

Jenny Lapekas

Rain Date

In the summer, I used to sit with my father in the dining room to watch the rain come in, an education in patience. We waited for the electric moment before the rain dropped all at once, the waves of heat crashing into us. Like a fist pounding on the season, every drop banged to a gradual orchestra, the sounds of evening filling the space between us.

We watched the droplets sizzle into the cracked black tumors of our driveway. “Here comes the rain!” an excited, childhood whisper floating out of me underneath the stillness of the marble ceiling and frozen china, my hands clasped together tightly and my father’s neatly on his lap.

On the wall hangs an old photograph of my parents, kissing through a volleyball net, surrounded by laughing friends. They meet in the middle, reaching for each other through the webbing, as if to act out some obvious metaphor.

She could run, travel through Rome, eat noodles in Bangkok, ride horses in Cairo. Instead, she calls my father from a dusty payphone, belly swollen and car smoking. She crosses the International Date Line, gives up hours, days, weeks of her life, over oceans of fish and shifting tides. She comes home to dim rooms with walls full of photographs, walking through ruins, meeting with meek smiles that limp across tabletops.

Together, my father and I waited on this feverish miracle that custom told us to watch from the bay window. Nothing awkward or dangerous about the rain, pounding like some headache you swear you’d always had.

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