

The day the rain came

Autor(en): **Vaughan, Alex**

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out his cigarette, rose and came to me and took me in his arms. His touch was flame. Bending his head he put his mouth on mine, and my body trembled and hardened with such desire that I groaned and clung, drinking his endless kiss. In bed we explored each other fiercely, hungrily, desperately, sleeping only from exhaustion, returning to the act of love with renewed intensity.

I awoke late in the morning and reached instinctively for Bill, but he was gone. As I sat up in bed he came in by the door, closed it and leaned against it wearily. His face was white and he looked dazed. He said: «I've been walking for the past two hours, trying to figure things out.»

«Why?» I asked, still groggy from sleep.

«Why? Because there's no future for us together. I've never done anything like this in my life . . .»

«Neither have I. Are you . . . sorry?»

«I don't know! I don't know!» he groaned. «Let's not talk about it now. I'm going back to Berlin. Give me your address. I'll get in touch with you later.»

We were transferred back to the States the next year and are both married now, with children. I am a Major and Bill is a Chief. But each year we manage to meet in some city for a few days of love. We never have found the time to talk about it.

The Day the Rain Came

by ALEX VAUGHAN

Paul slid out from behind the wheel and began to walk across the white gravel of the parking lot. The sun was burning his neck. «Odd how you don't notice it when you're driving.» There were only two other cars in the lot, but then on a week day there never was anyone on the beach. Paul looked forward to that; the long stretch of deserted beach, the surf breaking on the rocks, and the beautiful scavengers cutting wide arcs in the summer sky. Not even the hot silence and the sun burning his neck, nor the sand in his sneakers could spoil the pleasure he took in these afternoon swims. And no small part of that pleasure came from being alone. It's not that he didn't like people. it's just that most of them made him uncomfortable.

He climbed up over the knoll and there was the ocean. Some distance down the beach a family had camped and the children were standing in the surf letting the waves dig holes with their feet. In the other direction, where the rocks scattered out into the sea marked the northern boundry of the beach, a young man had set up an easel. As Paul walked out onto the white sand their eyes met; Paul looked quickly away. The tide was out and there were bits of drift wood on the beach. He threw his towel on the sand and pulled off his sweat shirt. He was sure that the young man at the easel was watching him. It made him uneasy. Nothing made him so nervous as being stared at, and that was particularly true at the beach. That was why he never went swimming on the weekends. Now with the painter watching him he couldn't wait to get into the water.

The sweat, the sand and all the uneasy thoughts were washed away

together by the sudden chill of the surf. He shook his head to throw the hair out of his eyes and began to swim out toward the rocks. He looked as at home in the water as sea weed. His long bronze body rolled from side to side, and his arms rose in short, clean, rhythmic strokes. He raised himself up onto a rock and lay looking out to sea. It would have been more comfortable facing the beach, as he usually did, but . . . well it was good to change.

For a while he lay looking down at the greenish black moss that covered parts of the rocks at the water level. He began to feel the breeze blowing loose the little gold hairs on his legs. He was rested. He'd forgotten the painter, he'd forgotten to think. Only his senses were alive. His stomach lay flat against the smooth, hot rock, his hand hung in the cool water and his eyes were filled with white and green and blue.

«I wonder what he's painting.» Paul stood and looked back at the beach. He dove off the rock and swam back. As he dried himself he was sure that the young painter was still watching him. He turned quickly to catch him. And when he discovered the painter quite engrossed in his work, he was a little hurt. Drying his hair, he walked over toward the artist. He half expected him to say something. He stood watching him for a moment. The painter was about twenty five, well tanned, and good looking, though he could have done with a haircut. He wore a light blue shirt with the sleeves torn out, and a pair of jeans with the cuffs rolled up. His hair was a light brown color in places bleached by the sun.

Though Paul would never have admitted it, he was enjoying himself. He liked the look of the firm, smooth skin of the painter's arms and shoulders and the pale blue color of his eyes. They were a different shade of blue than his own, so very light. Paul blushed as he realized he had been staring. He moved behind the painter to look at the canvas. Despite his embarrassment his eyes fell first on neck and shoulders before the painting.

In spite of himself Paul cried: «That's terrible . . . you're making it look barren and lonely. It's not like that.» The young painter continued as though he had heard nothing. Then without looking up he said: «I suppose it depends a little on who's looking at it.» Paul was already too embarrassed to answer, he walked back across the sand to his shirt. He spread his towel and lay in the sun. The picture and the artist ran through his head for a few minutes and then only the red and gold of the sun through his eyelids. He slept. About an hour later the artist packed up his paints and easel to leave. Putting the easel under his arm and carrying his paints case, he walked across the sand to where the boy lay asleep. He stood looking down at him. Paul's long bronze body lay casually across a burnished brown beach towel, his hair had dried and little wisps of gold blew across his forehead. The young man began to bend over him then straightened and walked away.

