

Hurricanes

Beau Kragovich

There was once a boy from nowhere. He drifted in the sea, until he washed up on a sandy shore on an island full of trees. The emerald pools and crisp blue waves, like nurturing hands, carried him to safety and laid him down in cradled sands. The sun's soft glow kept him warm, and that warmth, in turn, kept him alive. He was no more than 16.

The boy was of average height and average weight, with black hair and fair skin. Unremarkable in any way that could be seen by the eye. He awoke the next morning not knowing who he was. His life before that morning and his journey to where he lay was a blur.

He was the boy from nowhere; the boy born of the sea. For a few moments he was afraid to sit up. He stared up at the sky. There were no clouds and the sun was dull, but the sky was a rich blue with fuchsia streaks resembling the eye of a marble.

He sat up and cautiously surveyed his surroundings. There were dunes running through the beach. There were boulders, at least twice his size, sprinkled across the shore. There were trees, familiar and alien at the same time. Some of them so tall they pierced the sky.

He propped himself up and found his balance. He walked into the forest of trees hoping he was not alone and he would find others like himself.

Through the forest he found a town. Small and quiet, but he hoped still that he would find help. He knocked on every door and entered every shop, but there was no answer and no sign of life. The stores were fully stocked and clean and the small houses left unlocked and spotless.

He found his way to a bedroom, and then to a bed. The boy was tired, but not hungry. He had not been hungry once since waking up. He was not thirsty, but then he had never known thirst. But still, he was tired. The boy slept, but did not dream.

In the morning, he searched the town again. Door by door and shop by shop he searched. Again he found every shop stocked and cleaned and every house vacant, but ready. He didn't like the feeling of being alone in a seemingly abandoned place. He left the town and went back to the beach where he arrived.

The boy of the sea stared into the waters that bore him and wondered if he was really the only living being in all the world, or if there were lands beyond his shores with other lonely boys asking the same question. As he sat there wishing he could see farther, he remembered the trees.

He ran back into the forest and found the tallest one he could. He grabbed onto it, hugging its bark, and he pulled himself up. The boy wrapped his legs

around its trunk and he pulled himself higher. And higher and higher he went, until the boulders looked like grains of sand.

The trees went past the clouds, but he stopped when they touched his head. He was afraid to go further. He was afraid he'd have no way down.

He stopped and he looked. Down, around, and as far out as he could.

He saw the town where he slept, the shore where he arrived, and the forest which ran all through the island, but he saw no life. Out on the horizon he saw only water and nothing else. With a sigh and a pain in his gut he climbed down the tree and went back to town.

Once again he found himself tired, so he went back to his bed and fell asleep. He did not dream.

The next day, the day after, and the day after that, he went back to the tree. He climbed it to the same height and he looked around again. The boy saw no other islands, no other lands, and no other people. Every day he went back to town with a pain in his gut and a heaviness in his heart. Every night he slept, and he did not dream.

One night there was a storm. He had never seen one before and he was afraid. The winds blew hard, knocking down small trees and blowing open doors. He stayed in his adopted home and hid in his adopted bed, and wished for the storm's end. He did not dream and he hardly slept.

Once the rains stopped and the winds calmed, the boy went out to survey his island and see what damage was done. Some roofs had blown off, the store shelves were disheveled, and trees were uprooted.

He walked over to the beach and that's where he stopped, frozen. In almost the exact spot where he had woken up, lay a boy of about the same age, with olive skin and hair that matched the sand. Remarkable in every way his eye could see. He ran up to the boy and shook him, but the boy with sand colored hair did not wake, though he was breathing. So he picked him up and carried him to town.

There was another bed in the room he called his own, so he placed the boy there, wrapped him in blankets, and kissed him on his forehead. It seemed like the only thing to do.

There was wood and coal by the fireplace. He set the wood and the coal and started a fire. He had never set a fire before and yet he knew just how to do it.

For the first time since waking on the beach, the boy born of the sea wasn't alone, but he was hungry. He went to the store and picked up what he could find undamaged. He brought home his bounty and set a pot to boil. He put all the ingredients in the boiling pot and let them cook.

To his knowledge he had never cooked before, but his hands moved in steady motions and he cut, peeled, and diced. While he cooked, he heard sounds from the bedroom. The olive skinned boy, with piercing hazel eyes, had finally woken up. He made his way to the kitchen, walked up to the pot, and he smelled the stew. He turned to the chef and gave him a kiss on the forehead, just as the chef had done to him.

The chef's insides turned and his legs went weak. His body felt warm all over and he did not know why. He felt as though he had been waiting for that kiss

since the moment he first arrived. In that moment he knew that he had been waiting for this boy since even before that.

They ate the stew and they went to bed. They held each other close and that night they both dreamed.

