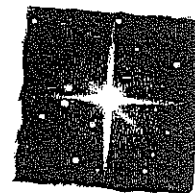


## CHAPTER 9



The water had risen to the attic by the time Dad chopped a hole big enough for them to climb through. The wind screamed and rain poured in.

"Stay together," Dad shouted. "We're going to stay together."

Cleo was so stunned that she stopped fussing. She kept her eyes on Barry's face, and he did his best to look calm, like Dad on the plane.

Dad dragged a trunk under the hole, stepped onto it, and pulled himself onto the roof.

"Barry!" Dad yelled. "Climb up."

Barry stood on the trunk. Dad lifted him by the arms, and Mom grabbed his legs, pushing him up slowly.

Barry gasped when he stuck his head into the storm. The wind was so strong he couldn't keep his eyes open. The rain came down hard and fast, stinging his face like a million bees. Dad held on to Barry, then helped him lie down on his stomach. The wind pushed against Barry's back, gluing him to the roof.

"Stay there!" Dad shouted.

Cleo came up next. Dad laid her down next to Barry. Barry put his arm around her and held on. Soon Barry and Cleo were sandwiched tightly between Mom and Dad.

They lay bundled together like that, not talking. Mom had her arm over Barry's head. Dad's hand rested on his back. Cleo was pushed

so close against Barry he could feel her heart beating. He smelled Mom's lemony soap.

Barry kept his eyes closed. But just as he started to feel a tiny bit calmer, there was a loud thud at the end of the roof.

Something had blown through the air and smacked against the house.

Cleo sprang up, struggling to her feet, breaking free from Mom's and Dad's hold.

"Akivo?" she called.

The wind knocked her forward. Mom screamed.

Barry's hand shot out and grabbed Cleo by the back of her shirt. Dad got a grip on her arm. They pulled her back into their huddle.

Barry's heart hammered.

They got Cleo to lie flat again. But before Barry could rejoin their huddle, a gust of wind swirled around him and hit him in the chest. He tumbled onto his side.

"Barry!" Dad called, holding out his hand.

Barry reached out, expecting to feel Dad's grip.

But he slipped back, and his hand sliced through empty air.

He slid down.

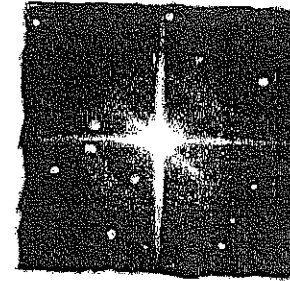
Down.

Down.

Down.

The last thing he saw before he fell into the water was the terrified look on Dad's face.

## CHAPTER 10



The water seemed to reach up and snatch Barry out of the air. And then he was swept away in a gushing tide. Barry struggled to keep his face above the waves, to keep water from rushing into his nose and mouth. His leg smacked into a piece of wood, but that barely slowed him down. His arm scraped against something sharp. His hand hit something big and furry—a rat?—as the water twisted and turned him and dragged him along.

And then, finally—*crash*—he hit something that stopped him cold.

It was a tree. Almost without thinking, Barry threw his arms around the trunk. The water pulled him, trying to suck him back into the flood. But he held on. He wrapped one leg around the tree, then the other. He hugged that tree so tightly he could barely breathe.

He gathered his strength and then he managed to shimmy up the trunk inch by inch. It was an oak tree. All of the branches had been ripped away but one, which rose out of the water. Barry pulled himself up onto it and sat in the V where the branch met the trunk. He hugged the trunk again, bracing himself against the wind.

He couldn't see much in the gray light and the stinging rain. And what he saw hardly seemed real: water in every direction. He felt like he was shipwrecked in the middle of the ocean.

The water was filled with branches and wooden boards and other wreckage from the

storm. Barry thought of Atlantis, a city lost under the ocean. He'd read about it in one of his favorite comic books.

Was that what would become of New Orleans?

Barry pressed his cheek against the tree. His entire body ached. His hands were ragged from climbing the tree. He started to cry, his sounds drowned out by the wind.

"Dad!" Barry screamed. "Mom! Cleo!"

He screamed their names until his throat burned.

The wind screamed back at him.

And then he heard a deep groan and a *crack* that echoed above the wind.

A massive shadow loomed over him.

Barry stared in shock: It was a house, pushing through the water like a monster. The windows and doors were gone, and as the house turned slowly in the water, Barry saw that one side had been ripped away.

He had to get out of the way. Now!

Barry jumped into the water, barely missing a big piece of glass. The house hit the tree with a *smash* and a groan and then got stuck there. The current started to drag Barry. He fought against it and somehow managed to swim to the house. He reached up and grabbed hold of a window frame, careful of the jagged glass around the edge.

A piece of wood fell into the water right next to Barry.

Its bright color glowed in the ghostly light: sky blue.

Barry stared at the house.

Could it be?

Yes. It was Abe's house. Abe Mackay's.

And that wasn't all.

The sound of ferocious barking rang out.

Somewhere in that ripped-apart house was Cruz.

The killer dog.

