

Dear Reader,

The idea for *Weather Girl* lived in my head for a couple years before I started writing it, and it's been a romantic comedy ever since my first lightning strike of inspiration—one with no shortage of climate-related puns. In the middle of the drafting process, it also became a romantic comedy with a depressed protagonist.

On paper, it sounds like those two things shouldn't mix. Rom-coms are escapist and exciting and often full of hijinks. And yet what I've loved the most about them as we've seen this category evolve is their capacity to balance those wild, escapist plots with the kind of realism I used to avoid in my storytelling. For a while, I've written about Jewish characters whose backgrounds are similar to mine, but it's rarer for me to explore mental health in a way that comes close to my own experience.

In *Weather Girl*, Ari's depression is mostly manageable, and it's taken nearly a decade for her to get to that point. There are also com-

plications with her family and relationship history she works to untangle over the course of the book. I tried to write her depression with care and sensitivity, with the understanding that this illness doesn't have a magic cure. That said, Ari's experience is not every experience, and each mental health journey looks different. Very few, including mine, are a straight line.

More than anything, I wanted this book to highlight a neurodiverse heroine who happens to be on medication and in therapy falling in love and thriving. I wanted to show the messy, heavy parts of her life alongside the moments that sweep her off her feet. And I wanted a hero who'd love her through her dark days, not despite them—because to me, that is the most romantic thing of all.

With so much love,
Rachel

If any of this subject matter is triggering to you, please be gentle with yourself while reading. The following resources are available.

Crisis Text Line: text SHOUT to 85258

National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK: 0800 689 5652

Samaritans Helpline: 116 123

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FORECAST: *Cloudy with a chance of public humiliation*

THERE'S SOMETHING ESPECIALLY lovely about an overcast day. Clouds dipped in ink, the sky ready to crack open. The air turning crisp and sweet. It's magic, the way the world seems to pause for a few moments right before a downpour, and I can never get enough of that heady anticipation—this sense that something extraordinary is about to happen.

Sometimes I think I could live in those moments forever.

"What was that?" my brother asks from the driver's seat. It's possible I've just let out a contented sigh. "Are you getting emotional about rain again?"

I've been staring—well, gazing—out the window as the early morning sky surrenders to a drizzle. "No. That doesn't sound like something I'd do."

Because it's not just that I'm emotional about rain. It's that rain means the thrill of tracking a cold front as it moves in from the Pacific.

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It means knee-high boots and cable-knit sweaters, and it's simply a fact that those are the best clothes. I don't make the rules.

For so many people, weather is small talk, the thing you discuss when you've run out of conversation topics at a party or you're on a first date with a guy who lives in his parents' basement and thinks you two could be really happy down there together. *Can you believe the weather we're having?* It's a source of joy or frustration, but rarely anything in the middle.

It's never been small talk for me. Even if we're due for six more months of gloom, I always miss it when summer comes.

"You're lucky I love you so much." Alex rakes a hand through the sleep-mussed red hair we almost share, only his is auburn and mine is a bright shock of ginger. "We'd just gotten past Orion's fear of the dark, but now Cassie's up at five if we're lucky, four-thirty if we're not. No one's getting any sleep in the Abrams-Delgado house."

"I told you she's a little meteorologist in training." I adore my brother's five-year-old twins, and not just because they're named after constellations. "Don't tell her we have to do our own hair and makeup. Ruins the illusion."

"She has to watch you every morning before preschool. Dinosaur-shaped pancakes and Aunt Ari on the TV."

"The way God intended."

"I must not have been paying attention that day in Hebrew school." Alex stifles a yawn as we jigsaw around Green Lake. He lives on the Eastside and works in South Seattle, so he picked me up in my tree-lined Ravenna neighborhood and will drop me off at the station when we're done.

His clock is always six minutes fast because Alex loves the extra motivation in the mornings. Right now it reads 6:08—usually late for me, but thanks to one of Torrance's last-minute schedule changes, I

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won't be on camera until the afternoon. I might end up staying awake for a full twenty hours, but my body's gotten used to me messing with its internal clock. Mostly.