In the morning, the boy of the sea, and the boy of the storm went hand in hand to explore their land. They found caves and coves and beautiful flowers which had begun to grow. Day after day they explored a little more. The two collected wood and cobbled together tools. Little by little they rebuilt the town and with each day made it more their own.

Every morning they would sit together and eat. Every day they would explore and build and rebuild and fix. Every night they would go to bed and hold each other until the sun came up. Every night they dreamed vivid dreams of voyages and adventures. They dreamed of each other, and of other worlds they could see together. The dreams of one, were the dreams of both, and every morning they gave each other a knowing smile.

One morning though, the boy of the sea woke up and his love was nowhere to be found. He searched the island wide and climbed to the top of the tallest tree, even beyond the clouds. He was more afraid of losing his love than of drifting off into the sky, or being stuck in the tree.

He couldn't find the boy. The boy born of the storm vanished just as quickly as he arrived. The boy of the sea couldn't help himself, and he cried.

He did not do much of anything else for the rest of the day; the next day was the same.

He did not know words and the two never spoke, but suddenly the boy he saved had a name, Virgil. And now he knew his own, Jal.

Jal's world began to feel wrong. Day after day he looked for Virgil. Jal could feel Virgil and he knew Virgil was close by, but he couldn't see him, hear him, or kiss him.

Jal needed to get off the island. It was playing tricks on him. Virgil was there, this he knew without a doubt. The island was keeping them apart, somehow.

Jal took some wood from the fallen trees and he built a raft in the same fashion as the roofs he had seen Virgil build. When he finally finished it, Jal set the raft on the edge of the shore. He jumped on and pushed off.

The sunny skies turned grey and the light breezes turned to winds. It was like the night of the storm and he was afraid all over again. Jal wished Virgil was with him. He tried so hard to remember how safe he felt with Virgil and just like that Jal saw a flash of Virgil's face. Older and sadder, but him just the same.

Jal didn't understand what he had just seen, but he couldn't dwell on it long, because the rains started.

The drops fell hard and cut sharp as they hit Jal's skin. The waves bounced him around like speck in the wind and he could hardly hold on. He was about to give up. That's when he heard a voice. Familiar, but deeper and stronger, and yet more vulnerable.

"Jal, I'm here. Please wake up. I don't want to lose you."

It sounded like Virgil was right next to him. Jal looked back at the shore, but saw no one. Nevertheless, he heard Virgil and he knew Virgil was there.

The rain fell harder and the wind blew harder. Jal wanted so badly to stop fighting it and to just let the storm take him. He was scared and exhausted, but he couldn't give in just yet. Virgil was so close.

Jal paddled further on his raft, but then there was thunder and then there was lightning. The lightning struck down on his raft and he was thrown off. Now it was only him in the middle of the sea.

Jal could no longer see the island and without the raft there was nothing between him and the push and pull of the waves. The waves felt like hands frantically rushing over him.

Jal had no more fight left in him. He no longer felt anything except for longing for Virgil and ultimately an overwhelming peace.

Jal heard a steady, rhythmic beeping sound and, with it, the same familiar voice he had heard earlier. "Jal, I love you." To this he replied, "I love you, Virgil." And with those, his first words, and his last words, he stopped swimming.

Slowly the storm stopped and all that was left was the ocean around him, and soon that disappeared as well.

Jal began to sink, and as he sank the rhythmic beeping turned into a long constant sound, and finally Jal knew what was going on. His world went dark and in that darkness there was rain. Tears from Virgil. The real Virgil, in a world outside of the island and the storm.

Virgil had been by Jal the whole time watching over him as he lay ill and in perpetual sleep. He cared for his love who would not wake up. Day after day he held him. He kissed him good morning and kissed him goodnight, until it became too difficult to keep coming back.

The doctors lost hope that Jal would ever get better and they set a date for his last day. Virgil couldn't bear to see him like this anymore, so he didn't come back for a little while. As the fateful day grew nearer, Virgil knew he had to see Jal one last time.

Jal was always Virgil's greatest source of strength. They had met as boys and now, as old men, all they had was each other. He tried to stay composed and to stop the flowing tears, but he could not. There lay his best friend and it was time to say goodbye. He looked at his love and said the only words he could think to say.

"Sleep, my Jal, and dream. Dream of lands we never visited, of things we never did, and of days we never got to see. I will dream too. And if I am lucky, we will meet in our dreams and we will get to share these adventures. And I will hold you as I have, and I will protect you as I could not now. I have loved you since before I knew what love was and I will love you even after the last breath of air has left my body. Sleep in peace until we meet again."

And with one last kiss, Virgil said goodnight.

Nominating Faculty: Professor Richard Hanley, English 2300, Department of English, School of Arts & Sciences, New York City College of Technology, CUNY.

Cite as: Kragovich, B. (2016). Hurricanes. *City Tech Writer*, 11, 87-90. Online at <https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/city-tech-writer-sampler/>