

28 Plays Later – Challenge #25

Every writer has started working on something and then gave up halfway through.

We all have somewhere an incomplete idea or play.

Your challenge for today, should you choose to accept it,

is to find one of those ideas and complete them!

THE WEATHER MAN

By

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Act I

Scene 1: A cliff outside a city.

SAM is trudging along a sidewalk, carefully carrying a mail-carrier style pouch, except that this one is filled with clanking glass bottles.

There is an arc of lightning, and just as the rain begins, SAM reaches out with his empty jar, "captures" something, and then claps the lid onto it.

SAM:

Gotcha! Summer storm, 2017. Captured.

Another arc of lightning. A torrent of rain.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 2: A city street. Six years later (2023)

SAM is walking down the street with his pouch of jars. His daughter is with him, her name is Allegra. She is six. They are passing a construction site.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER:

Hey, yo! It's the weather man! Sam, Sam the weather man! Whatcha got for us today?

FOREMAN:

Joe, get back to work. Poor S.O.B. can't help his obsession.

SAM:

It's not an obsession.

FOREMAN:

Kinda surprised you have your kid with you, Sam. She have any clue about Daddy's extra bottles?

SAM (patiently):

They're not empty. I've captured two squalls just this week.

FOREMAN:

Right. Squalls in bottles. As if. Look maybe you should try catching time. You know, like the song. (Sings) If I could keep time in a bot-tle, the first thing that I'd like to doooooooooo.

SAM:

Time is just an artificial construct. Weather? Weather is real.

FOREMAN (disbelief):

Man, you really are *it*, aren't you? Sam, Sam, the weather man, they call you? Heh.

ALLEGRA (tugging on SAM's sleeve):

Daddy....

SAM:

We'll be home soon, Allie.

ALLEGRA (insistent):

Daddy!

SAM:

What is it?

ALLEGRA:

I hafta pee.

SAM (embarrassed):

Well, we're almost home.

ALLEGRA:

We hafta hurry.

SAM (ushering her along):

Okay, honey, let's go.

SAM and ALLEGRA hurry offstage.

ALLEGRA (v/o):

Daddy, why did those men call you the Weather Man? Are you gonna be on the nightly news?

Blackout.

Scene Three: The Kitchen in Sam's House, seven years later (2030)

SAM is at the kitchen table sipping coffee and reading the news on his tablet. He is visibly older, and everything seems higher tech than contemporary life.

COMPUTER (V/O):

Remember to plan for your weather. Regions one through four should expect rain to begin at twenty-thirty hours and continue through zero-nine-hundred hours tomorrow morning. This will be the final rainstorm of the week. Those with lawns will want to adjust their watering schedules.

ALLEGRA (entering):

Dad, there's gonna be rain tomorrow. Mom says to make sure you'll take me to school.

SAM:

Yes, honey.

ALLEGRA:

Dad, what did I ask you?

SAM (looks up from tablet):

Huh?

ALLEGRA (teenagery annoyance):

Dad, it's going to be stormy tomorrow. I need you to make sure there's time in your schedule to take me to school.

SAM:

What time do you need to be there.

ALLEGRA:

Classes start at nine...

SAM:

Okay?

ALLEGRA:

But I need to be there by eight-thirty.

SAM:

No problem, honey. (beat) What happens at eight-thirty?

ALLEGRA (blushing):

That's when the bus arrives. And Jeff Ralston rides the bus. And if he sees you and says 'hey' when he gets *off* the bus, you're totally in with his crowd. (beat) So, please don't bring any jars or anything?

SAM:

I never catch storms in the middle; you know that, honey.

ALLEGRA (exasperated):

DAD!!!!

SAM:

Alright, alright, no jars.

ALLEGRA flounces out of the room. **SAM** goes back to his reading and his coffee. Lights fade down.

Scene 4 – A car on the side of the road.

ALLEGRA and **SAM** are in the car, with the headlights beaming through fog, and the driver's door and driver's-side passenger door are open.

SAM is rummaging through the back seat.

SAM:

Bottle, jar, anything... there's got to be something. Who keeps a car this clean anyway? It's not normal.

ALLEGRA:

Mom cleans it every week.

SAM:

You don't have a thermos, do you?

ALLEGRA:

A thermos?

SAM:

Comes in a lunchbox? Keeps drinks cold. Or soup hot?

ALLEGRA:

Dad, it's the middle of the twenty-first century. Almost no one brings their lunch to school, and if they did, it wouldn't be in a lunchbox. Well... K.J. used to have this plastic bento thing in grade school, but, not since then.

SAM:

Aha! Olives!

