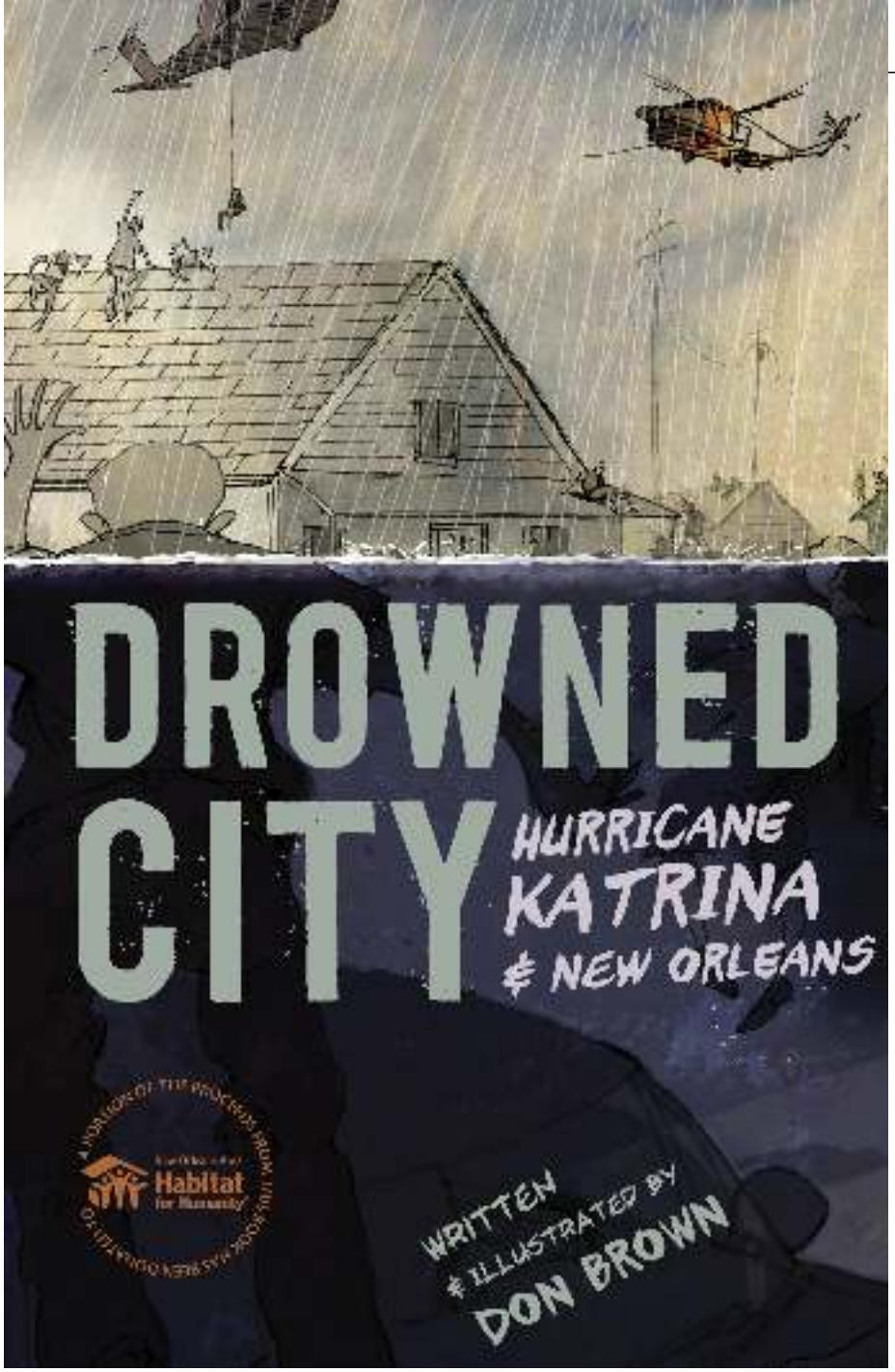
DROWNED CITY
HURRICANE KATRINA & NEW ORLEANS
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