

# Rain

Von Cleo

*remember, you always feel your best the moment after you've cried*

**Craig Owens**

When they first met, it was raining.

And not the light kind of summer rain that sets in after several days of agonizing heat. Not that kind of light rain, the refreshment everyone longed for.

The first time they met, it was pouring down waterfalls from the skies, accompanied by large black clouds and tree-bending wind, making an odd number of people hurry through empty streets, sometimes passing an umbrella-ed pedestrian who tries to keep away from the street where cars would produce cloth-staining splashes of water each time they drove through a particular deep puddle.

It was pouring down cats and dogs, somebody would say, when Shibutani Subaru sat on a park bench, little rivers of water dripping down the hems of his shirt, clothes heavy and sticky, and his shoes filled with liquid, leaving him with humid socks and uncomfortable tickles with each movement of his feet.

His hair was coming down in thick hanks, sometimes blurring his view, pulling down his head, making it heavy.

There was a puddle in front of him, a smooth surface but for an occasional vibrancy of clattering raindrops or leaves falling down.

Although he looked down, he could see the sky's reflection, an accumulation of greys and blacks, of nears and fars, of motion.

He wasn't crying. He was too proud to cry.

The tears had stopped when the pain set in, and really, there was no need to cry when it was already raining like that.

In a corner of his eye, he could see the sky lighten up, a flash turning blacks into bright whites.

Maybe that was what the past days, weeks had been: Darkness, deceived by bursts of temporary joy.

Maybe, it was the best to give in to the darkness.

A fearsome rumble made the earth shake a bit, blending into his body and making him feel shivers, the need to pull up his limbs, protecting them, becoming small and invisible.

Sighing, his focus returned to the puddle.

It took him three blinks to realize the blue reflection, rigid against the moving of the surrounding clatter of rain.

By the fifth blink, there was movement, and a transparent pinkness and blonde bangs obscuring a smile, and suddenly, it stopped to rain on him.

There was silence, the soaked guy hadn't spoken and the other had not moved, but silence turned into sounds, into rain, into water bursting on the ground or blending into bigger drops, into puddles, lakes.

"When I was young, my mother used to tell me that it rains when somebody cries for you because you're too proud for crying." One was startled when the other one's voice broke through their hush, soft and comforting, but still trivial, as if it was his ordinary day routine, walking through the park and talking to crying strangers.

"When I was crying, she told me to stop, because there was no need for two people to cry." A nostalgic feeling crept into his thoughts, projecting pictures of mothers and stories and days years ago.

"But I started to cry, just because there was someone crying for me. And; maybe, if I cried, that person would stop."

Well, that was definitely not something he would do, caring so much for another person he didn't even know, but it was nice to know that such people existed, people that talked to strangers on stormy days without asking for anything in return, people who truly understood the meaning of charity.

"It didn't help at all", the blond sighed. "And so I decided to stop crying. I wanted to be strong so there wouldn't be other persons who had to cry for me."

Silence.

"You know what?" "What?" It was hilarious, nothing a grown-up man should wish for.

But a grown-up man would not sit in the park, drenched to the toes, talking to a stranger about childhood days.

"I've always wanted to dance in the rain. And sing." Subaru laughed about his own idea, shaking his head, teeth showing in an amused grin.

And suddenly, there was a rustle of clothes and the blond jumped up, an umbrella falling to the ground and landing with a splashing sound, some drops flying through the air.

"You're insane."

A statement.

"Maybe."

A blink.

"What's your name?"

A smile.

"Yasuda Shota"

And Subaru reached for the offered hand.

The second time they met, days were clouded by a never-ending outburst of summer rain.

Nobody remembered when exactly the rain had set in, but everybody would complain how it had been raining for days.

There had been a particular session of hotness before, one that made people gather at outdoor pools and parks, one that would make ice parlour owners rich and salary men long for summer holidays.

There wasn't any thunder or remarkable squalls, just a continuous dropping of water, cooling down the earth and people, making it impossible to leave the house without an umbrella.

Maybe he should consider buying his own umbrella, was the first thought that crossed his mind when he fished for the pink fabric of Shota's umbrella. It was only after they had parted that Subaru had realized that he still held the umbrella while his blond acquaintance was doomed to walk home in a layer of damp clothes.

