

CHAPTER 1



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1900
AROUND 7:00 P.M.
GALVESTON, TEXAS

Nooooooooooooo!

A powerful blast of wind grabbed hold of eleven-year-old Charlie Miller and threw him into the raging flood. He screamed for his parents and his little sister as the churning waters swept him away.

Charlie was caught in the jaws of the deadliest natural disaster ever to hit the United States. A vicious hurricane was destroying the beautiful

city of Galveston, Texas. Winds tore apart houses and buildings. Towering waves crashed over streets. Thousands of people were already dead. And now the screaming winds and drowning waters had come for Charlie.

Charlie sputtered and gasped as he struggled to keep his head above the waves. But the water was filled with wreckage. Every second something smacked him, scraped him, stabbed him. A chunk of roof. A wagon wheel. Hunks of wood and glass. All that was left of houses and shops he'd known all his life.

Charlie managed to grab hold of a floating door and climb on top. But now he faced the killer wind, which had turned bricks and tiles into cannonballs. Charlie flattened himself against the cold, wet wood, squeezing his eyes shut. Even the pouring rain couldn't wash away his tears.

Charlie had never felt so terrified, or alone.

Just that morning, none of this had seemed possible. Galveston was one of the most important cities in Texas. Nobody believed a big hurricane could strike here.

But then came the monstrous waves.

Ba-room!

The wind that blasted with shrieking gusts.

Whoo-eeeeeeesh! Whoo-eeeeeeesh! Who-eeeeeeesh!

The sky turned black and split apart. Rain gushed down. But most shocking was when the usually peaceful Gulf of Mexico suddenly rose up — higher, higher, higher — and swallowed the city.

Galveston was doomed.

Charlie looked frantically around him. Where were Mama and Papa and his little sister, Lulu? Were they somewhere out here, too?

Lightning flashed, each bolt lighting up a new horror floating by.

Flash!

A house on its side.

Flash!

A woman clinging to a pile of wood.

Flash!

A huge wooden pole, speeding through the water.

Heading right for Charlie.