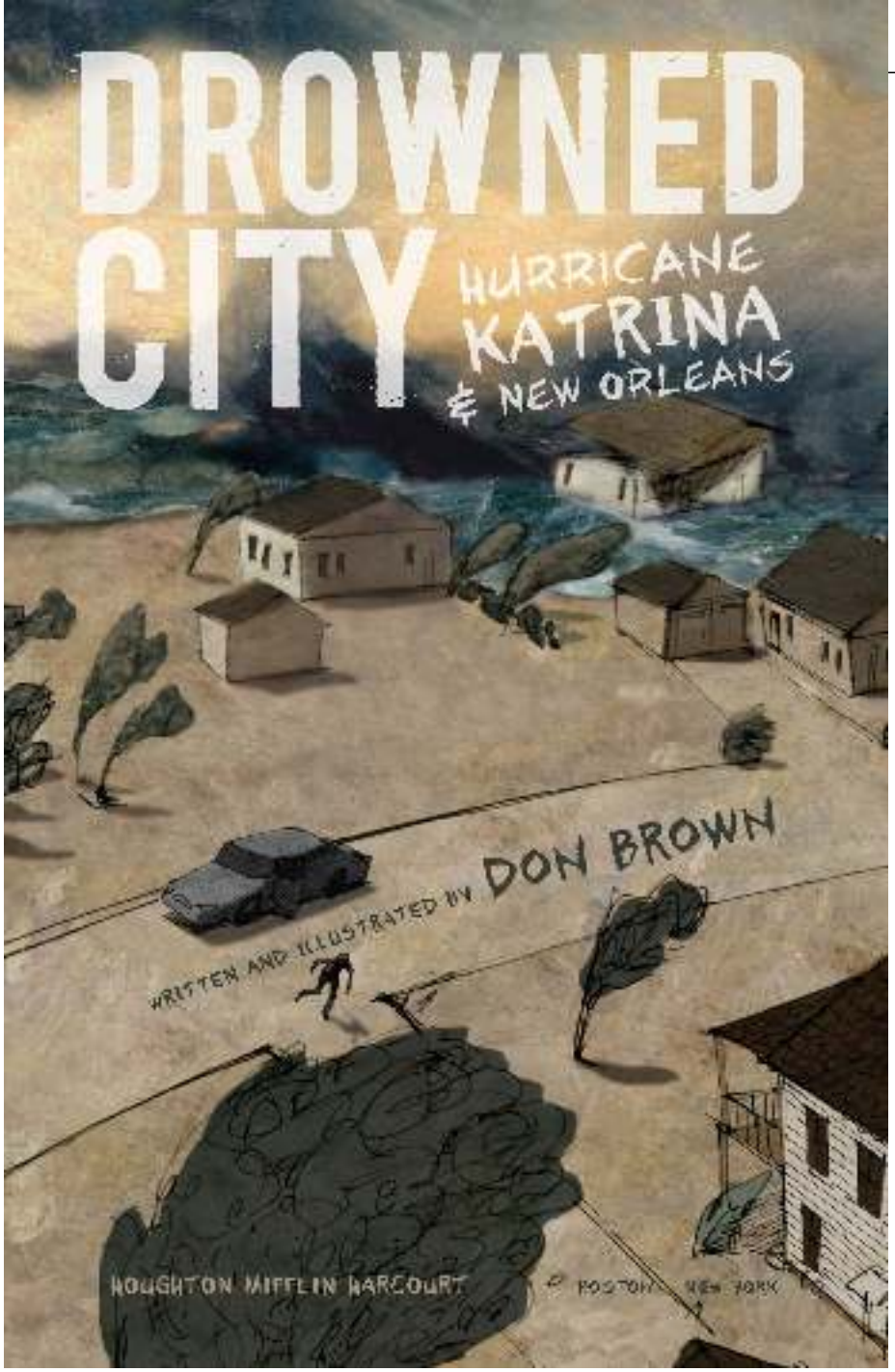
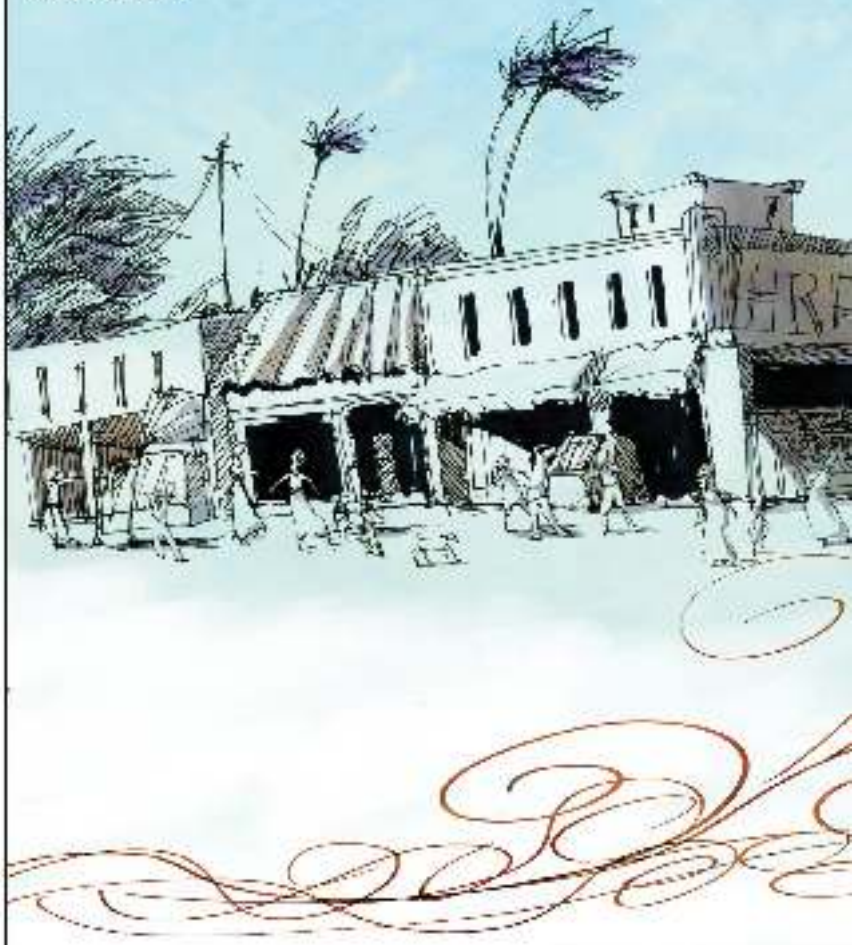
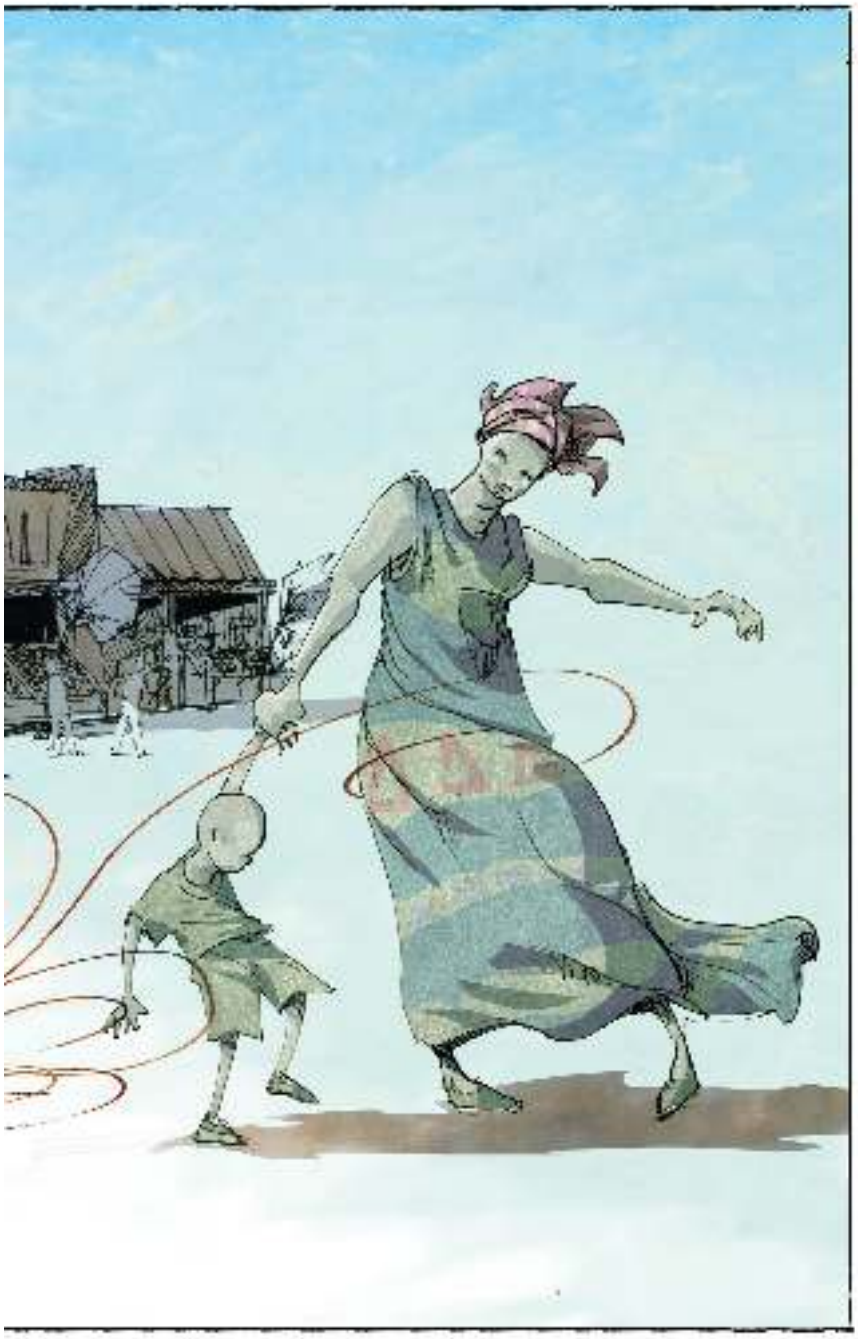
DON BROWN