Still, imagining my tiny perfect niece transfixed by a weather report warms the very center of my heart.

Once upon a time, I did the exact same thing.

"Relax. It's going to be great," Alex says as I fidget with the zipper on my waterproof jacket, and then with the necklace buried in the fuzz of my sweater. I only roped him into this because I didn't want to do it alone, but there's always been a whisper-thin line between excitement and anxiety for me.

Even if my tells weren't so obvious, he'd be able to sense my emotions with his eyes closed. At thirty, Alex is three years older than I am, but people used to think we were fraternal twins because we were inseparable as kids. That morphed into a friendly rivalry as teens, especially since we were in the habit of crushing on the same boys—most notably, this Adonis of a track star named Kellen who had no idea we existed, despite our appearance at every one of his meets to cheer him on. This was made clear on the day of the state championships, when I showed up with flowers and Alex with balloons, and Kellen blinked his gorgeous tide pool eyes at us and said, "Hey, do we go to the same school?"

Reluctantly, I allow the swish of the windshield wipers to lull me into a false sense of calm. We head north up Aurora, past billboards for the Pacific Science Center, for gutter cleaners, for a guy who could be either a personal injury lawyer or a pro wrestler, given the way his face is twisted in a scowl. A cluster of car dealerships, and then—

"Oh my god, there it is. Stop the car. Stop the car!"

"You're not allowed to yell like that when I'm driving," Alex says,

even as he stomps the brake, his Prius tossing me against the door. “Christ, I thought I’d hit something.”

“Yes. My ego. It’s shattered.”

He swerves into the parking lot of a twenty-four-hour donut shop, sliding into a spot that gives us an unobstructed view of my very first billboard.

WAKE UP WITH KSEA 6 AT 5! WE’RE ALWAYS HERE 4 YOU, it proclaims in aggressively bold letters. And there’s our Colgate-toothed weekday morning team, all of us looking natural and not at all uncomfortably posed: *Chris Torres, news. Russell Barringer, sports. Meg Nishimura, traffic. Ari Abrams, weather.*

And an unmistakable whitish-gray streaked across my smiling face, blotting out my left eye and half my nose and ending in a beautiful bird-shit dimple.

My face *only*.

Chris and Russell and Meg keep on grinning. **WE’RE ALWAYS HERE 4 YOU,** my ass.

“Well. I’m sufficiently humbled,” I say after a few moments of stunned silence. “At least my hair looks okay?”

“Am I allowed to laugh?”

A sound that might be a giggle escapes my own mouth. “Please. Someone has to.”

My brother cracks up, and I’m not sure whether to be offended or to join him. Eventually, I give in.

“We’re taking your picture with it anyway,” Alex says when he can breathe again. “It’s your first *billboard*. That’s a huge fucking deal.” He claps a hand on my shoulder. “The first of many.”

“If this doesn’t haunt the rest of my career.” I follow him out of the car, my Hunter boots splashing through a puddle that turns out to be deeper than it looks.

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“Say, ‘KSEA 6 Northwest News: where we really give a shit,’” he says as I position myself beneath the billboard and mug for the camera. “‘KSEA 6: what you watch when the shit hits the fan.’”

“How about, ‘Breaking news: Alex Abrams-Delgado is a piece of shit?’” I say it in my best TV voice while giving him the middle finger.

“THANKS FOR DOING this,” I say once we’ve grabbed a table inside the donut shop. I brush damp bangs off my forehead, hoping there’s a spare hair dryer in the KSEA dressing room. “I would’ve gone with Garrison, or with someone from the station, but . . .”

Alex braves a sip of his donut-shop coffee and grimaces. “I get it. I’m your favorite person in the world.”

“You are,” I say. “But Cassie’s a strong second place. Don’t take that privilege lightly.”

“I could never.” He empties a compostable packet of sweetener into his cup. “How are you doing, by the way? With . . . everything?”

Before the *everything* he’s talking about, my brother and I saw each other about every month. Now I’m draped across his couch once a week while his chef husband ladles comfort food directly into my mouth.

