were high with rainwater that could warp them rotten if they were not bailed. The river was satisfied. It was a god too. Too much had been forgotten.

Then, a mouse after a fête, its claws curled like moss, nosing the dew as the lighthouse opened its eye, the sunlight peeped out, and people surveyed the loss that the gods had made under a clearing-up sky. Candles shortened and died. The big yellow tractors tossed up the salad of trees, in yellow jackets

men straightened the chairs of dead poles, the contractors in white helmets and slickers heard the castanets of the waves going up the islands, moving on

from here to Guadeloupe, the beaded wires were still. They saw the mess the gods made in one night alone, as Lightning lifted his stilts over the last hill.

Achille bailed out his canoe under an almond that shuddered with rain. There would be brilliant days still, till the next storm, and their freshness was wonderful.

Chapter X

For Plunkett, despair came with this shitty weather, √ from the industrious torrents of mid-July till the farm was drubbed to a standstill. This year, the