# Autumn Rain

\_Trigger warning: Talk of self-harm and suicide\_  
  
  
  
Have you ever had this feeling? Like you're a helium balloon with your string  
cut. A rotting piece of wood adrift in the vast ocean.  
  
Does saying it like that make me sound too pretentious? Thinking I'm some kind  
of literary youth. Of course I'm not. I'm just sad. Sad people tend to be  
under the impression that they've been possessed by Li Bai and suddenly know  
the gruesome secrets of the universe through a few lines of poetry.  
  
Second year of university; my life is great. All the sad things from the past  
can be thrown to the back of the mind.  
  
So, my life isn't sad.  
  
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I'm sitting in the library after hours because it's raining outside and the  
librarian feels sorry for me.  
  
\_Lin Yu.\_ My name.  
  
In Chinese, it's written like 林雨. The first character is my surname - it means  
woods. The second character means rain. Don't know whether my parents did this  
intentionally, but if you add three dots to the first character, make it 淋雨,  
and it means getting rained on.  
  
The pronunciation is the same.  
  
My brother's name is \_Lin Qiu\_ , written like 林秋 - the second character means  
autumn. Our names put together are autumn rain. Quite poetic, isn't it? But it  
still makes me wonder why my parents couldn't have just had one son named  
\_Lin Qiu Yu\_ , rather than fracturing the name over two children.  
  
Because what happens when one is left without the other?  
  
Autumn rain paints an image of people walking with colourful umbrellas across  
a scenery of red, orange and yellow leaves.  
  
Rain on its own is only grey.  
  
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The library was my brother's favourite place. The librarian also let him stay  
after hours. It was because she liked him in the way of a favoured son. Not  
because she pitied him. Well, maybe she did when she learned that he had to  
give up dancing to take care of our mum.  
  
Stage three ovarian cancer.  
  
Why didn't our dad take care of her? Why didn't I?  
  
Why him?  
  
Dad didn't think that work was more important than mum - he wasn't that kind  
of person. It was just that someone needed to be working for the money.  
  
I didn't think that ballet was more important than mum - I'm not that kind of  
person. It was just that someone needed to be worthy of dreaming.  
  
My brother - \_Ge 'ge\_ as I called him, had gripped me by the shoulders in the  
hallway of the hospital.  
  
"Never give up on dancing, \_xiao 'yu\_," - it was a nickname; it meant little  
rain. "Please."  
  
"You'll start dancing again when \_Ma 'ma\_ gets better, won't you?" I said.  
  
His face darkened, then he held my hand. "Come, it's time to go home."  
  
I understand now that he didn't think mum was going to get better. That he  
could have started dancing again. That there were more roads to dancing than  
professional.  
  
But I pushed for that dream, \_our\_ dream, until I lay each night with an  
aching body, but still dragged myself out of bed at four in the morning. Until  
the studio's practice room became my almost-home, and the smell of sweat and  
huffs of exertion were perfume to my skin and music to my ears.  
  
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The rain beats louder on the glass. I look up at the highest shelf. I used to  
be able to put my leg up there. Bend my limbs in ways that would make you  
think they were made of rubber. \_Do you even have bones? \_People liked to  
ask me.  
  
If I do that now I might pull a muscle and not be able to walk for a week.  
  
My ballet teacher used to say: You don't practise for a day and your body can  
feel it. You don't practise for two days and you can feel it. You don't  
practise for three days and everyone else can feel it.  
  
My three days have piled into months by now.  
  
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My brother was always gentle. I was always getting hurt.  
  
"It's all right, just squeeze my hand. It'll be over in a few seconds."  
  
My eyes were already blurry with tears and my throat raw with swallowed  
screams. I could bear injuries. One time, I danced an entire concert with a  
fractured ankle. But for some reason, the moment my brother appeared before  
me, my cheeks gave way to rivers.  
  
The doctor snapped my knee back into place and I cried into my brother's chest  
for fifteen minutes.  
  
