

Splash!

Inda Lauryn

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The rain suddenly came down in torrents. A tornado watch was in effect, so Percy was anxious to get home before the weather got any worse. He could barely see through the water coming down like rapids on his windshield. Despite the lack of vision, neither he nor anyone else driving on the road had slowed to a crawl. The excess water meant nothing to them.

“Shit!”

Percy watched as the large puddle of water he suddenly happened upon struck a figure carrying a huge black golf umbrella. When it stopped and lowered the umbrella, Percy saw that she was a woman. He also noticed that her hair was locked.

“Oh, well. At least she’s not worried about getting her hair wet,” he said to himself, smirking away the fleeting thought that perhaps he should offer her a ride or at least apologize. No way was she going to get his leather seats wet. He saw then that the woman in black had dropped the umbrella. She appeared to be chanting as the rain violently pelted her. A horn blared behind him. He was holding up traffic. He looked once more for the woman in black. She was gone.

Percy finally made it home as the winds began to bend the trees. Olivia met him at the door.

“I was afraid you got stuck out there,” she said as she rushed him inside and bolted the door.

He looked at her baby gray eyes and smiled. He ran his hands through her honey blond hair. Her mocha-flavored skin had started to tan with the coming spring, but that was fine. Percy would let her walk over his \$300 coat so that her Pradas would not get wet. Olivia was worth it.

“It looks like a tornado *is* going to touch down,” she said. “We’d better get the house ready.”

They set about unplugging appliances, taping windows and making sure all their possessions were safe. They saw a tree fall just as the lights flickered out. Percy and Olivia ran into the basement as the wind howled around them and the rain made angry music as it splattered in fat drops against the house. Olivia jumped helplessly in his arms at the sound of a loud clap of thunder and vicious lightning strike. They both laughed as he kissed her dainty little nose and held her close. She did not move when Percy suddenly flinched when his eyes met the window.

“What’s wrong?” Olivia said lazily.

“Nothing. The wind must have blown something by the window.”

He could not tell her he thought he had just seen the disappearing woman he had splashed with his car earlier.



A week after the storm, things seemed to be back to normal. The power had been restored rather quickly. Percy’s home had escaped major damage. He had always been fortunate in that way. His roof needed a little work, but that was an easy task.

Percy headed to the bathroom for his morning rituals. He ran the water in the sink to wash his face and shave. As he stuck his hand under the spout, he felt a severe burn that caught him so off guard that he screamed. However, he froze when he looked up in

the mirror. She was behind him, her lips moving in a silent chant. He quickly turned to face her. She was gone.

“Goodness, Percy, what happened?” Olivia said running from the bedroom.

His heart pounded and he could not breathe. His hands still burned and had turned red as if he had been boiled.

“Why did you run the water so hot? You’ve burned yourself.” Olivia went to touch the water to test its temperature but abruptly jerked her hand away from the stream. The water was ice cold.

They stared at each other in confusion for a moment not knowing what to do. Neither seemed to hear the rushing water from the sink and definitely did not notice it until it spilled onto the floor.

“Aargh!” Percy screamed as the water came in contact with his feet. He ran from the bathroom. Olivia finally came to her senses and turned off the water. She had seen Percy’s skin burn, but the water coming from the hot spout was colder than winter.

When she returned to the bedroom, she found Percy removing the burned dead skin from his hands and feet. She did not try to hide the repulsion she felt looking at his mutilated skin. She stood in the doorway watching him, wondering what strange affliction made his skin burn from cold water. It somehow made her life seem less exceptional, watching the veneer of something she thought perfect cracking. Simply repulsive.

“I should see a doctor,” Percy finally said as he made makeshift bandages. “I don’t know how or why this happened.”

He struggled to dress himself through the bandages on his hands and enlisted Olivia’s help. He whined at her accusingly as she took great pains not to look at him. However, she finally agreed she should drive him to the emergency room even though she just hated to drive.

Dr. Norman was baffled. She had never seen anything like it in all her years practicing medicine. The burns were real enough, but she could not believe his claim they had been caused by cold water. Percy explained that perhaps the water had been contaminated somehow after the storm. However, he could not explain why this contamination had taken a week or why Olivia had not been affected. He made no mention of the woman in black. He did not want to end up in the psych ward.

Percy called in sick to work that day and the rest of the week. Olivia had decided to go about her day. Percy was careful not to touch anything wet as he attempted a late breakfast or early lunch. As soon as his cleaning lady came, he instructed her to clean the wet mess in the bathroom. He suddenly grew thirsty so he got himself a bottle of water. Surely the bottled stuff could not be contaminated. It burned as soon as it touched his lips. Tiffany, his cleaning lady, ran to the kitchen upon hearing Percy’s agonizing wail. There were fresh burns on his lips.

“What happened to you? Did you try to kiss the stove?”

She took the bottle and was about to try to douse the burns with the water, but Percy slapped the bottle from Tiffany’s hand. The drops that hit his skin left new burns. He ran to his bedroom in a panic. Percy found the burn ointment Dr. Norman had prescribed for his hands and feet. He tenderly began to apply it to the raw flesh around his lips. Then he saw her again behind him in the mirror.



