ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINE WATLINGTON

Winds Light to Variable...

I CANNOT BELIEVE that 2017 will mark the 30th anniversary of Hurricane Emily. It seems just yesterday that Mike was shaking me awake to tell me classes at Bermuda College were cancelled because of an approaching storm. Bliss, I thought, a lie-in. Hurricanes in my experience in Bermuda never happened; they skidded away at the last moment allowing unexpected holidays. Besides we had had no warning at all of this one. But Mike insisted we take in garden furniture, etc., and half an hour later he was proved right. The wind from the south was so furious I thought the apartment we were living in was about to take off. Then came the eye, directly over us, and the eerie illusion of great calm. We joined our neighbours on the road between apartments for a comforting chat and then rushed back inside when the wind roared back doubly furious from the north. I don't think I had ever felt so scared by weather in my life before or so impotent in the face of the elements. Emily lasted scarcely an hour but she left such devastation. I remember sending pictures to my parents. In a week or so they returned the compliment. Emily had decided to lash into the U.K., eventually reducing Seven Oaks to One Oak.

The storm had an effect on one of my students. He decided to switch his research paper topic to up-and-coming technological advances in weather prediction. Perhaps the weather forecast announced the night before Emily—"winds light to variable"—had something to do with his decision. Anyway, he wrote an extremely informative paper that took me, I thought, into the realm of science fiction where computers and satellites could do miraculous prophesying. In the future, he said, no longer would we be surprised by the storms appearing out of the blue. We would be able to time their arrival and length of stay and adjust our lives accordingly. We would be safer and, my student optimistically argued, we would not be without electricity for three weeks. (Hurricane Emily made me understand the true meaning of shower parties).

When he wrote that paper, I couldn't think ahead to the year 2000, let alone 2017—I felt firmly stuck in the twentieth century. I gave his essay a good grade and thought no more about it until last year when Hurricane Nicole hit us in October. I should have thought about it in 2003 when Hurricane Fabian was predicted days in advance and duly arrived as a Category 3 storm. But somehow I didn't, merely taking the far more accurate weather prediction for granted. But Nicole was a tease. One minute she was a threat, the next she was weakening. Just as we were beginning to relax, she took a deep breath and went straight for us as a Category 4. Once again, Mike and I were dealing with the garden furniture and cursing the fact we had acquired far more than we had possessed in 1987. Cursing, too, the flower pots we had never possessed in 1987 that had the potential to turn into missiles.

But however crazy a path Nicole followed, we were not without meteorological predictions. The National Hurricane Center and sharkoil.bm followed her every twist and turn giving us graphs of all her possible directions, arrivals and eyes, just as my student had predicted all those years ago. So nobody could say that Nicole was a surprise in the way Emily had been 30 years previously. When Nicole arrived, I was yet again in bed, this time Mike with me because we had done all the preparations—dealt with the furniture and the windows and the filling of pots with water. We decided to stay put and actually had that lie-in I'd wanted all those years ago. It wasn't exactly relaxing as the wind blasted at the windows and shook the floor boards, but neither was it nearly as terrifying as Emily had been even though Emily was just a Category 1. Just as we were adjusting to Nicole's rhythmic roar, the wind suddenly stopped.

"It's the eye," I said.

"It can't be," said Mike.

"Why not?" What else could it be?

"It's too early," Mike said.

"You what?"

"It's too early. The Hurricane Center said the eye would arrive at 12."

"So?"

"It's only 11 o'clock."

I looked at him. "Are you serious?"

We both fell about laughing. I'm not sure even my student could have predicted people would demand the same punctuality from hurricanes the Swiss expect from their trains.

WRITTEN BY **ELIZABETH JONES**

He Loves Me... *He Loves Me Not*

I have to confess that after all these years my home has been in Bermuda, I still miss the wild flowers of my childhood, immortalised in Cicely Mary Barker's *Flower Fairies*. Every February and March I have a longing for daffodils, primroses, violets and... daisies. There are, of course, many, many daisy species, but the one I most miss is the common daisy (*Bellis perennis*), that I would see faithfully beginning to appear singly in our English lawns at the end of the long winter months. I think I remember my mother telling me if there are daisies on the grass close enough together to let you put your foot over them, then summer has arrived. I've asked my sister and friends if they remember that saying and they don't at all. (Do any readers?) But everyone remembers making daisy chains for crowns or bracelets and plucking the "petals" one by one to play the "He loves me, he loves me not" game. And everyone remembers the song "Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer, do" apparently inspired by Edward VII's mistress, Daisy, Countess of Warwick, but also surely by the "He loves me" game.

The common daisy has a pink blush to its white "petals" which may explain why it's associated with innocence and purity. Its English name refers to its habit of closing at night and opening in the morning, the "day's eye" as told in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Legend of a Good Woman*:

That wel by by reason men it calle may
The 'dayeseye', or elles the 'ye of day'
The emperice [empress] and floure of floures alle.

Somewhere else he says no "English rhyme or prose/Suffisant this floure to praise aright."

The Latin name comes from bellus for beautiful but it could also refer to Belides, a nymph in ancient Greece who, as is typical in Greek myth, turns into a plant, in her case a daisy, to escape male attention.