With only names exchanged and no knowledge about phone numbers or addresses, the chance of meeting the other guy again was disappointingly low and so Subaru went and made it a habit to use the pink umbrella as a reminiscence of stormy days, where blond bangs and pure smiles had made him forget a crooked life and taught him a meaning in crying.

For Subaru, the light shower was perfect.

After the black clouds had gone, shoved away by a pink umbrella, there was no happy sunshine and cloudless blue skies in his life, but a greyish mess of standing between starting anew and leaving something old behind.

There was no road, defined and even, in front of his eyes, no instruction how when and where to be. There was hope, a bunch of possibilities, but still a tingling feeling of having lost, of regret.

Since the talk with the blond, everything seemed clearer, with the blacks gone, but as long as he could not make out a bright white in his life, the weather suited him.

On the fifth day of the unstopping downfall of realizations, Subaru decided to visit a new music store, which was where their second meeting took place.

He had passed the store a couple of times, looking through the stands in front of the store so often he could name the CDs by heart, but circumstances had made it impossible for him to enter.

But music was something that made his grey days a little more meaningful, giving his thoughts a bit more room to wander, providing new crossroads and decisions he wouldn't have made before, so it was just a question of time when he would enter the store for the first time.

The clerk looked suspicious, a grin on his lips, when Subaru entered the store, and then bent over to another shop assistant, shaking him not so lightly and yelling "Hey, Tadayoshi, you can sleep at home." There was a mumble and shifting and maybe it wasn't the right decision to enter in the first place, Subaru thought, while skipping through the shelves, looking for something, anything new, not for anything in particular, just anything interesting, something that would make his eyes stop for a moment, music that would make him forget, would get him one step closer to white, something permanent.

This was where he bumped in to someone. In clichéd movies, he would bump into the love of his life, maybe a girl that drops all her thing in shock and he would help her collect everything. It would end in excuses and coffee and maybe some dates, sex and maybe marriage or a fight.

But when he saw a baffled Shota on the floor in front of him, unsettled by the collision and blinking, a stack of CDs in his hands, Subaru thought that he could wait a little longer for the girl that would lose her CDs in shock.

"Hey, Yasu, be a bit more careful, that's the fifth customer you bumped into today!", was shouted by the guy that had scouted the sleeping guy before. There was a blush forming on his cheeks but no words coming from his lips, because there was a voice from somewhere in the store, "Ey, Yoko, are you nagging Yasu again?". Subaru had to stand on his toes to look over the shelves and find the back hair of a short shop assistant three aisles away, busy sweeping the store.

Shota was still looking everywhere but at Subaru when the clerk hmpfed and disappeared somewhere between aisle six and twelve.

"Don't tell me you've come only to bring me my umbrella?" Said 'looking everywhere' must have included Subaru's left hand, where a pink umbrella was dripping from the summer shower.

"No, I.. just came here by chance. Didn't know you were working here."

Shota smiled when Subaru offered his hand to help him up.

"Thank you." That bright smile was nearly enough to let the older guy imagine the faint feeling of a single butterfly being lost in his stomach. Nearly.

"You know, my shift ends in ten minutes. Would you... by any chance... like to get something to drink afterwards?" Maybe there was a blush, but Subaru couldn't see it well, when it was hidden behind bangs and a stack of CDs held way too high.

"Didn't I tell you not to hit on other customers?" For a third time that afternoon the annoying clerk was...well annoying, clearly neglecting his duty to check the shelves or sweeping the floor.

"Yoko, I'm not..." But Shota could not end his sentence when the clerk's head suddenly was hit by the hand of another guy, probably also one of the assistants, speaking some "stop bothering Yasu and go back to work", before both guys shared a laugh and went off, each to their own aisle.

"Yoko and Hina." Shota sighed when Subaru was about to wonder about the clerks of the music store.

"Yoko can be evil sometimes, but he's quite a nice fellow", the blonde explained while re-stocking the stands.

"They call you Yasu?"

"Ah, yes." The blonde's answer came a bit hesitant and the black haired guy thought he could hear a nuance of shyness.

"It has a nice ring to it. I think I'm going to use it, too."

Shota didn't answer and Subaru continued to look through the CDs, an occasional glance over to where the blonde was re-stocking some particularly low shelf, bending down a bit too casually.

