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Here Comes the Rain

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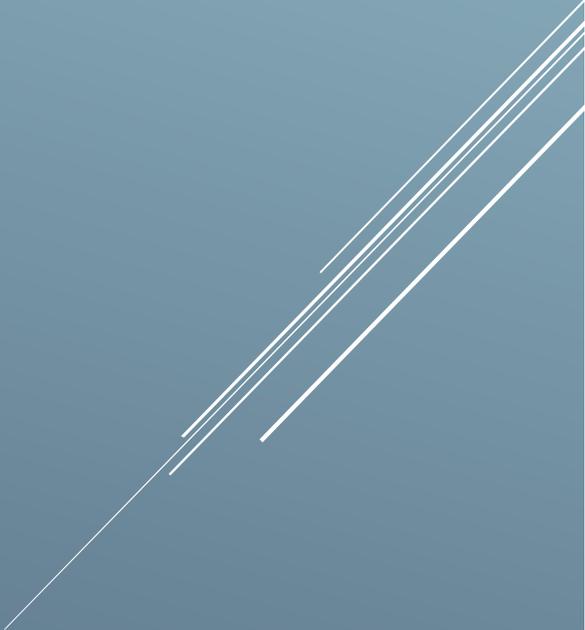
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HERE COMES THE RAIN

SURF PRESENTATION 2019

BY ISABELLA MINUDRI

Intro

We always look forward to when the rain will end. Rain means darkness, wet shoes, staring at the sidewalk and never at the sky. Rain means windshield wipers and ruined hair and cold hands. Gloom. So we wait. We watch the clouds from closed windows and urge them to break into wisps once again, because for most of us, the sun and happiness are two things that can rarely be separated. Here comes the sun, little darling. Here comes the joy.

What if we found happiness in both the sun and the rain? What if we looked up once in a while to see the beauty in the wetness? And not just an appreciation for the consequences of rain, like flora and glittering roads, but a true excitement for what comes with the rain. What if we loved the feeling of each round droplet on our skin or the way the clouds come together and create a song? I'd like to think that maybe, just maybe, we would begin to approach life from an entirely new perspective.

These pieces are a tribute to discovering beauty when life hurts the most, rather than after the pain ends. They're about deliberately splashing in the puddles even if your toes are cold. Sunshine will have its moment. So put on your jacket, please, and prepare to get your shoes wet.

Here Comes the Rain

Crowbar to the dusty rafters--
Crack, splinter, split--
Dry wall floating
up in clouds, covering broken beams, coloring
the inside of my mouth,
My nostrils, filling the wrinkles
In my hands. Cold metal
And strong, step into each swing, revel
In the shuddering *creak-snap!* that pierces,
The *boom* that rolls in sky.

I picture his smile against each wall
And put a hole through it.

Laughter bubbles against the tears
Salt water dripping, slipping
Between my hands, grip
The crowbar tighter and swing again,
Feeling it shiver as it breaks
Through the staircase railing, the creaking
Floor boards, boarded up windows. Peel
Yellowing bathroom tiles
Away with bleeding fingernails, porcelain
Shards and water pools, piping
Spray like rain slithering through my hair.

I run down hallways, throw matches,
And tear curtains
Down from castle windows,
No sun yet, and it smells
Like thunder. Glass-covered frames
And old photos of him curl in the blaze
To which I feed them. The last beam
Disintegrates beneath my hammering
Feet and now I stand
Atop the ruins, let the breeze touch
My crumbling skin
And feel my bones shatter in the sun.

Better This Way

I used to believe that falling in love
meant seeing poetry in someone's eyes
meant making lyrics out of fingerprints
verses out of all the ways we'd kiss

I used to think that being in love
was easy like Seattle rain
was green leaves and flowers every week
knees crooked together in sleep

With him it doesn't feel like free falling
more like maple seeds helicopter spinning
more like a child from a bike wobbling
vertigo in the Ferris wheel car

With him it's more laughter than gazing
more drunken choruses than one special song
more French fries than picnic baskets
backs pressed together in sleep

love in the off-beat rhythm of our breaths

Much Ado About Frosting

The screen door hammered shut in the mudroom, the sound vibrating through the house. Marlene glanced up from the towel she was folding meticulously and smiled to herself, hearing her husband's muttered curses.

