



Weathering With You

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PROLOGUE

The Story I Heard from You

Beneath a rainy March sky, the long whistle signals that the ferry is leaving port.

As the ship's enormous hull plows through the seawater, the heavy vibrations travel through my seat to the rest of me.

My ticket is for the second-class cabin, the one closest to the bottom of the ship. The voyage to Tokyo will take more than ten hours, and we'll be arriving at night. This is the second time in my life that I've made this very trip, on this ferry. I stand up, heading for the stairs to the deck terrace.

The first time was two and a half years ago. After what happened while I was in the city, rumors about me had started circulating at school: *They say he's got a record and I hear he's still wanted by the cops.* Being the subject of gossip didn't bother me (in fact, I'd be more surprised if I wasn't), but I hadn't told anyone on the island about what had happened in Tokyo that summer. I'd said a few things here and there, but I hadn't told a soul—not my parents, not my friends, not the police—about the really important stuff. Now I'm headed for Tokyo again, with everything that happened that summer inside me.

Now that I'm eighteen, I'm going to settle there for good.

And I'm going to see her again.

Those thoughts always create heat behind my ribs. My cheeks are flushing, little by little. I want to be out in the sea wind as soon as possible, and I start climbing the stairs faster.

Up on the deck terrace, the cold air strikes me full in the face, bringing rain with it. I draw a deep breath, trying to drink it all in. The wind is still chilly, but it's filled with the promise of spring. I've finally graduated from high school—and the reality of it belatedly strikes home, like a notification coming in late. I rest my elbows on the deck railing, gazing at the receding island, then shift my focus to the windswept sky. Countless raindrops dance through the air for as far as I can see, way off into the distance.

Just then—I shudder, breaking out in goose bumps all over.

It's happening again. I squeeze my eyes shut involuntarily. As I stand there, stock-still, the rain hits my face, and the sound of it echoes in my ears. For the past two and a half years, the rain has been a constant presence. It's like a pulse that never stops, no matter how long you hold your breath. Like the light seeping through your eyelids, no matter how tightly you squeeze them shut. Like a heart that never falls truly silent, no matter how you try to calm it.

Exhaling slowly, I open my eyes.

Rain.

The black surface of the ocean undulates as if it's taking a breath, sucking the rain down into its bottomless depths. It's as though the sky and sea are conspiring together to raise the level of the ocean, for the sake of some practical joke. I'm getting scared. A shiver wells up from deep inside me. I feel like I'm going to be ripped apart and scattered.

I squeeze the railing. Breathe deeply through my nose. And, as always, I remember her. Her wide eyes, her vibrant expression, the energetic and dynamic tone of her voice, the long hair she wore in twin ponytails. And I think, *It's all right*. She's here. She's alive, in Tokyo. As long as she's here, I have a firm link to this world.

“—*So don't cry, Hodaka.*”

That was what she said that night, in the hotel we'd fled to in Ikebukuro. The sound of the rain on the roof was like a distant drum. The scent of the same shampoo I'd used; her gentle, all-forgiving voice; her skin, gleaming pale in the darkness—they're all so vivid that suddenly, I forget I'm not still there. Maybe we're actually in that hotel right now, and I've only imagined my future self on a ferry, like a spell of *déjà vu*. Maybe yesterday's graduation ceremony and the ferry are all illusions, and the real me is still in bed at that hotel. When I wake up in the morning, the rain will have stopped, she'll be next to me, the world will be as it always was, and the ordinary daily routine will start up again.

The whistle blows sharply.

No, that's not true. I focus on the texture of the iron railing, and the smell of the tide, and the vague silhouette of the island that has almost vanished over the horizon. It's not true; this isn't that night. That happened a long time ago. This me, the one rocking on the ferry, is the real one. *I'll think about it, really think about it, and remember it all from the very beginning*, I think as I glare at the rain. Before I see her again, I have to understand what happened to us. Or even if I can't understand it, I at least have to think it through.

What did happen to us? What did we choose? And what should I say to her?

It all started— Yeah, it was probably that day.

The day she first saw it. What happened that day, what she told me about, was the beginning of everything.

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