

Rainstorm



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When I was a kid, one of my favorite things to do was walk in the rain during one of the famous summer rainstorms in Houston. It was like taking an outdoor shower. I shouldn't have done that when I moved to Amarillo, where the rain is freezing cold, even in July. But it hadn't stopped me from trying.

Like a horse returning to its corral, I saw the rain and wanted to dance and sing in it. So I tried to reinvent the scene from *Singing in the Rain*. I needed to be silly again. Act like a child and simply enjoy those simple pleasures before the reality of adulthood completely overtook my body and soul. Thank goodness I still danced in the rain, even as I eased into adulthood. If I hadn't, I would have never met my wife.

I'm old now as I watch the rain splatter against the pane of the window in my hospital bed. I lift my head an inch above the pillow and stretch to see the fat wet drops splatter against the clear glass. My wife is holding my hand and smiling at me. Her hair frames her face. She was never one to follow the rules and decided there was nothing wrong with shoulder-length hair on an old woman. No cropped silver hairdo for her. I'd given up on long hair years ago, finding a short haircut a lot easier, especially after I became ill.

"Can we?" I ask.

She shakes her head, and that sad, indulging smile appears. "They would never let me take you outside."

"Please."

She knows it won't be long, and I see her resolve begin to wane. The mischievous smile appears, and I know I've won this last request. Her head swivels right and left, and her eyes land on the wheelchair beside the bed. I know I won't get to dance in the rain on my own two feet, but I can still sing. My wife will twist and turn with me in the wheelchair, and we'll do a modified dance in the rain.

"Okay," she agrees, and her silver hair moves with her laughter. "We'll have to time this so Nurse Ratched doesn't catch us." She's still quite the jokester.

I giggle. My mind takes me back to the day we danced in the rain for the very first time.



Henry was droning on and on about some unimportant financial statistic as the clouds rolled in, and I knew a rainstorm was imminent. He was trying to impress the new director of marketing. She was hot. Everyone was trying to impress her, including me. The drizzle began as I glanced out the window, and I couldn't help myself; I started to zone off. My report was next. I missed the cue to begin because I watched the drizzle increase and become a full-on rainstorm. I was itching to run outside and play.

At the time, we worked in Port Lavaca, where the summer rainstorms felt like a caress on my skin, both invigorating and calming. I'd always wondered how it was possible to be both exhilarating and soothing, but later my wife would remind me that making love was a lot like the rainstorms, and then she would give me "the look." The one that said, "well duh," making love with the right woman was always revitalizing and comforting. Perhaps not at the exact moment, but the whole encounter encompassed both experiences.

"Sarah? Sarah? Are you still with us?" Jim asked. He was the CEO and a kind old gentleman. He'd hired both of us and later told me it was the two best hiring decisions he'd ever made. At the time of hire, I hadn't yet shared my particular quirk with rainstorms. When I did confess my affinity to the notable storms, he rolled with it like the wonderful boss he turned out to be. Some of my colleagues would take cigarette breaks, and I would take rain breaks. I considered them a lot healthier, and so did Jim.

I turned my head toward Jim. "Yes, sorry, but I need a minute. Can we take a break?"

"Sure, sure. I'd like some coffee myself." He grinned, and his face transformed into one of a little boy on Christmas morning. I knew the cookies were calling Jim like the rain was calling me. The coffee was an

excuse to grab two chocolate chip cookies the catering department had prepared for the meeting.

The minute Jim lifted his large frame from the chair to make the trek to the cookies, I ran outside. I was too excited about the rain to remember to grab my rain jacket. Not that I really ever bothered to do that when the rain appeared. As I lifted my face to catch the raindrops and began to twirl, I heard her voice.

"What are you doing? You'll catch your death in this weather. I have your umbrella." She offered me one of those compact, black nylon umbrellas everyone carried on rainy days. Except, it wasn't mine because I hadn't held one since childhood.

Funny how a traumatic experience as a child turned into my fascination for the rain. I couldn't have been older than six when I walked home one blustery day in the rain, holding the enormous umbrella tightly against my tiny body. When a gust of wind flipped my umbrella upside down, I thought I had broken it. After managing to fold it back into shape to hide my mistake, I realized the rain was warm and let the swollen droplets fall. I snuck quietly into our trailer. I didn't want to admit to breaking the cheap umbrella. I knew an expensive rain suit and boots were luxuries we couldn't afford. I tucked the evidence into my closet and religiously took it with me on subsequent rainy days, but I never flipped it open again.