"Hi, honey," she called, setting the towel on top of the dryer.

"Hey, Mar."

She shuffled into the kitchen to see Henry, Dodgers baseball cap low over his eyes, piling overfilled grocery bags onto the counter. He immediately turned and went back into the mudroom to fidget with the door hinges, opening and closing the screen several times before throwing up his hands and letting it slam into the doorjamb once more.

"Damn that door," Henry said as he walked back into the kitchen. "It rattles the windows of every house in the goddamn neighborhood."

Marlene laughed and pulled a carton of milk from a bag. "Maybe you should actually do something about it, Henry. It's not goi—"

"To fix itself, yeah, yeah, I know," Henry finished, grinning at his wife. He took the milk from her and pulled open the refrigerator door. "You've said it before."

"Well, I don't know what else you want me to say, honey. You complain about the door every time you come into the house." Marlene shrugged a little and reached for some cans of tomatoes. She placed them in a cupboard next to the oven, adjusting them so that all of the labels faced the same direction. She turned to see Henry still standing in the light of the refrigerator, the milk in his hand hovering awkwardly in the air like he couldn't decide where to put it. Marlene gently pushed him aside and took the milk, set it on its designated shelf, and then moved away to unload more groceries.

"We have some WD-40 in the garage, don't we?" Marlene asked over her shoulder. "Maybe that would help with the squeaking, at least."

She paused, dug her hands into a few of the remaining bags, and said slowly, "Henry, I thought I asked you to get frosting."

Hearing no response, she turned to see Henry sitting at the island in the middle of the kitchen, already absorbed in the front page of the newspaper.

"Henry."

"Hmm."

Marlene stepped forward and flattened her hands on the island. “I specifically asked you to get frosting. Did you leave it in the car?”

“Hmm?”

“Henry, would you look at me for one second?” Her voice began to rise.

Henry finally looked up from his paper and sighed. “What now, Mar?”

Her eyes narrowed. “Frosting, Henry. Where is the frosting.”

Henry met her gaze for a second, and then cleared his throat and tugged his ball cap lower over his eyes. “I didn’t buy any frosting. Gotta put it on the list, Marlene.”

He scratched his neck and went back to his paper, while his wife glared at him across the marble. After a minute, she went back to the grocery bags, emptying them of their contents. On the counter, she left a box of chocolate cake mix, a packet of candles, and a lighter, and then turned to look back at Henry.

“You look so much like him in that hat, Henry,” she murmured. “I thought maybe it would help you remember.” With that, she walked stiffly into the living room and out of Henry’s sight.

Henry sat still, staring after his wife with guilt clouding his vision. The paper in his hands fell limp, so he folded it up and set it in front of him to rest his elbows on while he pressed his face into his palms. After a moment, he rose from the counter and approached the living room, holding his breath.

Two large, glass doors overlooking a small garden allowed sunlight to warm the carpeted floor where Marlene stood barefoot, watching birds in the yard and rolling an old baseball between her hands. If she heard Henry enter the room, she made no indication, except to rotate her hands a little faster.

Henry chose to stand near the doorway—comfortably, with his hands shoved into his pockets, but under the brim of his hat the skin around his eyes tightened.

“I’m not perfect, Marlene.”

Silence. The tension in Marlene’s arms was enough to pull her skin taut.

“You can’t expect me to remember every little thing that goes on around here—my brain’s gonna fry.”

The baseball rolled around and around.

“I swear I’m trying—would you say somethin’ so I can stop feelin’ bad about this?”

Marlene whipped around, her jaw clenched and her nails digging into the ball's stitching. Her arms began to shake.

