

# *This is incredible!*

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Good intentions are not good enough. It doesn't matter that you get along with your gods, or that each night you devotedly pray asking for forgiveness and love even for your worst enemies, nor is it enough that you are really Cuban and that you do no harm, well, it is not even enough that you are a vegetarian to the core, and that you are incapable of killing even a mosquito, or that you are so disciplined that you always fulfill your duties, none of that is important, really important when the whole and the sum of all its parts, is doing bad. That is why, if in the middle of the night, you wake up feeling that the floor is shaking, pray to the Orishas because nobody can understand them, they are making the whole house tremble, the walls bend down, twist, stretch, contract, the doors' arches are no longer decent rectangles, twisting around into obscene angles and the scared boards hit the fleeing walls, all this accompanied by an infernal symphony of noises, shudders and complaints moans, you jump out of bed, you

fall on the dancing floor, you crawl scared to no end, remembering all of a sudden that you have seen all this in the movies about earthquakes, all you have read, trying in vain to protect yourself in those frames and thresholds that are trying to be no more, you run desperately, hanging onto anything you can imagine and you manage to get out, with the rest of your family, thank God, into the cold night, falling into that repetitive chaos, like a fierce mockery of Eleggba, your neighbors almost naked in a strip tease of embarrassment running like you, stumbling into each other, with faces of fear and spasm, the houses repeating the San Vito dance of your room, the roofs inclined toward each other in ironic and grotesque salutations, like hats that are about to fall down, screams rising in a crazy scale accentuating the music of those infernal noises and asking, by the way, to understand those desperate and absurd questions that they make, everyone makes, you make, and suddenly, and to top it all, the coldness of the



night, inhospitable, goes up your feet, because the muddy water, unexplainably, shows up as if by incantation and rises to the level of the sidewalks all the way up to your ankles, covering the car tires and begin rise into the abandoned homes, through the open doors, yawning and they go up to your knees, and up above the hood of those cars, entering through the small open windows, wetting the car engines. –Now, those cars don't turn on! making your poor dogs swim, dogs you just remembered, making your furniture float, that furniture that is showing up through those doors through which your dreams fled, like ships in a toy flotilla, it now reaches your waist, freezing up your behind and making you want to urinate with total relieve, under the water, and the night, no one is going to notice, that dirty water like light chocolate and without sugar, entering through the windows of your house, a house that is dancing alone, far from you, covering with a goodbye 'glup!' the rest of those cars that don't float, taking a crown of pots, of flowers, containers, vases about to capsize, dishes, books, sad unmatched shoes, always rising and it is coming up to your chest and the unpleasant cat of your neighbor fleeing from the water scratches your head, like every respectable cat must do and you see your bed swimming with scary chickens, –I wonder whose are those hens?– and when they pass by you, you grab them with your hands, just in case, and it keeps rising and you can't stand up, nobody can, and everyone swims badly, the children clutching to their parents, the roofs of the houses are now the only visible thing, the trees, among the shades of a night that you won't forget until you die, they are deformed island where everyone is going to, but the ever rising black waters makes them look ever smaller and the roofs disappear, the last islands of whispering leaves disappear, and you climb up on the bed you grabbed before, you, your black woman, your children and your dogs, all trembling, wet, stinking like wet dogs and fear, some neighbors bring you their grandmother –or is it their mother? – powerless, old, scared to death, no matter, where two can fit three can too, they stay grabbing the outskirts of the

