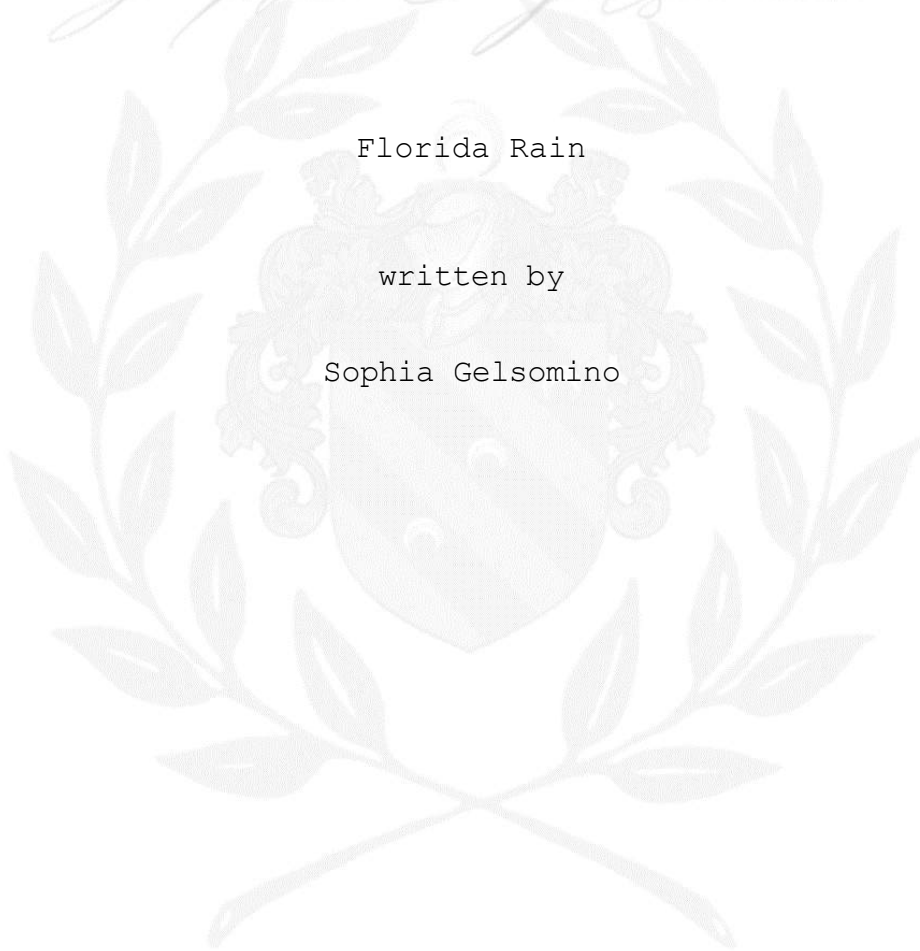


*Sophia Gelsomino*

Florida Rain

written by

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INT. CHICAGO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Present day. It is coming into spring, and a storm is passing through the city. It is unusually warm, causing lightning and thunder in the distance. Rain is starting to sprinkle down, hitting the open window like pebbles on the highway. LANA, 20, silently does the dishes in an empty apartment. Her roommate is gone, waiting out the storm nearby.

Lana dries her hands, realizing the ring she was wearing is no longer on her finger. Frantically, she searches the dishwater as it drains down the pipe. She has lost the ring forever. She bangs her fists on the counter.

LANA

No. No! Dammit!

She picks up the phone to call maintenance. She reads the number off a safety poster on the back of her front door. The line is busy. She slams the phone down. The rain becomes heavier. She walks over to the open window, gazing out over the night lights of the city. She's about to close it when the rain speeds up. She kneels down and sticks her face as far out into the rain as she can, taking a deep breath.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

SUMMER, 2004.  
Palm Bay, Florida.

LANA, 6, sits in a dated and green fabric-folding-chair under an open garage door. She stares out into the rain. ROMEO, a black lab lies by her side. A red sports car sits in the driveway, the rain slides off the hood. BEATRICE, Lana's mother, 41, walks out of the house behind her. She sits in a dated, red fabric-folding-chair set up next to her daughter. She watches as chalk drawings get washed away from the cement driveway.

BEATRICE

Are you hungry?

Lana shrugs. Beatrice swats at the red fire ants crawling into the dry garage.

LANA

When's the rain gonna stop?

BEATRICE

Soon. It's almost 5 o'clock.

