoping he wouldn’t say anything else.

The market down the road was the town’s shopping market and laundry mat. Mr. Chester promised me a job the week school let out. He said he’d pay me a whole dollar an hour and let me work 20 hours a week. I wouldn’t know what to do with that kinda money besides help Ma’ma’ and save, maybe buy something nice for myself.

“Can I come?!” Jr. said coming from the back yard.

“Yea, come on.”

\*\*\*

Nothing was on the road but Jr and I. The sun beamed on our heads. Elijah and I walked this road many of times going back and forward to school before we started riding the bus. We’d also walk to the corner store and buy soda and snack cakes. Sometimes Charles use to send us to get him a cartoon of cigarettes for him and Ma’ma’. I’ll never forget that time I actually tried one. It was 1962. Elijah smoked his first cigarette a few years before that had a normal routine of sneaking a 3 or 4 out the pack after they opened them.

“Can I try one?” I asked. Elijah lit his with a match. He took a puff trying to look like the super stars we see on the billboards. He started coughing. We got off the road and went through the trail in the woods that takes us to the field behind the house.

“You sure you want to?” he passed me the cigarette. I looked at it, puckered my lips and took a hard inhale like I was drinking something throw a straw. Both my nose and throat burned immediately. My face got hot and smoke came from my mouth but felt like it came from my ears. Elijah started laughing.

“I don’t know why you’re laughing. You can barely smoke them yourself!” I said pushing him.

“Ok, ok just look at me.” He placed the cigarette up to his mouth and inhaled. He let out a large cloud of smoke. “Now you try it.” He gave me the cigarette again. This time I inhaled the smoke slowly.

“Good, now exhale without thinking about the smoke.” He demanded. I exhaled the smoke and didn’t cough this time. I did it. I can’t believe I smoked. We stood there in the woods and shared a cigarette together and then walked back to the house. They had no idea when we got back.

“Where was I?” Jr. asked.

“Well you were just a kid. You might have been playing outside or something. That was when they didn’t let you walk everywhere with us.”

The road looked like it was melting and evaporating in the air. It was so hot outside. I hope my clothes and hair do get too sweaty. I kept my handkerchief in my hand so I could wipe the sweat as it came. I want to look presentable for my interview. The market was about 3 miles down the road from the house.

Elijah been working there in the meat department a little over a year now. He said they needed a new buggy and stock person. Mr. Chester didn’t mind Jr. and I hanging around when Elijah worked there alone, as long as we stay clear out the way when it was time for him to help someone. I’m pretty sure Jr. can stay also if we both worked there.

\*\*\*

We made it to the store around noon. The parking lot was filled with cars. People rabbled through the isles filling their buggies with groceries. I’ll have to admit, I’m nervous like the first day of school in a new grade. My stomach felt like a bag of butterflies but I kept a stern look on my face.

I wore one of my good shirts and made sure I creased the hell out of my pants. My socks matched and shoes were shined so well I could see my reflection in them. I made sure Ma’ma straightened my hair and made it look real nice. I wiped the sweat off my forehead and tucked my shirt in tight to get rid of the little wrinkles I made walking. I took a deep breath.

“It’s gonna be ok. You’ll get it.” Jr. said patting me on the back. We walked up to the front door.

As much as Elijah keeps telling me to relax and I’ll get hired because I’m his brother but that doesn’t help any. He could change his mind in a heartbeat.

“You got a nickel? I want a piece of gum out the machine.” Jr. asked.

“Here, get it and come on Jr. I don’t want to be late.” I demanded, giving him a nickel from my back pocket. We walked straight to the meat department. I could see Elijah glasses through the window from a distance. He also had on a hair net and bloody apron. We crept up the window to try and scare him.

“Hey, you look just like Ma’ma’ with that apron on boy.” I joked.

“Oh shut up before I butcher you.” he laughed throwing a tooth pick at us. “Ain’t got an interview to go to?” he asked.

