

After the Storm

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PM

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Chapter 1

The Storm

It was the thunder that woke Andy. A blast so loud that it shook his bed. He lay there for a minute, unsure what had happened, his heart beating fast. Outside, the wind surged and roared, and hard bursts of rain splattered against his window. Andy turned to put on his bedside lamp, but when he flicked the switch, nothing happened.

A wavering glow appeared in the doorway. It was accompanied by his mum's voice; she had to speak louder than usual to make herself heard over the din of the storm.

“Are you all right, Andy?” she asked, as she stepped into the room, flashlight in hand.

“What's going on?” he asked anxiously, sitting up.

“The storm is worse than we thought,” said Mum, almost yelling. “It's ripped part of the roof off the kitchen. The power has gone out and rain is gushing inside. Dad and I think we'll all be safest downstairs in the garage.”

By then, Andy was out of bed, pulling on jeans and a jumper.

“Can’t we just drive down to Grandma’s?” Andy asked. He pictured his grandmother’s cosy house in the city, twenty kilometres away from their little town in the hills.

“No,” said Mum. “It’s too dangerous to drive anywhere. The wind will be blowing trees over. We know some are already down. The phone towers are all out, so we can’t call anyone. The best thing to do is to wait for the storm to ease.”

Andy followed Mum through the kitchen and down the stairs. Dad and Andy’s big sister Mish were opening the car doors just as Andy and Mum reached the garage. Their flashlights and the light spilling out from the car interior made everything seem unfamiliar and faintly spooky.

“This is weird,” said Mish, as the four of them clambered into the car. “We’re getting in, but we’re not going anywhere.”

Dad half-laughed. “It is very strange,” he said, turning off his flashlight. “But it’s the best place to be right now. We’re quite protected down here. See if you can get a bit of sleep. I think everything should calm down by dawn.”

Andy was sure he wasn’t going to sleep a wink. Even though it was quieter in the garage, he still felt alert and a little apprehensive about the storm outside.

He tucked a quilt around himself, and after a little while he felt surprisingly warm and cosy. The last thing he remembered was nestling his head into his pillow and listening to the howls and thumps from the storm outside.



Chapter 2

Wrecked!

When Andy woke, it was morning, and all the noise of the storm was gone. Light flowed in from a large side window in the garage, and he could see he was alone in the car. From somewhere far away he heard the sound of a chainsaw and distant voices.

He had just started to push his quilt off when Mish suddenly appeared at the car window.

“Hey, Andy, you’re awake!”

Mish pulled the door open, and Andy got out. His neck felt a little sore from sleeping sitting up.

“The house is wrecked,” said Mish.

“Wrecked?” Mish was always so dramatic.

“Come and see,” she said, heading out of the garage.

He followed her out of the garage and they both looked up at the house. A large tree from the garden had fallen, ripping some of the kitchen roof off with it as it came down. All the windows on that side of the house were smashed. Andy couldn’t see what it was like inside.

Wrecked!



“What about our rooms?” Andy asked anxiously.

Mish tilted her head in the direction of the front of the house and started walking up the driveway.

“They’re okay, but the rest of the house isn’t.”

They found their parents at the front door. Dad put his arms around Andy and hugged him tight.

“It’s a mess inside,” he said.

“There’s a lot of water damage,” added Mum glumly.

“What will we do?” asked Andy.

“There’s not a lot we can do for now. At the moment the roads into and out of our area are closed,” said Mum. “It might take a while to clear. However, I’ve had a text alert that an emergency centre has been set up in the community hall. If we can get down there, we can probably stay there for a night or two.” She shrugged half-heartedly.

The family spent the next few hours examining the damage, talking to neighbours and discussing what to do next. Although Mum and Dad were receiving occasional text updates on their phones, they weren’t able to make calls out to anyone. It was afternoon by the time an emergency crew arrived and advised them that the road had been cleared enough to allow access to the community hall.