

40 Years of Rain

(excerpt)



by

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Forty Years of Rain was performed at Mansion in Beirut,
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By the time you read this, it will be way too late.

My father's not so famous last words – if, in fact, the postcard *really* was from him. This cryptic message typed out on one of those ancient manual machines, each letter hitting the page at its own chosen speed and leaving behind its own chosen shade of black.

You know who types postcards? Someone who can't quite decide whether he's running *to*...or running *away*.



Trust me – I know what I'm talking about. I've known since 1975.

And I know it that night 25 years later when I drop in on Lazaro – the beautiful super suave compa working the graveyard shift at one of the countless government bakeries scattered all across Havana. It's after midnight, after midsummer, and after the rain. There's a crackly radio playing in the distance picking up some long-gone signal, oven fires blazing, and black hands digging into endless massive mounds of not so virgin white dough.

I count the hands. 24.

Walk around the corner to an all night shop. Buy 12 cans of beer – plus one for me makes a baker's dozen. Go back to the inferno and pass the beers around, have a seat and watch my life float slowly by. Watch those twelve dark glowing men kneading that virgin white dough and thirstily drinking their beers. But if you look closely you can see that their hearts just aren't really in it.



Maybe it's because they did math and figured that the money I paid for those twelve cans is more than they're gonna make all month long. And maybe it's because the know that I walked into that store and plunked it down like it was nothing.

Remember their faces?

Maybe if I keep talking...they'll come back to you.



By the time you read this...

The postcard says.

On the other side is a photo of dancing showgirls at Havana's Copacabana taken back in those *wild anything goes* pre-Fidel days. My father had stolen the postcard from my mother – along with a lot of other things he couldn't actually lay his hands on.

Maybe he was upset that she'd married someone else before him.



Her first husband was a navy fighter pilot. In the summer of 1958 they were stationed in Key West and every weekend they'd take the ferry across those sky blue Caribbean waters to Havana. Long before October of '62, when the missiles arrived

and her husband's fighter jet quietly disappeared over those same sky blue waters. Long before the city began to slowly crumble into its exquisite state of ruined grace.



And long before forty years of rain swept me out of my life and through these streets and up onto the shores of Teatro La Victoria – where I slide over a peso for my ticket without even bothering to ask the woman what's showing. Step out of the blazing sun and into the blinding darkness – the opening scene of this nameless movie set in a dimly lit crumbling warehouse.

And so I feel my way down the aisle, the rows of seats shrouded by the pitch black void. My hand touching a shoulder which doesn't protest – a shoulder with stories to tell – some of them true, others merely factual. But I leave all those stories untold and keep inching forward, making my way closer and closer to the murky screen until my foot finally comes down in cool invisible water – the splash echoing against the stone walls and ceiling.

And just then – onscreen – the film cuts to a sunny day and I see that all the seats in the front half of the theater have been ripped out and there is nothing there but a massive pool of bottomless black water.

Surely you remember that.



(end of excerpt)