

Amali, a 14-year-old girl who lives in Buea, Cameroon, loves her village.

Lush green hills lean lazily against an ever-bright sky, palms nod their feathery heads languidly. People move like a molasses river –slow and easy, always with a smile in their pocket. An endless horizon.

Here, time sits in its rocking chair, watching the world from its front porch.

When the season comes, the rains bring life to the dry, dusty land. The air breathes, and opens its throat to sing.

This year, the dry season had been cruel. The sparsely-leaved hills darkened the sky; the palms looked resigned. The intolerable arid heat stifled the land, the air, the people.

Amali waited. She knew soon the rains would quench the earth. The crops would surge forth with surprising abundance, the children would giggle as they sullied their school clothes, and all would gather in doorways to watch the downpour.

But this year, the rains come differently. They come heavy, vengeful, filled with raw wrath. Day after day, they storm in, seeking retribution for a sin we did not know we had committed.

The village floods, and Amali's family struggles to stay afloat.

The water tramples their crops while the sky laughs.

It rushes at the door, insistent. It pounds and pounds, heavy, relentless.

First a bucket, then a loose plank, then a stove, a dresser, a bed. Then it lifts the frightened cattle, bellowing. Louder, louder, louder it roars– knocking, knocking.

Thunderous shouts above rain judgment down on the village.

Her family scoops and scoops—buckets, bowls, cupped hands—frantically managing the problem at hand.

Amali's thin limbs strain in the darkness, fighting upstream, hoping to block the water from its source.

The task proves too big for such a small girl.

All she can do is huddle inside with her family and try to stay dry. She is wet, and she is cold, and she is scared.