“Yea, I came to ask you where I go.”

“Mr. Chester’s office is on the end of the cereal aisle, to your left. You should see a door with his name on it.” Elijah took his hair net off.

“Jr. you stay with me and I’ll fix us a sandwich. It’s just about my lunch time.” He said.

“Fix me one too!” I yelled walking away.

As I got closer to the back of the store, near Mr. Chester’s office, I thought about all the ways I could help Ma’ma’. Even though Elijah helps her a lot also, extra help would take the stress off of her completely. She’ll have more time to enjoy herself and maybe get rid of Charles for good. I could finally buy presents on birthday’s and Christmas’s. Even take Laura on a picnic or buy her something nice since I like her.

Ma’ma’ still young and beautiful, any man can steal her away from him. That’s only if she wants them to. With Charles on her hip like a belt, I doubt nothing but death could break that curse he has on her. They ain’t married. He won’t marry her. If that ain’t odd, I don’t know what is.

*Chester McCormick.* I read on the front door. I took a deep breath. As soon as reached for the door knob it swung open. Mr. Chester came barging out with stacks of papers in his arms.

“Mr. Chester, I’m Alton Thomas, Elijah’s –“

“You Elijah’s kid brother?”

“Yes Sir.” I said in a stern voice.

“You come looking for work?” he asked looking me up and down.

“I’m 16 years old now and my Ma’ma’ said it was okay.”   
 “Grab a broom and apron, you start now. Your brother will train you to keep the store tidy and how to stock the new inventory that comes in. You work 7-11, Tuesday through Saturday. You get paid $20 at the end of each week.”

My heart was beating so fast. I can’t believe I got a job. I’m so happy. I tried to look adult and just answer him and hold my composure.

“You getting all this boy?” he asked.

“Yes, Yes Sir.”

\*\*\*

The stars lit up the dark sky. The moon guided us as we walked the dirt road leading to the house. Mosquitoes and insects buzzed around us. The locusts made loud noises high in the trees. I could see the porch light up ahead from the road. It had to be almost 8 or a little over.

“You think Dad gonna be mad?” Jr. asked walking slower.

“Why because this was my first day and we making it home at night?” I asked.

“You know how he gets about calling the house and letting them know stuff.” Jr added.

“Well if that’s the case, maybe you should’ve called with that nickel you asked for. I was working.” I said.

“Y’all worry too damn much. We ain’t out partying or just hanging at the lake. We were at work and Jr. you were around us the entire time.” Elijah said.

He’s got a point maybe I was worrying too much. It’s just Charles gets mad at anything. He’s also never wrong about anything in his eyes.

\*\*\*

Thank God Charles truck wasn’t parked outside. Usually I wouldn’t care but something just tells me we’re in trouble for not calling him and having Jr. out with us. Elijah’s 18 and it wasn’t him who brought Jr. so I doubt he gets in trouble.

When we opened the door, Ma’ma’ stood in the living room with her arms folded. It was very apparent we were in trouble. An empty glass sat on the table with her lipstick print on it. The ash tray beside it was filled with cigarette butts.

“Where the hell have you y’all been? Ya’ Dad and I have been worried sick about you.” She said.

“I got the job Ma’ma’. You know down at Mr. Chester’s Market were Elijah work.” I said, hoping that’ll change our fate. She didn’t notice my apron or care about me telling her I have a job. She smelled like the whiskey bottle itself.

“You out, ain’t call nobody and got Jr. tagging along with you all day! We haven’t seen you since this morning. Just wait til ya Dad gets back! He went looking for y’all asses.”

“He ain’t look too hard. He knows they only be one or two places. Ain’t they fault y’all didn’t listen that Alton when he said he had an interview today.” Elijah added.

“Elijah you know better than not to call; you’re the oldest. You defiantly getting some words tonight!” she yelled at us as we marched up the stairs. I prayed he doesn’t come home until we are sleep or at least too drunk to get on us tonight. Elijah went to his room and Jr. and I went to our room. All we do is wait now.

