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What Gets Saved

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What Gets Saved

The slant of a rooftop. The rest of the stage is flood water. Three people on the roof: a teenage BOY, a MAN (40s), an older black WOMAN (60s). The woman sleeps in a curl. The Man with suitcase in his lap. His glasses are broken. Empty cans litter the roof.

Flood waters have reached the gutters.

Boy pricks up his ears.

BOY: I hear something.

MAN: What do you hear?

BOY: It's loud.

MAN: (looking up) Helicopter?

BOY: And voices.

MAN: I don't see nothing. What would I do without you boy?

BOY: It's a boat.

MAN: What are you saying. Is it coming? (to the older woman) Shila, wake up. The boy hears they're coming.

WOMAN: I'll wake up when they git me. No use wastin my day on waitin. (sniffs the air) Somethin bad about that water. Smells like death.

BOY: (calling out) Hey, Tessie! Tessie can you see anything from where you are?

MAN: Quiet boy!

BOY: Why?

MAN: Quiet. We want to know who's comin first.

BOY: Why?

MAN: Could be po-lice, could be bastards. This suitcase got all the loveliness from this house.

BOY: That's just bitty spoons and forks in that suitcase.

MAN: It's called the silver. And the day we're back in this house, I'm gonna eat myself great big table of food, food enough for whole the block. We'll eat with only the special knives.

Austin Bunn is Assistant Professor of Writing at Grand Valley State University. "What Gets Saved" has been performed for community groups and schools in Iowa and Florida, as part of a post-Katrina awareness program. "Night of the Cure" was previously published in Lost Magazine.

BOY: I hate cream of mushroom soup. (kicking the cans) And tomato soup. And soup. Generally. (he licks the interior of the can)

MAN: You're going to have steak when we're back, boy. And not no skirt steak like I never did feed you anyway.

BOY: Look.

MAN: What do you see boy? My eyes no good.

BOY: It's dry people. (beat) In a boat. (beat) And they're going to Tessie... No, they're passing by Tessie. They're going right past her.

MAN: I can hear em now.

Sound of approaching boat.

BOY: They're leaving Tessie behind.

The WOMAN WAKES.

WOMAN: I don't like the look of these ones. Too many people on that boat. (she climbs up the roof) And I don't swim.

MAN: Where you going Shila?

WOMAN: I'm going to look from up here.

BOY: (shocked) They left Tessie. How can they do that?

The prow of an inflatable boat enters. A RESCUE WORKER holds a life buoy.

RESCUE WORKER: Are you safe?

MAN: Good Lord are we happy to see you. Not quite starvin but close.

RESCUE WORKER: Catch. (tosses the buoy to him) You just pull us in and we'll take you aboard.

MAN: (Preparing to enter the boat) Come on Shila, Boy, let's go.

WOMAN: No way no sir you gettin me on that slip of a thing. You just leave me some cream of mushroom and I'll be fine.

RESCUE WORKER: Whoa whoa. You can't take them, sir.

BOY: (to the Man) What'd he say?

MAN: This suitcase got everything worth something. I'll give it you
you let me take my boy and Shila.

RESCUE WORKER: No pets. No dogs, no cats. The rules.

BOY: (to Man) Why are you looking like that?

RESCUE WORKER: Mister, we've got a lot of people and if you
don't come with me, they'll come with guns and make you go.

WOMAN: Just some cream of mushroom.

BOY: Why are you looking like that? Don't look like that.

Man runs his hands through the Boy's hair.

MAN: You protect Shila, you hear me.

BOY: What's that sound in your voice? Don't make that sound.

Man opens suitcase. Cutlery spills out.

MAN: Somebody'll come for these. Somebody'll come for you.

Man releases boy. He steps into the boat.

BOY: (comes to the edge of the roof) Wait, wait, for me.

Rescue worker pushes off.

MAN: Let's go.

The man sits. He forces himself to look away. Puts
his head in his hands.

WOMAN: (Going to sleep) Just some cream. What I'd give.

The Boy slowly turns to the Woman, more threatening. They stare at
each other.

LIGHTS DOWN.