They sit in silence.

LANA

Can we go feed the birds later?

BEATRICE

How about tomorrow? We'll take  
grandma with us.

Lana groans quietly in disgust.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Come on. Help me set the table.

Lana doesn't move.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Grandpa's making beef stew.

Lana bolts up from her chair without a word. Romeo sprints after her into the house. Beatrice folds up the chairs and lays them up against the wall.

INT. GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

Lana and her grandfather, JOE, 68, sit in the living room watching COPS. Joe sits in a big, blue recliner. Lana, in a tiny brown recliner, to match his. She copies his mannerisms.

Lana sneaks into the kitchen and grabs an ice cream sandwich from the freezer. Joe walks into the kitchen, catching her in the act. He clears his throat. She turns around, the sandwich pokes out of her mouth. She reaches back into the freezer and pulls out another and holds it up for him. He takes it from her, closes the freezer door, and unwraps it. They clink the ice cream bars like glasses.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - THE NEXT DAY

The sun shines down on Joe and Lana in the driveway. They are washing the red sports car. Joe aims the hose at Lana and she runs away from the spray, but not before she gets hosed down head to toe.

Joe kneels next to her, pointing at the wheel, teaching her about how to clean it properly.

INT. GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Joe and Lana sit in their chairs watching a Liberty's Kids re-run. Joe sits in his recliner, piles of mail stacked up behind him. She looks over the arm of her chair, head on hands, staring at Romeo lying under Joe's chair.

Beatrice walks into the room with her mother, BLANCA, 65, following behind.

BEATRICE  
You ready to go?

LANA  
But it just started!

BEATRICE  
You can watch it later.

LANA  
But mom-

BEATRICE  
You can finish it later. Now go get your shoes on.

Lana drags herself out of the chair.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
(to Joe)  
Dad, are you coming?

JOE  
(Shaking his head and flipping through channels)  
Take your mother.

BEATRICE  
(to Blanca)  
Ma, go put on your shoes.

BLANCA  
Where are we going?

JOE  
Rose, go with Beatrice.

BEATRICE  
To the pier. Go put on your shoes.

Blanca shuffles away.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
Dad, you gotta take that earring out. It's turning your ear green.

He shoos her, but reaches up to take it out when she's not looking. His ear looks like he dipped it Listerine. Lana runs back into the room, and leans on the arm of his chair. She watches him struggle to take out the earring. She can't help but notice the black-stone ring on his right hand.

LANA  
Grandpa, are you coming with us?

BEATRICE  
Go get in the car, Lana. Mommy will  
be right there.

Lana runs to the door, grabbing Blanca's hand on the way out.

LANA  
(agitated)  
Come on, Grandma.

BEATRICE  
See you later, pops.

She kisses him on the forehead.

JOE  
See you later.

Beatrice walks toward the door.

BEATRICE  
Lana, did you put on sunblock?

INT. CAR - DAY

Beatrice and Blanca sit up front. Lana sits in the backseat. She rolls the window down to feel the warm air on her face. Beatrice rolls the window up from the driver's side controls.

BEATRICE  
That sound is too distracting,  
Lana.

Lana sits quietly and pouts, watching the palm trees systematically go by.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Lana and Blanca sit at a small round table in the middle of the parking lot. In between the cars and the drive through, a small patch of cobblestone and bushes create a picnic area. The red umbrella attached to the table shades them from the Florida sun. Beatrice is over by the walk-up window, waiting for their food. Blanca sips on a cup of coffee in a white Styrofoam cup.

BLANCA  
You ever tried coffee before?

Lana shakes her head no. Blanca offers the cup to her. She takes it with both hands and sneaks a sip before her mother sees. Lana winces at the bitter taste and holds it out for Blanca to take back.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

What's a matter? You don't like it?

Lana violently shakes her head no. Beatrice approaches with two small banana milkshakes, three chicken sandwiches, and a large curly fry to share. Blanca and Lana unwrap their sandwiches. Beatrice takes a seat. She unwraps a red straw and shoots the paper wrapper at her daughter.

LANA

Hey!

BEATRICE

(Sticking the straw into  
Lana's milkshake)

What? Not cool, mom?

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

(to Blanca)

How's your sandwich, ma?

Blanca nods as she fiddles with the ketchup packets. Beatrice watches Lana suck down her milkshake, resulting in a brain freeze. She recovers and they laugh.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

WINTER, 2014.

Palm Bay, Florida.