"He's got quite a nice bum, huh?" Subaru nodded before he could actually realize that it was the grinning clerk from before who was now standing next to him, arms crossed in front of his chest and leaning casually against some stand.

He was astonished about how fast the other clerk was in arriving on time to hit Yoko after he made some snarky remark, but had to laugh, just because the whole situation was amusing and somewhere he found that he could not remember the last time he had laughed.

Said low shelf seemed to have been the last one to re-stock, so the two guys found themselves at the verge of leaving, waving the other assistants goodbye, although Subaru barely knew their names, not able to tell who was Ryo and who was Ohkura, and only keeping Yoko's name in mind because he was the one to crack perverted jokes while he was waiting for Shota to change clothes.

"Hey Yasu, don't let your boyfriend see that you've already found someone new." One guy hit Yoko from behind and this time, an elbow found its way, painfully landing in his ribs, words being whispered that could be "don't mention him" and Yoko made a

grimace, joining the other guys in waving.

They had to share an umbrella and their sleeves got wet at the edges, but they didn't care and laughed it off, because really, if you spent an afternoon singing in the rain with your clothes glued to your body, you did not care about single drops.

The third time they met, the sky fell down in heavy downpours, thunder and lightning forming a concert that stopped pedestrians from crossing streets. It was still summer, but Subaru wondered whether there was hail falling down when something hit him. There was still no umbrella in his possession, and the storm had come quickly, taking him in surprise on his quick visit to the grocery store.

He was wet, his shoes already squeaking from all the water, so he didn't see a point in hurrying.

Circumnavigating one particular big puddle, realization hit him that he was not the only one being so stupid to leave the house without an umbrella.

He approached the mess of blue clothes and blond strands, legs pulled up in a protecting matter, with arms slung around soppy knees and he realized that it was Shota, sitting on the bench where they met, crying.

So Subaru did the most rational thing. He passed by.

A couple of minutes later, he sighed and sat down next to the blonde, ignoring the numb wetness of his clothes pressing against skin.

"You don't have an umbrella." A whisper escaped soft lips, slipped through crossed arms and reached Subaru's ears.

"Neither do you." He handed over one of the two cans he had just bought and opened his own.

Shota did the same, rather pretending to take a sip, with both his hands wrapped around the metal.

"But I deserve to get wet and sick." There was a shattering sound when Subaru's can didn't hit the bin like it was supposed to.

"Nobody deserves to get sick." A rather dull noise broke the monotonous pit-pat of rain purring down, when the second can hit the bottom of the trash bin.

"I do. I do deserve to be punished, because I tried too long to hold on to it."  
There was a sniff somewhere along these lines.  
"But smiles and cotton candy and pleas cannot mend fading relationships."

Subaru sighed. He could remember a tissue somewhere in his pocket, but regarding the fact that he had his pants sticking to his body like a second, uncomfortable skin, he thought that maybe a tissue would not help to dry the tears on the blonde's face.

Damn, he thought, he was never really good with tears.

But he remembered that he used to be quite good with words, in a time before dark clouds were dominating his thoughts.

"You know what my mum used to say?" A snuffle and the blonde shifted a bit.

"The rain is necessary, she said. Because after the rain, there would be a beautiful rainbow that would lead me to a hidden place with sparkles and ponies and gold. At first, I didn't want to go there, so I saw no need to stop crying."

"Subaru-", Shota started to protest, but was cut off by the other guy's complain.  
"Oh please, I'm trying to cheer you up here, be grateful and stop interrupting me."

Maybe there was a snicker, maybe two, maybe none at all, but he could feel the blonde unclenching.

"But when I grew up, I found the hidden metaphor."  
Subaru looked up, soft drops grazing the outlines of his face. He could feel Yasuda's glance on him, could feel the expectancy, feel how he longed for something, anything to give him security, to make this guilt and uneasiness go away.

"Maybe you don't need sparkles and ponies, but you need sunshine and happy moments in your life so it will be worth spending time in the rain and crying."

And for his bright smile, Subaru got one in return, halfway crooked and tainted with tears, but pure, filled with hope of better moments to make these days worth the tears.

It would be a couple of minutes later that both would notice that the rain had stopped, big grey rain clouds giving way for the sun to shine.