

The weatherman makes me feel quaky. Is that big storm coming here?

I can't watch anymore so I sit on the porch and my neighbors. They are so busy today.

Our house is all boarded up already so my parents are down street. Mom is holding ladders for Mr. Dominic and his son who are putting up shutters on the neighbors houses. Mom says Mr. Domininc and his son are pros. They have done this before and love to help make sure their neighbors are safe.

Dad is helping the other dads move barbeques and lawn furniture into garages.

Every now and then a small group of adults forms on the street. It is like a huddle during a football game. They exchange information, laugh at something, or look shocked. Then they scurry off to their new positions.

Some go to the new neighbors who have never even seen a hurricane, some go to the elderly couple next door to help with their beautiful garden, some go to help the man who doesn't speak English (he is confused by the weatherman too).

Mom comes back with some of the neighborhood kids. We play inside the dark house as mom does endless loads of laundry, fills bottles, buckets, and baths with water, and sets lanterns and flashlights everywhere.

I really want to use the flashlights now. "I can't wait for the lights to go out," I tell her. She laughs at me. "I'll check back with you on that tomorrow."

As the wind starts whipping the tree branches around we say goodbye to our neighbors and hello to our friends who have come to our "hurricane party". Our dog is really excited because they have brought their cats. Our friends don't have shutters on their house.

The party is fun at first. We play hide and seek, dolls and puzzles while the adults keep watching that weatherman. They call him by his first name now. Like he is a friend!

But then a blarring sound comes from their phones. There's a tornado warning. We run to our safe room- six people in a little bathroom. The weatherman says the name of our street! I'm shaking. My mom holds me tight as we sit on the toilet. My sister and her friend are in the bathtub. Dad is trying hard not to step in the big bucket of water.

They say the tornado passes quickly but it doesn't feel like that. We try to make the bathroom more comfortable in case we have to go back in. We load it with pillows , blankets, games and a computer to watch movies on.

The power goes out. We play with the flashlights. Shadow plays, flashlight tag, stories by lantern light. The adults find their friend Steve on the radio.

We end up in the safe room many more times. Mom plays some poetry read by the “rain drops on roses” lady. I like her voice and fall asleep in the safe room.

For two days we hear the wind and rain pushing against our house. We can only see one little palm through the slit in the shutters. It dances around in the wind, twisting this way and dipping that way.

The card games are fun. Sometimes we have a battle, parents versus kids. Not to brag but we kicked the parent’s butts.

Finally we wake up to a sunny morning on the other side of the storm. It is still dark and hot in our house but now we can open the windows to let the air and breeze in.

Everyone goes out to survey the damage. The trees are naked. Fences are down.

Look at that power line! It almost hit the Smith’s house.

The adults huddle again. And then off they go, after they get coffee from Mrs. Maggie who has made it her mission to feed the neighborhood.

Branches are piled, leaves are raked, roads are cleared. Mom hands me a rake. I can help too! Everyone works together. Before the elderly couple next door comes out we have their yard in order so they won't have to worry.

Everyone says we are blessed. It could have been worse. It probably was worse for other people. They are worried about their loved ones. The adults seem lost without their phones to keep them in touch. They can't see where the storm went and for some reason they can't hear weatherman Steve anymore. I see mom hug Mrs. G---- who doesn't know what happened to her daughter who lives further east.

I like helping. Being part of the team. We fill up big black bags of leaves as Mr. Dominic and his son pull out their tall ladders again. The neighborhood hums and vibrates with the sound of generators. It is hard to hear what people are saying over the machines.

By afternoon things look much better. We still pretty bad though. It is so hot and going inside doesn't help. Mr. B---- cleans out his pool and all the kids jump into the icy water. We spend the whole afternoon splashing until Mrs. Maggie pokes her head over the wall. "BBQ Time! Rice and beans and the contents of everyone's defrosting freezers.

Everyone gathers in her yard for delicious food and games as the sunsets in the west. The clouds look like a soft peach. It isn't a quiet sunset. The generators roar, as well as the parents with laughter.

Our tummies full we play cards and dominos by lantern light into the night. When I get sleepy I curl into my mom's lap. We snuggle and stare at the stars. They are so clear in the darkness.

Even though there were a lot of scary things during the hurricane I will have good memories. Helpful neighbors, friends staying with us, and hugging my mom under the stars. The next time a hurricane comes I won't let it make me feel quaky. I'll know it bring out all my neighbors.