

At the back of the crowd

by Rhett Davis

They were all celebrating something, but she couldn't see what it was. She could hear cheering, and laughter. The crowd was full of the very tall and the taller, and even when she stood on her tiptoes she couldn't see over them. They were all in their brown suits and green dresses, and they wore hats, and they were smiling, and she was certain that they were having the most fun they'd ever had. In the office buildings above them, people were waving from windows and standing on the rooftops; there were people packed into parking garages and wrapped around lampposts. Every vantage point was taken.

Behind her, a tree stood, bare and glistening, dripping with water from the rain that had just passed. She turned her back to the crowd and stared at the shining water dripping from the branches. She thought she could see a few buds starting to form. Two boys had climbed the tree and were now standing on one of the thicker branches. They clapped and jumped, and hundreds of droplets fell to the ground, lit up by the strange, white light of a winter sun trapped in silver clouds. For a moment, she ignored the clamour of the people around her, and saw the water descend in slow motion. When the droplets hit the ground, she felt like she heard a hundred tiny xylophones being struck.

She felt a dabbling, a dashing of water on the back of her neck. She looked up to see thousands more droplets of rain falling from the clouds. It began to rain harder, and she quickly found shelter in a doorway. The crowd stopped cheering and laughing and started to cover themselves with newspapers, and their hats, and they started running. She watched as they dispersed.

Soon it was quiet, and there was nothing left but a few red streamers and the poster of a man in a brown suit and a brown hat lying sodden on the ground. She walked over to the poster, and stared at it. The man stared back at her. It looked as if he knew her.

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