“There are good days and bad. I’m not sure what today is yet, or if that’s a literal sign from the universe that things are about to go to, well, you know.” I wave a hand toward the billboard outside before taking a bite of a chocolate old-fashioned. “You’re not going to tell me to get back out there, are you?”

That’s the worst side effect of a breakup. Let me breathe for a moment before I attach myself to someone else who’s only going to end up disappointing me.

I rub the place on my finger where the engagement ring used to be.

I figured its imprint would last longer than a few days, and I wasn't sure how to feel when my skin no longer carried the evidence of our relationship. Truthfully, I never thought I'd be that attached to a ring—until Garrison asked for it back. In his defense, it was a family heirloom. In my defense, he's a human trash can.

A human trash can I've barely been able to stop thinking about since the breakup five weeks ago, when I moved out of our spacious Queen Anne rental and into the studio apartment just big enough for me and my feelings. Our friends felt like they needed to pick sides, which is why these days, my sole confidants are my brother and a precocious preschooler. At least now I can say Garrison's name out loud without wanting to curl up inside one of those nest pillows Instagram is always advertising to me. I think they're meant for dogs, but I can't be the only person who desperately wants one. The algorithm must know I need it.

"Absolutely not. Not until you're ready." Alex reaches for another sweetener packet. "At least you hadn't put any deposits down. Silver linings, right?"

"Mmm," I say noncommittally. Wedding planning was another one of those excitement-anxiety knots for me, though most of the time, anxiety had been winning. Whenever we started talking about it, I'd freeze with indecision. Spring or fall? Band or DJ? How many guests? Even now, it's enough to make me itch inside my cable-knit sweater.

But what Alex said sticks in my brain. Because silver linings—they're kind of my thing. Any time I sense negativity beginning to simmer inside me, I force it away with one of my practiced TV smiles. Leap right over that murky puddle. Keep myself dry before I risk sinking deeper into the darkness.

"We should have these donuts more often," I say, even though it's an entirely unremarkable donut.

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Alex must be able to tell I'm not eager to dig up more history because he launches into a story about Orion's determination to lose his first tooth.

"He was trying that old string-and-a-doorknob trick," Alex says. "Only, he completely missed the doorknob part, so I found him sitting in his room with all this string hanging from his mouth, waiting patiently for a tooth to loosen up."

"And why didn't you send me pictures immediately?" I ask, and he remedies this.

Once we've both moved on to our second donuts, my phone lights up with a notification, and I tap it to find an email from Russell Baringer, sports.

If he's emailing me, it can only be about one thing.

Weather girl,

Seth put up new signs today. Torrance found one on her oat milk and she's livid. Just wanted to let you know you might be walking into a hurricane.

"I should get going," I say to Alex. "Or, we should get going so you can drop me off."

"Something with your boss?"

I do my best to temper my sigh so it doesn't sound as long-suffering as I feel. "Isn't it always?"

We're about to get up when a thirtysomething guy with a soaked umbrella stops in front of our table and stares right at me. "I know you," he says, wagging a finger at me as rain drips onto the linoleum.

"Oh, from the news?" I say. It happens on occasion, strangers recognizing me but for the life of them unable to figure out why. Usually

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they're disappointed I'm not my boss, and honestly, I'd feel the same way.

He shakes his head. "Are you friends with Mandy?"

"I am not."

My brother waves an arm out the window at the billboard. "Channel six. She does the weather."

"I don't really watch TV," he says with a shrug. "Sorry. I must have been thinking of someone else."

Alex is shaking with silent laughter. I elbow him as we head to sort our trash into its proper bins.

"I'm so glad my pain is hilarious to you."

"Gotta keep you humble somehow." Before we leave, Alex waits in line to grab a few dozen donuts for his fourth-grade class. "Guilt donuts," he explains. "It's state testing week."

"It's a wonder some of us make it out of school with only minor psychological wounds."

He gives me a half smile that doesn't quite touch his eyes, and then he lowers his voice. "You'll text me if you're feeling down or anything this week, right?"

