

Round the Bend from Spooktober

Aftermath of Hurricane Carol in August of 1954

By: Tim Flaherty

Within the passage of an hour, there was the heightened return of thunder and lightning, with a blast of cloudburst that seemed like the water pouring uncontrollably over the top of a dam and a water-main break. The rains poured down pearls of water that beat upon the streets, sounding like a drummer banging on a snare drum. The rain was unwavering, powerful and constant, causing a sudden panic that the torrents would descend and sting everyone on contact. Surrounded in liquid, all living beings were trapped with no place to run for shelter. It didn't even matter who described it because nobody could tell it any worse than what it was. One couldn't measure the severity of it because it fell from the sky with such destructive force, whipping and stinging the skin of anyone trying to take cover. The falling sheets of rain removed all the impurities in the night air while smashing and crackling up from the black asphalt. The fresh, cooling deluge even appeared to buckle the heated, steamy, blistering street hardtop, breaking the heat wave. It was just astonishing, so potent it could put one's eye out if they risked looking upward, while the pounding current swamped all the streets with an unleashed flow of rapids for as far as anyone could see in the darkness.

People could only watch in amazement and despair while melodic cicadas were caught up in the violent tide during the deadly interruption of their mid-life cycle. Those insects looked like pinwheels spinning out of control before hitting the surface of the water. Many of them departed this life while jetting in every direction, leading to storm drains, clogging the waterways that led to sewers. For some people, it was surreal, and there was nowhere to run for cover. So overwhelming and crushing, it carried the force of a massive deadly flash flood. People watched in shock as the raging water swamped cars and anything else not tied down, dragging them violently to an unknown land of lost destinations. The downpour seemed to pursue anyone on the street with punishing, crawling, hidden eyes, following no matter how victims tried to escape it. With a monstrous and cruel intention, the swift-moving currents swallowed and drowned any birds it pulled under. Looking back on it, the water carried with it a feeling of omnipotence, almost bringing an overpowering awe of malevolence. The huddled, tormented community genuinely thought that this was the end of their world as they knew it.

There were further vast streams of water running down Main Street and heading to the east side of the town. Many sheltered, terrified families, lucky to be inside, were mystified as they hunkered down together in their homes, listening to the angry surge pelting the land outside with deadly retribution. It really seemed as though the entire Earth would quickly become a new, complete water world orbiting in the universe, with no land in sight, and where the ocean bottom was unreachable. Suddenly, and without any warning, the downtown street imploded into a massive sink hole swallowing more cars, fire engines, police cruisers, ambulances, the unholy, cats and dogs, the filth, and all that remained of the carnal. It was just nature's way of cleaning the aftermath and wiping away the ungodliness of a conquest at the fragile end of a business enterprise.

Now the streets were only illuminated by the shadowy glow of the telephone poles and the backup generators casting emergency lighting. With only a mild mist falling, numerous, gluttonous seagulls, with all their infernal cackling voices, drifted down, plundering the burgeoning trash dumpsters in Medfield. These shadowy white birds rummaged for anything edible, all the while greedily stabbing at one another with those long, pointed, hideous yellow beaks. They took advantage of all the garbage and leftovers that remained from the debris scattered on the streets. They feasted on the plump, juicy cicadas that drowned and were now left concentrated in the open street gutters. The fat white birds had insatiable appetites, slamming so many cicadas down their gullet, gorging themselves with enough to make these bully-boy scavengers choke in ecstasy. These seagulls looked like malcontented fools, acting like the clowns who shoveled the muck from the elephants that worked under the big top circus.

Now with an eeriness, black ravens arrived to make their claim but refused to join and mingle with the gulls they thought inferior. These ominous bird soared up to another level in the flickering light, remaining calm above, perched like sentries on tall buildings and the high broken branches of the many huge trees on North Street. They looked down from above at the people who appeared to be nothing more than a blast from a simple garden hose.

While the gulls had eaten the appetizers, the raven were biding their time before methodically floating down from above to savor the entrees. Circling and descending upon the delicacy of the dead, they hungrily skewered and devoured the soft, lifeless eyes from the perished storm victims. Surely, Medfield was in need of deliverance. But would anyone ever want to live here in Medfield after this disaster?

It was deep into the night and the neighborhood resembled the aftermath of a neutron bomb explosion. There was no excessive damage to the waterlogged, concrete, physical structure but plenty of permanent devastation and death in the cost of the sacred loss of human life. Time to welcome the blessed sun from the stardust. The only positive uptake was the prospect of the Earth star bringing newness to this dark day, still only five hours old.

The End