We may not have wild primroses in Bermuda but we definitely have daisies, though not of the common English variety. We have our own endemic Darrell's fleablane, not common at all, whose flowers are more feathery and miniscule. And we have daisy fleablane, a delicate shade of purple and also tiny. But my favourites in Bermuda are the showier and larger ox-eye daisies, also associated with innocence, that in recent years have become more common escapes on the roadside. When I was a child, I never could understand why people named Margaret could be nicknamed Daisy. It didn't make any sense to me. That's because nobody told me the French call these daisies "marguerites," perhaps after the Greek word margaretes which means "pearl." (The aforementioned Countess of Warwick wasn't called Margaret, though—she was Frances Evelyn.) In England, the ox-eyes are also known as herb Margarets.

Several famous Margarets are associated with daisies: St. Margaret, whose piety gave her the doubly appropriate name "Pearl of Scotland"; Margaret, Queen of Navarre; and Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, who was known for her beauty but also her ruthlessness. Diana Wells in her *100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names* rather wittily points out that marguerites have another side, just as Margaret of Anjou did: "In a vase they will make other flowers wilt." But that Margaret did found Queens' College in Cambridge, and in this regard has something in common with Margaret, Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VII, who founded Christ's College, also part of the University of Cambridge.

Both the English daisy and the marguerite are members of the Compositae family, so called because while they appear to be single flowers, they actually consist of many. The "petals" surrounding the centre are ray flowers while the centres, or heads, contain many disk florets, each with its own stigma, stamens and petals. Daisies, therefore, have huge reproducing powers since the insects they attract can pollinate many flowers at once. For that reason, some people denigrate them as invasives. My sister argues you can tell what gardeners are like from their relationship with daisies. "If you're a proper one you abhor them. If you're like me you note with delight how they spring up a few days after you've mown the lawn and are glad they exist." I agree with her and with Wordsworth: "We meet thee like a pleasant thought/When such are wanted."

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A Rose by Any Other Name...

When I left the UK and had my first Christmas in Bermuda, I knew I had to adjust my thinking. Where decorations were concerned, it could no longer be simply a matter of the holly and the ivy. That said, some people did assure me there was such a thing as Bermuda holly. Indeed, a 1955 edition of the Bermuda Garden Club book *The Bermuda Garden* mentioned it growing profusely in Devonshire Marsh, but I never saw it there in 1973 and in all the 44 years I've been here I've never seen it anywhere else. It's not mentioned in the club's 2002 *Bermuda: A Gardener's Guide* so perhaps it has died out altogether.

Mexican or Brazilian pepper also bears a berry as red as any blood and being the invasive it is, is in no danger of dying out (though last Christmas the berries were few and far between, thanks to Hurricane Nicole). Asparagus fern has red berries, too, complete with prickles as sharp as any thorn, so for the first few years those were the main plants I used to decorate the apartment. However, once we moved into our own house I got converted to the roses and the jonquils, discovering both were growing in our garden and helpfully blooming just in time for Christmas. The jonquil, like the holly, "bears a blossom as white as lily flow'r" and just as perfumed. Over the years, the scents of a Bermuda Christmas have become for me a heady mix of pine, cedar, jonquils and roses.

Among the roses we found growing in our garden is the cramoisi supérieur, otherwise known as the Agrippina rose that is now very common in Bermudian gardens. According to the Bermuda Rose Society's *Roses in Bermuda*, it is "almost naturalized all over the island and can be found growing under the most adverse conditions." Our rose bush bears this out since we have not exactly assiduously paid it attention. It blooms sporadically all year, and without fail, its crimson buds appear a week before Christmas, opening into cupped blossoms with close layers of petals. The heads bend from the stems and it is true that they are not the best roses for cutting since they drop their petals. I ignore this, however, since they look beautiful in the base of an eighteenth-century silver sugar shaker that is otherwise perfectly useless.

Besides, who can complain about a constant stream of fragrant confetti?

The only thing about the rose that bothers me is its name. Now as Shakespeare said, a rose with any other name would smell as sweet, but still, Agrippina is a bit much. The name is apparently Greek and means "born feet first"—not an easy way to start life but that's not my objection. I don't understand how this beautiful rose species with its shyly drooping heads bears the name of a scheming, murderous ancient Roman empress, Julia Agrippina the Younger. She not only connived with her tongue, but also probably poisoned an inordinate number of people, including two husbands, Passienus Crispus and Emperor Claudius, not to mention Claudius's son Brittanicus. I suppose you could say that like the rose she was a survivor but that by her end was not true. She had her comeuppance since her insatiable ambition for her son Nero arguably drove him to murder her. When tricking her to sail in a ship designed to sink didn't work—she swam to safety—he had her murdered in her own country house.

Not to worry, Google this rose and you'll find it has a variety of other less-sinister names, including Bengale à pétales striées, Bengale éblouissant, La Gaufrée, and Lady Brisbane. Other countries might have claimed it (originally from China, it was apparently discovered in Europe by 1832), but we too have adopted it for our own, dubbing it the Old Bermuda Red Rose. Now that is a great name for a rose that smells so sweet.