saving boat, providentially, you remember that thank God you replaced all the bed metal with a plank of wood along all the borders because of your back pains, no hard surfaces can be seen anymore, only the dark water and the strange floating boats full of trembling people of all colors, from the sweatiest Black man with terror stuck to his teeth and butterfly eyes, the Whites, dirty and uncombed, the Chinese yellowier than virgin candles that you die off in the altars because of the rush, all mixed blood from pure fear, the democracy of terror makes them all the same, wiping out those privileges of smelly cigars, creating a rightful brotherhood of the street cigar you get in the corner, like in the beginning, hundreds of miles of boats of fear with fear because of fear they approach yours and form a group, looking for some comforting company in the silence of that absence of noises and bitten tears, each time there are more, there so many sea travelers of that nightly nightmare; you were not dreaming, no, in one of those rafts there is a rooster singing away his unavoidable song to the sun, announcing itself among flashes of light, and as always in the tropics, dawn comes suddenly, as if they turned on a huge light bulb along the whole horizon looking inside the eyes of one of your children, climbed behind your trembling back among screams of –This is capsizing, is going under! – in all directions, the float of strange boats full of people is the only thing you see, sad people on beds, chairs, tables, upside down cars that float as if by miracle, absurd aimless flotilla, questions fly, repeat themselves, bounce, returning without answers, nobody knows what happened, where they are, where we are going, –My Olofi! Yemaya! –What will become of us? What are we going to eat? –asks a child making those street brave hoodlums tremble with fear.

A slow flattening liquid calm rises in the mind with the heat of the day, a wet lethargy makes the hens doze off and prevents other from sleeping well, nodding in silence, sleepy, until somebody screams out making the others shake– Here! Here! Help! Help! Folks, look, look! There come a bunch of helicopters over there! Here comes help! –The surprise is gen-

eral, and happiness complete, hope emerges among the hearts, from orphans of the future, laughter rises and life returns to that sea of rafts like a wave. —From another raft someone else screams —People, look over there, look those ships coming, look, look! — Very small, but visible in the horizon, from many directions ships are approaching, they come more slowly than the helicopters, of course, but they come and hope grows bigger, and somewhere songs begin, and a rumba answers back and soon we are all slapping on anything that makes noise, hitting the kind of note that the Papines would envy, making music and fun like we always do, we are famous for having fun at wakes, or even when we line up at the door of hell.

Tio Sapito, the good neighbor next to my home, well, what used to be my home, ha, ha, ha, his mother is with us, poor lady, well Tio Sapito remembers that he had placed useful things in his child's basin, always looking ahead, thank you Orishas, —a basin, wet on the outside and dry inside, ha, ha, ha —among a mix of things in total disarray like a lifesaver for hemorrhoids, a hundred yards of nylon rope, some stinking pair of blue boots, a plastic bag full of wet bread, a manual of The War of the People, also wet, a small portable TV, one of those that need battery, he was also able to fit the car battery —Oh Mother Yemaya, now I remember!—says, he connects it and after struggling with the static and parasitic noises, there comes an intermittent image, that comes and goes between the static and the scrambling, one of our sport commentators, in pajamas, on top of what appears to be a dresser, with the face of someone that is scared and does not know what the hell is going on. He is telling some news we can hardly understand. —...it is all over the national territory, comrades! Firm land has disappeared throughout the whole island! The loses are staggering, but until the mo... cannot report any loss of human life, only...could be many, given ...phenomenon that we are being hit with! We are asking all citizens, to .....rades, to stay calm and with the discipline ....characteristic, our government is doing whatever is necessary, from ...., in which we find ourselves,

for....solutions! Stay calm and don't panic! Help....! Foreign governments have responded to our urgent situation! I repeat, international help....on the way! Comrades, within ...you with the next news bulletin! The image disappears and the rain of little lines is the only thing left, making everyone feel more alone, the surprise, the fear, is complete. Yemaya, the whole country is under your water, —What could have happened? —screams someone over there —Armageddon, that is what is happening, those white-clothed ones, the end of the world! —screams a half-dressed lady, with rollers on her head — What happened, only happened here! Replies someone else—Everybody makes the same type of comment, they ask each other, they scream, they argue to the point of being physical, like in a good baseball game, like it always happens, even in the middle of this wet nothingness.

