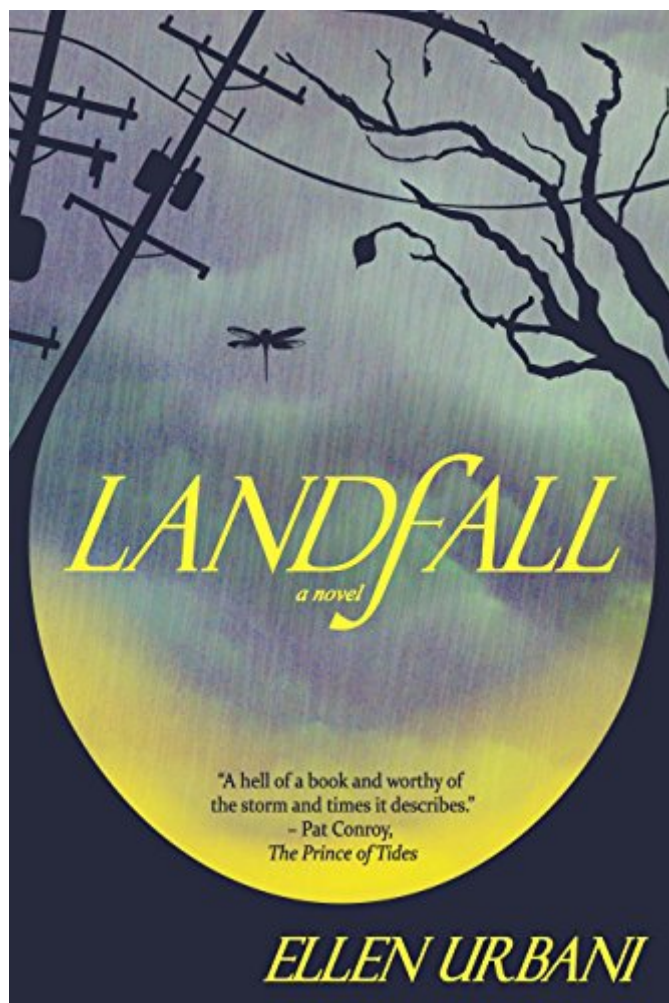


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# Landfall



## Synopsis

Two mothers and their teenage daughters, whose lives collide in a fatal car crash, take turns narrating Ellen Urbani's breathtaking novel, *Landfall*, set in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Eighteen-year-olds Rose and Rosebud have never met but they share a birth year, a name, and a bloody pair of sneakers. Rose's quest to atone for the accident that kills Rosebud, a young woman so much like herself but for the color of her skin, unfolds alongside Rosebud's battle to survive the devastating flooding in the Lower Ninth Ward and to find help for her unstable mother. These unforgettable characters give voice to the dead of the storm and, in a stunning twist, demonstrate how what we think we know can make us blind to what matters most.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Having read a gazillion or so books in my lifetime, too many of which now adhere to stock formulas for increasing sales and the shiny-object chance of becoming a major motion picture, it usually takes me all of four or five pages to discern a book's plot, how it will unfold, and its inevitable

outcome. With *Landfall*, Ellen Urbani joins the ranks of world-class authors who actually have something refreshing to say and the firsthand experience, intelligence, and wit to make a richly textured gift of it. She moves the reader with flawless grace across cultural boundaries, as someone who has long observed and understood the nature of slights, obscenities, and human kindness. In their realism, her portrayals of the love and conflict between mothers and daughters tugged painfully at my own memories, long buried. Her recounting of good and evil in Hurricane Katrina's aftermath moved me, as did her flowing narrative of two teenage girls asymptotically approaching an ending that caught me by surprise.

There are books where the characters grab you and pull you in. There are books where events are shared so creatively that you live them. There are books that teach you about real events you didn't even realize you didn't understand. There are books where language is so well-used that you yearn to have the author's ability to find just the right tone, vocabulary, and patois. There are books that take you to a new area you now want to visit. But it is rare to find a book that offers all of this. Ellen Urbani introduces you to two unforgettable characters who never meet, but who impact one another's lives dramatically. You love them both for different reasons. This book takes you into Hurricane Katrina and leaves you amid the remains of the destruction. The book grabs your heart and mind with beautifully selected words and phrases. You enter New Orleans and you never completely leave it. The story remains with you as you ponder the personal impact. Ellen Urbani's earlier book *WHEN I WAS ELENA* is also brilliant. I highly recommend them both. (You will want to have friends read them, as the discussions that ensue are meaningful and endless.)