It's so easy to joke around with him that sometimes I forget I can do more than that. "I will." I glance down at the time and tap my phone. "If you can get me to the dressing room in twenty minutes, I'll make Nutella rugelach for Hanukkah next weekend."

"On it," he says, reaching for his keys while I balance his boxes of donuts. "You could really use that extra time."

"Hey, I am very fragile right now!"

With his chin, he gestures outside one more time. "Fine, fine. You look just as good as your billboard."

2



FORECAST:

*Showers of shredded paper
moving in this afternoon*

WHEN I WAS little, I wanted to grow up to be Torrance Hale.

I watched her every night on the evening news, mesmerized by her smooth confidence and the way her face lit up when sun was in the forecast. The way she looked at the camera, looked right at *me*, one corner of her mouth hitched in a quarter-smile as she joked with the anchors—there was something electric about her.

As a baby science nerd, I'd been fascinated by the weather since an April blizzard shut down the city for two weeks when I was in kindergarten. Of course, I'd later learn that this was not normal and in fact a very scary thing, but back then, I wanted to experience as many weather phenomena as I could. Living in Seattle made that tricky, given how mild it is year-round. Still, I saw enough to keep me curious: record-breaking summer heat, a lunar eclipse, a rare tornado that touched down in Port Orchard when my family was on vacation.

Torrance made science, made *weather* seem like it could be glam-

orous. I didn't have to be stuck in a lab, poring over data and writing reports. I could tell stories with the weather. I could help people understand, even help protect them, when Mother Nature grew brutal.

My mother was unreliable, her dark moods sometimes turning her into a stranger, but Torrance never was. She was a source of comfort and calm, always exactly where she was supposed to be: in front of the green screen at four o'clock and then again at twelve-minute intervals. Friday nights, she hosted a half-hour show called Halestorm that focused on in-depth climate trends, and I'm not ashamed of the party invites I turned down so I could watch it live. I even bleached my red hair blond in eighth grade to look more like her, nearly burning off my scalp in the process.

Even when my own moods dimmed in a way that sometimes matched my mom's, the earliest symptoms of the depression I wouldn't get diagnosed until college, my love never wavered.

A couple years later, after all my red had blessedly grown back out, I won a high school journalism award for a story about the life cycle of a solar panel, and Torrance herself presented it to me at the banquet. I was sure I'd faint—I kept pinching the inside of my wrist to make sure I stayed conscious. When she whispered in my ear how much she'd loved the story, there was zero doubt in my mind: I was going to become a meteorologist.

The reality is that working for Torrance Hale is a very different kind of Halestorm.

"Have you seen this?" Torrance slaps a piece of paper on my desk, her ivory-painted nails trembling with the indignity of it. "It's unacceptable, right? I'm not losing my mind?"

After three years at KSEA, I'm still intimidated by Torrance,

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especially when she's in full makeup—the kind that looks natural on camera but creepy when you're two feet away from someone's over-blushed, over-eyeshadowed face. As always, her mouth is slicked with her signature lipstick, a shade of cherry red that costs \$56 per tube. I used to beg my mother for it every year for my birthday, with no luck. When I finally bought it as an adult, I realized it was garbage with my complexion. Such is life as a pale redhead: keep us out of the sun and away from half the color wheel.

I unzip my jacket and hang it on my cubicle hook. Although technically, we're not supposed to call them cubicles. During orientation, HR stressed to me that this was a “low-partition office,” which is . . . basically cubicles, but the walls aren't as high. It was a recent redesign; the staff had been unhappy with cubicles, and an expert had come in and made all these changes designed to increase productivity. I'm not sure if it increased productivity, but it definitely increased people talking about how it's supposed to increase productivity.

It's eight o'clock, meaning the morning show just ended. All over the newsroom in our Belltown station, people are hunched over their desks beneath too-bright fluorescents and a bank of TVs, the one tuned to KSEA currently airing an ad for a carpet cleaner with a too-catchy jingle. On a typical day, I'd be a few hours from the end of my shift, but Torrance is presenting at some gala tonight. As a minor Seattle celebrity, she's always getting invitations like this, and while I've grown out of my obsession with her, the city hasn't.