A huge noise, like a huge fan, overcomes everybody, accompanied by a strong wind that raises the waves and moves and scares everybody, making them shut up, a huge helicopter, one of those with gigantic blades painted in blue with huge letters in white, comes closer, many people with white hardhats show their faces through its opened doors and someone with an amplifier, in a Spanish from who knows where, yells out loud: —Attention, attention! We are an international rescue brigade from the United Nations! We are here to help you! You will all be rescued and taken to ships that are assisting us! Stay calm! You will all be rescued! We are only asking that you maintain order and stay patient since we must rescue you all and there are many of you! Stay calmed! You will all be rescued!— They repeat the same message over and over again all the time, insistently over the flutter of the helicopter blades that releases long and fat ropes into the water and through them men in green overalls, orange lifesavers and white hats descend, telling us that they are rescuers and doctors, asking if anyone is hurt, they give away chocolate tablets and water bottles, while from the helicopters we see fall on us a soft rain of those orange lifesavers. The rescue operation begins and people are brought

up through the ropes, the helicopters are everywhere and the image is impressive, hundreds of those things flying over the flotilla, and thousands of people hanging from black ropes, climbing up in what looks like a rescue to paradise, a noisy and agitated paradise, the paradise of beetles. One of those rescuers, a huge Black man in a dark green overall in the water and a dirty white hat comes swimming to our bed-raft and asks if anyone is hurt and that sort of thing, while he prepares uncle Sapito's mother to take her up, and she is totally happy preparing coffee for him in a make-shift coffeemaker that happened to miraculously be next to the TV. –Cuban coffee, delicious! says the UN guy –Take it easy, my son, it is made of green peas. Sapi, did you bring the Coffeemate? –asks the old lady, and he, as he tastes the aromatic nectar, tells us using a Castilian like the one you find in the Silent Comedies of Armando Calderon –It's wonderful! You are floating, like this, grouped together and there are many, many, the whole country, they say! More than eleven million people! This will take us weeks, months, years! But don't worry, all the countries are helping. All! There are thousand of ships and helicopters and camps receiving you in all the countries all over the earth, so don't worry, you will all be rescued, sooner or later! –Then, on the side, so as not to worry my family more than they already are I ask him–Do they already know what happened? –He looks at me surprised and tells me –You don't know? Of course you can't know yet! The island disappeared! –I give him a look as if he was crazy and I tell him, almost screaming –What do you mean disappeared? What are you talking about? –He asks me contrite– It left, my dear man, it left! The satellites detected since yesterday evening, that your island was sinking slowly, but it was sinking into the ocean, our radars stopped detecting land hours ago, and then the satellite images were able to see only an immense flotilla of rafts and people, the whole length and width of what used to be the island, at least from the sky it looked like an island! Besides, hours ago the same satellites photographed the island in the Atlantic, between South America and Africa, and it

looks like it is moving slowly, but it is moving and now there is an International Government Commission, scientists and whatever else, following the movements of the island, since they cannot explain it, it is the biggest crisis in history! –That left me totally stunned, I couldn't spe–, it couldn't be true, but it seemed it was, at least, our wreck?, if that is what it is, a wreck, it is true. How can something like that be happening? I could imagine the faces and fantasies of the wise men all over the world, trying to understand that emigrant island. Emigrant!! The idea entered into my brain like a knife and I began to laugh without control, like a madman, laughing loudly, each time more and more intensely, tears falling from my eyes like rivers with laughter, crying of laughter, that is how they pulled me into the helicopter, with my hands tied up just in case, like a madman, laughing and crying.

A week later, having concluded the rescue, all refugees distributed, , vaporized into miles and miles of camps all over the world, and the scientists going almost crazy and governments screaming at each other, there was a declaration from the American government that really topped it all:

“The latest photos taken from our satellites have been following last week's phenomenon that has shaken the whole world because of the magnitude of the problem and because it cannot be explained, we took the images we are here projecting. They are shocking, but more now, a group of high level experts have just studied the situation and has informed us of something unprecedented, where there was once located the ‘wondering island’ like it has been called by many, there are now a huge sign, thousand of kilometers long and hundreds wide, written with the remnants of million of rafts that the victims used to save themselves, and the message reads:

“I, the island, cannot take it anymore. I am sick of all of you, citizens. Now, I am the one that is leaving!”