

Dear Reader,

For as long as I can remember, stories of natural disasters have both terrified and fascinated me. I have vivid memories of reading and rereading the entry on tornadoes in the “T” volume of my dad’s old encyclopedia, and one of my very first chapter books was all about volcanoes. But for this girl who grew up near the Gulf Coast, nothing captured my imagination like hurricanes, especially after Hurricane Opal roared into my hometown of Dothan, Alabama, in 1995. I can still remember the nervous anticipation in the air as school let out early, the way my parents and I camped out in our living room that evening as the skies got darker, waiting and watching as the winds grew stronger, the rain louder.

As a character in *The Storm* says, it’s worse when they come at night.

We were lucky. Our backyard flooded, but the water stopped an inch or so from the back door, and apart from losing power for a week and having a lawn full of tree limbs to pick up, Opal treated us gently.

My husband, who grew up even closer to the coast, has not been as fortunate. As a child, his family lost not one but two vacation homes to hurricanes, and one of his earliest memories is hiding in an upstairs closet as Hurricane Frederick ripped through. Twenty-odd years later, the two of us returned to his hometown to help his family with cleanup after Hurricane Ivan, and I’ve never forgotten the sheer scale of the destruction.

The Storm is—obviously!—about storms like these, but it’s also about the places that withstand them, and the people who live there knowing that, at any time from June to November, a monster could be gathering steam somewhere out in the ocean, slowly turning their way...

Happy reading, and batten down the hatches!



RACHEL HAWKINS

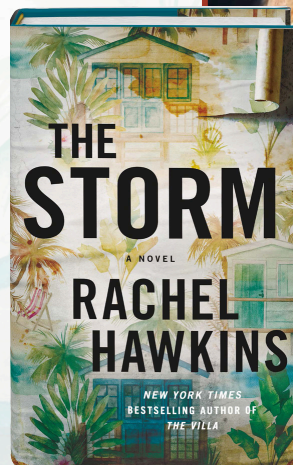


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