DROWNED CITY
HURRICANE KATRINA & NEW ORLEANS
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY DON BROWN
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT
BOSTON NEW YORK

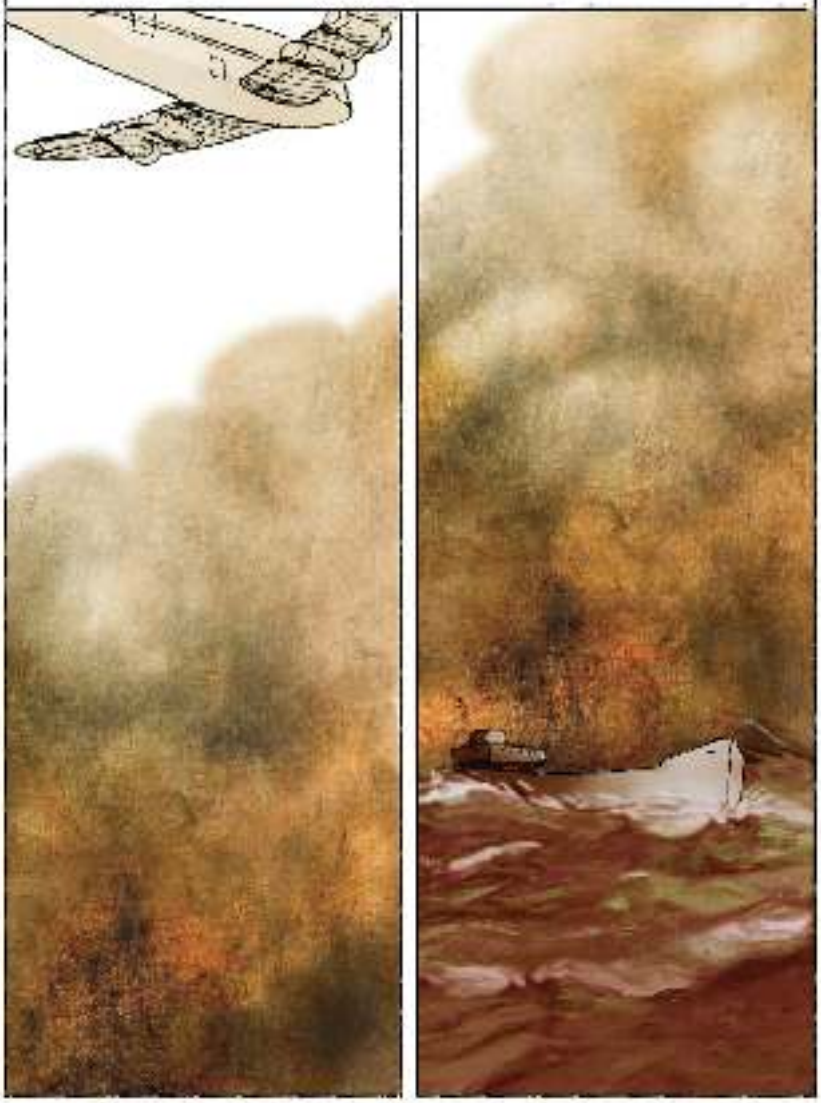
Early August, 2005

A SWIRL OF UNREMARKABLE WIND LEAVES AFRICA AND BREEZES TOWARD THE AMERICAS. IT DRAWS ENERGY FROM WARM ATLANTIC WATER AND GROWS IN SIZE.





FROM A SMUDGE OF FOUL WEATHER IT BECOMES A NASTY TROPICAL STORM, AND THEN ERUPTS INTO A VICIOUS HURRICANE WITH HOWLING WINDS, PINWHEELING COUNTERCLOCKWISE. AS IT DOES WITH ALL BIG STORMS, THE NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER IN MIAMI, FLORIDA, ASSIGNS IT A NAME: KATRINA.



HURRICANE KATRINA SLICES ACROSS FLORIDA. ALTHOUGH IT IS ONLY A CATEGORY 1 HURRICANE—THE LEAST STRONG—KATRINA KILLS SIX PEOPLE, LEAVES A HALF MILLION WITHOUT POWER, AND DRENCHES ITS PATH WITH A FOOT AND A HALF OF WATER.

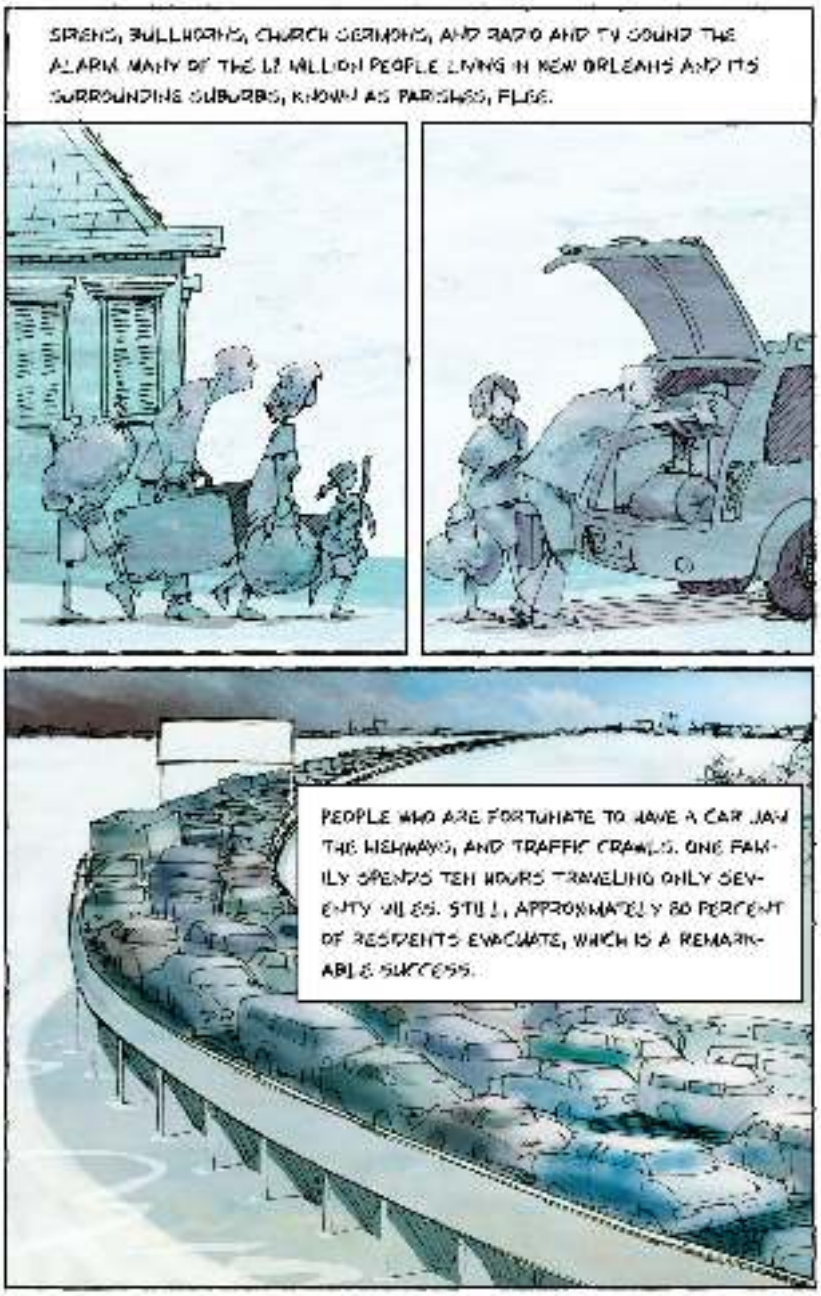
KATRINA CARSENS INTO THE GULF OF MEXICO, DRAWING UP EIGHTY-FIVE DEGREE WATER THAT MULTIPLIES ITS STRENGTH. BY AUGUST 26, IT IS THE MOST CATASTROPHIC OF HURRICANES, A CATEGORY 5, WITH ROARING 155 MPH WINDS AND IT IS SWIRLING DIRECTLY AT NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA.

