

Prayers and Lotteries

by C. Thomas Murray

“What if every cloud you saw carried a bit of hope?” she said to the window, looking out at a rolling storm.

There's something peaceful about stormy weather when you're inside. Stormy weather. It almost sounds quaint.

“Well?” she said, expecting an answer.

“Oh...” was all that I could produce before she answered for me.

“What about all of the farmers? To them clouds are prayers.”

“Interesting... I guess I never really thought about it like that.”

The rain hit against the windows and beige plastic siding in even patterns. Metronomic and mundane and musical. The gray outside cast the room in a darker shade and everything seemed dulled and sleepy. Clouds rumbled.

“But, every event could be disastrous. Rain could be too hard, wind... and what about sleet? Every cloud is a chance and a prayer, a big atmospheric lottery.”

I could tell that she was pleased with herself and her clever, mildly insightful statement, so I laughed a little. But it didn't come out like a laugh so much as a strange, short breath, more grunt-like than laugh-like. Could she tell that I thought she was being silly and melodramatic? I looked at her in the dense, gray light. A light that seemed to convey weight and substance. I tried to think what she was thinking

— those poor farmers

— their potentially damaged livelihood
— clouds and rain
Contrived. I felt dishonest. Patronizing.

I looked at her again. Maybe she was right. Maybe her trite presentation was necessary. Maybe it conveyed what she really felt. Maybe she was being honest.

“Prayers and lotteries,” I said.

