



As in the first book, Inspector Cassandra McCarthy is based on a friend and real fire inspector in a small, North Carolina town, although details of her life were changed to simplify her story and mask her identity.

All characters within the story, other than Cassandra, are fictional including Detective Campos, Chief, Kelan, and all firefighters.

Silver Heights is loosely based on the town of Raeford, North Carolina, although names of fire departments, neighborhoods, and other identifying places have been changed.

Inspections and fires within the story are loosely based on true stories from the experiences of various firefighters and inspectors I read through books and news reports from around the world. In each case, key details were changed to make them my own, so any resemblance to real life is coincidental.

CHAPTER 1

The storm described in this chapter is real. It hit our town unexpectedly hard on October 1, 2016. As the area was already saturated, the wind and additional rainfall easily took out several trees and washed out a few roadways.

Emergency Managers of small towns are frequently hired to do more than emergency management, so when they are called upon to help in severe weather, they must balance their other duties. Cassandra and her boss being out on the roads in the midst of foul weather is normal, and both the paid and

volunteer firemen and other emergency personnel often step in to help where they can.

The National Weather Service watches several computer models during inclement weather, trying to combine the multitude of factors into one reasonably reliable forecast. The models often disagree.

Daily conference calls with the National Weather Service, regional weather service directors, emergency managers and other key government personnel are normal during inclement weather. The frequency of the calls increases as needed. Local governments start planning for potential hurricanes one week before they are scheduled to hit the area.

CHAPTER 2

Hurricane Matthew is real, as are the details included about it within the story. It started with a landfall as a Category 4 Hurricane in Haiti on October 4, 2016. Before going out to sea October 9, it wreaked havoc in Cuba, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

Numerous rivers throughout eastern North Carolina set flood records in the days after the hurricane, and multiple towns went underwater for several days. The death toll in the United States as of October 15, 2016 was: 26 in North Carolina, 12 in Florida, 4 in South Carolina, 3 in Georgia, and 1 in Virginia.

And yes, my real life Fire Inspector loves hotdogs from a particular convenience store in her county.

CHAPTER 3

The trajectory of Hurricane Matthew remained uncertain for most of its path. The statement from the National Weather Service is a direct quote from an official NWS release.

The details of the storm within the chapter are accurate. Haiti was hit hard by the hurricane, and a major bridge was washed away. The death toll on the island rose above 1,000. Florida and Georgia issued evacuation orders, and storm warnings were issued as far north as Pennsylvania. Tornadoes in front of Hurricane Matthew were a major concern. Additionally the NWS was concerned about Matthew circling around to strike again, and a second storm, Hurricane Nicole, did form near the West Indies and traveled toward the southeastern US for a time.

The information for storm shelters is accurate for our area. Representatives from the Red Cross, Health Department, Department of Social Services, and law

enforcement, as well as a school janitor must be on site at all times. An accurate count of all people within the shelter, to include temporary visitors like the Fire Marshal, must be maintained at all times in case of fire or other building emergency.

In our area, one shelter accepts the animal trailer for pets who arrive with families. At the height of the storm, our pet trailer housed twenty-five dogs, twenty-five cats, and twenty-five other animals including birds and reptiles.

CHAPTER 4

Hurricane Matthew skirted the coastline, putting the coastal cities in the best possible spot for weathering the storm.

Our real life Fire Inspector ordered a high water vehicle, helicopter, well testing kits, and semi-trailers full of water. Much of it was used, although she was able to cancel the order for the helicopter. In addition to thinking ahead for what the community would need, she also had to constantly consider the cost of the supplies to the county.

In order for FEMA to come in and offer assistance after a national disaster, the President, the state's Governor, and the local official must all declare a state of emergency.

CHAPTER 5

The details about the Emergency Operations Center are accurate, and our real life Fire Inspector had six computers, and two radio communication systems monitoring law enforcement, EMS, fire departments, and eastern branch channels. Additionally, five televisions tuned to news channels helped her navigate what the public was hearing about the storm, including a news report in error about a major dam breach and evacuation order for our county.

The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality includes the state dam inspectors, and a couple of inspectors really did show up in the midst of the hurricane to check on local dams. Most of the dams in our area are privately owned and constructed, several of which our real life Cassandra only found out about after they were breached in the days following the hurricane.

Although Bonnie is fictional, she was created in honor of the officer who manned the 911 system during the hurricane. When we talked about the emergency response during the storm, my friend impressed upon me what an incredible asset this officer was to our county during those days.

Overflow calls to the 911 system were routed to the EOC and then to the Fire Marshal's cell phones. The cell tower in the middle of the town went down during the storm, forcing the fire marshal's and law enforcement officers to carry radios.

CHAPTER 6

Interstate 95 closed for a few days while flooding receded. The quote from the Governor is from a news article, and regular traffic on all necessary roads was delayed so residents from flooding towns could evacuate.

A boil advisory was put into effect for our county for several days until the flood waters receded and everything returned to normal.

Tens of thousands lost power due to downed trees and power lines as well as flooding. Utility companies placed priority on emergency services, hospitals, and key government offices first, then grocery stores and key community services, then homes and other businesses. Almost everyone had power restored within a week.

Yes, a resident really did call the emergency line to ask about boiling water before washing his car.

Yes, a resident really did call the emergency line to ask about boiling water before watering his grass. One day after the hurricane.

And yes, a resident really did call the emergency line to give our real life Cassandra her grocery list.

In the days after the hurricane, many churches, organizations, and citizens nationwide wanted to help. While the county gladly accepted all water and can good donations, all monetary donations were directed toward the Red Cross. The local government took a lot of heat, but no clothing donations were accepted because of the problems stated within the story: bed bugs and roaches.

This chapter contains probably one of my favorite stories from the hurricane. A young couple from Texas came to North Carolina on the promise of a job. Once they got here, the job fell through. With no funds to return home, they were living in a tent when the hurricane hit. They found an unlocked car and spent the night in it before finding the shelter the next morning. Our real life Fire Marshal's boss, the man represented in the story by Chief, fought for this couple, making sure they had the funds and supplies to return home to Texas.

The details about Greenville's evacuation and Lumberton's flooding are accurate.

CHAPTER 7

At long last, on Sunday, October 9, 2016, Hurricane Matthew slowed down and turned out to sea. It did not circle around or combine with Hurricane Nicole who thankfully took a sharp turn away from the US coastline and stayed in the ocean.

One hundred and three roads were closed in the days after the hurricane. Most reopened as the flooding receded, but some required weeks of work to rebuild bridges and support systems.

The firemen, mostly volunteers, honorably stepped up to support their community. After making sure their families were secure, many left their homes so they could respond to emergencies, clear downed trees and power lines, and calm citizens horribly shaken by the storm.