



Daisy Makes it Rain ©2024 Cameron Hindrum

Daisy leaves her house by the clunky back door, passing through the kitchen and not seeing the week's worth of dishes gathered in their silence in half-towers on the sink, shadowed with the remains of their eating. The birthday cake with two chunks hacked out of it remains on the small table, its candles fallen, and Daisy doesn't want to see it. There was no birthday. It was a day like any other and she is glad, for some reason she cannot quite fathom, that it is behind her.

Daisy crosses the small back yard to stand by the fence. Beyond the fence is all the sand, and beyond the sand is the sea. There are clouds over the sea and it looks as though the clouds might have rain in them and Daisy hopes that today it will rain. She likes the rain smell, the washing away of the water, how the rain makes her clothes stick to her skin. If it rains, she will come outside and stand in it.

It is the early morning, late Summer, her favourite time of the day and her favourite time of the year. The days are long and stretch into nothing. Standing by the back fence—until recently, she was not allowed to move beyond it—she can hear the sea: the waves, rolling and crumping on the wet sand. The air is crisp and clean and dry and she feels the tang of the ocean in her nostrils, filling her, making her light. There is nothing else.

The fence is a tired old thing, collapsing faded palings leaning against each other in places. It is easy for her to move one aside and wriggle through. On the other side of the fence is a wide shoulder of sand, hinterland her father calls it, uneven sand dotted with heath and pigface, without a recognisable path and not really needing one. Sometimes Daisy crouches with her back against the splintery palings and sees the land before her—how it is both empty, and not. She scoops up handfuls of dry sand in her fingers. It would work its way up between her toes. Sometimes she would half-close her eyes so the land before her would lose focus and she could not tell where the sand ended and the sea began, or where the sea gave way to the sky. It was one vast unimaginable place, and it was warm against her skin. It was everything: It was happiness, such as she could find.

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'I'm sorry Daze, I'm not very well today.'

'That's okay Dad.'

'Your special day, Love.'

Daisy stands softly in the doorway of the loungeroom. Her father is collapsed into the shape of his armchair, and in the half-shadows—her father does not usually have the curtains open, although there is decent gap between them now—she finds it difficult to see where the fabric of the chair gives way to the tired clothes her father is wearing. A lit cigarette is just barely held in the tips of two callused fingers, pointing into space, a ghost-thin finger of smoke from its tip spiralling upwards into nothing.

'We'll go to the shops...' He is interrupted by an enormous hacking cough, brutal in its intrusion into the room. '...tomorrow. I'll get you something nice.'

'And my uniform.'

'What's that Love?'



‘For school. It starts soon.’

He coughs again, his head jerked forward with the effort. There will be no more words for now. He waves the cigarette hand at her, a gesture trying to convince her that he understands. The hand returns slowly to the arm of the chair, like something falling. Daisy can hear his other hand fumbling on the little table on the other side of his chair, for the remote control. She stands still softly in the doorway and watches him for a while. And then she disappears.

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Beyond her father’s coughing and, now, the low babble of whatever he is losing himself in on the television, there is the silence of the small house. They have been here since December, since the end of the school year, since just after it happened. Daisy is still not able to think about it happening, although in the silence of the house it threatens to come back to her. It is the noise of the unforgiving siren she remembers most, piercing her, slicing open her sleep. She distracts herself with some jobs: her father must have washing to do, and she does, her bathers and some other clothes from yesterday and the towels from the bathroom. This house, their holiday house, only has a small rickety old washing machine and so there will need to be a few loads, which she will hang on the spidery collection of ropes strung between the side of the house and the side fence. And then there is the washing up in the kitchen. She will make a start on that too, and perhaps her father will join her.

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Her father does not join her.

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She finishes most of the washing up and leaves it drying, piled comfortably on the short length of the sink. She could sweep out the kitchen floor and check the fridge to start making a grocery list although she does not know when they will be going shopping again. No: she leaves it. Enough is done for now. She checks on her father and he is asleep; the cigarette, now dead thankfully, has fallen from his fingers to the faded carpet. Daisy picks the butt up and, holding it at arm’s length like something poisonous, drops it into the bin in the kitchen. Her father is snoring quietly. She returns to him briefly and turns off the television. He is not well, she knows, and it is the sadness that has made him so. She doesn’t know how to make him better. Other adults who have spoken to her about it say that it will take time. They do not say how much time. Daisy stands in the quiet room, bathed in the old-clothes smell of him and the gentle weight of his snoring. And then she disappears.

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She sits with her back against the clumsy palings of the fence and looks at the sand, and the sea beyond. She often wonders what is beyond the sea, apart from the foreign countries and people she has been in books and learned about at school. Her friend Zeynab is from such a place. She came to Australia with her brothers and sister and their mother but her father could not come and Zeynab has never explained why. Daisy doesn’t feel like she can ask this question: she will have to wait for Zeynab to tell her. Zeynab wears a scarf that covers her hair and ears and is tucked in place with a



pin or something under her chin. It's not a scarf, Daisy remembers: Zeynab calls it a hijab. Daisy found the courage one afternoon to ask her why she had to wear it.