SAM lifts the bottle of olives in victory.

SAM:

I can just dump these out and use this bottle. Is the fog getting thin? I need the thickest fog.

ALLEGRA:

You can't dump those.

SAM:

Why not? They're olives. I can grab another bottle on the way home.

ALLEGRA:

Because. Those are Mom's emergency olives.

SAM:

Emergency olives? You mother has urgent Kalamata needs?

ALLEGRA (patiently):

Mom keeps olives in the car in case she's ever caught short at a pot luck at work, or if I need something for a food drive. No one in the family eats that kind of olive, so it's something that she can keep in the car, and no one will care.

SAM:

Well, if we'd taken my car, I'd have jars, but *someone* made me promise not to –

ALLEGRA:

- drive the StormCatcher. I know. Jeff Ralston would never like a girl whose Dad collects jars of weather.

SAM:

Then maybe Jeff Ralston isn't worthy of your attention.

ALLEGRA:

He's the cutest, smartest, boy in school, Dad. He's worth *everyone's* attention. (beat) It's eight-fifteen.

SAM:

I *promise* I will buy your mother a new bottle of emergency olives. I'll even toss in an urgent-care can of sardines. Sit tight, I won't be a moment.

SAM opens the jar of olives and pours them out, then he uses the sleeve of his sweater to wipe out the jar. He walks into the thickest part of the fog and returns with the jar sealed. A bit of fog (batting or cotton) is in the jar.

ALLEGRA:

I cannot believe you did that. (beat) Ugh, and now you smell like olives. The whole *car* smells like olives. Ugh.

SAM:

You wanna walk?

ALLEGRA:

No, just... just drive, Dad, please? (beat) But let me out a block away from school.

SAM:

I remember when I was your father, and not just a chauffeur.

BLACKOUT

ACT II

Scene 1 – SAM's Garage - 2040

There is no car in the garage, but the walls are lined with shelves of mismatched glass jars. Each has a label.

SAM, ten years older, is on a ladder, reaching for something on the highest shelf.

MAGGIE, his wife, about five years younger than him, comes in from the door to the house, upstage left.

MAGGIE:

I might have known I'd find you out here. What are you looking for?

SAM:

This drought is killing us. I thought if I could find a small enough storm, I could at least give the neighborhood some relief. Your roses, Maggie... I could save your roses.

MAGGIE (warmly):

I wouldn't want you wasting a storm on my flower garden, Samuel. Besides, those are so old... what if they don't work?

SAM:

They'll work. I just need... just a small squall, really.

MAGGIE:

Samuel...

SAM:

Maybe just a spring shower...

Sam continues his search, rolling is ladder from wall to wall, shelf to shelf.

MAGGIE:

Samuel, you don't have to worry about the roses. I put cuttings in the freezer last year, and I have some bushes with intact root balls in the cryo bin. Come inside where it's cool, sweetie. I used some of our bonus ration to make a pitcher of iced tea.

SAM:

Maggie...

MAGGIE:

Now, Samuel.

SAM (sighing):

Yes, dear.

SAM and MAGGIE both exit. As the lights dim we hear:

COMPUTER (V/O):

WeatherNet is now in its sixth week of zero precipitation. Water rationing will increase to level four beginning on Monday at zero-six hundred hours universal time. Please continue to listen to weather announcements.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 2 – SAM's Kitchen.

SAM is seated at the table, staring at once of his jars. Every so often he picks it up, and puts it back down again.

ALLEGRA (now 23) is heard offstage.

ALLEGRA: ... will get him for you. One moment.

ALLEGRA enters from off stage.

ALLEGRA:

Dad! Dad, there's a couple of guys here about your bottles.

SAM:

Sam, Sam the weather man... that's what they used to call me. You did two, once. I think you just liked the rhyme.

ALLEGRA:

I don't think these guys are here to make fun of you, Dad... and I never meant to. Really. Come... come show them the garage and talk to them?

SAM:

I'll be along in a minute.

ALLEGRA exits, but SAM stays put for a long moment.

ALLEGRA (offstage):

Dad! Come on!!

SAM exits as the lights fade down. He leaves the jar.

Scene 3 - The Garage

AGENT RALSTON and AGENT RAMIREZ are waiting in the garage, looking at the jars, picking them up, putting them back.

SAM:

You might want to put that back, son. It's the eye of a hurricane.

RAMIREZ:

A hurricane? Really?

SAM:

Yeah. Category Five. It was the last killer storm before the weather net went live. When I first started my collection, I thought it was the first winds you wanted, but no. It's the eye. That's where all the power is. You might say it's the focal point. (He laughs at his own joke.)