ALONG WITH A MAJOR EARTHQUAKE IN SAN FRANCISCO AND A TERRORIST ATTACK ON NEW YORK CITY, DISASTER EXPERTS MOST FEAR A DEVASTATING HURRICANE STRIKING THE LOW-LYING LOUISIANA CITY. IT DEPENDS ON LEVEES AND PUMPS TO KEEP IT DRY EVEN IN THE DRIEST OF TIMES.

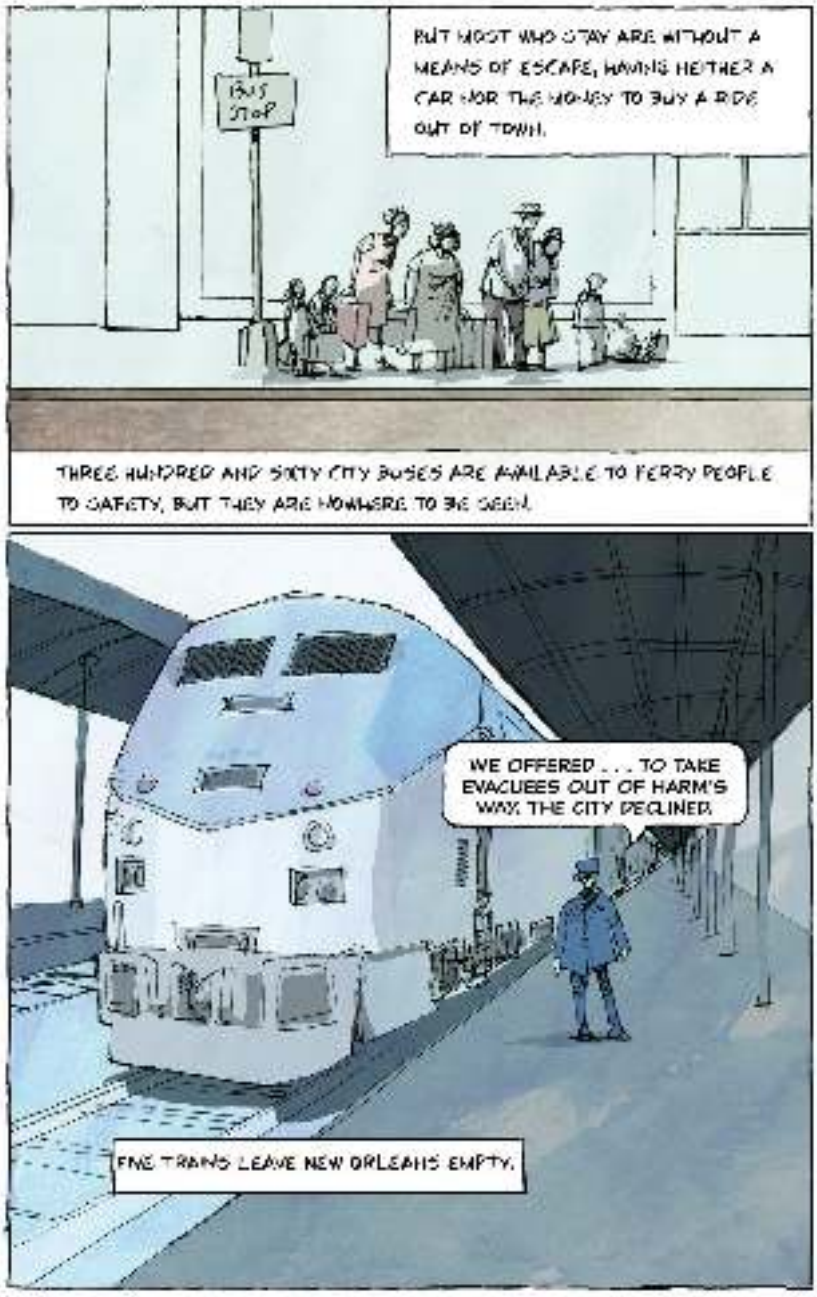
WHEN I HAVE A NIGHTMARE, IT'S A HURRICANE IN NEW ORLEANS.
FEMA

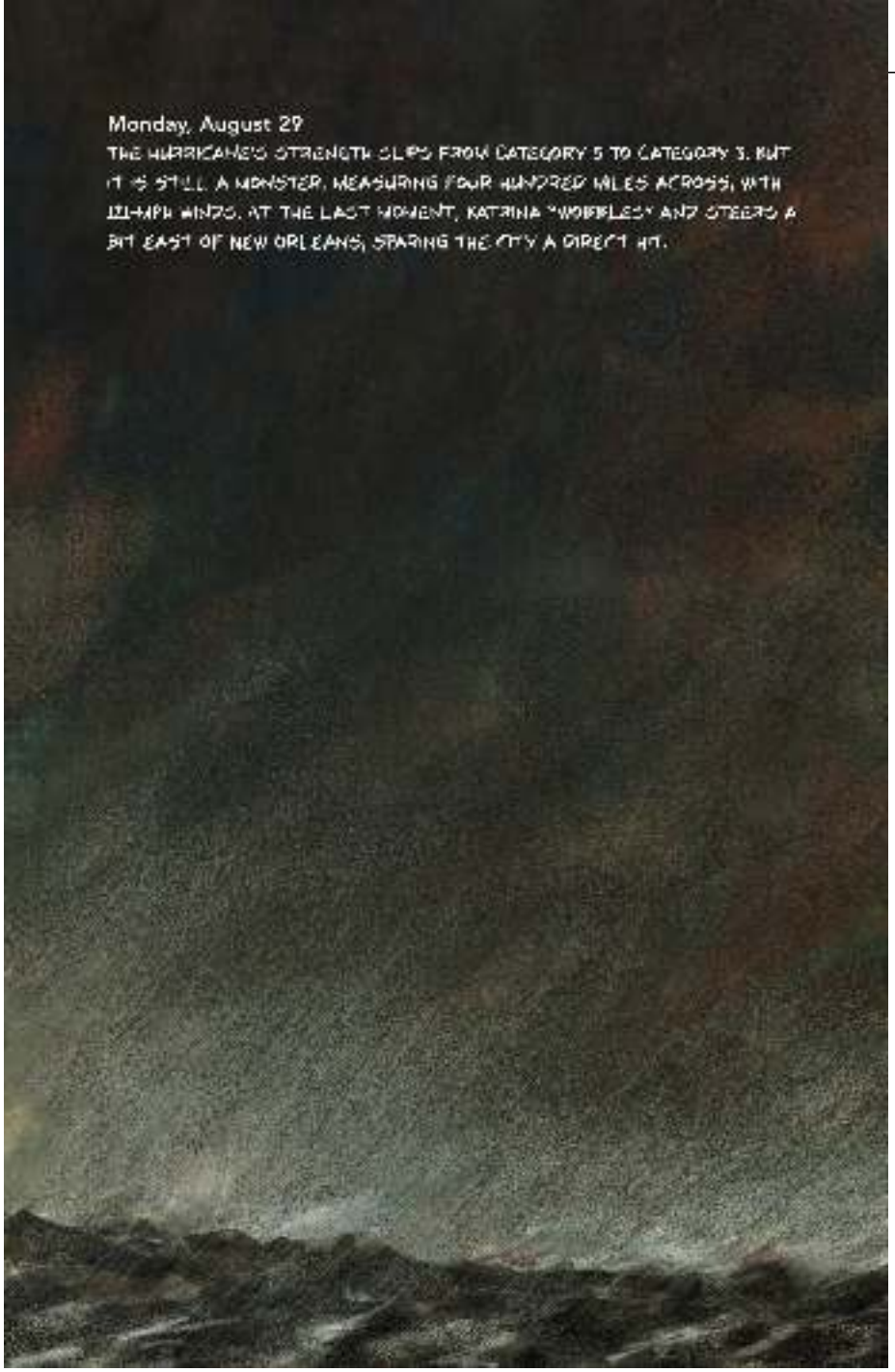
ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 28, THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ANNOUNCES THAT KATRINA WILL HIT NEW ORLEANS IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