Smiling, I turned my attention back to the beautiful new marketing director. I laughed, and maybe it sounded maniacal to her. I don't know because I never asked. "I am dancing in the rain, and in two seconds, I'm about to sing. It opens a person up to the wonders of the world. You should try it. Besides, I think you just stole Henry's umbrella. That's not mine. I never carry one."

She smiled at me, set down both umbrellas, and lifted her face to the clouds and rain. Then, as she spun, I started singing. She didn't know all the words but followed along. After we finished the song, we both laughed, squeezed the excess water from our hair, and walked inside to return to the board meeting.

Jim held out a towel for me. "Sorry, I only have one. You'll have to share." He winked at me. Henry was grumbling something like, "Batshit crazy." He might have asked about his umbrella. I wasn't paying attention.

My focus lasered on the water trailing down my partner in crime's face from her wet hair, darkened to almost black from the rain.

I gently towel-dried my future wife's hair and asked, "Do you want to grab dinner after the meeting?"

"I'd love to. Somewhere with a fireplace because I am drenched." She laughed.

Before meeting the love of my life, I had zero ability to determine whether a woman might be open to a relationship with another woman. She made it so easy to figure out. She was always front and center with everything. There was never a coming out for her. She simply accepted the fact that she loved women and thought everyone else should follow with no consternation. I loved that about her. I don't honestly believe she was ignorant of the whispers behind our backs. She simply did not give a thought to them. At all.



The rain had subsided by the time we left for the restaurant following the board meeting. Fate had smiled on me again after I learned she'd caught a ride with a colleague because her ancient MG Midget was on the fritz again. I could not only offer her a ride to the restaurant, but I'd get to escort her home and perhaps receive an invitation for coffee. Coffee was the code for something else entirely. I didn't always accept that offer, but tonight I would if extended to me.

I took the long way to the restaurant so I could pass by my favorite field of bluebonnets, vast and colorful after all the spring rains fed the tiny blossoms. Like the riddle of what came first, the chicken or the egg, I wasn't sure if my two favorite colors were blue and green because of my love for our state flower or if the love of this particular flowering variety resulted from my favorite colors. I've never been the type of person to select just one, except for my wife. I have multiple favorite foods, favorite books, songs, and many other wonders of the world. Life is vast and must be lived to the fullest, ignoring society's need to make us choose just one.

The tiny petals resembling the old-fashioned bonnet of pioneer women never ceased to bring a smile to my face. I glanced at the beautiful woman sitting in the passenger seat and saw the same look of awe on her face. That

was the defining moment for me. The moment I knew that love at first sight was not a fluke. Not only did she dance in the rain with me, but I could tell she worshipped the bluebonnets with the same vigor. We were indeed a match made in heaven.

"They're breathtaking, aren't they? No matter what, I don't think I could ever move from Texas. I'd miss them too much."

"You could always visit," I suggested.

"Not the same thing as having them literally in my backyard. My house might be as dilapidated as my unreliable MG, but with five acres, including my own personal field of bluebonnets, I have heaven at my doorstep."

"I'm looking forward to taking you home. I hope I'll still be able to see the bluebonnets in the dark. Maybe the clouds will clear, and the moon will shine bright enough to catch a glimpse."

"Or, if you're really good, you can see them in the morning."

I resisted the urge to pump my fist in the air. She was feeling the crackle in the air, and I was sure it wasn't because of the rainstorm. That was the third sign to cement my absolute belief that I would ask this woman to be my wife before the end of the year. And I did. When it is right, there is nothing that will get in the way. Of course, it wasn't legal back then, but I didn't care. I had absolute faith that the politicians would pull their heads out of their asses, and somehow, before I died, it would be legal. I'd run down that aisle a second time, for sure.

"I'd like that. If you have breakfast fixings, I can whip up something that will endear you to me even more than dinner and drinks."

"I'll hold you to that." She winked, and my stomach fluttered in anticipation of our first date. When her hand pushed through the still-wet strands of her long, dark hair, I felt the familiar stirring of arousal that I would need to tamp down for the next several hours. But the anticipation was all a part of the total experience of love and lust.

"So, Marjorie, that's not a very common name." I began the inane chitchat required for a first date.

She chuckled. "Marjie. I hate Marjorie. When I was in grade school, Tommy Jones tried to give me the nickname Margarine. And yes, that really was his name. Believe me, he was not even close to Tom Jones, whom I happened to like as a kid. Don't judge."

"And," I prompted. I could tell there was more to the story.