"好了好了哭出来就好，回家哥哥给你做好吃的。" \_It 's okay, it's good to cry it out, when we go  
home, Ge'ge will make you something delicious.\_  
  
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我想哥哥做的糖醋排骨了。  
  
\_I miss the sweet and sour ribs that Ge 'ge made.\_  
  
I find that I've been thinking in Chinese more and more nowadays. Probably  
because I miss him. Miss how him and mum used to yammer at each other in  
Shanghainese. He spoke to me in Shanghainese on occasions.  
  
I understand it, but I never learned how to speak it.  
  
That's not what I'm sad about.  
  
I pick up a book and try to read, but the lighting is too dim, and the words  
are just a blur of black.  
  
"Yu," the librarian says. "The rain has stopped."  
  
"Thanks," I say, picking up my bag.  
  
Maybe she sees some tears in my eyes, or maybe I just look sad. "Are you  
okay?" she asks.  
  
I smile. "I'm good," I reply. "Thanks for asking."  
  
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The pavement has been washed clean. \_Are you okay?\_ Can that question really  
change things? Is saving a life truly one question away?  
  
If so, I should have asked. Should not have assumed that my brother would be  
fine after mum was cancer-free. That under his long sleeves in summer there  
was smooth skin. That in his heart, there wasn't an invisible darkness.  
  
Perhaps his name even foretold it. Add a heart, 心, \_xin\_ , under the  
character for autumn, 秋, \_qiu\_ , and it becomes 愁, \_chou\_ - to worry. When  
worry builds up, the weight is crushing. Even when that worry isn't needed  
anymore.  
  
All Ge'ge had done was worry. Worry about mum and her possible relapse. Worry  
about dad and the stress of his work. Worry about \_me\_.  
  
哥哥最疼我了。  
  
\_Ge 'ge was the one who cared for me the most.\_  
  
疼, \_teng\_ , on its own means hurt, pain, but you add 我, \_wo\_ - me, and it  
becomes to be looked after, cared for.  
  
心疼, \_xin 'teng\_. The first character is heart. The second character is hurt.  
It means to care about a person, feel that twinge in the heart when they are  
in pain.  
  
\_I care so much that my heart hurts for you.\_  
  
My heart hurts for him now, but he's gone.  
  
I stopped dancing because the dream had shattered. It can't be our dream  
anymore. Because he's gone.  
  
Dead.  
  
Left the world, not with the comfort of being held, but with his final breath  
entrusted in a blade about to cause the most irreversible of damages. A cut  
can heal. A deeper cut can scar. But there is a point where deep becomes too  
deep.  
  
No amount of stitches and bandages can piece it back together. No amount of  
'are you okays' and 'I love yous' can fix anything now. \_You are not alone. I  
am here for you. You are loved. More than you will ever know.\_  
  
哥哥，就让我疼疼你吧。  
  
\_Ge 'ge, just let me care for you. \_  
  
It starts raining again, and I stand there. Being rained on.  
  
I close my eyes and listen to it. I think of autumn with its red, orange and  
yellow. My body moves with the rain as my music. My muscles are stiff, but my  
limbs remember the thirteen years of aches and sweat masked to move in a way  
that makes my body into art.  
  
My heart hurts. Because I hurt. And I dance. Because I love.  
  
Arms batting the rain. Reaching out for an umbrella, a warm body, someone to  
hold me in the rain.  
  
你说你是哥哥我是弟，你要为我遮风挡住雨  
  
\_You say you are the older brother and I am the younger brother, so you will  
block me from the wind, and shield me from the rain.\_  
  
你说你是哥哥我是弟，我也为你遮风挡住雨  
  
\_You say you are the older brother and I am the younger brother, so I too will  
block you from the wind, and shield you from the rain.\_  
  
Because when I dance, I don't dance about autumn, I don't dance about the  
rain.  
  
I dance about autumn rain.