AS IT CROSSES THE GULF OF MEXICO, THE WHIRLING STORM CREATES AN AIR PRESSURE IN ITS CENTER, OR EYE, THAT LIFTS THE OCEAN'S SURFACE INTO A KIND OF MASSIVE BUBBLE. WHEN THIS BUBBLE IS COUPLED WITH THE WATER DRIVEN AHEAD OF IT BY KATRINA'S HIGH WINDS, NEW ORLEANS FACES A SURGE OF HIGH WATER THAT WILL BE TWENTY-FIVE FEET ABOVE NORMAL.


SIRENS, BULLHORNS, CHURCH SERMONS, AND RADIO AND TV SOUND THE ALARM. MANY OF THE 1.2 MILLION PEOPLE LIVING IN NEW ORLEANS AND ITS SURROUNDING SUBURBS, KNOWN AS PARISHES, FLEE.
PEOPLE WHO ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A CAR JAM THE HIGHWAYS, AND TRAFFIC CRAWLS. ONE FAMILY SPENDS TEN HOURS TRAVELING ONLY SEVENTY MILES. STILL, APPROXIMATELY 80 PERCENT OF RESIDENTS EVACUATE, WHICH IS A REMARKABLE SUCCESS.

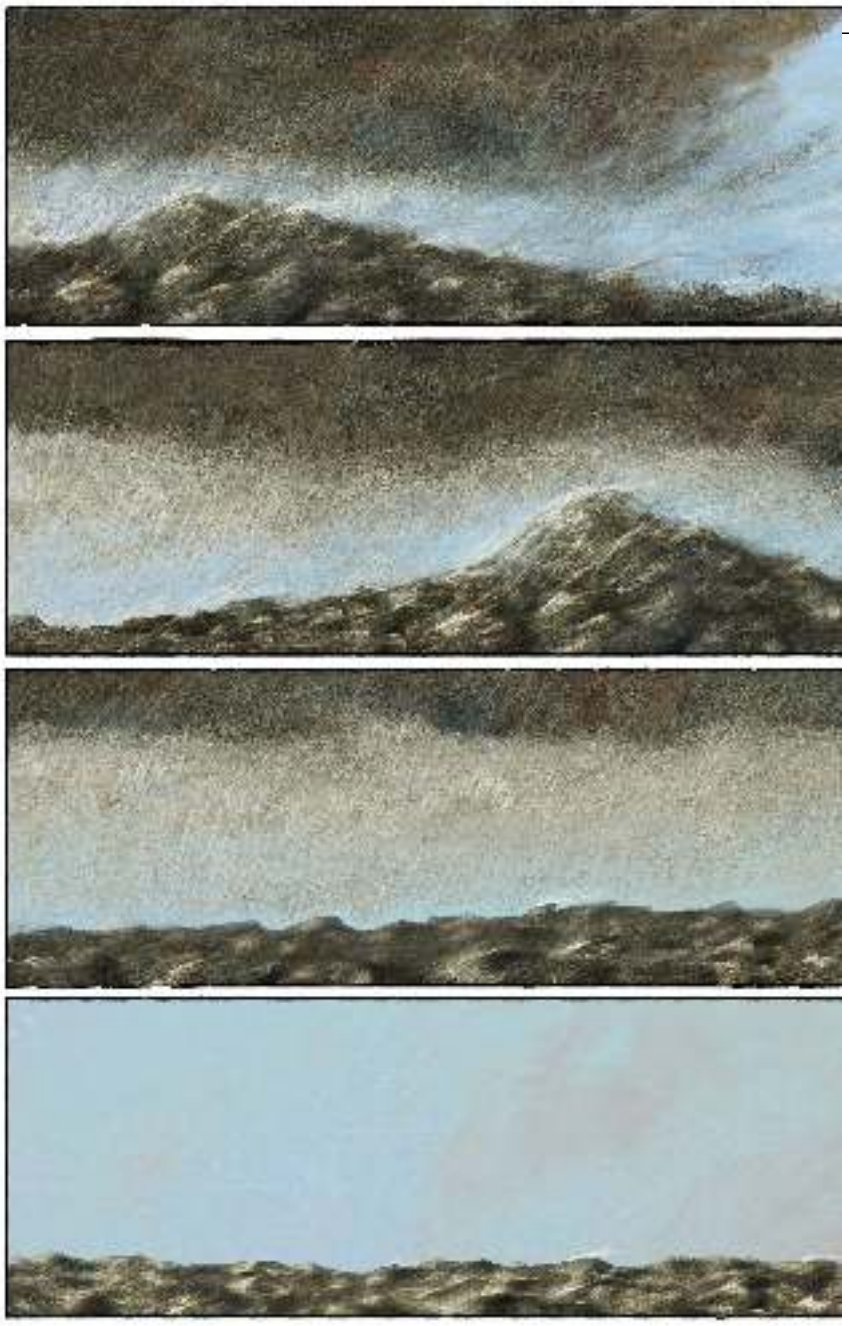
BUT ABOUT 200,000 PEOPLE STILL REMAIN. NEW ORLEANS'S MAYOR, RAY NAGIN, ISSUES A MANDATORY EVACUATION ORDER SUNDAY MORNING, BUT IT IS TOO LATE! THE POLICE ARE IN NO POSITION TO ENFORCE IT.
OTHERS STAY BECAUSE THEY FEAR LEAVING.
I'M JUST MORE COMFORTABLE STAYING AT HOME THAN GOING SOMEWHERE WHERE I DON'T KNOW ANYBODY.
SOME PEOPLE WHO REMAIN HAVE STAYED OUT OF STUBBORNNESS.
COME ON THEN, STORM. BRING ME WHAT YOU GOT. LET'S SEE WHO WINS.