Without looking at the piece of paper and even without the warning from Russell, I'd know who's behind this unacceptable behavior: Seth Hasegawa Hale, KSEA 6 news director. Torrance's ex-husband.

I chance a peek at it.

Rachel Lynn Solomon

Please finish milk before opening new carton to avoid waste. Two containers are already open and more than half full. The environment thanks you. —SHH

Classic Seth. With our general manager a year from retirement and completely checked out, Seth's taken it upon himself to run the station as he sees fit, often in the form of passive-aggressive signs like this one. The irony that his initials are SHH isn't lost on me.

I'm not sure which of Torrance's questions to answer first. "I hadn't seen it yet," I settle on. "Maybe he didn't know it was yours?"

"He knows perfectly well that I've been off dairy for years and soy gives me hives. I'm the only one who drinks the oat milk. This was very clearly directed at me," she says, sparing me from having to take a side in the Great Milk Debate. She leans her hip against my desk, her form-fitting blue dress wrinkle-free even after having been on the air since four in the morning, her blond hair tumbling past her shoulders. At fifty-five, Torrance is, and I say this with a tremendous amount of respect for her as a scientist, smoking hot.

"He can't just do this and expect all of us to fall in line the way he wants," she continues. "If he wants to talk about saving the planet, then he should trade in that SUV he's driving. Or stop wasting all this paper."

I'm fairly certain this isn't about the environment at all, but I won't pretend to understand the intricacies of the Hales' relationship. From what I've heard, they were miserable for a while before they divorced five years ago. I don't love Seth's signs, either—really could have done without the one in the bathroom reminding us that the plumbing is too delicate to handle tampons—but I imagine I'd love them a lot less if I used to be married to him.

I do my best to stay optimistic. Upbeat. "He did say 'please,' at

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least? And I drink the oat milk sometimes, too . . . maybe it was more of a general note?" I have never had the oat milk.

"Is everything okay over here?"

Seth is striding toward us, hands in the pockets of his navy slacks, hem of his matching jacket swaying as he walks. Posture relaxed, chin tilted upward just slightly. Completely unbothered by his ex-wife's distress. He looks so innocent, he might as well be whistling a tune and wearing a cap at a jaunty angle.

"What do you think?" Torrance asks sweetly, snatching up the sign with her thumb and index finger and dangling it in front of his face. "You realize people might actually do what you want them to if you asked them nicely, right? Instead of this passive-aggressive bullshit?"

"What a shock that I'd want to put it in writing instead of dealing with this," Seth says, monotone. While he's not as imposing as Torrance, he's well past six feet, black hair graying at the temples in that distinguished way only men seem able to pull off, though I'd love to think I could rock a gray streak someday.

Everyone at my old station in Yakima, my first full-time job out of college after I double-majored in atmospheric sciences and communications at the University of Washington, felt like one big family. Maybe the problem here is that the Hales are too much like a dysfunctional one.

As the news director, Seth should be chief meteorologist Torrance's boss, but because of their history and her seniority, she's directly underneath our GM, a man named Fred Wilson whom I have spoken to exactly twice. Given that Wilson's third-floor office stays locked most of the day—when he bothers to show up, which he didn't even do for the seventy-fifth birthday party we threw him last month—this essentially puts Torrance on equal footing with Seth.

The two of them are willing to run this station right into the ground, as long as it means one of them comes out on top.

“I don’t need to be micromanaged, Seth,” Torrance says. “What I put in and take out of the fridge is my own business.”

Seth crosses his arms over his chest, which he probably does in part to show off the way his ridiculous biceps strain against the fabric of his jacket. Sometimes I think Torrance and Seth are locked in a battle to prove who’s winning their divorce. I imagine them at gyms on opposite sides of the city, panting on treadmills while personal trainers shout at them to go faster. “Can’t say being a team player has ever been your strong suit.”

“And not being a massive prick has never been yours.”