"Well, I can tell you I am no margarine because I am the real deal. Soft and creamy, just like butter, and I told Tommy that."

I laughed. "That stopped him from calling you Margarine?"

"Nope, the punch in the nose stopped him. No one ever tried to give me a nickname after that. I told them all they could call me Marjie, and from that point forward, nobody has ever called me Marjorie."

"Feisty. I like it." I put my hands up in supplication. "Any other rules I shouldn't break? I'd hate to receive a punch in the nose for inadvertently doing something wrong."

"Like I said. I am the real deal. I'll never be a second-rate substitute for anything." She narrowed her eyes. "If we become an item and you ever partake in margarine on the side, you won't like my reaction any better than Tommy Jones."

"Now, why would I ever choose margarine over butter? Soft and creamy sounds divine to me."

"Good answer."

After that exchange, we never devolved into small talk, and I discovered how utterly charming and intelligent Marjie really was. She had a grasp of the arts, politics, and philosophy. You name it, she could hold her own in a conversation. And yet, those attributes were simply the icing on the cake. It was Marjie's passion for life and love that cemented our relationship. Sometimes her passion caused knock-down drag-out fights when we would disagree, but I always preferred that over the milquetoast conversations with women who lacked passion. No opinion irked me more than anything else.

After dinner, I took Marjie home, and because I am a gentlewoman, I'll never confirm or deny if we made love on our first date. But I will confess to never making love to another woman after taking Marjie to dinner. I'd have married her the next day if it was legal, but unfortunately, at that time, it was barely acceptable to my small inner circle of friends.

I give enormous credit to Jim, the CEO of our small critical access hospital. He recognized the spark between Marjie and me right from the start and was forever in our corner, even after the word leaked that we were together. A few more conservative board members had an entirely different reaction, but they knew if Jim left, they were screwed, since he'd been the

one to save the hospital from financial ruin. Henry, on the other hand, pissed me off until the day I retired.



I'm not afraid to die. Luck, fate, good karma, I'm not sure what has shined upon me, but something always has. I met my wife at a time when I wasn't completely led by my vajayjay. Oh sure, it tugged at me quite a bit. My wife is a beautiful woman, even to this day. She is and was a total package of complexity and perfection, not just something to make my drawers dampen with excitement. Mind you, there is nothing wrong with that, but there is also a lot more to a marriage than exhilaration between the sheets.

Music is playing on the portable Bluetooth player. My wife bought the small cylindrical device to keep the music playing whenever I needed a boost of good energy. Music, like my beloved rain, always seems to cheer me up. I smile when the song, *Ironie* by Alanis Morissette comes on. Marjie blesses me with one of her famous grins.

"Turn it up," I say.

"It's already at nearly the top. You're going to get me in trouble with the nurses again," she says and then proceeds to crank it up as she glances at the open door in the room.

I squeeze her hand as much as possible in my weakened state, and she smiles at me. "Thank you."

"Only you could have the power to summon the rain on our wedding day," she says as she gets that faraway look in her eyes. I know she is remembering our wedding day.

I am convinced she knows that I also want to think about our special day. We'd always laughed at the oddity that, for us, rain on our wedding day was not ironic at all but rather perfect. I close my eyes, and the whole movie that was our wedding spirals through my mind as if it were yesterday. My body might have turned against me, but my mind never did. I thank the universe for that. I could not have imagined a greater travesty than forgetting Marjie and our years together.

While sipping my first cup of coffee, I looked out at our expansive backyard and smiled at the dark clouds rolling in. The ends of the white

tablecloths fluttered in the breeze, even though the folding chairs were pushed against the tables. I thought it was a good thing we ordered the canopies to cover the area where the caterers would prepare the meal.

"What are you grinning about?" she asks.

"It's going to rain today." I was giddy with excitement.

"You know that most sane individuals would not pray for rain on their wedding day. Our guests will not be amused when they realize we did not rent tents for the ceremony." Marjie shook her head.

"They'll thank us for the unique experience."

"No, they won't. People gussie up for a wedding." Her arms were crossed as she propped her tea on her forearm. She appeared to survey the backyard and the path leading to where we would recite our vows. None of that was covered.

I began laughing deep in my belly. "Gussie up? What are you, eighty-five? Besides, the eating area has a canvas roof."

"That is a perfectly acceptable expression, and the canopies won't help during the ceremony." Marjie sipped from her tea. "Do you think we've jinxed the day by sleeping together last night?" She waggled her eyebrows.

