



One
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of rain

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10 YEARS OF ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE ARTS
10 ANS DE SOUTIEN DU GOUVERNEMENT DE L'ONTARIO AUX ARTS



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After the neighbour calls the authorities. Reports the fight she overheard. Sets into motion the procedures for arrest and charge. The processes that will eventually bar our heroine from returning to her home. Then it begins to rain. She is not fallacious enough to connect this with her circumstances. She confines herself strictly to the facts. She leaves. It rains.

There's one thing, though. Despite how reliably it appears each day, the rain is never exactly the same. At one moment there might be a patter, as of little scrabbling squirrel paws on the roof; at another, a windblown torrent will fling itself against the panes of her room, rocking the window in its frame with sudden violence. She thinks that her own senses must deceive her. Surely there cannot be this many separate sorts of rain. But, as it turns out, there are.

I.

All of the noises of the jail are unfamiliar ones. She is surprised by how the procedures resemble those she's seen on TV, especially the invasive ones. Bend over, say the kindly impersonal guards – guards! – and she realizes, smiling disbelievingly, that they are serious.

Other things that she could not have predicted. The stamping of her hands, which are covered with rich black ink and pressed onto a special sheet, with sections. Everything has its place and is neatly organized: there's a sink afterwards, and a special kind of soap, to wash.

She poses for photos also, side and front, and at intervals is led to a telephone within a giant hood, like the sort of dryer they place over your head in an old-fashioned salon. When she picks up, at the end of the distant echoey line is a voice: a lawyer. There are two charges, two separate ritual calls, but his advice is invariable. What are you charged

with? he demands, at once, and when she tells him: Don't say anything. For he must know that she is bursting to talk to anyone who will listen: I am innocent, you are mistaken.

The heavy steps of the guards measure out the hallway beyond. There is the reassuring murmur of conversation and, behind that, a patter as of rain, dying slowly away with the distant clanging and clicking of doors closing, so faint that perhaps she has only imagined it. It was sunny when they took her, but hours have passed since then. Someone is screaming in another cell. At times the voice of a guard rises, shouting back. Someone in uniform brings her a bag: inside is an apple, a baloney sandwich, a box of milk. She drinks the milk, eats the apple. More hours pass. She is taken to the telephone again, shuffling, holding her blanket. They have given her a pair of jeans to wear, surprisingly decent ones, and taken away her shoes.

A justice of the peace is at the end of the line. He will release her but. She cannot return to her own home, own any knives but for cooking, contact her spouse. She questions these strictures. Perhaps, he suggests, she should wait and see a judge in the morning. No, that's fine, she murmurs hastily, the conditions are fine.

Now the opposite of what has come before: more forms to be completed, the ceremonial return of the belongings ceremonially removed upon her arrival. Your wife left you a message, the cop at the desk tells her as he hands back her purse. She says to call your psychiatrist, he's worried

about you. Oh, and she says she loves you. She notes, grimly, these misrepresentations. Says nothing. Who here has believed her so far, who cares?

She dresses again in the clothes of the morning: her dark grey woolen skirt, her pearls, a little cream crewneck sweater. Once again she dons her dead-black tights, and the thick wedge loafers. Her red coat with the blonde fur collar is a beacon, the sharp colour of love in a cartoon; her translucent purse nestles under her arm, a friendly ghost. Today might never have happened. Everything is as before but for the passage of time, and the stain on her, invisible to anyone else. Now you're sure you'll be okay? a female constable asks her anxiously, unlocking the door to the outside world. You don't want to call someone to pick you up? It's a rough neighbourhood, you know. Several replies occur to her but as with the message she stifles them. She has learned her lesson.

The rain tonight is her favourite kind: drops so widely spaced as to convince you, until one plops on your forehead or lands on your arm, that you are only imagining them. The sky appears clear but for a few drifting clouds: here on earth, a sudden dollop of liquid rides her skin before flattening and disappearing. A few raindrops speckle the pavement and the fabric expanse of her coat but the wet is indeterminate: at any moment it might stop or begin in earnest. She has always liked that, the uncertainty of it. Rain you can ignore, until it resolves itself into something else. The next morning is clear again.

About the Author

Rhodes Scholar Carellin Brooks is the author of *fresh bell: motherhood in pieces* (2013), *Wreck Beach* (2007), and *Every Inch a Woman* (2005). She edited the anthologies *Carnal Nation*, with Brett Josef Grubisic, and *Bad Jobs*. Winner of the Books in Canada Student Writing Award for poetry (1993), the Cassell/Pink Paper Lesbian Writing Award for non-fiction (1994), and the Institute for Contemporary Arts New Blood Award for prose (1995), Brooks lives and works in Vancouver, where she was born.

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