The same restaurant, the same table, 10 years later. Lana, 16, Beatrice, 51, and Blanca, 85 all sit and try to eat lunch in peace. They are quiet. Beatrice and Lana both have their banana milkshakes and chicken sandwiches. Blanca has only her cup of coffee, which she's barely touched.

Lana unwraps her red straw and shoots the wrapper at Beatrice, who gives her a "not now" look. She sucks down her milkshake, resulting in a brain freeze. As she recovers, Beatrice notices, but doesn't react much.

BEATRICE

You barely touched your coffee, ma.

Blanca doesn't react. The three can hardly look at each other.

INT. CAR - DAY

Different car, similar interior (A 2015 red Hyundai Sonata). Beatrice drives with Blanca on the passenger's side. Lana sits in the backseat. She rolls down her window, Beatrice rolls it back up and locks it from the front seat. She looks at Lana in the rearview mirror, but says nothing.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Lana follows Beatrice down the hallway, holding Blanca's arm. They pass by open doorways of patients bedridden. Turning corners, they arrive at a room where her father, PHIL, 49, stands in the doorway. He embraces Beatrice. He leans down to Lana and holds out a folded 20 dollar bill.

PHIL

Take your grandmother downstairs.  
Get her a coffee and whatever you  
want. I want the change back.

Lana takes the bill and sneaks a peek through the bodies in the doorway. Joe, 83, lies in bed, unconscious. Her parents block her gaze and she leads Blanca away.

LANA (V.O.)

I was 16 when he got sick. No one  
expected it, though we all saw it  
coming.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lana sits alone next to Joe's bed, the others watch by the door. He's wide awake though he looks like death. His hair is completely white and long enough to have a pony tail trailing down his back. He tells stories, his hands flaring around. He tries to laugh, but his eyes show pain. The tears build up in Lana's eyes, though she successfully holds them back.

LANA (V.O.)

He stopped eating. Some days, he  
would refuse to drink water. His  
hair became one long web, whiter  
than I last remembered.

INT. CAR - DAY

SPRING, 2014.  
Upstate New York.

Joe sits in the back of the same car, wrapped in blankets. Blanca sits next to him. They stare out opposite windows. Phil drives, Beatrice is in the passenger's seat. She watches them from the rearview mirror.

LANA (V.O.)

That spring, my parents moved them up to New York to live with us. Dad made sure they had an apartment no more than 5 minutes away from where we were.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - NIGHT

A modest senior living apartment complex. 10 distant family members are gathered in the tiny living room. Joe, bedridden, sleeps in a separate room down the hall with the door cracked.

LANA (V.O.)

They stayed there for a few months. Grandma could barely do anything for herself, so I cleaned the apartment every weekend.

Lana sits on the couch, staring down the hall into the darkness through the crack. Phil walks up to her, ready to leave. Lana looks up at him, hesitant.

LANA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

With everything going on in my life outside home, I couldn't function knowing what was going on behind closed doors. I didn't want to.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Phil drives home in the Hyundai with Lana in the backseat. She has the window down, taking in the spring air. Phil watches her in the rearview mirror.

PHIL

You didn't see him all day.

LANA

I said hello.

INT. LANA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lana stands in her parents' bathroom, in front of the mirror while she brushes her teeth. Beatrice walks in.



BEATRICE  
Why don't you use your own  
bathroom?

LANA  
Because I like your face wash.

BEATRICE  
You should, it was expensive.  
They chuckle. Beatrice preps her night routine.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
I heard you didn't see your  
grandfather tonight?

LANA  
I saw him earlier.

BEATRICE  
You know, he doesn't have much time  
left.

Lana spits out her toothpaste. She pauses. Beatrice looks at her in the mirror. She doesn't say anything else and continues her routine.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lana creeps into Joe's bedroom. She peers through the crack and gently closes the door behind her. Joe's fast asleep. His breathing is staggered and heavy. She takes a seat in an armchair next to his bed.

LANA  
(whispering)  
How ya doing, gramps?

His breathing continues to stagger.

LANA (CONT'D)  
It's been quite a day. You know  
tech starts this week and Tony and  
I are fighting. But, he's a nice  
guy. I hope you get to meet him  
soon. It's just been a lot,  
lately...

Pause. She listens to him breathe, fearing each one might be the last.