BUS STOP
BUT MOST WHO STAY ARE WITHOUT A MEANS OF ESCAPE, HAVING NEITHER A CAR NOR THE MONEY TO BUY A RIDE OUT OF TOWN.
THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY CITY BUSES ARE AVAILABLE TO FERRY PEOPLE TO SAFETY, BUT THEY ARE NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.
WE OFFERED . . . TO TAKE EVACUEES OUT OF HARM'S WAY. THE CITY DECLINED.
FNE TRAINS LEAVE NEW ORLEANS EMPTY.

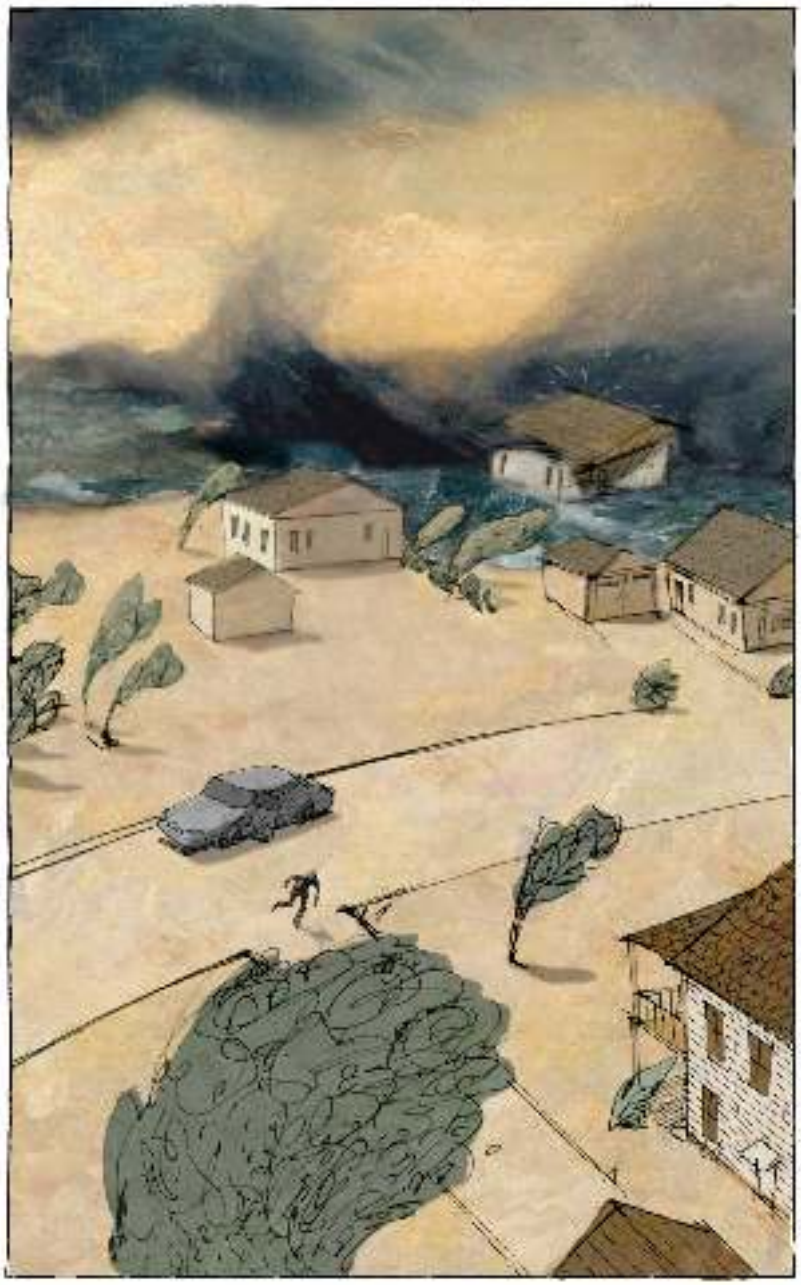


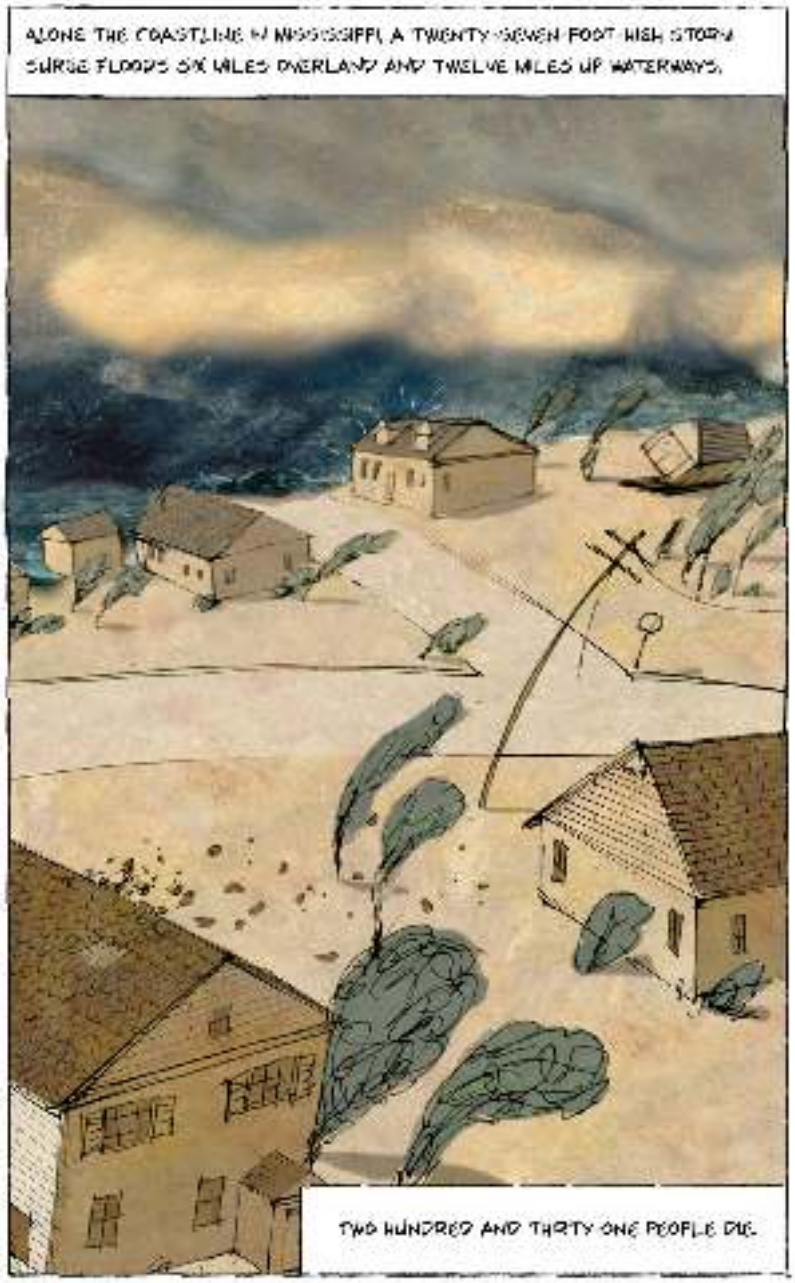