'All the girls have to wear one,' she said. 'It is decreed.'

Daisy wanted to ask what that word meant. Instead, she simply replied: 'I don't have to.'

Zeynab smiled at her. 'Because you are from Australia,' she said. Daisy liked Zeynab's smile.

Daisy looks at the sand and listens to the quiet of the sea beyond it. *I don't know whether I want to be from Australia*, she thinks.

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High School: Daisy has been saying the two words to herself for weeks now. It should be okay. She will know people. Somehow though it will not be completely okay. There will be people she doesn't know. The rooms and the places will be unfamiliar and she will get lost. She will not know what time classes start, or where to be when they do.

Under the pillow on her small bed she has three photos. One is of the last day of her Grade Six year, with her two friends Zeynab and Tom. Zeynab is going to a different, smaller high school and Daisy tries hardest not to think about that. Tom and Daisy will start Grade Seven together. They are standing under a tree. One of the teachers took the photo. Activities had been organised for the last day of school—a jumping castle, fairy floss, a mechanical rodeo bull swirling and jerking madly above a sea of layers of blue and red foam mats. There were the cries of happy children—a choir of playing voices, carefree and lost in the jubilation of the moment. Daisy remembered being happy when the photo was taken, and smiles when she looks at it now. It was a bright, happy day, but so long ago.

The second photo is an old one, a square while the other two are rectangular. Daisy's father holds her on the day she came home from hospital. He is standing in front of the car he used to own, although all Daisy can see of the car from the photo is that it was brown—not a colour she likes. He is smiling in the photo and that is how Daisy is able to remember what he looks like when he smiles—actually smiles, the sort of smile you offer when you're standing in front of your car cradling your new-born daughter, the warm happy weight of her, and the world is perhaps bright with possibility and promise. Daisy's mother is not in the photo—perhaps she took it—but she is featured solely in the third photo Daisy keeps and treasures.

Her mother always seemed young. In the third photo, she is leaning against the frame of the back door of this house, and Daisy can't be sure but thinks it was taken not long after they bought it, when it was still a small three-room weatherboard shack. Her father and his mates added a couple of rooms and renovated the kitchen and Daisy remembers lots of smoking and swearing when she was younger. Her mother is framed in the photo by the sky over her right shoulder, and it creates a thin corona around most of her head, which is leaning against the frame. Her face is nearly shadowed by the light behind her, but Daisy can still see her. Her eyes are shining blue-bright, her skin healthy and young. Her lips are together but she is smiling. She is wearing a t-shirt over a one-piece bathing suit; her arms are folded under her breasts and it is her left shoulder making physical contact with the frame of the door. Her bare legs are crossed, one shin in front of the other. She looks casual, pretty, relaxed, ready for the day. And so happy. There is nothing of her future in the photo and often, when she looks at it now, this is what Daisy likes the most about it. She also often wonders

whether she is inside her mother in this photo. She wants to believe this as much as she wants the rain to come: but she cannot ask. Her father will not talk about her unless he has had too much to drink and then the things he says cannot possibly be true and it hurts Daisy to hear them. Those things pull her even further away from him.

The man holding her in front of his car: that's the father she wants.

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The house is quiet. At some point her father has lit another cigarette and forgotten about it, so that a neat trail of ash has been left along the arm of his chair as the cigarette burned itself out down to his fingers. He is asleep, or seems to be. Daisy wonders whether he is old now before his time. She knows how to catch the bus from here to the shops, and she knows the number of his credit card and where to find it in the other wallet he keeps in his wardrobe. The start of school is a week away; they will leave here some time before then but there is a shop in town that sells shirts and grey shorts the same colour as her uniform. She wants to be organised. She knows where the shop is, a few minutes on foot from where the bus pulls in.

She does not look at the forgotten birthday cake on the table. She opens the door in the doorway where her mother stood, not caring about the abrupt loud sound it makes—he will not wake up—and stands in the fresh air, looking at the lazy fence and the sand beyond it and the sea beyond that. Everything that matters. Everything that is promising beyond that line that joins the sea and the sky, an impossibly distance away. She breathes the distance in and lets herself smile. This is what will keep me safe, she thinks. The sand and the sea and the heavy, clouded sky and everything it promises.

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Her father is awake. Has always been. He is silent in the empty house. His face is turned towards the uncurtained window. Drawn to the lines the rain is making on the glass. Long streaks and the imperfect shadows. He reaches for a cigarette. Will listen for their voices in the ghost of its smoke.



Cameron Hindrum lives, writes and works in Launceston, Tasmania--the island state of Australia. His novel *The Blue Cathedral* was published in a revised edition by Forty South Books in 2023, and his third collection of poetry—*Every Sunrise* (Walleah Press) also appeared that year. His novel manuscript 'The Sand' won the University of Tasmania Prize for best unpublished manuscript at the 2022 Tasmanian Premier's Literary Awards.

Two of his four plays, *I Am A Lake* and *101*, have been produced professionally in Tasmania, with *I Am A Lake* premiering at the 2016 Unconformity Festival in Queenstown, on Tasmania's west coast. In 2021 he received a Doctorate of Creative Arts (Writing) from the University of Wollongong.