The day of the hurricane started a lot like any other day. After breakfast, Jeff and I checked our shoes for scorpions, then went outside to play. *El Yunque*, the biggest mountain in Puerto Rico, loomed over us as we scrambled down the cliff to the ocean. The breeze was soft and the sea was calm inside the coral reef. Far out, a giant stingray flapped its wings across the waves. Our fins slapped as we waded in, watching for the sharp black spines of sea urchins.

We pulled our masks down, kicked out toward the reef breathing through our snorkels, and dived down. Sea fans waved. Fire corals flamed. Schools of tropical fish flashed by like flocks of birds turning in a wind, while *langostas*—tasty Puerto Rican lobsters—hid in dark cracks in the huge reef.

We came up for breath—and everything around us had changed. The sky had turned deep purple, crowded with clouds. The air was perfectly still, with not a whisper of breeze. I felt as if my breath were being sucked from my lungs.
We swam ashore and climbed up the rocks. Mom raced from the house. “A hurricane!” she panted. “It’s coming our way!” Our house could be blown right off its stilts. “Hurry up,” Mom told us. “Pack quickly!”

I ran inside and packed my baseball mitt and ball, my shooting marbles, Slinky, and yo-yo. Then I rushed out to put my bike away. Fists of wind pounded me, punching me sideways. The palm trees bent and thrashed in a wild dance. The wind was pushing the waves into mountains. They broke over the coral reef, then crashed against the rocks in a burst of spray as high as our cliff. “Batten down the hatches!” Dad shouted in his old navy talk as he slammed the storm shutters. I tried to whistle for Triste, but no sound came.

The sky was alive. Lightning scribbled on the dark clouds that had buried El Yunque. Thunder shook the earth. Suddenly, Triste leaped into my arms and almost knocked me down. The palms, whipping crazily, slung coconuts at us.

Short burst of dialogue—matches the urgency of the moment.

Such a good, specific list, sounds believable, like a child’s list of beloved objects.

Poetic descriptions of wind make even more drama. We can **see** the dancing branches and waves as big as mountains.

Does not say “my dog,” but gives the hint of “whistle for”. Drama and worry here.
Everyone piled into the car. I was crammed into the backseat beside Jeff and a suitcase. *Triste* sat on my lap and whimpered.

The moment Dad drove off, the sky fell. Rain slammed into us like a crashing wave. All the way to the shelter, we drove through rain so solid, it was like driving underwater. The shelter was an old nave barracks where sailors used to live. Babies cried and grown-ups bustled around and kids yelled at one another. I sat on a sagging bunk bed and hugged *Triste*.

Suddenly, with a loud crash, the wind ripped a shutter off. Glass shattered. The hurricane roared in as the lights went out. Mom lit a kerosene lamp. Dad and two other men shoved some metal lockers in front of the broken window. I helped, too. The barracks shivered and creaked like an old ship at sea. Nails squeaked in the wood as if they were trying to hold the whole building together.

Somebody started to sing, so quietly at first that I thought I was just hearing things. But her voice grew stronger. Jeff joined in, then my folks and I. Soon everybody in the shelter was singing “Silent Night.” “*Noche de*
paz…noche de amor…."
Christmas was months away, but no one cared. The singing made us feel better.

Finally, halfway through the night, the wind died down. The rain stopped hammering. All was silent. “Well, it’s over.” Dad said. Mom gave me a big hug.

When we got home, the yard was littered with coconuts and palm fronds. But the roof was still on its stilts. We were lucky. We heard on the radio that just fifty miles away, a tin shack shantytown had been flattened by wind and waves.

The next morning, Jeff and I started cleaning up our yard. The sky and sea were rosy and calm. Above us, unbelievable green, stood El Yunque. It was tall and peaceful as ever, as if nothing at all had happened. “Vamanos!” I shouted to Jeff. “Let’s go!”

We raced down the cliff path to the beach. The sparkle of sun on the water was brighter than ever.