When Paul woke the sun had moved far into the west and the long shadows of the rocks were creeping down the deserted beach. As he slipped his sweat shirt on he cast a glance toward where the artist had been. He noticed the foot prints in the sand. He walked back to the car. The leather seats burned his thighs. All that night he kept thinking of the young man with the fine long hands. He even remembered the twisted

silver ring with its strange green stone, so bright on the tan finger.

The next morning Paul went riding over the same path he always took through the pines. But today the bridle path didn't seem as calm as usual, he kept being tempted to turn the horse toward the beach. «What's the matter with you, Paul? Remember you're twenty not twelve.» He left early for the beach, and he took with him a bottle of wine. He didn't walk across the sand, he ran. That is he ran to the edge of the knoll, then, satisfied not to find the beach deserted, he walked out onto the hard, flat sand. He'd been much more careful about what he wore today. He had chosen a beach shirt and a swim suit that he knew would . . . well look right. Yet even now as he took off his sneakers he felt a little annoyed with himself. «You're a nut. You don't even know this guy's name.» He almost said that out loud. He fastened the wine bottle to his wrist and waded into the water. He swam on his side watching the bottle rise like a skier out of the water and sink back again. Paul climbed up onto the rocks and wedged the bottle between the rocks in the water. Then he lay facing the beach.

He was watching the artist on the beach. Occasionally his attention would be distracted by a gull but his eyes always returned to the rocks and the painter. Paul didn't quite understand why he enjoyed looking at him. Now he was beginning to worry about how he was going to offer him the wine. He put his hand into the water to feel the bottle. It was cool. Well it wouldn't make any difference if he waited another couple of minutes. «If I'm going to do it I might just as well get it over with.» He swam back to the beach, sat on his towel and opened the bottle. Not too sure of what he was doing Paul walked up to the young man and said: «Would you like some wine?» Somewhat surprised the artist began: «Why . . . eh . . . yes, thanks I would.» He took a long drink of the cool wine. Some of it ran down his chin. It was beautiful, green bottle, white teeth, tan skin and red wine. Paul brought over his towel and shirt and sat where he could watch both the painter and the painting. They didn't speak much but they were not uncomfortable.

In the days that followed they came to know each other well. They swam together and they talked a lot. Paul explained that he was a student, that he was twenty, and that he thought he would teach. Ted, that was the painter's name, spoke of Japan and the service. He said that he was twenty-five, that he wasn't anything and that he wasn't sure he ever would be. Despite the fact that they became good friends they never came or left the beach together, they never even exchanged last names. Paul had grown to need this friend. He had always been a quiet person and this was the first time he had ever shared anything with anyone. It wasn't the time they spent together or what they said or even so much what they did that mattered; it was the way they gave. Yes «gave» is the word, Paul was learning to give of himself. He had begun to enjoy getting up in the morning.

Even the painting was beginning to change. At first it seemed that the ocean was becoming more calm; then the sky less gray, yes even sunny. The last touch came when a figure appeared on the beach. «In three days it will probably be finished,» Ted said. Paul's interest in the painting had grown ever since the figure had appeared. Perhaps be-

cause he recognized it or perhaps because he had begun to worry about what would happen when it was finished. There was only one thing that Paul was sure of—he wouldn't do anything that would change things. He wished it could always be summer.

A few days later when Paul left the house he took another bottle of the same wine as he had first offered Ted. Today it was exactly a month since they had met. Well, a month and a day if you count the first time they saw each other. He was a little anxious today because the weather forecast had been for rain; but the sky was such a clear blue that as he drove along his apprehension blew away. He parked the car and ran across the lot. When he reached the top of the knoll he had to swallow hard to try to get rid of the lump in his throat. The beach was deserted. Paul walked disbelievingly out onto the sand and over to the rocks. A thousand thoughts crowded his head. But one echoed louder than all the others: «Did he finish the painting?» Paul sat on the rocks a little way from the spot where Ted usually set up his easel. He took off his shirt and his sneakers automatically. «Maybe he's just late. It's silly to get excited, after all he doesn't have to tell me what he's doing.» Little tears began to well in Paul's eyes. He opened the wine and took a couple of swallows. The tears had begun to overflow and run down his cheeks. He put the bottle down and wiped his face. He sat there staring at the sand. He couldn't pray and he wouldn't cry.

After a few minutes he looked down the beach. Clouds were blowing in from the west. It was getting breezy. Where Ted's easel had stood so often there was only the wine bottle left from the night before. It was standing up with its bottom buried in the sand. Paul walked over and picked it up. He held it a few seconds twisting it in his hands before he realized there was something in it. He tried to reach it with his finger but couldn't. He knelt down and broke the bottle on the rock. He unrolled the wad of paper. It was the twisted silver ring with the green stone, wrapped in a note.

