

Shelter



T H E H E I G H T S



Chapter 1



“How much longer?” Lilia asked.

“About a hundred miles. We’ll be there in two hours,” Ana said.

“Let’s hurry up,” Antonio added. “Two days in the car is too long! I can’t wait to get to *Tía* Rose’s!”

Ana had three sisters. Sara was the oldest. She lived in Kansas. Julia was the baby. She lived near the Silvas in the Heights. Ana and

Rose were in the middle. They were twins.

Ana and her two kids were going to Rose's house. It was by the beach in Florida. Rose was on a cruise with her family. She let Ana and the kids use the house while she was gone.

Ana thought a family vacation was a great idea. But Rafael had to work. And Franco had college football camp. So only Antonio and Lilia came with her.

So far, the drive wasn't bad. Antonio brought his iPad. They talked, played games, and watched movies the whole way.

It was now eleven thirty at night. "Not much farther," Ana thought. "That's good because the rain is

coming down. I don't like to drive in bad weather."

The streets were quiet this late at night. Around midnight Antonio spotted the sign.

WELCOME TO
STONE PALM ESTATES

Then they passed an old stone church. It looked funny next to all the new houses. But *Tía* Rose had told them the church was historical.

If only the Silvas had gotten there earlier. They would have seen the roads full of cars. Everyone was leaving the beach. The storm was really a hurricane. It was all over the radio. *Hurricane Bill will reach land by noon tomorrow. Flooding is expected. High winds likely.*

The rain was heavier now. Ana found her sister's house. She pulled into the driveway. Antonio suggested that they park in the garage. "Good idea, honey," said Ana. "We can unload the car and stay dry. I'll go in and open it."

They unloaded the car. Then they explored Aunt Rose and Uncle Rob's huge house. By the time they went to bed, it was two o'clock in the morning.

At four the police drove through the streets. They wanted to make sure people were safe. Stone Palm Estates looked empty. And it was. Except for the Silvas. As the rain and wind got worse, Ana and her kids slept. They didn't know about the danger outside.

Chapter 2



Antonio got up first. He poured a bowl of cereal and turned on the TV. Every channel showed the same thing. There was a hurricane.

Antonio went to the window. He had never seen so much rain! There was water everywhere. Trees had fallen. Trash blew through the air. The newscaster said that the worst part of the storm was still to come.

Antonio ran into his mom's room.

"Mom! Mom! Get up. We're in the middle of a hurricane. We have to leave," Antonio shouted.

Antonio turned on his aunt's bedroom TV. Ana gasped. He was right. They *did* have to get out of there.

"Go wake you sister," Ana said.
"We need to head out now."

Ten minutes later Ana backed the car out of the garage. But there was no way she could drive. The street was flooded. The car would stall. Ana pulled the car back into the garage. The Silvas went back into Rose's house.

"This may not be the safest place. But it is safer than the car. I'll call

nine-one-one. Maybe the police can help us,” Ana said.

Ana grabbed her cell phone. But there was no signal. When she picked up Rose’s house phone, there was no dial tone. The line was dead.

“Antonio, is the TV still working,” Ana called out.

Antonio turned it on. He stared at a black screen.

“No, Mom. It looks like we’ve lost the cable,” Antonio answered.

“Great,” Ana sighed. “We’re in the middle of a hurricane. No one knows we’re here.”

“Don’t worry,” Lilia said. “Dad knows we’re here. When he doesn’t hear from us, he’ll send help. Right now, we should check our supplies.”

“She’s right,” Antonio agreed. “We can’t panic. It won’t do any good. Lilia, check on the food. I’ll look for flashlights and candles.”

Ana looked at her children. Neither one was worried or scared. They even took control of things. Maybe all those adventures with their dad taught them something. They were calm under pressure.

Back in the Heights, Rafael read the morning paper.

“Morning, Dad,” Franco said. “Any interesting news?”

“Hurricane Bill,” Rafael said. “It’s going to be a big one. It should hit southern Florida today.”

“Isn’t that where Mom is?”
Franco asked.

“Yes,” Rafael replied. “But I’m sure she stopped somewhere when she heard about the hurricane. I’ll feel better when she calls.”

The hurricane got worse. Ana looked out the window. Now the lawn was flooded. And it was still raining.

The wind was getting stronger too. Anything not tied down blew away. Toys, patio furniture, and tree branches flew through the air. Ana was afraid something would smash through a window.

“This is a really bad storm, huh?”
Lilia asked.

“Yes, Lil, it is. But we have one thing going for us,” Ana said. “Rose’s house is new. It’s strong. It will hold up. In an old house the roof would be gone by now.”

“But this house is shaking. I’m not sure it’s going to last,” Antonio said.

“Look! Water is pouring into the living room,” Lilia yelled.

The floodwaters had reached the house. Most of Stone Palm Estates would flood. Antonio was sure of it.

But how long would the rain continue? And how high would the water rise?