\*\*\*

It was a half pass midnight. I could hear Ma’ma’ downstairs still waiting on Charles. He can’t still be looking for us that long. The night sky seemed darker than a normal summer evening. Jr. just went to sleep a while ago so Elijah and I climbed on the roof out his bedroom window.

“You too use to climbing up here.” I said struggling to get comfortable.

“Yea when you been sneaking out since you were 14, you get used to it.” he said.

“I’m letting you know now Alton, if he touches me, I’m going to fight back. I’m too old for a whoopin’ and I’m not afraid of him.” Elijah said lighting a cigarette and looking at the moon.

“She always gonna take his side. She never listens to us.” I said.

“We can never talk to Jr. about going against Charles. He don’t know if he wants to love him or hate him. I reckon it’s because they share the same blood.” He said.

He right about our baby brother. It didn’t matter what Charles did, Jr. saw no wrong in his eyes or felt like he could be forgiven for anything he does.

The last time he whooped Elijah so bad, he had belt marks and bruises on his hind legs and arms for weeks. He whooped him because he caught him kissing and feeling up some girl from school in the backyard. Ma’ma’ just sat there in the back with her arms folded as if justice had been served. After that, Elijah said he almost a grown man and Charles shouldn’t have touched him for having a girlfriend. He said he’d kill him if he touched him like that again.

Some head lights came from down the street.

“There he go.” He said blowing smoke.

Charles came pulling in, in front of the house, parking like a blind man. He also ran over one of Ma’ma’s rose bushes. He left both his truck and headlights on, facing the porch.

“He must’ve been drinking.” Elijah said throwing his cigarette butt off the roof.

“Keep your voice down.” He demanded.

He got out his truck and almost fell on the ground.

“Where they at! Where the boys!” he said with slurred words. Ma’ma’ came barging out the house. I could hear the screen door slamming shut behind her.

“Do you know what time it is? The boys been home for hours so where the hell you been?” she yelled. The locusts sung so loudly, I could barely hear them clearly.

“Rose you asked me to go look so I did! What the hell else do you want from me?!” he yelled back at her, stumbling.

“You are a drunken mess. Look at yourself!” she yelled lifting up his shirt.

“Why are your pants unbuttoned? Who you been with this time Charles? You got me out here looking like a damn fool!” she got in his face, pointing at his head.

“This was the perfect excuse to be out for hours huh?! You and your little bitch! What do you have to say for yourself?! Answer me!” Charles just stood there looking at her. Ma’ma’ slapped him across the face. My heart dropped for a minute as an old thought rekindled in my mind from when I was 6. I walked in on Charles choking Ma’ma’. The house was tore up, Ma’ma’ lip was bleeding, and Charles had scratches on him. He turned and looked at me and said, “Get out of here boy, me and ya Ma’ma’ talking.”

“Who were you with Charles? Who were you with!?” she yelled. Everything seemed to get silent for a second. I couldn’t hear the locusts anymore. The headlights made a perfect spotlight on Charles and Ma’ma’. I could feel a drop of rain on my cheek.

“Why’d you put your hands on me rose!?” he yelled. Charles cocked his hand high in the air and slapped Ma’ma’ in her face. The sound was so loud it probably woke the dogs in the backyard.

“You don’t put your hands on a man!” he said. He closed his fist this time and struck her in the eye so hard she fell to the ground.

“Ma’ma’!” Elijah and I both stood on the roof not caring to be spotted anymore. I couldn’t move for a second. I felt like I could feel Ma’ma’s pain as he got hit. My face got hot and my eyes clouded my vision with tears. I looked at Elijah, who was so mad his glasses began to fog a little.

Ma’ma’ tried to get off the ground but he struck her again. A hot tear came down my face this time or maybe it was the summer rain that started falling gently out of the dark sky. Elijah raced through the window to get back inside the house. I followed right behind him. My heart raced as I followed him through the house not knowing what he was about to do.

