

Wizard of Rain

He drives into the garage with such impatience that the radio antenna brushes the bottom of the door as it goes up, and makes a cartoon sound: *oing oing oing*. But he has no sense of humor to enjoy such things tonight. He is a man with responsibilities.

Moving automatically, he turns on just enough lights to find his way to the bedroom. He throws his suit on a chair, changes into sweats and a hoodie, and goes to make tea in the kitchen. Then he turns the lights all out again and stands looking through the glass doors at the rain drumming on the balcony, and at the lights of the city below.

“Well it is dark and it is raining. It will be a long night for us all.” This he says aloud as though praying; a spell of faith in the night and the storm.

He sets his cup on the glass table near the door, beside a brass elephant the size of a fist, slides the door open and goes out. He stands in the rain, lifts his face to it, fists clenched against his chest and says:

“This rain began at sundown, as rain always does when it wants to seem portentous, prescient. It imagines itself with tidings of solemn work or grief. But men know the rain is blind and deluded. Man builds his own sorrow, stick by brick, and calls down rain to wash it all away.”

He leans out over the balcony’s drop – 30 feet into wet scrub oak and weeds – with his belly against the railing, arms spread wide.

“I want to give up. I want to retire from wizardry, this calling down of storms, dispensing clouds with my arms. My shoulders are hills of dark forest and it causes me terrible pain.” Relieving himself into the canyon, he says, “here's what I think of the rain.”

The storm moves on to Bakersfield, San Bernardino, and falls as snow on Bridgeport while he sleeps. It's Saturday and he rises late, puts the sweats on again. Standing in his bedroom, he sees the light is gray on the drapes but there is no drumming of raindrops on the roof. He feels empty, an indehiscent husk. It takes an hour of CNN and three bowls of Cheerios to make him feel human.

Shaving, he sees his face as from a satellite, all deltas and estuary. His forehead drifts like noon on the Salton Sea. His eyes are wetlands full of wild birds. He feels better, knowing his father before him faced a mirror just like this, and his grandfather too. We face ourselves early in the day to get the hard part done, move on.

He tells the mirror, "I am a man. I know the wind blows cold." And zipping up his jacket in the hall, he says, "I am not afraid."



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