I bring a hand to my throat and rub my thumb along the tiny lightning bolt at the end of my necklace. The charm is about the size of my pinky nail and hammered gold, a gift from my mother when I graduated from college. A rare day she seemed truly happy. I want to disappear between my low-partition walls, but the whole point of them is that you kind of can’t.

“I’m just going to—” I start, but Torrance suddenly stands straighter, something catching her attention across the room, in her office. She marches over there and, in one swift motion, tugs a sheet of paper off her computer monitor. Another sign.

“Be sure to turn off your office lights to conserve power when you’re not using them?” Did you put this in my office when I was on the air?”

“I wanted to make sure you’d see it,” Seth says with an innocent shrug.

Maybe Seth’s requests aren’t entirely unreasonable, even if his method is. Yes, they’re petty, but Torrance does have a way of forgetting her surroundings when she’s at work. On camera, she’s poised and professional, but off it, she’s a bit of a mess. Too often, I’ve swept

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trash off her desk, tidied her makeup in the dressing room, watered the plants in her office. If her ficus is thriving, it's not because of her. It's probably not the best way of getting my boss to pay attention to me, but at the very least, I figure I've prevented a couple Hale v. Hale brawls.

Torrance storms back over to my desk, sign balled in her fist. "That is such a blatant invasion of privacy, I don't even know where to start." She juts her chin toward me. "What do you think, Abrams? Can you imagine if I put up signs in the weather center saying, 'Be sure to check the National Weather Service' or 'Don't forget to smile when you're on the air'? Would you appreciate being treated like a child?"

Again, I get the feeling anything I say is going to be the wrong answer.

"Maybe the weather center would be run much more efficiently if you cleaned it up every once in a while," Seth says. "I don't know how any of you can work like that. That place is a pigsty."

"Because I just finished my shift!"

"Excuse me," I say, backing out of my chair and grabbing my bag, but they're no longer listening to me. If they ever were.

The farther I get from them, the easier I can breathe, but their voices follow me down the hall. I probably could have come in later, since I won't be on camera until three, but I'm an early riser to my core. And I could use some therapeutic alone time with my hair straightener—I've never quite mastered my natural curls and have to iron my shoulder-length hair into submission before each broadcast—and newest eye shadow palette. The people at Sephora adore me. I've been a VIB Rouge since before I could legally drink.

My usual shift may require getting up at 2:30 in the morning, but there's one benefit that wasn't listed in the job description: Torrance and Seth are never there.

On my way to the dressing room, I catch Russell leaving the Dug-out, which is what they call the office where the sports team sits. Morning anchor Chris Torres told me—bitterly—they got their own office because one time they were throwing around a football and hit an unsuspecting reporter in the head, but I’m pretty sure that’s just a rumor. All I know is that they have their own office, and on days like this, I kind of hate them for it.

I gesture to his empty coffee mug. “Heading back to the scene of the crime?”

Russell’s in a charcoal jacket that matches the sky outside, a blue dress shirt underneath. He’s a big guy, broad-shouldered and soft-angled, light brown hair usually gelled for the camera, but this morning it’s a little unruly. Probably got caught in the rain on his way to the office.

“I warned you,” he says, glancing over my shoulder to make sure no one’s around to overhear us. “How bad was it?”

“They’re children. No, wait, that’s not fair to children.” I pause next to a flyer reminding us to RSVP for the office holiday party this Friday, which will be at a swanky downtown hotel. Already RSVPed, already dreading going without a plus-one. “I have half a mind to go into the kitchen and dump out the rest of her oat milk.”

“She’d just blame Seth.” His mouth tips into a grin. “Actually, maybe we should use this to our advantage. We could probably do just about anything, and they’d assume it was the other person.”

“You distract them, and I’ll take the milk.”

“Deal,” he says, blue eyes bright behind his rectangular black glasses. He has the longest lashes I’ve ever seen. If I had lashes like that, I wouldn’t be nearly as beloved by my local Sephora. “Well—good luck out there.” He motions toward the kitchen, giving me a kind but somewhat muted smile.

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“Right. You too.”