«I'm sorry that I can't say 'good-bye' myself, but if I were with you, I couldn't say it at all. You have a good future ahead of you, and if we . . . I mean I . . . well I just wouldn't want to spoil it. You see I think that I love you. Thanks for giving me the beach. -Ted»

«Spoil it!» Paul looked down the beach; the sky had grown black; the ocean was getting rough. Out where he usually rested on the rocks the white caps were breaking. «He's taken my beach.» He looked down at the note. A little trickle of blood had run across it and was dripping onto his thigh. He had cut his hand on the bottle. The tears were running down his cheeks, unchecked now. He slipped the ring onto his finger. It was beginning to rain. By the time he had picked up his things it was pouring. All the way across the beach he was thinking: «How do you find one artist named Ted in a whole city?» Then he remembered that he hadn't put the cover on the car. He began to run. It was one of those summer showers that come up out of nowhere, fall in sheets and disappear. When Paul got to the car he found that the cover was already on. Then someone said: «You look a little wet.» Paul dropped his shirt and sneakers and turned around. What with the rain and the tears he could hardly see, but he knew that voice.

Noel I. Garde, *Jonathan to Gide. The Homosexual in History*

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«Der Homosexuelle in der Geschichte» ist der Titel dieses hervorragenden Buches, das ein Material bringt, wie es in dieser Fülle bisher noch nicht dargeboten worden ist. Von David und Jonathan zieht sich der weitgespannte Bogen dieses Buches bis zu André Gide, von vorchristlicher Zeit bis zu unserer eigenen Gegenwart. Dieser schöne Band ist das richtige Buch, um es zuhause auf den Nachttisch zu legen und es immer wieder zur Hand zu nehmen. Eine gute Bibliographie und Indexe am Schluss führen einem weiter bei der interessanten Lektüre, die dieses Buch bietet. Immer wieder ist man überrascht von dem Riesenmaterial, das der Verfasser in jahrelanger Arbeit zusammengetragen hat. Und selbst einem genauen Kenner der «Materie» wird in diesem lexikonartigen Werk noch Stoff geboten, von dem er sich nicht hat träumen lassen. Hinzu kommt, dass das fast universal zu nennende Wissen des Verfassers in äusserst lebendiger und fesselnder Weise vermittelt wird, was die Lektüre dieses Buches noch zu einer besonders angenehmen macht. Jedem unserer Leser, der in der Lage ist, Englisch zu lesen, sei dieser Band aufs wärmste empfohlen. Er kann durch jede bessere Buchhandlung bestellt werden oder auch zum Preis von zehn Dollar direkt bei dem oben angegebenen Verlag. Ab. 300

Theater-Kritik

«*Seid nett zu Mr. Sloane*» Stück in drei Akten von Joe Orton.

Ein vertaner Theaterabend. Dieses Vier-Personen-Stück (der alte Vater, die 41-jährige Tochter, der um einige Jahre jüngere Sohn und der knapp 20jährige Mr. Sloane) hat nun nach der deutschen Erstaufführung in Hamburg seinen Weg auch in die Schweiz gefunden, wo es die «Komödie» in Basel aufführt. Da ihm der Ruf vorausging, dass es das homosexuelle Problem in grösserem Umfang auf die Bühne brächte, war das ein Grund, nach Basel zu fahren und sich die Aufführung anzusehen. Die Reise hat kaum gelohnt. Schuld daran waren mancherlei Gründe. Der missglückte Versuch des 25jährigen englischen Verfassers, ein französisches Boulevardstück zu schreiben, ohne den dafür nötigen Esprit zu besitzen. Dann die mehr als holprige Uebersetzung. Und zuletzt die mittelmässige Regie in Basel, die es fertigbrachte, die einzige Frauenrolle des Stücks derart outriert herauszustellen, dass nahezu der gesamte erste Akt als eine groteske und reichlich peinliche Farce wirkte.

Der Inhalt des Stücks ist schnell skizziert. Der junge Sloane hat schon vor dem Beginn des Stücks einen Mord begangen, dessen einziger Mitwisser der alte Vater ist. Um sich seiner zu entledigen, ermordet ihn Sloane im zweiten Akt. Vorher hat sich die mannstolle ältliche Tochter das hübsche Jüngelchen geangelt und sich von ihm ein Kind machen lassen. Sie ist in ihrer blinden Verliebtheit bereit, den Mord an ihrem Vater zu vertuschen. Aber sie hat ohne ihren Bruder gerechnet. Der hat nach mannigfaltigen Abenteuern mit Frauen festgestellt, dass es amüsanter ist, mit Männern zu schlafen und verlangt seinen Anteil, wenigstens für ein paar Jahre, wie er sagt, an dem hübschen Körper Mr. Sloane's. So ist der zweifache junge Mörder in einer Falle und muss notgedrungen einwilligen, sechs Monate des Jahres mit dem Bruder zu schlafen und sechs Monate mit der Schwester, da ihn beide des Mordes an ihrem Vater überführen können. Keine sehr appetitliche Angelegenheit, die im