I waved my hand in the air as if I was swatting away any negative vibes. "Nope, I don't believe in all that superstitious hooey. Besides, look at those glorious rain clouds. As I always say, the rain decided to wash our souls today. It'll be perfect."

She shook her head again. "Nutball. I believe the correct saying is that the sun decided to shine upon us, but that certainly is not happening."

I held out my hand. "Shall we go upstairs and start primping for this thing? Unless...that's another superstition you feel queasy about."

Marjie laughed. "Nope, we've already demolished the big one. Several times last night, I might add." She winked.

That was my gal. Marjie could roll with the best of them.



We'd been together a long time by the day of the wedding. Legal marriages were now available to us, and that's why we wanted to tie the knot. Yet, we weren't going to follow any tradition for our marriage, and we certainly weren't going to have anyone give us away like we were a piece of

prime meat. Walking hand in hand down the grass path in our backyard, listening to Brandi Carlile's, *The Story*, I felt the first droplet of rain. I was hoping for a lot more than a drizzle. As I looked at the faces of the small group of friends and family, I could tell they did not share my secret wish.

Fortunately for everyone, the ceremony was brief. The minute the officiate pronounced, "You may kiss one another," the sky opened up like the petals on a rose, slow and full. As we experienced the joy of our first kiss as a married couple, the warm rain flowed and bathed us in magic. We stood soaking in ambrosia from heaven and began twirling while our wimpy guests ran for cover. My sister noted we were completely mad as she dashed for the large tents, not more than twenty feet from the house, where the caterers were working hard to create a masterful presentation of food.

The long white dress clung to Marjie, and I could see her nipples poking through the silk fabric. My linen suit didn't offer as much to Marjie, and she complained loudly of that once we had the opportunity to change.

"How'd you do it?" Marjie asked.

"Do what?" I grinned at her while removing my wet tunic.

"Arrange for the rain at the perfect moment. It's not like you're on a first-name basis with the guy or gal upstairs. Have you ever even set foot in a church?" She pointed to the back of her dress.

I moved behind her and tugged on the zipper. "Don't be intolerant. I know you're more worldly than that. When we put our wishes out to the universe, the universe always answers."

She let the dress fall to the floor and then draped it over a chair in our bedroom. "Okay, then I'm going to ask the universe for rain on our honeymoon when we walk onto the balcony in our silky skivvies." She turned to face me, then winked. "The ones I already packed. I'm gonna ogle your breasts when your nipples stand at attention like mine did today."

Marjie brushed her hand over my still-wet bra and got a preview of what actually occurred on our honeymoon. The universe blessed us that year with two opportune rainstorms. One in Texas, where we were married, and one in Mexico, where we honeymooned. Over our long life together, we enjoyed many storms and the calm that happened before and after. Like our marriage, storms and passion raged throughout. There were good times and

bad, but through it all, we endured and even relished those storms. We gave them the proper perspective and respect they deserved.



Not only did the rain mark the joyous events in our lives, but somehow it followed us around for the less-than-blissful times. Fortunately for us, water refreshes a person and rejuvenates their soul. It has a tendency to put out a raging fire, even when the rain is warm.

Our first knock-down, drag-out fight came not long after I moved into her house. Honestly, I don't even recall what caused such a row, but I remember feeling pure panic as my new girlfriend raised her voice like I'd never heard before. It wasn't like I was afraid of her since she was 120 pounds soaking wet. I feared losing her. Would she walk out on me? The reality set in that I'd never had a relationship with someone who could hold their own. I'd always dominated. This woman was going to challenge me in ways I'd never known before.

I do recall her yelling, "You are the most stubborn woman I've ever known! I wish you'd stop being so pig-headed and narrow-minded."

Well, that was like a red cape to a bull. I fancied myself the most open-minded person in our conservative town. How dare she call me narrow-minded? I matched the decibel in her voice and added a new level. I was not one to let anyone get the better of me. The yelling became a screaming match until we heard the boom of thunder that undoubtedly punctuated the end of one of our sentences. We looked at one another, and she grinned first, extending her hand.

The clouds were dark and angry, matching the atmosphere a mere minute before the loud boom. You'd think that would only serve to stoke the raging inferno, but it always had the opposite effect on us.

Running outside, we danced in the rain and let the water cool the fires ignited by irritation over something we both knew was inconsequential. Since Marjie had offered the first olive branch, I mumbled the first apology. Then I did something so uncharacteristic it surprised both of us.

I mumbled into her neck, "Please don't ever leave me or kick me to the curb."