“I’m going to kill that bastard!” he said busting through their bedroom. He started rambling through dresser drawers, shoe boxes, and looking under the bed.

“Where is it!” he yelled.

“What?” I said.

“The pistol! Help me look!” he demanded, looking under the mattress.

“I don’t know Elijah.”

“Well the hell with it. Alton, listen to me.” He grabbed my shoulders and stared me in the eyes. “I have to kill him. I love you so much. Please take care of Ma’ma’ and Jr. if anything happens to me.”

“Why you saying this to me?” I asked yanking away from him.

“Because ain’t no coming back from what I’m going to do. It’s either me or him.”

“We fight together. Let’s go get Ma’ma’.”

We raced down the stairs. I grabbed my bat out the corner of the front door. Elijah opened the front door and the head lights beamed on me, blinding my view a second. Everything got silent again and my ears started ringing like a bomb just exploded. Ma’ma’ was on the ground still holding her face.

“You son-of-a-bitch, I’m going to kill you!” Elijah yelled as he ran full speed toward Charles, punching him in the mouth. He kept hitting him in the face until he fell backwards. I came after him and swung my bat with all my might, hitting him in the ribs. I could feel a big relief of anger from everything he’s put us through.

“You ungrateful bastards! I’m gonna put a whole in your backs!” he yelled from on the ground.

“Do it you fucking coward! Fight me!” Elijah yelled standing over him. I ran over to Ma’ma’ to check on her and help her off the ground.

“Ma’ma’, you okay?”

“Yes, baby help me get up and y’all go in the house.” She said. I helped her to her feet and she went in the house. Elijah still stood over Charles after beating him like a child that stole something.

“Boy you got some nerve after all I’ve done! I raised the both of you like you were my own flesh and blood!” he yelled as he spat blood.

The rain began to pour heavier. Charles stood on his feet and slumped over his truck.

“When your Daddy never gave two shits about you and he lived down the street, I was there Alton! When your Daddy went off to the military and got himself killed, Elijah I took you in as my own!”

Elijah grabbed my wet bat off the ground. “Don’t you ever speak of my Dad again. He was a great man, unlike you. You’re just a bum and a drunk.”

Charles charged at Elijah. Ma’ma’ came outside pointing a pistol at Charles. The rain had everyone soaked. Shivers came across my back as a cool breeze of wind flew by.

“If you don’t leave my land, I’ll blow your god damn head off!” she yelled. Everyone got quiet. The sound of the rain hitting the porch put me in a trance. I looked at the dark sky. The rain came down like thousands of needles ready to pierce the earth.

“I don’t want to say it again Charles. Leave!” she yelled gripping the pistol tighter, cocking it back. Elijah just stood their staring at him as he got in his truck. The headlights, that once lit the porch, switched directions and dimmed as he turned and drove away. We ran up to Ma’ma’ and hugged her tight.

“Give me the gun Ma’ma’. He gone now.” Elijah said, slowly taking the gun from her hands. She started crying as we all hugged in the front yard under the dark rain clouds.

“He’ll be back. I know he will.” She cried.

\*\*\*

The next morning, I didn’t smell breakfast downstairs. I know Ma’ma’ must be tired from last night. I wasn’t woken up by my normal force of the sun shining through the window either. Jr. wasn’t in his bed on the other side of the room. His bed was perfectly made. He probably woke up early since he slept through the rain last night.

I looked outside and the sky was dark and filled with rain clouds even though it was morning. Raindrops on the window clouded the view of the field. Light rain took over the sunny summer morning that I was use too.

*It must’ve rained all night.* I walked downstairs. Everything was dark and there was still no sign of anyone.