RALSTON:

I don't know if Allegra recognized me, sir. I'm Agent Ralston. Jeff Ralston. I went to school with Allie.

SAM:

She said you were the cutest, smartest boy in school. If you're that smart, I'm guessing you're here to commandeer my collection?

RALSTON:

Not commandeer sir, no. We've been authorized to compensate you generously for the entirety of your collection. WeatherNet is... well, it's irreparable, sir. We need to restore normal weather.

RAMIREZ:

We think that if we take your collection into the atmosphere and release it all at once, it will be a sort of global reset.

SAM:

Interesting theory. (beat) 'Course you're assuming I'm not just some crazy old coot with a garage full of empty mason jars.

RALSTON (quietly):

I've seen them work, sir.

SAM:

Oh?

RALSTON:

Allegra got fed up hearing people talk about you, sir, so she stole one of the baby food jars. I think it was a spring mist? Only when she opened it, out behind the bleachers, it was October, and perfectly dry.

SAM (remembering):

Scotland, 2013. The year I met Allie's mother.

RALSTON:

Yes, sir.

SAM:

You can have the bottles.

RAMIREZ:

How much?

SAM:

I'm sorry?

RAMIREZ:

As we said, sir, we're authorized to offer you generous compensation.

SAM:

Don't want money. (beat) Want a promise. No more weather control.

RAMIREZ:

Well, sir, I don't think we can –

RALSTON (cutting him off):

- refuse you that. We'll have a truck here within an hour, sir. And sir, your country and your planet thank you.

The agents exit. SAM stays in his garage, making a silent goodbye to his life's work.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 4 – The Kitchen

MAGGIE, ALLEGRA, and SAM are sitting around the table. Rain is loud outside and the windows are whitened by lightning every few minutes.

ALLEGRA:

I hate storms!

MAGGIE:

You used to love them, when you were little. Before WeatherNet we used to have storms like this every winter. Once we even got snow.

ALLEGRA:

Snow?

SAM (dry):

Cold, white precipitation, falls from the sky?

ALLEGRA:

I know what snow is, Dad, I just... I don't remember it.

SAM:

It never happened very often. Not here. We took you to Colorado to visit your grandparents one year, and you got lost in a snowdrift... we had to dig you out...

MAGGIE:

I was so worried! Your cousins had pushed your baby carriage into the drift, and then there'd been fresh snow... but when we found you, you were sound asleep, all wrapped in blankets, and only your nose and cheeks were a little red.

ALLEGRA:

Rain seems like a much better form of precipitation.

COMPUTER (V/O):

Please access your local news channels for specific weather information. Chaotic weather is likely to last for another three days before normalization begins. Please access your local news channels for specific weather infor....

Lights fade out on computer voice.

EPILOGUE

Scene 1 – The deck of Sam's house, evening. 2042

SAM and ALLEGRA are on the deck, leaning on the rail.

ALLEGRA (wistful):

I'm going to miss these evenings with you, Dad.

SAM:

I'm pretty sure Jeff can arrange for a balcony or deck on the house he's building for you.

ALLEGRA:

He can, but... my whole life, this is where we had talks...

SAM:

During the years you were willing to talk to your old man, anyway.

ALLEGRA:

I used to hate it when the construction guys would jeer at you. I only started to do it, too, when kids teased me at school. Until I stole that mist.

SAM:

I knew it was you.

ALLEGRA:

Because Jeff told you, when he came to ask for the collection.

SAM:

No. Because you were extra helpful around the house, didn't sass, and did all your homework without being asked for a week after it went missing.

ALLEGRA:

Oh... that.

SAM:

Speaking of bottles...

SAM hands ALLEGRA the bottle we saw him with in the opening scene.

SAM:

I thought about giving this to you when you graduated from college, but it was too soon. Now that you and Jeff are getting married... well, your mother would rather we give you some of your grandmother's jewelry - and I'm sure that'll happen, too – but this... this is from me to you, honey.

ALLEGRA accepts the bottle, and reads the label.

ALLEGRA (teary):

Summer storm, 2017...

SAM:

It's from the night you were born, kiddo. Some summer, when you're desperate for a rainstorm, you can open it.

ALLEGRA:

I hate storms.

SAM:

That may change.

ALLEGRA (moved):

Oh, Dad...

Father and daughter are quiet for a long moment as fog creeps in around them. After it gets pretty thick, ALLEGRA speaks.

ALLEGRA:

Dad...?

SAM:

Yes, honey?

ALLEGRA:

Do you smell... olives?

BLACKOUT

THE END

