

# OFF THE DOCK

WITH D. A. MANN

## ~ Helene the Hurricane ~

The Hurricanes are a large family. The family blood line has been carried around the world. All continents have been visited; but, they keep returning to the Caribbean. Something about the tropic feel of the islands, the smell of paradise, and the warm Gulf waters is irresistible to them. The Hurricanes are always pulled *in* and *up*. Sailing *in* to surf the swells and *up* to Galveston for Tex-Mex; or New Orleans for some jazz; or Destin to ride the dunes. Cedar Key is also attractive this time a year. They'll move in and take over the entire town and the surrounding area. Helene likes this little community. So much so, that she and her relatives often visit it more than once a year.

The Hurricane family has been around as far back as anyone remembers. Their heritage is widespread and marked with tragedy. Every member of this clan has killed at least one person. They will dominate the news like no other entity, like no other murderer. Stealing your house, your car, your furniture, your clothing, and even your memories; they will revel in your anxiety and drain your emotions. You will truly be left with nothing; not your sanity, not even hope. But you are not alone. Your neighbors bore the same fate; and, they too, are homeless, helpless, and hopeless. Helene is smiling down as she circles the disaster from a lofty perch. The yachts of the rich are yanked from their berth and tossed into piles where condos used to stand. No more hamburgers at the Tiki Hut for you. The Hut is somewhere in Georgia by now. Dreams have been blown away and then buried under water never to be realized again. The Gulf is no place for dreamers. It's a place for the Hurricanes to prosper. Their stormy past insures an

even bleaker future where no one will stand in the sand; where no one will build a home, a life, or a future for their children.

There will come a time when all is lost. An ending is not so far off. When the Hurricanes have cleared the landscape, they'll be silent for a period. They'll be silent until the attraction of sun and sand becomes too much to ignore for the masses. The masses will build. The masses will play. And eventually, the masses will run. All the communities, the hotels, the businesses will vanish without a trace of ever existing on the beach. Gone. The Hurricanes have moved in - again. They'll lend you a little beachfront property. You might think you own it; but, you'd be mistaken. The ink on the eviction notice is still wet. They are coming for you. Your little generator will not help. Nor will your cash, your full tank of gas, the ice chest, or your escape route. Welcome to Hell.

So the next time you see the clouds flying by,  
or the wind whipping the palm fronds,  
or the rain coming down so hard it hurts, it's a sign.  
You can feel a change in the air and it's not normal.  
It's the Hurricanes exercising. They are in the mood for a fight.  
A fight that they never lose.

\*Written 9/24/24

Before the storm