Monday, August 29

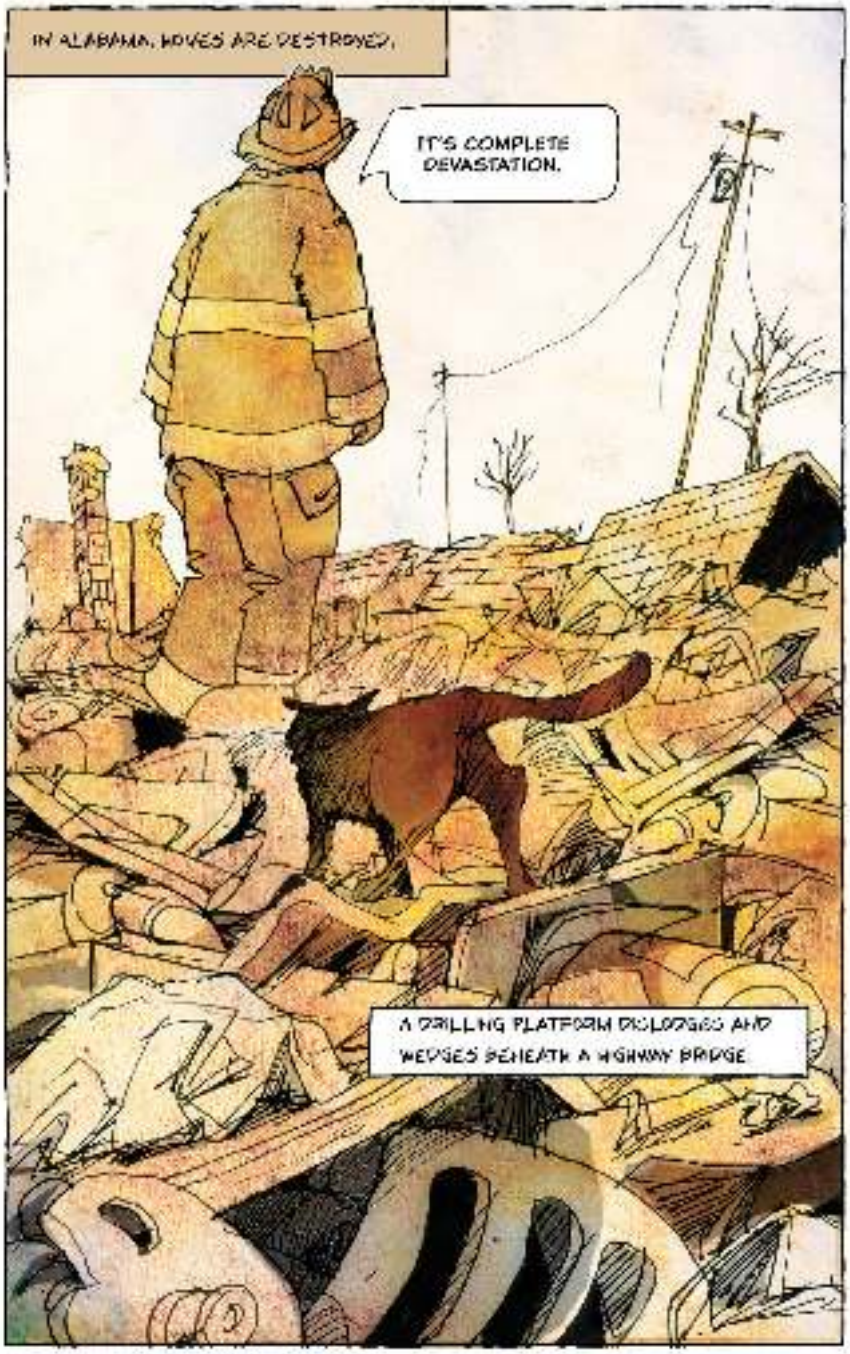
THE HURRICANE'S STRENGTH SLIPS FROM CATEGORY 5 TO CATEGORY 3, BUT IT IS STILL A MONSTER, MEASURING FOUR HUNDRED MILES ACROSS, WITH 125-MPH WINDS. AT THE LAST MOMENT, KATRINA WOBBLES AND STEERS A BIT EAST OF NEW ORLEANS, SPARING THE CITY A DIRECT HIT.



HURRICANE KATRINA CRASHES ASHORE AT 8:10 A.M.
IT'S ONE SWEEP OVER THE SMALL FISHING TOWN OF BURAS, LOUISIANA,
AND ERASES IT.
THE TOWNSPEOPLE HAVE ALL EVACUATED
AND NO ONE DIES.

