



2017

Rainy Weather Friend

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Recommended Citation

Hanson, Kaylie (2017) "Rainy Weather Friend," *The Laureate*: Vol. 16 , Article 31.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/laureate/vol16/iss1/31>

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When Marianne was first invited over, she'd wanted to come. She'd been meaning to stop by and visit, just like the old days. Except in the old days Felix didn't have tumors growing inside his body like grapes in a vineyard. He was skinny, pale, bald, with chapped lips and sunken eyes—but he'd smiled when she showed up at his bedroom door and waved her in, almost cheering. "Annie! I missed ya," he said. "How've you been? How was Seattle?"

"Rainy."

Felix asked how her family was, what she's been doing with herself. He talked about how much he'd love to make a snowman that winter or maybe even dare to dream he'd be well enough to go skiing. He was feeling better, he'd said. Nobody visited him after the first two years. After maybe an hour, an hour twenty, when Marianne was dangerously close to yawning, Felix gestured to his bookshelf, "Do you wanna watch a movie, Annie?"

"It's getting late, Felix. I should probably let Brutus out of his kennel."

"But I have X-Men. You love X-Men."

"I really have to go, Felix." Marianne frowned, reaching forward to squeeze her friend's bony, cold hand.

"Okay," he muttered, disappointment dripping from his voice.

"But come and hang with me more often. Please?"

"Promise," she said, exhausted. "I'll visit all the time."

Three weeks passed without seeing Felix, by fault of the whirlwind that was Marianne's day-to-day life, and when she got the phone call at four in the morning, Marianne realized, with all the grace of an anvil crashing down on her skull, she wouldn't.