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Island Man

A NOVEL BY

Joanne Skerrett

Island Man is a story about a father and son who struggle to forge a relationship out of generations of family trauma, secrets, and loss.

A grieving Hector Peterson and his estranged father Winston Telemacque arrive on the lush island of Dominica in 2017 to spread his mother's ashes when Hurricane Maria strikes. Amid the devastation, the fragile peace between father and son is tested as long-buried family secrets at the heart of Hector's identity are unearthed. Hector faces down his failed marriage, shipwrecked career, and his own failures as a father, while Winston, after three decades of striving as an immigrant in Boston, seeks to reclaim the losses from a painful childhood and the bloody betrayal by his one true love. In *Island Man*, the ruins of past and present are reconciled and shattered generational bonds are restored.

ADVANCE PRAISE

"In *Island Man*, Joanne Skerrett has written an impressive novel that examines the passionate loyalties and difficult choices inspired by the demands of community, family, and love against the dramatic backdrop of the repression of Dominica's Rastafarian community and the hero's migration to America. This satisfying novel takes the reader into the heart of the immigrant experience, what is found, what is left behind, what is lost, and, finally, what is claimed. You will find yourself dreaming, aching, and yearning with a cast of characters whose lives span generations and will remain with you long after the last page."

—**Marita Golden**, American novelist, nonfiction writer, professor, and co-founder of the Hurston/Wright Foundation

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joanne Skerrett is the author of several novels, including *Abraham's Treasure*, a finalist for the CODE Burt Award for Caribbean Literature in 2011. She has worked as an editor for the *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Raleigh News & Observer* and is a candidate for the MA in writing from Johns Hopkins University. Her recent work has appeared in *Spellbinder* literary magazine, where she won the prize for fiction in 2021, and in *Rebel Women Lit*. She lives in Washington, DC.



PUB DATE: Fall 2023

ISBN: 978-1-63628-130-8

SIZE:

FORMAT: Tradepaper

EXTENT:

PRICE:

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REDHEN PRESS

DISTRIBUTED BY

Ingram Publisher Services

an exclusive distribution entity

ORDERING INFORMATION

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MORE PRAISE FOR ISLAND MAN

“When I read the opening paragraph of Joanne Skerrett’s fast-paced novel, *Island Man*, I knew my plans for the day had to be changed. The story starts with a Category 5 hurricane and what follows is hurricane-strength winds that fan a blazing and expertly constructed plot. Skerrett’s well-developed characters are alive; you can hear them breathe between the lines. It feels as if I know them. One of the highest tributes readers can pay to a book and its author is to admit that the story is so gripping, the prose so unrelenting and masterful that they could not put it down. *Island Man* is that kind of book. I could not wait to find out what happened after each chapter ended. The story of loss and redemption, twists and surprises, is powerful and necessary. It is timely, even as it spans decades; Dominica and Boston. Skerrett’s *Island Man* is glorious.”

—**Katia D. Ulysse**, author of *Drifting* and *Mouths Don’t Speak*

FROM ISLAND MAN

Cousin Eddie’s house had large glass-paned window on the first floor, and it took all day for Dad and me to board up the first floor while Cousin Eddie and his friends secured the rest of the house. I had to admit, after twenty years of sitting at a desk or in an airplane seat, the physical labor was exhilarating. My atrophied muscles were springing to life again. At one point, Dad looked over at me and wiped his brow, grinning. “Boy, I haven’t sweat like this in a long time!”

The neighbors ribbed me without end. “Eh, eh! How a spoiled American like you going to survive a big hurricane like that? Is not like snow, you know? We don’t have no FEMA to come and rescue you, eh.” I took it all in stride.

Around eleven-thirty I went upstairs to my room, leaving Dad and Cousin Eddie in the living room reminiscing about the old days. Cousin Eddie’s house was large and modern, so I wasn’t too concerned. Over the years, Dad had taken care of his entire extended family on the island, so all had climbed out of the poverty that plagued his early life.

I was so beat from all the manual labor; I collapsed into bed still in my shorts and T-shirt. The rain and wind were causing a ruckus outside, but I was too exhausted to care, to savor the events of the day: working with Dad and saying goodnight to Dante’s face on the screen. But in a few minutes, I was out cold.

I don’t know how long I’d been asleep when a loud crash and wail jolted me upright. The wind, screaming like a banshee, had torn off the roof over my room, opening the black sky, and vibrating through the walls. Suddenly, I was in a wind tunnel with raindrops flying at me from every direction, into my nose, my ears, my eyes. Before I could cry out, the partition wall, liquefying before my eyes, caved in right next to my bed. I must have blacked out at that moment. When Cousin Eddie came running in to pull me out, I had a mouthful of concrete and my hearing was completely gone in one ear.



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