“Elijah! Ma’ma’? Jr.!” I yelled. No one replied. No sign of life was in the house at all. A loud crack of thunder hit the house walls. The front door swung open from the brush of wind the burst through. A dark figure sat in Ma’ma’s chair on the porch. It didn’t look like her, Elijah, or Jr. It didn’t look like the silhouette of Charles either.

“Who’s there?” I yelled. Rain flew the front door. Pictures on the wall flew off, shattering on the floor. I grabbed my bat and walked slowly toward the dark figure.

“Bigma’ma’?” She sat in the rocking chair rocking back and forward. The rain didn’t touch her at all like she had an invisible shield around her.

“Look to turn things around child. Your Ma’ma’ needs you and your brothers. He is killing Rose with the perception of love.” I stared at her, unable to blink or move a muscle. Bigma’ma’ had been dead almost 3 years. I must be dreaming. The sky turned bright red.

“Save your Ma’ma’ Alton. Protect her child.” Some headlights came racing fast toward us on the porch.

“Protect her!” she yelled. A black tear fell from her eyes. Charles got out the car.

“You thought I was done boy!?” I heard Charles voice come from the sky like God. He got out the truck and pointed a shot gun at my face. My life flashed before my eyes as a loud shot came toward my face.

“Alton! Wake up!” Jr. and Elijah sat at the edge of my bed. The room was dim and didn’t look like morning just like my dream. I got up and looked out the window. The rain came down gently. A crack of thunder roared in the distance.

“Elijah said y’all fought Dad last night. Why y’all always metaling in Ma’ma’ and Dad business? “ Jr. said.

“Get out my face! You were asleep, just like the baby you are. You don’t know shit and ain’t gonna do shit!” I got in Jr.’s face.

“You think you’re grown now because you because you got a damn job? You don’t scare me Alton.” He said standing over me.

“Just because you’re bigger than me doesn’t mean I can’t beat your ass. I’m still your big brother!” I yelled. The thunder outside got louder and the rain started coming doming heavy. Elijah jumped in between us.

“Hey! I’m still the oldest so you both need to have a seat before there is a problem.”

Just them Ma’ma’ came in the room with her robe on smoking a cigarette holding a bottle of whiskey.

“What the hell is going on in here? I hear fighting. Y’all love to fight huh? Y’all fought Charles last night so…” she said with slurred words.

“Ma’ma’ you need to give me that bottle and go sit down.” Jr. suggested.

“Don’t tell me what to do in my house boy and Elijah and Alton why y’all aren’t at work?” She said.

“Mr. Chester called this morning and said the store was gonna be closed until the storm passes. He say it’s gonna board the store up because it’s gonna be bad.” Elijah said.

“I gotta go find Charles.” She said walking to her room.

“Ma’ma’ you’ll be a fool to leave in the storm after than man. You ain’t going nowhere.” Elijah grabbed Ma’ma’ arm.

“He your Daddy!”

“He ain’t my damn Daddy. My Dad is dead. That man only cares about what benefits him Ma’ma! Why can’t you see that?” Ma’ma’ stood there for a second as we all stood in the hallway.

“I got to go look for him before it gets too bad. You care after your brothers. I’ll be home shortly.” I can tell Elijah was mad. He punched the wall and then went to his room, slamming the door. The storm got louder and the rain poured heavier.

Ma’ma’ got a I know there was nothing we could say to stop her.  *Please Lord, bring my Ma’ma’ back safe.*

\*\*\*

I could hear the dogs howling and barking at the wind as the storm picked up. The grandfather clock read 5:15pm. Ma’ma’ still ain’t come back. Her driving ain’t the best. She’d walk a mile before she gets in her own car and drive. I don’t know why she’d rather go after Charles instead of look after us in the storm. Maybe she think it ain’t that bad, she can go find Charles, bring him back and everything be okay.

We all stayed in living room, sitting looking at the static on the TV. The lights flickered on and off.

The branches slapped up against the window hard.

“Get from by that widow boy. You tryna get killed?” Elijah said. The dogs kept barking.

