

STORIES IN GLASS Book 2

Songs in a Box



PAUL S. MOORE

SONGS IN A BOX

Book Two from Stories in Glass

Paul S. Moore

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SAMPLE CHAPTER

INTO THE WORLD

JOHN ‘LOCKJAW’ SMITH HAD A HISTORY of being in situations where good outcomes never came easy. When Dorothy produced the helicopter key and began speaking in excellent English, his mind went straight to looking for the big ugly surprise.

It was Willa who jumped into the moment and seized it. The woman, who spent a good part of her career interviewing modernized tribes kept in tribal preserves and dreamed of studying uncivilized people in their natural environment, didn't waste a moment to abandon her dream. “What are we waiting for?” she asked. “Forget all the camping gear. Let's hop on the bird and fly.”

Dorothy sprinted ahead of them, excited. In the moment, she reverted to her tribal language, whooping in a tone full of awe, “I see world!”

The helicopter started with a cough and sputter. Lock continued to expect something to go wrong and Willa scanned the rocks for naked, horny, little men, waiting to grab her and welcome her into the tribe. Dorothy climbed on top of the golden bull in the

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back and pressed her face to the window. "Up, up," she said. "Over the rainbow."

Not another word came from Dorothy until, after skimming the sea of green, the helicopter flew past a river village. It was the buildings that got Dorothy excited. They were the largest structures she had ever seen. "Is New York?" she asked.

Reverting to her tribal speech made Dorothy seem child-like. Willa was both charmed by her and scared for her. Her stomach squirmed, and she paused before answering the question. "No, no," she started, "New York is ..." A pang choked Willa in mid-sentence. "New York is bigger."

"Up bigger? To throw paper from high-up on Buffalo Child Long-Lance?"

"Yes, but in every way, much bigger. Too big for us."

"Oh, I see. Too big for me. Many people might not like me. I would try hard. I would smile and show both my teeth. They will see I can be often friendly."

"Everyone will love you, Dorothy." Willa spotted another village and pointed. "Look at this one."

Dorothy pressed her face to the window again, remaining wordless beyond the occasional, sudden 'ooh', as each village they passed grew bigger than the last. When they approached a village with a double rainbow arching over its center, she broke her silence, screaming suddenly like a teenage girl. "Over the rainbow! We fly over the rainbow!"

Lock turned and flew straight at the twin arches, but he let Dorothy know the rainbow was like the Savant. "It will hide when we get close. Watch it start to melt away. Before we can fly over it, we will scare it off."

"Then fly away. Let the rainbow alone, to stay pretty."

Willa leaned into Lock. "Dorothy's a rainbow, John. We can't take her to the airport. They'll separate us."

"We have another option, babe. We're going to Sam's island."

"Pineapple Sam? He has an island?"

"He owns it. His wife's tribe lives on it."

"You've known him awhile? You can trust him?"

"He flew the big helicopter at the Grand Canyon when we captured the Shem."

Willa relaxed, as miles and miles of green floated by. She was grateful for time to think about how to fit Dorothy into the world, but couldn't ignore time was running out to come up with a plan. The villages were crowding closer together as they flew nearer to civilization.

Lock passed over villages big enough to be called towns. Next, bright lights ahead hinted of the first large mainland city. It was the landmark he was looking for. He veered toward the Panama islands zone, leaving the glow of Panama City at twilight on his left, a sunset behind him, and dark clouds straight ahead.

Dorothy had seen many a wonderful sunset. She saw seasonal storms up close and personal. She had never seen a glow over the land like the lights of civilization. "How big is their campfire?" she asked.

Willa focused on the cloud ahead of them. The sky turned suddenly, deeply, darker.

Behind them, a fierce red sun sprayed orchid and mango splashes onto the blue-sky palette. Normally, the display would have been the star of the show. On this evening, it wasn't even a distraction.

"We're heading into a storm," Lock called out. "I need to fly under the clouds." With one eye on the gas gauge, he decided not to circle and wait out the storm. He checked his GPS and relaxed. "Less than four miles," he called out. "We're going in."

Willa sat back in her seat, recoiling from a cloud in front of them. "It looks alive," she said. "Scary."

Dorothy didn't seem to notice the oncoming storm. She was losing her adrenaline and starting to let worries close in. Why do people need to make such big fires? Why is New York too big for me? Does God want me to stay where he put me? Why did I come? Why am I here? Who will like me and give me a home?

Nervously, she began to rub the etchings on the head of the golden calf, realizing her adventure wasn't going to be all berries and fish. Tracing the odd lines with her finger, she thought she noticed a pattern and looked closer.

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A sudden flash of light, so white it burned the eyes, turned the sunset to pastel and everything else to black and white. Lightning surrounded the helicopter and crackled, leaving behind the smell of burning hair. The dome light went dark.

Dorothy squeezed her eyes tight, still scratching nervously at the idol's etched head. She opened them briefly when Lock told her it was going to be okay. "I see the island up ahead."

A stubborn, lingering flash of light from a far-off burst illuminated the inside of the cabin, and Dorothy saw the etchings she had been tracing. "Is something," she called out, then she screamed when the startling boom of the distant lightning rattled the helicopter.