LANA (CONT'D)

Do you remember when I was a kid,  
and we used to go to the beach and  
catch coquinas? But they would  
always burry themselves back in the  
sand before we would catch them?  
And the summers when I would sneak  
ice cream sandwiches past bedtime.  
Grandma would get up before you and  
make a pot of coffee. You came out  
in your red bathrobe and made eggs  
and bacon every morning.  
I'm really gonna miss your beef  
stew and the tomato salad you used  
to make for dinner.

She pauses. Phil quietly opens the door and gestures to  
leave. Lana holds up a finger, asking him to wait another  
minute. He nods and closes the door, the light from the  
hallway disappears from her face.

LANA (CONT'D)

God. I don't remember when you  
stopped taking me places. It was  
always me and mom. Sometimes  
Grandma when she wasn't at home,  
cleaning. I always went to you  
first when we came to visit. You  
were the last one I said goodbye to  
when we would leave. You always did  
everything for her. I hate that  
you're leaving her behind. I hate  
you for giving up like this.  
But it's okay. It's okay for you to  
leave. I forgive you. It's okay,  
gramps. I love you, so much.  
Goodnight.

Lana stands up to kiss him on the forehead. He's cold to the  
touch, but still breathing. She walks to the door, hesitating  
before closing it. She watches him sleep.

LANA (V.O.)

Dad said he passed minutes after I  
left that night. I found out the  
next morning from a Facebook post  
my aunt had written. The worst part  
was, nobody was planning on telling  
me anytime soon.

Lana closes the door, the streak of light from the hallway  
shines into the room and slowly disappears into the darkness.

INT. CAR - DAY

WINTER, 2019.

In the red Hyundai, Lana, 20, sits in the backseat while Beatrice, 56, drives. Beatrice is on the phone with her brother, who is on speakerphone. They are discussing Blanca, 87, who is suffering from Alzheimer's. Lana watches her mother in the rearview mirror.

BEATRICE

The thing is, she's beginning to feel useless. That's what she does in order to feel like her life has purpose.

LANA (V.O.)

Over the next two years, Grandma couldn't even remember her own kids. They didn't know what to do with her, although at times it seemed like mom was the only one who really cared.

BEATRICE

It's like being five-years-old and lost in the mall, trying to find your parents. Like when she's at your house, she's looking for her children as kids, not their grown-up versions. That's what she remembers.

INT. LANA'S HOUSE - DAY

SPRING, 2019.

Phil, 54, sits on the edge of his bed, head in hands, rubbing his face in exhaustion. Beatrice stands on the other side of the bed, folding laundry. He explains the situation. She sits next to him in comfort, though keeping her space.

LANA (V.O.)

By spring, we had lost two more family members. His mother was just diagnosed with stage four cancer. I'd seen that cancer attack my family 3 times in the last 10 years. First, it was her daughter. Then, her own. Finally, her son, my dad.

Lana sits on the couch across the bedroom. Beatrice walks over to her and hands her a small jewelry box. She opens it to reveal a man's ring.

BEATRICE

I thought you should have it.

Lana takes the ring from the box and places it on her middle finger to fit. She looks up at her mother and smiles. The reminder of him brings tears, but she only lets one drop fall down her cheek. Beatrice pulls her in close.

LANA (V.O.)

I could only imagine how long it would take before I was next.

INT. CHICAGO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Present day. Lana hunches over the windowsill, letting the tears spill out. She crumbles to the floor, clutching the hand where her grandfather's ring used to be. She pulls herself up to the slot in the window and breathes deeply.

LANA (V.O.)

Someone once told me that death isn't the thing we fear. We fear what we will leave behind when we're gone. But today, it's 5am, and it smells of Florida rain.

INT. CAR - DAY

Palm Bay, Florida.

Palm trees outside the window pass by.

LANA (V.O.)

The same palm trees and warm air of my memories...

EXT. PIER - DAY

SUMMER, 2004.

Palm Bay, Florida.

Lana runs down the pier happily chasing seagulls with bread in her hands.

LANA (V.O.)

The scent of the ocean and the sand between my toes...

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Lana and Beatrice are seated at the same small table, drinking their banana milkshakes, laughing.

LANA (V.O.)  
The hint of banana milkshakes  
somewhere in the distance.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

SUMMER, 2019.  
Upstate New York.

Lana drives her grandfather's red Hyundai down the highway, all windows rolled down as the wind hits her face and blows her hair away. She drives into the night, surrounded by other cars doing the same.

LANA (V.O.)  
There comes a day when we all must  
meet our maker. I'll be happy to  
just see tomorrow's daylight.

THE END.