“Jr. bring the dogs in the house and tie them to the kitchen table.” He demanded. Jr and I went to the back door to get the dogs. As soon as the door opened the wind forced the door to slam open again the wall. Rained showered on us as we stood on the doorway on the top of the stoop. I could see the dark sky light up with the lighting in the background.

“Come on George, Dip-Stick. Come boys!” I yelled over the whistling wind. Neither one of the dogs paid attention to me. They just kept barking at the storm. We each grabbed a dog and drug them inside. The door was so hard to close.

“We need to eat before the power shuts- “just then a large noise came from the living room. We all raced to the living room and saw the tree fell and came crashing through the window and pierced a hole in the house. Rain came spurting in.

“We can’t stay here Elijah!” Jr. yelled. A large explosion came from the side of the house. The power flickered and then shut off. The house is old and I’m not sure if it will make it through the storm. We have to get out of this house. The shed in the back isn’t that far from the house.

“The shed! We can go to the shed. Let’s get George and Dip-Stick and go to the shed!” I yelled. The wind blew the roof half off and watering started coming in more. I looked around and the living room that I’ve known my whole life was ruined. Pictures and paintings fell and broke. Ma’ma’s lamps and decorative items were being damaged from the water. The roof started caving in.

“Come on! We gotta get outta here now!” Jr. ran to the kitchen to get the dogs. A tree busted through the kitchen window.

“We gotta go Jr.!” Elijah yelled. I ran over to help him untie the dogs from the table leg.

They ran out the back door. Jr. attempted to run after them.

“Boy leave them damn dogs and come on! We gotta go! Follow me to the shed and run as fast as you can.” he yelled.

We all ran to the shed out the back door. The shed always seemed to be close but this specific time it wasn’t. I could barely see through without the street lights or the moon. The wind blew hard and made it hard to see. The rain came down hard and felt like I was being poked with a sharp stick over and over. Tree branches, leaves, and small objects blew uncontrollably across the fields. What was once our home was coming to a crumble.

“It’s not opening!” Elijah yelled. He picked up a crow bar on the side of the shed and hit the lock until it broke.

“Come on yall go inside!” he yelled. The dogs barked and ran off. Jr tried to run after them but I grabbed his shirt and yanked him back in the shed.

“Are you crazy you fool!? Leave them damn dogs unless you want to die!” I yelled.

The shed was dark but it held up better than the house. We could hear items hitting the shed from all directions. The whistled loudly through the cracks. Jr. sat on the ground as Elijah and I kneeled over him. The shed door started rambling loose.

“I don’t know how much longer than door will hold!” I said.

The wind blew the door open. Rain flew inside. Elijah ran over and grabbed one of the slabs of wood piled in the corner.

“Jr. get over here! Help me shut this door.” I yelled.

A large branch rushed in with the wind hitting Elijah in the head. His glasses fell to the ground as blood came streaming down his face.

“Elijah!” Jr. yelled.

“I’m fine. Let’s get this door shut!” he yelled, ignoring the blood on his head. Jr. and I shut the doors while he shoved the wood in the latch to lock it shut. A pile of hay and old potato sacks rested on the far end of the shed.

“Come over here ya’ll. We can stay here til the morning.” I suggested. Elijah tripped over his foot nearly stumbling to the ground.

“Sit down. We need to just pray we make it through the night. We need to stay together tonight and look for Ma’ma’ in the morning.” I said. I grabbed Elijah’s hand and then Jr.’s and began to kneel to the ground. The moon shined through the dreadful storm, peaking into the shed windows. It was the only thing that gave us light. We bowed our heads, and prayed.

“Our Father, protect Ma’ma’ in this storm. Please Father, shield my brothers and I. Let us make it safe through this storm. Amen.” Elijah said.

The sound of the storm started to tune out as I got used to it. We made pallets on the ground out of straw and potato sacks. The itchy hotness would normally bother me but not tonight. All I care about is staying strong for my brothers and making it to morning, hoping the storm passes. I just hope Ma’ma’ somewhere ok.

