

I have heard that humans can smell rain more acutely than sharks smell blood. It's poetic, I think. The faintest hint of petrichor, and our minds are flooded with primal instinct. Most people would say it's a simple adaptation; we must drink to survive. But I disagree. Because out of all my deep and secret and lustful desires, the hunger that is deepest and guiltiest and most exquisite is that which yearns for rain.

I remember the first time I experienced a tornado. It was the summer I moved to Missouri, when the air is hot and swollen and the rain is desperate to fall. There is no joy in that still, heavy water. There is no fear in the faces soaked with it. When the tornado started my mother screwed her eyes shut and hid herself away in the cellar. I had never seen her look so terrified. I had never felt so alive. I pressed my nose up to the window, breathing in the smell of rain as it beat upon the flimsy pane of glass, barely enough to keep out the torrent. It was deep, and rich, and I closed my eyes and let it fill up my body until all I knew was the heavy, melodic rain. It gave me such joy that I could not help laughing, fully and heartily, drawing in the wet air and thrusting it back out in my mirth.

I was not a mean person. Nor was I inconsiderate, and in fact friends often came to me seeking advice or sympathy. I almost always helped them. But when thunder and lightning and rain made them shriek and cower, I had no room left in me for empathy. I was already saturated and full to bursting with primordial ecstasy. I just laughed and laughed; my lungs emptying themselves of air so that they might be filled once more with that intoxicating rain. It was my deity, and my cocaine, and my lover. I kept my heart for myself and gave my lungs to the storm.

It was at the death of that beautiful, rainy spring that I moved to the desert- not by choice, of course. I despised that awful, crackling May heat. It dared to languish through summer and I

hated it more than I have ever hated anything. It sat, bulbous and lethargic, through the days that were once sodden with clouds. And at night, those exquisite summer nights that belonged to the storm, it was only desolate and dry, breeze whistling weakly through the Joshua trees. It made me feel hot on the inside, too, like I was boiling, and that made me hate it even more. The air was thick, but it was thick with dust and it tasted of salt. I found myself yearning for the insufferable summer days when the air had been humid and damp, when at least the nightly rain could wash me clean.

It was only a matter of time before I broke. I don't know what the final straw was, if one even existed. Perhaps it was the cheery voice of a weatherman, commenting on the perpetual sunshine. Perhaps the dust was thicker that day, or the heat was more vile. Perhaps it was simply that my new school had a tin roof, and I could no longer bear to hear the absence of rain upon it. Whatever finally persuaded me to do it, I know that I felt the approval of all the parched heavens as I climbed up to that roof, thin and rusted and weak as paper. The clouds drifted restlessly in the sky. They had held their breath for years. I was sure they were waiting for me. I threw my arms into the air, as if my flesh itself was evaporating and rising up in steam. I drew in a deep breath, and the air pressed against my chest as I knew it pressed against the clouds above. My lungs seared with pain; perhaps they had hurt this way ever since I set foot in this dry, wretched place. The wind battered and cut my skin in anticipation, and I knew if I did not exhale I would collapse. Still I let the pressure build inside my ribs, as the pressure of the air grew with frenzied excitement.

And finally, all was ready! My skin, cut and dirty with sand! My lungs, an aching recreation of the atmosphere! My body, a perfect, throbbing sacrifice to the storm! I opened my

mouth and the scream that came out twitched and shuddered like laughter. When the rain hit me it was so heavy that I fell to my knees, my chest more full than mere air could ever fill it. The water washed the foul dirt from my skin and the filthy blood from my veins. I called out to the thunder, beckoned it with some new and invisible limb that had sprouted from my ribs. It shrieked a response, crackling in time with the lightning. It was the sound of the earth being shredded into pieces. Voices were crying out from inside the school, where a thousand unnoticed leaks gushed water into the building. I heard their fear and I hated them for it- not a hot, fiery hate- but an uncaring, rushing tide of emotion that flowed in and out of me, as impersonal and unstoppable as the tide. I moved with it, and I let the storm tug and pull at me how it liked.

The school was collapsing. The wind was battering it into powder and the rain was dragging it into the earth. The storm would not grant those inside the mercy of death by crushing, and the great pieces of roof that sloughed off were carried away into the air. I knew how they would die. And somewhere, in some airtight crevice of my mind that was not yet consumed by the storm, some part of me that was still conscious, I wanted it. I willed them to lift their faces to the sky, so that the rain might enter their noses and find their lungs. I wanted them to breathe with the storm, to give up their entire being, and to *love* it. The rain continued to beat down, and I could feel my eroded flesh flowing off of me in rivulets. I shouted into the wind until my lungs were empty, until I could feel my ribs collapsing in the vacuum of my chest.

And then I was still. The air was not. In that awful stillness, I knew that I would never move again- except perhaps when my body was blown by the wind. The rain was destroying me- not consuming or sustaining me- my death would give the storm neither help nor hindrance. What does the wind know of the stone it blows against; what does the rain care of the earth it

falls upon? We love and exalt and make sacrifices to the storm, but it cannot love us back. The relationship between humans and rain is one-sided. It is not a relationship at all.

They found my bones when the desert dried. In the newspaper they wrote an obituary, the same newspaper that published an article about the warm front that brought in the storm. They were on different pages, and neither made any mention of the other.