

this wedding night, as the fast express rocketed toward Rome, and wondering if there was still a Miami Beach, wondering and grieving, all my thoughts with Carl.

Two days later a delayed cable arrived.

"Congratulations. Don't worry. Things pretty bad shape Miami Beach but not as bad as might be. Am writing. Carl."

Miami Beach had been warned that a hurricane was on its way. The hurricane flags went up that morning of Friday, September 17, 1926, and the report was broadcast that a hundred-miles-an-hour hurricane was racing from the south toward the Florida coast. Since Miami Beach was only a decade old, few of its inhabitants had experienced a hurricane. People stayed in their homes that day as the wind started blowing. The vessels in Biscayne Harbor dropped their anchor and some of them made for shelter in the Miami River. The occasional bursting of a window by a gathering wind made people realize that a storm of unprecedented violence was on its way.

That night the wind rose, whipping southern Florida with destruction and death. It reached the height of its fury over Miami Beach at six o'clock the next morning, tearing the city apart in a hundred-and-twenty-five-mile gale. There was a lull for a couple of hours during which some of the braver citizens ventured out of doors to see the horrifying damage. As if waiting for these, the wind rushed down again, carrying a knifelike rain, hurling upon those venturers stray pieces of lumber, roofs, squares of tin, cutting them away from refuge and killing many. Under that violence, houses were washed away by waves that raced from the beach through the streets and back to the sea.

All that Saturday the wind and the rain tore at a city fighting for its life.

The next morning papers all over the world carried the headline I saw first in Paris: "South Florida Wiped Out by Storm."

Carl was aboard the *Shadow K* on the Atlantic coast, halfway between Miami Beach and Montauk, when a radio message changed his life, as a telegram had once before. One of the real-estate salesmen on his Miami Beach staff wired in his panic:

MIAMI BEACH TOTAL LOSS. ENTIRELY SWEEPED AWAY BY HURRICANE.  
UNTOLD DAMAGE.