Russell and I should share a camaraderie of the both-our-bosses-are-assholes variety, but our work friendship hasn’t evolved much beyond this. He mostly keeps to himself in the Dugout, friendly with his sports colleagues but surface-level pleasant with everyone else. How was your weekend, polite smile, moving on. He ends conversations too quickly, and I’ve never been able to get a solid read on him beyond the fact that he might be as miserable as I am.

Except he has a door to shut it all out.

“AS YOU CAN see, we have increasing rain and wind in store for your afternoon commute,” I say, moving my hand across the green screen behind me. On the monitor in front of me and in viewers’ homes, it’s a map of western Washington. “Overnight, we’ll be seeing more showers, with temperatures in the low-to-mid-forties.”

Most of my weather hits are thirty seconds, but for this longer one, I have two minutes on the clock. I think of it as building a story: I start with a live satellite view of the region to show what’s happening right now, and then I explain it through air patterns and pressure systems. I always wrap up by talking about the week ahead.

“We’ll be heating up to the mid-fifties tomorrow, thanks to a warm front that’s moving in. Behind that, though”—the graphic shifts to a model that shows what’s happening off the coast—“we have a stronger cold front that will be marching through western Washington on Wednesday that’s going to increase our wind speeds, with gusts of up to sixty miles per hour and possible power outages. We’ll continue to keep an eye on that, so be sure to keep checking in with us as we fine-tune our forecast.”

The screen switches again, this time to this week’s forecast.

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“Here’s your seven-day forecast, and as you can see, there’s not a whole lot of variation. It’s going to be wet and windy, with *maybe* a chance of a sunbreak Friday afternoon. It’s December in the Pacific Northwest, after all.” I bite back a laugh, playing with the audience as I deliver the week’s highs and lows. “And it looks like next Monday’s system could be another rainy, windy one.”

“And you sound positively gleeful about it,” says Gia DiAngelo in my earpiece as I walk over to the anchor desk and sit down, the same way I do every morning with Chris Torres.

“I can’t help it, Gia. I’m a Seattleite through and through.” I hold up my arms, still grinning. “There’s rainwater in these veins instead of blood.”

It’s a running joke that while most meteorologists—most people in general—get excited when sun is in the forecast, I’m the opposite. Contrary to popular belief, it doesn’t rain here as much as people think. New Orleans and Miami get more annual precipitation, while the Pacific Northwest tends to get more rainy days on average. Still, there’s something about rain in Seattle that’s deeply romantic.

Gia chuckles and faces the teleprompter again. “We’ll hear more from Ari soon. I’m sure everyone wants to know how all of this will affect their holiday plans. Coming up next: a local woman thought she’d found her dream home—but when she started renovations, the police showed up to tell her the house wasn’t actually hers. Kyla Sutherland investigates.”

And cut to commercial.

I’m still buzzing with adrenaline when we go off the air. It almost makes me forget the fact that my boss barely notices I exist, unless she needs me to cover a shift. Just once, I’d like her to say, “Ooh, this really meaty climate story would be great for Ari, go ahead and take the lead on it.”

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“Always nice having you here in the afternoons,” Gia says, pulling a compact from her pocket to check that every strand of her glossy black hair is in place. “Even when you’re giving us bad news.”

“Rain isn’t bad news, Gia,” I say in a singsong, switching off the mic clipped to my dress and heading for the newsroom to refill my water bottle during this ten-minute break.

Torrance is in her office, gleefully feeding a stack of Seth’s signs through a paper shredder.

Instead of allowing it to get to me, I square my shoulders and stop by the cluster of intern desks in the draftiest part of the newsroom, telling them how glad all of us at KSEA are to have them here, and if they ever have questions about broadcasting or about the weather, they can feel free to ask me any time. Their strange looks are worth it for the way the tension eases in my chest, ever so slightly.

“Does anyone know how to fix a paper shredder?” Torrance yells. They say don’t meet your heroes. Don’t work for them, either.

3



FORECAST: *Take shelter and brace for Hurricane Torrance*

“WELL . . . THEY TRIED,” I say.

