

# DANCING IN THE RAIN

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**W**e're at one of those boutique places crammed with so much decorative crap that you can barely turn a circle for fear of knocking some two hundred dollar porcelain vase off of some eight hundred dollar desk when I realize we're not gonna make it. I'm looking at a three hundred dollar knockoff bust of Michelangelo's David, wondering what kind of asshole actually has this shit in their house when Sarah asks the saleslady, "How much for this sign?"

It's hand painted, mottled to look old, and it's about the size of our fucking tv. I can't imagine any place in our current apartment that it'll fit, but since Sarah painted the living room robin's egg she's been attacking ikea catalogues with something close to mania. The saleslady replies that it's ninety dollars and I'm trying to figure out why we couldn't just make one ourselves when Sarah says, "Perfect," and it hits me that there's no way this is going to work out.

The sign says: "LIFE ISN'T ABOUT WEATHERING THE STORM, IT'S ABOUT LEARNING TO DANCE IN THE RAIN"

She didn't even ask what I thought.



I realize Sarah is going to be the one to break up with me two days after we get the new couch. I've sunk everything into this apartment, we both have, and it sort of feels like when you stay in a hotel room for too long. At first glance, everything is nice and neat and new, but the longer you look around the more you realize there are no signs of life in any of the rooms. Sarah and I had an argument about the couch because it's white. None of my friends are neat, they're hockey players, and the first time they come over somebody is gonna spill a beer and there goes the nine hundred dollars we dropped on a couch. So she gets back into it with me, saying that if I didn't like the colour then why didn't I say anything when we were buying it, and I mean—okay, you're probably thinking, "Fair enough," but you don't get it—even if I had said something about the colour, she would've gotten all pissed off and probably started shouting at me in the show room, which frankly would've been the best way to picture whether or not that particular sectional suited our apartment.

So we're standing there—me with a bowl of Cool Ranch Doritos in one hand, her standing between me and the couch like it's her firstborn—and she's telling me that if the guys are gonna make a mess of the couch then they can't sit on it, and I'm like, "Oh great I didn't realize I spent nearly a grand on a non-functional couch," and then she says, "We spent a grand," because we were going to split the cost of it except she never e-Transferred me afterwards and I've never found a good time to bring it up and it turns out that was not the moment.

Long story short the offensive lineys and I watch the game at a bar and Sarah spends an evening by herself, presumably not sitting on the couch.



One of the inmates dies during my shift with Steigelman. The guy's name is Ridley. He has a seizure, drops right there in front of me while I'm chewing two of the other guys out for contraband, just hits the ground like God's own hand had been feeling particularly vengeful that day. Steigelman calls for the ambulance while I start CPR. It feels like I'm running up a hill after three minutes, so Steigelman swaps out. Then I swap out. And then he swaps out and I ask the dispatch when the fuck the ambulance is gonna be here because we've been doing this for almost twenty goddamn minutes and Ridley's eyes look like he's been holding them open underwater for hours.

He dies, of course, and I mean that's part of the job, right? We've walked into bathrooms and bunks and found dudes OD'd on fentanyl and once some guy choked himself out using his shirt and we found him lying there with his dick in his hand and that's not the kind of shit you ever want to see but it's part of the job, right? So why the fuck is it when I'm driving home all of the sudden I can't see anything and I have to pull the car over onto the side of the road and get out and sit there crying for god knows how long?

And when I get back into the car I've got my head on the steering wheel because I know that Sarah's at home asleep in bed and when I get in I'm supposed to wake her up and tell her about what happened but instead I get home and I crawl into bed next to her and I just watch the ceiling until the sun comes up. It feels better knowing she's asleep and she doesn't know how terrible everything is yet.



I'm sitting in the waiting room at the doctor's office. Guy at work gave me a referral for a counsellor. I'm looking down at my shoes. I need new ones, I needed new ones about a month ago, but I put it off because Sarah and I were saving up money for the move. I can see my socks through the top of them if I lift up my toe. They're my avocado socks. Sarah got them out of the blue a while ago, left them on my pillow. I love avocados.

I leave the office before they call my name.



We're visiting my family and Sarah's embarrassed because she made pie and nobody's eating it. I told her not to bring food but she did it anyway. I feel bad, so I take two slices of it, but somehow that was the wrong thing to do, because she doesn't say anything to me the whole car ride home until I look at her and I say, "What," and she says, "Your family is never going to like me until you give them a reason to," which feels like a riddle to me.

And I look at her and I say, "Look, Sar, I don't know what to tell you," and she says, "Wow, shocking," and I stare at her and try to remember what it felt like the first time I ever saw her and why it feels so different

from now. How come knowing more about a person makes you like them less?



Steigelman and I have a beer at a bar sometimes and we don't really talk about too much of anything. He'll talk about his fantasy team, or shows, but I'm never caught up on *Westworld* so I can't add anything to the conversation. So it's not until we're outside in reality, no longer babysitting criminals that I realize the two of us have nothing in common apart from the fact that nobody else gets it.

He mentions very casually one night how he sometimes sees Ridley when he's walking down the street and I don't have any advice for that one. I mention one time that I read somewhere that the two professions who have the hardest time buying into therapy are journalists and cops and sure we're not either, but we're close enough that it feels like validation for not going. Another round.