"Yep, this is really something," Lock shouted above a loud push of wind and the sudden slapping of rolling rain curtains diving into the windshield.

"The shiny beast, it is something." Dorothy shrieked at another burst of lightning surrounding the helicopter and dove over the seat into Willa's lap, no longer caring about etchings on a golden cow. "God doesn't want me to fly!" she shouted.

"It's only lightning!" Willa screamed the words without realizing it. Her attempt to comfort Dorothy came across as a cry for help.

The helicopter swayed in the wind gusts from nose to tail rotor, making several sudden, short drops and recoveries. Finally, the view through the pilot's windshield showed a narrow sandy spot of beach with jumping waves and bending palms. Through the rhythmic bands of window-slapping sheets of water, the beach looked like it was darting back and forth, closing too fast, then ... *whoomp*.

The helicopter came down hard. The ground was soft but uneven. A sudden tilt brought a blade into contact with a bending palm, and the helicopter whipped a half turn, then suddenly stopped. The inertia pulled Lock and Willa sideways in their seat belts. A flash of gold caromed off the back of Willa's seat and the idol burst heavily through the passenger door of the copter. A screaming Dorothy followed.

Big fists of raindrops, pushed into the cockpit by wind, belted Lock and Willa in their face while they attempted to reorient themselves to the tilted, motionless helicopter. Willa covered her eyes and looked through the slats of her fingers. In a flash of lightning, she caught a snapshot of Dorothy flailing in a low cluster of palmettos.

Lock opened his door and it flew out of his grip, blown by the wind howling through the missing passenger door. When he tried to climb out, he couldn't lift himself off his seat. He thought he must have been paralyzed, until his shock cleared and he realized he was still wearing his seat belt. When he unlatched his belt, he slid toward Willa.

"Hang on to something," he yelled, "I'm going to undo your seat belt."

"Dorothy's stuck in the ... Ow!" Willa screamed when she braced herself with her foot, and a sharp pain stabbed her ankle. Her pain cry echoed extra loudly, because the wind stopped suddenly. The howling was gone. So too, were the big lights on the helicopter. Two blinks and they went dead. Only the red flashers kept working.

The rain continued to fall, but down, not hard and sideways. Chill crept into their bodies, and worry for Dorothy filled the places where fear had been. Before they could even call her name, she ran up to them, hair full of orange sand, body scraped by palmetto leaves, and a trickle of blood running with the rain from her nose and dripping off her chin. She had a message for them.

"Mushka! Thank you, that was new for me." She walked in circles, voice excited, arms flapping. She was rambling in shock. "Would I fly one more time? I will wait first. No! Not wait. I will not fly starting now." She pounded her tiny fist into her palm for emphasis. "I will never fly again. Hooga mushka! God has put me right here in the rain, and right here in the rain I will live. I am home. I choose to see only the world I can see with my feet on the ground." She ended her declaration by clasping her hands under her chin, rolling her shoulders forward, bowing her head, and shivering from her knees to her lips.

Willa, hopping on her good leg, retrieved her laptop from the floor of the helicopter, then pulled her suitcase to the ground and

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sat down, opening it in the rain. "You need to put something on," she said.

Dorothy chose the white cotton skirt Willa wore on the beach the night Lockjaw approached her. She tried wearing the skirt over her head like a cowl, then draped loosely off her neck, and finally, over her shoulder and wrapped around her waist.

After she pronounced herself satisfied, Willa told her she looked like Mahatma Ghandi.

"Is she pretty?" asked Dorothy.

Willa was saved from answering by the approaching glow of flashlights.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Moore was born in the Missouri Ozarks, raised in St. Louis, and eventually settled in the sand of central Florida. He calls each of these places home.

His inner mix of hillbilly river rat, lowlands daydreamer, sand road hermit, and reader of nineteenth-century history writers form the base of a non-elite education. These roots allow imagination to turn historic events into serendipitous thoughts. Those thoughts organize into stories, and stories become novels.

With the remedial help of a good critique group, and the birth of publishing companies that read a manuscript without asking first, "What are your credentials?", he's found a voice to share those stories.

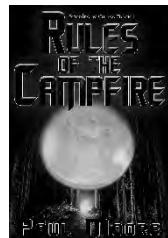
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On a trip to spread his Grampy's ashes in the Amazon, John 'Lockjaw' Smith finds love, and a renewed sense of purpose with a lady haunted by her past association with a group of eugenic maniacs.



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THIS TIME, THE ENEMY IS HUMAN.

On a trip to spread his Grampy's ashes in the Amazon, John Lockjaw Smith finds love, and a renewed sense of purpose, in the person of Willa Vernon, a lady haunted by her past association with a group of eugenic maniacs.

On the return trip, they add a passenger. She is a delightfully unique "ninety-year-old hyperactive child" with eyes like a jaguar, muscles like a howler monkey, and the mind of the Savant. She names herself Dorothy, after the fictional balloon traveler to a place called Oz.

Dorothy knows the world only from stories, yet she is the only person alive with the ability to save the world from Willa's old employers. She has thirty days to solve a puzzle.

The maniacs have a head start of more than a century. It's not fair. Poor maniacs. Oh, well. A little mass murder could even the playing field again.



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