*Landfall* is a truly remarkable book. At first blush, I expected yet another heart wrenching story about Katrina, the hurricane that outdid all hurricanes, but this story is much, much more. Cilla, her daughter Rosebud (Rosy), Gertrude and her daughter Rose narrate the story from worlds apart, though living in relatively close proximity. Gertrude and Rose live in Tuscaloosa, AL, where Bama football is king. For reasons not understood by Rose, Gertrude constantly moves them from one apartment to another, leaving Rose untethered. All she knows is that her father is dead. The only friend she has is her mother. Cilla and Rosy are poor African Americans who live in the now infamous Ninth Ward in New Orleans. Ignoring the dire hurricane warnings, Cilla and her friend Maya insist on riding out the storm with Rosy. Despite having watched day after day of storm coverage on television, I lived through Katrina in the pages of this book. Watching the storm surge destroying the levees was almost surreal, much like watching the Twin Towers fall on September

11th, but putting names and faces to the horrific events made them real. The sheer terror as the rising water forced Cilla, Maya and Rosy to the attic, the dire necessity of having to get outside to the roof, the view of floating debris and bodies is so vividly described that I found myself shaking. Would I have the wherewithal and will to survive against all odds, I wondered. Landfall is a stinging indictment against the incompetence of government agencies on all levels. How could so many people gotten everything so wrong? Ray Nagin, the mayor from hell, is now where he belongs, living as a federal inmate, and others have been prosecuted. The most heartbreaking incident I read was the police blockade on the bridge out of New Orleans. Katrina is a powerful backdrop to the story of Rose and Rosy. They become inexorably joined after Gertrude has an automobile accident, killing herself and Rosy, a pedestrian in the wrong place at the wrong time. Rose becomes obsessed with notifying Rosy's relatives of her death. Rosy carried very little with her, but Rose refuses to give up. In her search for Rosy's kin, she finds herself. In the midst of unspeakable tragedy, I found the story of Rose and Rosy to be beautiful. I loved the characters in the book. Bits of humor (Connie [sic] West) had me laughing, and the commonly heard Southern phrase, "Bless Her Heart", always makes me smile. The dialogue is impeccable, without being demeaning. Ellen Urbani perfectly captures the patois of the Deep South. The obsession with the Crimson Tide is also spot on. Hell would freeze over before my relatives in Tuscaloosa would miss a game. Above all, Landfall is a book of hope and the power of the human spirit. Despite all odds, goodness and kindness prevail.

Loved the book and the narrative. Set against the backdrop of Katrina, the story brings the threads of two seemingly different people together in tragic juxtaposition. The writing is flawless except for the occasional piece of dialog that seems a bit wooden. The characters are expertly drawn and you grow to love both sets of mothers and daughters. Some might say the ending was too predictable but without the deep humanity of the story would not have been illuminated. I found the book very thought provoking and satisfying on every level.

I loved this book. It kept me wanting to come back each time I had to leave it. Ellen Urbani's use of language is beautiful and believable. The characters were complex and interesting. The story is sad, yet hopeful and inspiring to see what people can do as they deal with the challenges they face. Katrina was a tragic natural disaster that impacted so many lives. Ellen has given the reader a taste of how one victim of the hurricane dealt with the aftermath. I hope Urbani will write more books. I look forward to more great reading from her.

Ellen Urbani's new book Landfall is truly a masterpiece! Her storytelling is so authentic & grabs you from the first page with amazing descriptions & dialogue. I have read it twice because I was afraid I missed something, it is so full, sad at times but so full of hope & connections in a horrible time. I am so impressed with the accuracy & authenticity of her descriptions. I lived for many years in New Orleans & also experienced a hurricane as well as a levee break & remember vividly going thru the hardest hit areas after the water receded. I highly recommend this amazing book. Thank you, Ellen.Susie S.

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