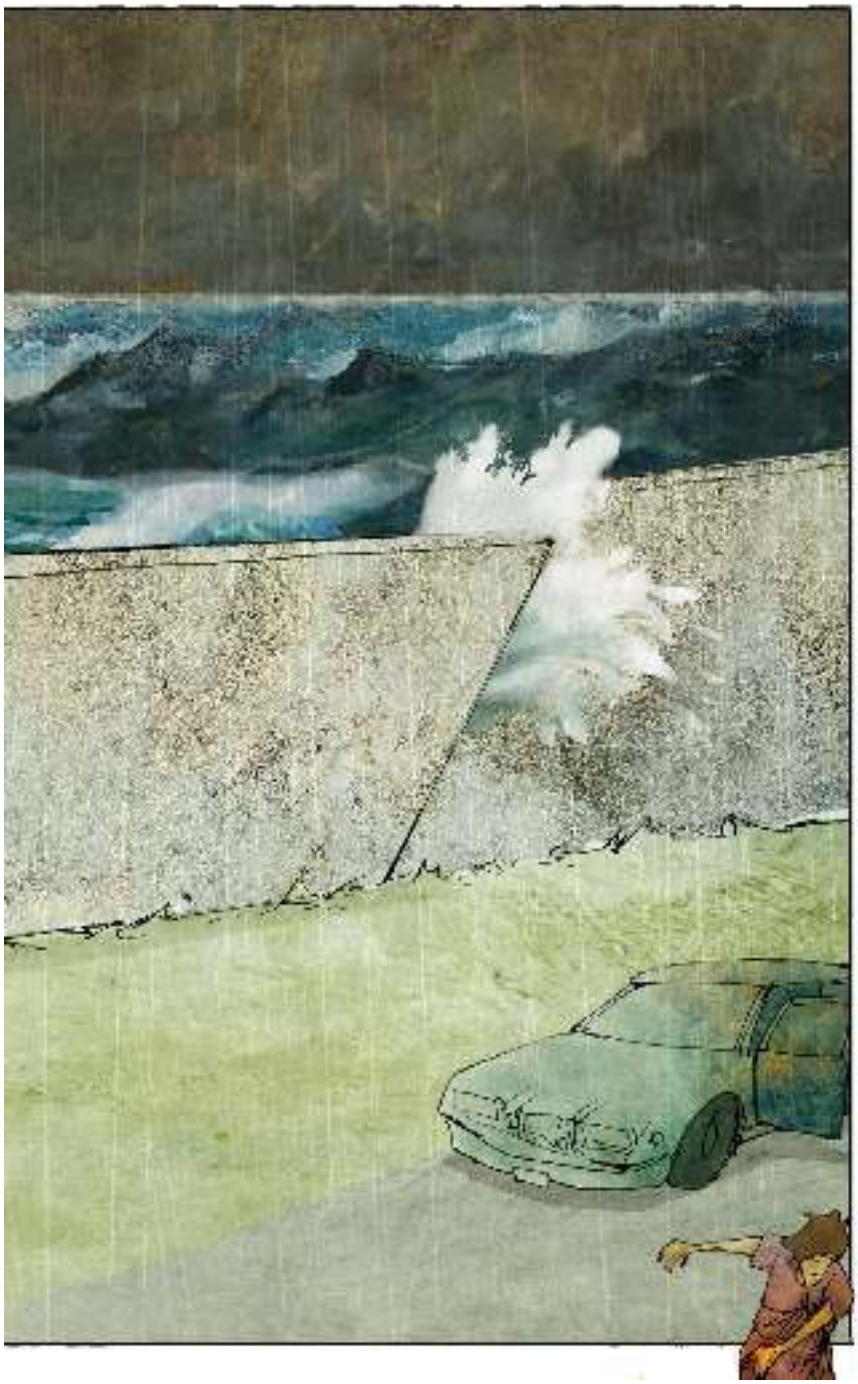


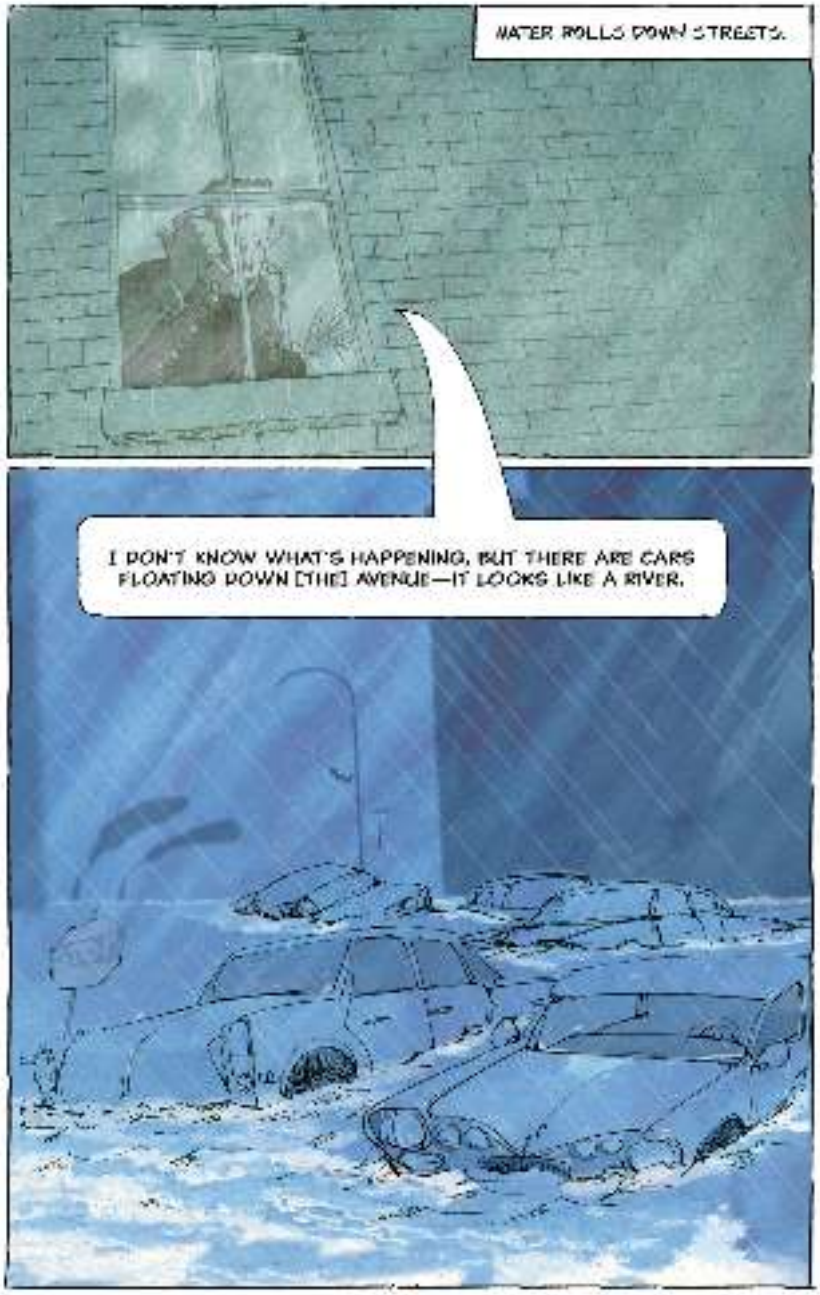

ALONG THE COASTLINE IN MISSISSIPPI, A TWENTY-SEVEN-FOOT HIGH STORM SURGE FLOODS SIX MILES OVERLAND AND TWELVE MILES UP WATERWAYS.
TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY ONE PEOPLE DIE.


IN ALABAMA, HOVES ARE DESTROYED.
IT'S COMPLETE DEVASTATION.
A DRILLING PLATFORM DISLODGES AND WEDGES BENEATH A HIGHWAY BRIDGE

IN NEW ORLEANS, FEROCIOUS WINDS BLOW THE GLASS OUT OF SKYSCRAPER WINDOWS, SUCKING THE CONTENTS OF THEIR ROOMS INTO THE SKY.
THE HURRICANE'S STORM SURGE FORCES WATER UP THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, THROUGH CANALS AND WATERWAYS, AND INTO LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN.

THE CONSEQUENCES ARE ENORMOUS. WATER FROM WAVES OVERFLOWING THE LEVEES CAN BE REMOVED BY THE CITY'S ENORMOUS PUMPS, BUT BROKEN LEVEES MEANS FLOODING BEYOND THE PUMPS' STRENGTH, AND IT WILL CONTINUE—A MILLION GALLONS OF WATER A MINUTE—UNTIL THE HOLES ARE PLUGGED OR THE WATER IN THE CITY IS EQUAL TO THE SURFACE HEIGHT OF THE SURROUNDING LAKE AND CANALS.




WATER ROLLS DOWN STREETS.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING, BUT THERE ARE CARS FLOATING DOWN [THE] AVENUE—IT LOOKS LIKE A RIVER.

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