"You aren't. You aren't trying, Henry." She said carefully through gritted teeth. "I don't care if you don't remember every little thing, just as long as you remember the *big* things!"

"How the hell am I supposed to know the difference between the big things and the small things?"

"Oh, for Pete's sake, Henry. Listen to yourself! The door is a small thing, because the only person it's bothering is *you!*"

She suddenly stopped mid-rant, eyes glued to her husband like she would strangle him if he moved any closer. Then she pulled her arm back and launched the baseball at the wall near Henry's head. Henry ducked, and the ball thudded into the paint, dropping to the floor in a flurry of white dust.

Henry looked at the ball and then at his wife, his mouth open. "What the he—"

"*You* only care about *you*, Henry! The stupid door could bang itself into the next century and I wouldn't care! But you know what I *do* care about? You know what really matters to me *right now?*"

"Well, I think—"

"Don't think, Henry! You *know* the answer!" Her voice rose by an octave as she moved toward Henry in her anger. "This day comes around every single goddamned year and you pretend to forget every single time! What, do you just *hope* that Bobby's birthday will magically *not occur* if you don't acknowledge it? Do you think maybe I'll just *not* say anything about it?" She was so close to him their noses almost touched.

Henry gave up trying to answer her questions and kept his eyes on the floor. Marlene took a shaky breath and a step backward, settling her hands on her hips. She watched as her husband reached up to adjust his hat again, still not looking at her.

"That's it, isn't it," she said, her voice suddenly gentle. "You're hoping I'll forget too."

Defeated, Marlene dropped onto the couch as tears began to catch in her eyelashes. Before long, she was sobbing into her hands the way one does when tears have been evasive far too long.

Henry finally released the spot on the carpet from his gaze and sighed before moving to sit next to the blubbering woman on the couch and pull her into his chest.

“I’m sorry, Mar, I really am,” he murmured, his hand stroking her hair. He didn’t say anything more for a long while, allowing his shirt to soak with her tears until she had cried herself out. When she eventually sat up, the two of them looked at each other and smiled a little.

“I miss him too, honey. I miss him every day, you gotta believe me.” Henry tucked a strand of Marlene’s hair back and took off his hat for both of them to look at. “I only wear this stupid thing because it’s how I feel closest to him.” He fingered the fraying threads on the bill of the hat and chuckled. “The Dodgers. Of all the baseball teams our kid coulda picked...”

Marlene began to laugh a little too. “It really is strange, isn’t it.”

“We didn’t even like baseball!”

“Never took him to a game, never put him in T-ball...”

“The Dodgers, Marlene!” Their laughter bubbled over, husband and wife letting out cries of mirth and wiping tears from their cheeks. Gasping for breath, Henry grabbed Marlene’s hand and quickly sobered. “I promise not to forget Bobby’s birthday again, okay? Maybe eight years of pretending it’s just a regular day is long enough.”

Marlene leaned in and pressed a kiss to his cheek, and then stood up from the couch, smoothing her skirt. “I think maybe we have some powdered sugar in the cupboard and a little food coloring. I’ll just make frosting from scratch. Care to join?”

Henry rested his head on the back cushions and gave her a gentle smile. “I’ll be there in a minute,” he said, glancing at the hat in his hands. His wife nodded and made her way into the kitchen once more. Henry let out a long sigh.

In the pantry, Marlene found the last of her powdered sugar and blue dye, and as she mixed them together with the milk and butter that Henry had bought, she thought she heard the shudder of a glass door closing. Curious, Marlene wiped her hands and peeked around the corner into the living room.

Henry was no longer on the couch, so Marlene walked softly over to the double doors. Just outside, Henry sat on the wooden porch step, face in his hands. His shoulders heaved with sobs, and the old Dodgers hat was lying upside down on the lawn.

Marlene moved to open the door, but hesitated, watching her husband’s pain. She splayed her fingers and pressed her palm into the glass, and the two of them stayed like that for a long while.