She pulled back and looked into my eyes. "Now, why would I ever do that, you stubborn fool? Not one single person on this planet argues better than you. You, love, will always keep me on my toes. If I can't handle a minor disagreement now and again, I have no business entering into any relationship."

I quirked my eyebrow. "Minor disagreement?"

"Okay, maybe it was a full-on scream fest, but don't you feel alive? Isn't it better than always agreeing? It is always the couples that agree on everything who fall out of love because their life is so boring and placid. I don't understand how anyone can be shocked when the inevitable divorce happens. No passion, no love. You, darling, have passion."

"As do you." I pulled her closer against my wet body.

"I'm sorry for yelling so loud that we almost missed this rainstorm, but I'm not sorry for disagreeing with you," she whispered in my ear.

I drew back to look her in the eyes. "Was that an apology?"

"Yup, get used to it because that is as far as I will ever go." She pulled me close again.

"You know you hurt my feelings, saying I was narrow-minded." My mouth was close to her ear again as I said these words quietly.

"I know, and I meant every word at the time." She stepped back and gently kissed my nose. "I am sorry for hurting you and not clarifying that what you said was narrow-minded, not who you fundamentally are as a person. We're going to hurt one another occasionally; it is inevitable. I'm sorry I can't promise never to hurt you. I can promise never to leave you because I'm madly in love with your stubborn ass."

"I think I've met my match." I brushed her wet locks aside and looked into those mesmerizing eyes that had captured me when I first met Marjie.

"You certainly have," she responded, then captured my lips in a searing kiss.

When we returned to our dry house, we began ripping at each other's soaking-wet clothes. But I learned something that made our fights a lot more palatable during this first major quarrel—our lovemaking rose to a whole new level.

The song, *Ironic*, ends, and I look into the lined face of my beautiful wife and nod that it is time. The wheels on the chair bump along the rough sidewalk and jostle my old, worn body. The pain would have been excruciating, but the cold, clean rain is refreshing and just enough distraction to keep me settled. It should feel uncomfortable, but it doesn't. I was sure my wife would get in trouble for wheeling me out into the frigid Amarillo rain, but why should they care? I am dying. It isn't like I will catch my death in the rain. I'd already caught something else, and it wasn't a measly cold.

"Remind me why we moved to Amarillo?" my old voice croaks.

"I wanted to be closer to family as we got older. I needed the help when..." Her voice trails off.

Marjie is still a feisty old broad at eighty-six, but she is eighty-six, and these last few years were getting to be too much. I knew it, and she knew it. It is unfair of me to remind her of this, especially since that argument was the last knock-down drag-out fight we'd engaged in. I no longer had any fight left in me after that. We both knew what agreeing to move meant for us.

"I'm sorry. I like Amarillo. I do. It's just that I miss the warm rain."

"I know, love, I know. I do too."

"A person can get used to anything, though. I'm starting to enjoy this refreshing rain." I smile at her.

She strokes my shoulder. "Liar."

"No, honest. I never thought I would, but I really do. Icy rain, warm rain. It makes no difference. It has always been about cleansing one's soul. Letting Mother Nature caress and love you. You always got that. All these years we've been singing in the rain together were the very definition of perfection."

Marjie pats my shoulder again. "I think you may have forgotten the times we disagreed. Vehemently, I might add. I think we scared your nephew when he walked into one."

I chuckle. "That was my favorite dish you broke into a thousand pieces. What did that sink ever do to you?"

"I didn't throw it at your head like he thought," she defends.

"Oh, my goodness. Do you remember the look on his face?"

"Sure do. I thought he was going to convince you to divorce me."

"Nah, if anyone understands passion, it's him. He told me once that if he were ever fortunate enough to find someone like you, he'd never let her go. And he didn't. I caught him and his wife once in one of their epic arguments, and I do believe they learned from the best."

"Love and passion were never a problem for us. I wonder if it might have been better for either of us to find a partner who was a bit more Zen about things."

I don't know how I feel the warm droplet on my cheek amid the icy rain, but I do. I see the tears drop from my wife's eyes. We both know this will be the last time we dance and sing in the rain together. The end is near.

As she spins the chair in the rain, I hear her clear voice sing with mine the Whitney Houston classic, *I Will Always Love You*. And I will always love her. Even as my soul makes its way to the other world, I will take that love with me.

Note from the Author

Although this is a standalone short story, not based on characters in previously published novels, if you enjoyed reading this short and/or the writing style, I hope you will check out my other books from Amazon. Here is a link to my Amazon page: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/Annette-Mori/author/>