His house was dirty. He was dirty. He was also thirsty. He felt weak. The woman in black haunted his dreams. She stood outside his house when he tried to leave. He barricaded himself in the house. Olivia disappeared for good two days after his affliction appeared. He wondered who she was now getting to pay for her weave, contacts and latest nose job. He had also chased Tiffany away.

Dr. Norman had called a few times trying to convince him to see a research doctor interested in his case, but Percy did not want to become a lab experiment or worse, a sideshow attraction. Still, the neighborhood kids had found a new town troll. He had grown tired of chasing kids away from his windows, so he no longer opened the curtains. At one point, Percy wondered since water burned him, would heat feel like water. He experimented with a set of curling irons Olivia accidentally left behind and found his answer. He now had a fresh scar on his left elbow. He still had the smell of his dirty singed flesh in his nose.

Percy listened as the rain began to fall. The drops pounded the roof, the windows and the doors. He curled up into a ball on the couch not watching the television. He did not even move as the lights flickered then went out for good. The silence surrounded him as he began to listen to the weather outside, grateful to be shielded from his worst enemy. Then he noticed a change in the sound. The dripping seemed to get closer. He tried to adjust his eyes in the darkness as he listened for the source. He found it in the kitchen when the water hit him in the back. The roof was leaking.

Panic set in as Percy ran toward the basement. Even in the darkness he could see the glistening pool that covered the basement floor. The water was rising fast. He shut the door as his heart tripled its rate. Water was in the house. Water was outside the house. There was nowhere to go.

“Aargh!” he screamed in agony as the stream of water leaked from the ceiling hitting him square in the middle of his forehead. The burning was horrible. He could not go to the kitchen. The leak had begun to cover the entire floor. The living room ceiling was growing worse as well. Percy ran to the bedroom. It was still safe. Then he heard it.

It sounded like a small explosion then he heard the hissing. Percy looked toward the bathroom to see his broken faucets spewing water everywhere. The water would soon cover the floors of both the bathroom and the bedroom, particularly since a leak had developed a couple of feet away from him.

He did not have to look to know she was there. He felt her presence behind him. He ignored the burning at his feet as the cold water began to cover them.

“Why are you doing this to me?” he asked desperately. “This is killing me.” He turned to look at her. Her face was only partially obscured by the hood. Her smooth dark brown face was unexpressive. Her plump lips formed a straight line and the one black eye he saw shone ominously. For some reason he thought of how different she was from Olivia. Had he splashed Olivia that day, he would have definitely stopped, apologized and offered her a ride to make it up to her.

The woman in black stared back at him coldly as if she could read his thoughts. Tiny droplets of leaking water began to pelt him all over his body, delivering tiny stings of pain. Percy wished the water would just come down all at once and melt him, saving him from this slow torture. But he felt rooted to this spot unable to move. She began to

chant, but no sound came from her moving lips. Percy could feel the skin peeling off his body as his flesh burned.

He no longer thought about Olivia. He no longer thought the woman in black had not minded his lack of consideration. Olivia or not, he should have known better.

“I am so sorry.”

As the words left his lips, Percy saw her open her mouth wide. A loud siren came from the depths of her throat as the water suddenly built up and immersed them both.



Someone blasted a horn from behind him. Percy rolled down his window and jumped in surprise when he realized the water did not burn him. He waved a couple of cars past him then backed up to the woman in black he had just splashed with his car.

“Excuse me,” he called out. “I’m sorry about that. I didn’t realize I was driving through that puddle.”

She tilted the umbrella back to look at him. Percy recognized his neighbor Chandra from down the street. She did not own a car and he frequently saw her walking all over town.

“Let me give you a ride home. We’re headed in the same direction.”

“Well, I’m afraid I’m all wet.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

Chandra climbed in, trying to be mindful of her wet umbrella and bags. “I was already halfway to the store before this started. Been getting tornado warnings so I thought I’d better prepare.”

“Yeah and I know. I need to go get the house together.”

“If we’re lucky, it won’t touch down. I can handle a thunderstorm, but a funnel of high wind coming at me scares the hell out of me.”

“Yeah, but at least I got Livi. If you want to come wait it out with us...”

“Thanks but I’ll be fine.”

“Okay, but if you change your mind we’re just down the street.”

Percy stopped in front of Chandra’s house. She gathered her umbrella and bags.

“Thanks again. It feels nice to be considerate of others sometimes, doesn’t it?”

He thought he saw a small sparkle in her black eyes as she smiled at him. Chandra then quickly got out and ran to her front door without opening the umbrella. Percy made sure her black-clad figure got into the house before he pulled off. Olivia was waiting for him.

About the Author

Inda Lauryn is constantly changing the soundtrack of her life. She is the author of two books *In Time* and *The People in My Head*. She will be releasing her next novel, the paranormal tale *Blood Tastes Sweet* in 2011. Although she has been writing since her childhood, she only recently decided to pursue her first love as a professional endeavor. A lifelong music and movie lover, she frequently cites her favorite artists and films in her work, drawing inspiration as well as exploring their effect on society. She is currently working on an afro-gothic novel, two fantasy series, a new novella collection, a screenplay and two sequels featuring characters found in the work *In Time*, hoping to contribute to the ever-expanding representations of African-American women in literature. Visit the websites <http://conceding2kismet.weebly.com> and <http://conceding2kismet.yolasite.com> for previews and promotional trailers.