I'm a D-man and this guy's just getting a little too hacky with my goalie for my tastes, so I grab him by the 19 on his jersey. He didn't expect a tilly, didn't want one, and I didn't ask—which is like, "So much for common courtesy,"—so when I knock his helmet off, his face is this neat little blend of shock and fury. I knock that off next. And then I keep going until somebody grabs me by the back and hauls, and it turns out it's not a guy from the other team, but my own liney, and 19 is just a pulpy mess on the ice and whoa look at that I get a six-game suspension during a beer league game.

I figure Sarah'd lose it on me if she found out, so I don't tell her. It's a nice little secret, to have no accountability three times a week for two hours. Mini vacation.



We finally have a housewarming party even though we've been living in the place for nearly five months at this stage—but Sarah wouldn't let

anybody around until we'd finished decorating. I asked if she thought she'd end up in a Country Living spread and she didn't talk to me for an hour. I wanted to make guacamole but apparently it was a finger-sandwiches kind of event so I spend an infuriating forty minutes cutting cucumber slices and watching Sarah fluff every pillow in the house like someone was gonna come in with a measuring tape and tax her extra for not having dense enough cushions.

There's sixteen people crammed into the living room in our apartment when Sarah and I have a fight in our bedroom because Jack showed up with his girlfriend Chelsea and I didn't remember that we weren't inviting them to things because Chelsea allegedly told Moyra that she thought Sarah and I were a bad match. Sarah says to me, "This is basically like taking her side," and I say, "Well I'm still with you aren't I? If I was on her side I'd have fucking left you," and maybe I also forgot that we needed to have that fight quietly because the party outside gets uncomfortably mute and Sarah's whole face gets red. And then the two of us are just staring at the door to the rest of the apartment, trying to figure out how to go back out into the living room and pretend like we don't know what everyone else is thinking and then I take the opportunity to say, "Fuck maybe she is right," which is when Sarah goes into the bathroom crying.



I squirm for a minute before finally going out into the living room and I ask the first person I see if they need another drink, and that person just so happens to be Chelsea, and she asks if maybe someone should go talk to Sarah and I say, "No she'll be fine, she'll be out in a minute," and then Chelsea tells me that every couple goes through rough times and instead of saying anything else I just finish my beer.

Sarah doesn't come out of the bathroom, by the way. She now has something all new to be mad about, since nobody insisted on going in there to check on her. I sleep on the couch nobody's allowed to sit on and wonder why I don't just get up and say, "It's over," because it definitely is.



Sarah once fucked me in a bathroom at a club and that was the first time anybody ever did that with me. I once got food poisoning and spent the entire night alternately vomiting into a bucket and shitting uncontrollably and once I finally stopped, Sarah put me in the bathtub and turned on the shower and washed my hair and my face and that was the first time anybody had ever done that for me.



In the morning I made her a coffee and I mumbled, “Sorry,” and she muttered, “Yeah,” and we both left for work at separate times and when she kissed me goodbye she missed my mouth but she didn’t correct herself.



I come into work and one of the guys tells me that Steigelman is in ICU at St. Joe’s because he tried to blow his head off and I’m kind of baffled by how a person can fuck that up, but apparently he stuck the gun in his mouth and just blasted through his jaw which is so fucking gnarly that I can feel acid in the back of my throat while we’re talking about it. It occurs to me that I ought to go and visit the guy, since I kind of have an idea on what that’s all about.

My six-game suspension is up but I don’t end up going to the game anyway. I just go and sit in a bar and think about Steigelman’s girlfriend who found him on the floor of the kitchen. God she’s probably as fucked up as he is, now.

I get home around two which is bad since my ‘game’ was at seven and Sarah is sitting at the kitchen table surrounded by used tissues—I know her well enough to see that there’s some theatrics at play there, because she’s so tidy it borders on compulsive—and she looks up at me and asks, “Where the fuck have you been?” and I just stand there.

She asks me what the hell we’re doing, what the hell I’m doing. She asks me why I’ve been pulling away from her, if I even love her anymore. She says she can tell that I’m not happy anymore and she doesn’t understand why. I realize, listening to all this, that in her world I’m the one who’s been the cancer. I’ve been slowly eating the relationship,

inside-out. I wonder what her face would look like if I took my handgun and blew out my jaw in our kitchen. She'd probably check the couch for stains before anything else.

She's telling me that she called her mom and she's going home for a while, so that I can pack my things up, and I should start looking for a place. I wonder why she thinks she's entitled to live here and not me, but also I know that I'd live in a cardboard box on the side of the road before willingly shacking up in an apartment with robin's egg walls. She's mad, now, because I'm not crying and she starts screaming at me because obviously our relationship meant nothing to me if I'm not weeping on command. But the last thing I wept over was a guy who had three weeks left on his sentence dying under my hands, so this whole song and dance kinda pales in comparison. She wouldn't get it, and she wouldn't care, even if I did try to explain, so I just let her yell, because I never tried to correct her about things before, and it doesn't matter now.

She has her giant leather tote packed with overnight stuff and she slings it over her shoulder. She's very Meryl Streep when she stops at the door and asks me, "Did you ever even love me?" and I just tilt my head at her and say, "What's the matter, Sar? I thought you wanted to learn how to dance in the rain."

