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## My Weather Girl

by Richard Wilding

After one year and five months of what I think of now as the blue sky phase of our marriage, the clouds appeared on the far horizon and as unstoppable as a weather front, the sunshine of our love turned first milky and then obscure so that for the next six years and five months our marriage was lived under grey, increasingly joyless times. “When”, as Marvin Gaye famously asked three times on his acidic album ‘Here, My Dear’, created to pay his divorce settlement and not a patch on Let’s Get It On, “did you stop loving me?” When did I stop loving her? I don’t know that I ever did.

Her mother, always as welcome in my life as a bout of syphilis, told me that it was me - and what she termed my ‘creepy ways’ – that had turned my wife to drink, more specifically to vodka, more specifically still to Morrison’s Own Brand vodka, bought at the end of the twice-weekly shop as if on a spur of the moment whim. It was the drink which brought on the cloudy skies, the silences, the tetchiness and then as the clouds built and built, the raging storms, all thunder and lightning and deluges of venom. The worst – which is to say, the worst before the separation after which there were many every bit as torrential – was seven years, ten months and thirteen days into our marriage (exactly, as it happened; the argument began at precisely two thirty, the very time of our wedding) when I happened to mention, as nicely as I could, that our bank account was substantially overdrawn. I produced the bank statement for her and said that the debt was entirely caused by her drinking, and that she – rather than we – should settle the debt.

Well, I don’t mind confessing that I had been building up to this. It was not a one-off on the bank statement but a trend which I had noticed – me, a senior leader at the bank with banking qualifications and therefore a trained eye when it came to reading bank accounts and sensing in which way they were heading. She denied it at first then shot me that black-eyed look of hers, which I knew was the lightning before the thunder. Sure enough, that thunderous temper erupted a minute later.

She screamed, shrieked, fulminated. At 3:12, she actually foamed at the mouth. I remember looking at the clock on the wall above the bureau (her mother's; I never liked it) and I can never now see 3:12 and not think of those white speckles being spat out involuntarily.

We didn't speak again for six whole weeks – not a single word. Two people living under the same roof, travelling to the same office in the same car. In a way, it was quite impressive. Finally, the seven words, which broke the silence were hers: “I want you to move out tomorrow.” She never did settle that debt.