“Did they, though?” asks traffic reporter Hannah Stern, pushing aside a tree branch.

We lean closer to inspect the Christmas tree in the hotel ballroom—more specifically, the single menorah ornament, dangling in all its blue-and-silver glory behind a surfing Santa carrying a red bag. Seems like an inefficient way to deliver gifts, but okay.

“It’s one more Jewish decoration than last year,” I say, searching for a positive. And because beaming out a compliment always seems to help, I gesture to Hannah’s gold T-strap heels. “And I’m obsessed with your shoes.”

This Jew is not backing down from a Christmas party, especially since it took me three hours to get ready. I straightened my hair before worrying it looked like I was trying too hard, so I spritzed it with water and scrunched to bring back the waves. Then I took out my flat

Weather Girl

iron to add more curl to the ends, burning my palm in the process and rushing to the kitchen for an ice pack. All I found was an overpriced Amy's ravioli I'd been saving for a special occasion. It's quite sad, how much I've been looking forward to that ravioli, which I bought during my first post-Garrison grocery trip. My life may not be on the right track if the sole bright spot is a box of frozen pasta.

Maybe that billboard really was an omen.

The hotel ballroom is decked with garlands, snowflakes, and multicolor lights, a band onstage playing "Jingle Bell Rock." Our holiday party is Seattle black tie, which means you can get away with wearing jeans. I tried on no fewer than four outfits before settling on the black lace dress I wore for my engagement party. I'm giving it new life, freeing it of its association with my ex. To further sell that to myself, I swapped my usual lightning bolt necklace for a vintage pin Alex found at an antique shop and gave as a birthday gift one year, a little gemstone-dotted cloud. It was missing half the jewels, so I scoured Etsy and Seattle bead shops to fix it and strung on a few blue crystals for rain. I am nothing if not tragically predictable. That repair mission grew into a full-fledged hobby, one that takes up half my kitchen table, complete with an entire drawer unit and all kinds of tools I wouldn't have known the names of a year ago, and relaxes me when the world is too much.

I'm doing great! is what this outfit says, only I'm not exactly sure who it's declaring it to. Maybe I'm trying to prove it to myself.

Hannah and I are the only two Jews at KSEA, though because Hannah works afternoons, we don't often cross paths. As a result, we haven't broached the gap between work friends and outside-of-work friends, which is starting to feel like a pattern with me. Maybe I'm the common denominator, which would require a whole lot of self-reflection I'm not sure I'm ready for.

I follow her back to a table with her boyfriend Nate and a few other reporters, at which point it becomes clear that I'm one of the only people at this party who didn't bring their partner. Despite my comfort on camera, I've never been naturally outgoing, able to strike up a conversation with strangers. I don't have my forecasts and graphics as a safety net.

"Any chance of snow this year?" Gia DiAngelo's husband asks me, in that good-natured way you ask someone you know precisely one thing about. I imagine it's similar to asking a doctor acquaintance whether they'll take a look at a mole on your inner thigh.

"All my models are predicting warmer weather than usual," I say. "If we get snow this winter, I don't think it's going to be in December."

He lets out a long sigh, like rising global temperatures are my fault. "My kids'll be disappointed. Just once, I'd like to have a white Christmas." He waves a hand at the fake snow that's part of the table's centerpiece. "Wouldn't that be something? Get everyone on the air wearing Santa hats, too—I bet viewers love that."

"They absolutely do," I say with a false smile. Hannah's on my other side, talking animatedly to our weekend meteorologist, AJ Benavidez. I stand to head for the buffet. "Excuse me." The line is already long because there are few things that get a roomful of adults excited like free food. To be fair, I am one of those adults.

I realize I live in a city with a Jewish population of less than two percent, but the assumption that everyone celebrates Christmas has never not rubbed at me like the softest sweater's sharp-edged tag. This time of year, it's nearly constant. I've been the only person ever not wearing a Santa hat during a broadcast, and our social media blew up with accusations that I hated America.

"Weather girl," someone says from behind me in line, and I feel