We lied beside each other looking at the ceiling out the window.

*It’ll be over in the morning. Go to sleep. Go to sleep. Go to sleep.*

A loud blast of wind hit me in my face waking me up. I opened my eyes and I was soaring over clouds in a blue sky.

“Oh my God! I’m flying. What the hell!”

The town was below me. Birds flew pass me soaring toward the ground, through the thick clouds, closer to town. I could see one of the birds was red. It stood out over the other birds that were small and black.

I could see Mr. Chester’s Market and the rest of the town clear as day. The red bird fly out of the synchronized flock and went in another direction. I followed him. He stared flying lower near the power lines, close to the trees.

*What’s it doing? Where is it taking me?* The beautiful bird flew faster and headed straight for this tree near the old mill. I fell to the ground near the tree.

*“Ah. Where is the bird?”* I walked behind the tree to find Ma’ma’ lying there with blood on her head. I raced to her trying to wake her up. She was cold as ice.

“Ma’ma’?! Ma’ma?!” I screamed to the sky.

I woke up and saw the sun shining through the shed. I heard nothing but birds chirping from outside. Elijah and Jr. were still sleep beside me.

“Elijah wake up! We gotta go get Ma’ma’! I know where she is!” I said.

\*\*\*

Dry blood painted the side of Elijah’s head. We all stood looking at what was once our house. The house was in a million pieces in a pile and across the yard. Dip –Stick lied dead near the back door, crushed under the cement stairs.

Loud wailing came from the side of the house where part of the house once the living room. We ran over.

“George!” Jr cried out. George had a tree lying on him. His head poked out as his bleeding eyes faded away staring at us.

“Damn dog still alive?” I said looking the other way so Jr. would see me crying. Elijah went to the shed and grabbed Charles shot gun, and one of the potato sacks we slept on last night.

“We love you boy.” I looked the other way and held Jr. as Elijah shot George in the head, ending his pain. He placed the potato sack softly over his head.

“Let’s find Ma’ma’. We’ll bury them when we get back.” He said.

\*\*\*

No one said anything as we walked the road heading to the old mill. It was such a beautiful day. The wind let off a nice gentle breeze. Tree branches, and lots of debris scattered across the field from miles and miles. Elijah kept the shot gun with him.

“Is that Ma’ma’ car!” Jr. yelled running to the car. A large tree sat of the top of the car crushing the driver side. My heart stared hurting as I felt it breaking inside my chest. My Ma’ma’ is dead. We all raced to the car. Ma’ma’ wasn’t in the driver seat, Charles was.

“Ma’ma’ on this side of the car!” Elijah yelled. The door was shut and unable to open but the window was big enough to get her out.

“Lijah?” Ma’ma’ said low.

“She alive help me get her out!” he yelled. He busted the window with the end of the gun. We all grabbed Ma’ma’ out the car.

“We gotta get her to the hospital.” As we were walking off I heard coughing coming from the car.

*“Charles?”* He wasn’t dead. I’m not sure how he is still alive either. I walked over to Elijah and whispered in his ear so Ma’ma’ could hear.

“Charles still alive.”

“Let’s get Ma’ma’ to the hospital.

\*\*\*

The night sky looked more like the other night before the storm. Elijah and I walked up to the car.

“You sure nobody gonna find out?” I asked.

Charles opened one eye as we stood looking at him in the car unable to move.

“No.” Elijah cocked the shot gun back and pointed at Charles head. He started shaking.

“I can’t shoot him.” He said putting the gun down. He must be getting cold feet. I grabbed Charles mouth and nose to smother him but I moved it. Charles stared shaking and then stared lifeless at me.

“I think he has a heart attack.” I said.

“Let’s get out of here.” Elijah said. We hugged and turned to walk down the road back to the hospital.

Part 2 Continues……..





