

The Storm

The father heard the hissing sound high overhead. He looked up, and to his horror saw the boiling mass of clouds sweeping across the sky towards them.

'Mother!' he cried. 'The rain! The rain!'

The mother saw, and screamed. 'Help the children!' she wailed. 'We must save the children!'

Other families had heard the noise and seen the clouds now, and panic broke out in the community as all the parents rushed to gather their children together.

10 But there were so many children, and so many different places for them to play.

'We'll never find them all in time!' the mother sobbed. 'Oh, hurry, hurry!'

The sky darkened and the hissing grew louder, until it became a thundering roar. 'Save them, save them!' cried the mother.

'It's too late!' shouted someone else. 'The storm's almost on us - save yourself, if you can!'

Then the rain began. It was a drenching downpour, hot and stinging and choking. Everyone scattered, desperately trying to reach shelter. But there was no shelter from that rain. Screams rang out above the roaring sky. Bodies fell,
20 struck down by the deadly storm. The father tried to drag the mother to safety as the rain hammered down on them. He heard her cry out, saw her collapse. And he was coughing, choking, half drowned and half poisoned. The world blurred. The screams faded. And he fell, to lay dead with her, among the bodies of their children and their neighbours as, at last, the clouds moved on and the rain stopped.

The gardener switched off his insecticide sprayer. He looked at the rose bush and grunted with satisfaction. 'Damned greenfly!' he said to himself. 'That's got rid of them!'

30 He stumped away, leaving the rose bush dripping in the summer sunshine.

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