

Something Strange About the Rain

By Ellis Rhoades

There's something strange about the rain tonight, the aging woman thought.

She watched rivulets slip down her window, considering the first few drops that foretold a storm. Was it the rate of fall? The weight? The cadence? Was there something less than random in the rain, or was she imagining things? She tracked each solitary bead as it fell through a gathering veil of mist.

Lights from the town below glowed softly. She watched them distort as a raindrop slithered down the windowpane, blurring her vision. The rain had only just begun. Soon dusk would give way to dark. Evening would be upon her, a time of peace with the *pit pat pat* of sprinkles and the low, calm chatter of clouds drifting down to earth, speaking in ancient and mysterious tongues. She almost smiled. Almost.

How she had enjoyed nights like these, once.

The woman rose from her seat by the window with a sigh of age, glad it was not yet a groan.

That will be the day...

She stretched and breathed deeply, then started across the thickly carpeted cedar floor of her house. She passed the open hearth on her left, noting with satisfaction the robust store of wood piled near it for just such an occasion as this. She believed in preparing for the worst, not with hope or gallantry, but stolidly and with as little fuss as possible. Life was like people—wild, unpredictable, sly at the best of times,

always trying to gain the upper hand. The graying woman knew little of people or of life, except that she would not be prevailed over by either of them.

She stepped to the small kitchen at the far right corner of the great room, drawing water from the sink into a pitcher that sat ready alongside a copper kettle and her favorite teacup. Taking the kettle from its place on the counter, she strode to the open hearth, set it down, and snatched a small box from its position atop the mantle. With practiced ease she struck a match upon the side of the box. She coaxed kindling to life under the stacks of pine she had prepared hours ago. She breathed flame into the wood and, in no time at all, had a healthy blaze stirring in the fireplace. Leaving the kettle in its holder above the flame, she returned to the kitchen to prepare dinner.

An hour later—and less three cups of tea—she sat back down in her worn chair by the window. She stared out as the drizzle of rain turned to a steady shower, alternately sipping soup from a spoon and tea from her fourth and (probably) final cup. She was cozy and warm. But not content. As a child she had stared out windowpanes onto scenes just like this one, drinking in pure life. All she'd had a mind for then was the rain—its beauty and its mystery. Now memories invaded her peace. She peered outside, but somehow, the view always led inward.

Oh, John, you bastard. I miss you. You said I would, and I miss you.

Heart-lover, soul-waker. Wife-beater, oathbreaker. All these things were John. All these things the graying woman saw in the rain that danced outside her window.

And then she saw a man.

He was tall, broad-shouldered, muscular, with generous features and a full, black beard. The man was utterly unfamiliar to the graying woman. A loose red shirt clung to

his skin and jeans, wet straight through, dripping as he trudged up the hill in a wandering fashion, glancing this way and that as if he were drunk. It was plain to see he'd been drenched, but the rain was only showering yet—he must have come a long way to end up in such a sorry state.

The woman squinted at the man long enough to determine that, despite his meandering path, he was coming closer, headed for the house. Well, he would just have to make his way back down the hill. No stranger would find shelter in her home. She resented the popularity of the term “unexpected guests.” People had the gall to pretend it was something other than an oxymoron.

The woman rose from her seat, closed the curtains, and locked the front door firmly. Then, because it was the only way of guaranteeing she wouldn't be seen or heard, she strode to the far left corner of the great room, through the door, and into her bedroom.

It was a sparse affair, very different from the richly carpeted and well-proportioned great room. The bed was small, even for a slim woman, and the dresser and nightstand matched it. A faded photograph sat on the nightstand. Its frame was turned toward the wall so no one could see it short of leaning over and picking it up. At the thought of that face—the still image she'd never had the courage or wit to throw out—the woman briefly considered locking her bedroom door as well.

Then she shook her head and laughed wryly. Whoever he was, this mystery man would have to have an axe or two to get through the heavy oak of the front door. And if that were the case, there was little barricading herself in her room would do. Besides, it was childish to run from a stranger on one's own property. If there was anything the

graying woman had grown to hate, it was the kind of puerile silliness that children so adored and ought as soon as possible to grow out of.

That thought did it. If the mystery man wanted in, he'd not find an occupied house with a mute owner. No, she'd give him what-for if he insisted. The water left in the tea kettle might still be hot enough to scald...

With that thought to cheer her, she shook her head and walked back out to the great room, chin held high. Just as she was about to resume her place in the chair, there came a knock on the door. The woman froze, all her dignity forgotten. The knocking came again, harder this time.

"Hello?" a gruff voice boomed from outside. "Anybody home?"

The graying woman rallied herself. "Yes, I am at home," she snapped. "What does it matter to you?"

"To me?" the man echoed dumbly.

"Yes, you—a stranger at my door. You're not welcome."

"Ah, well, begging your pardon—"

"I said you're not welcome. Not in the least!"

"Now hold on a minute there. I just come to ask ya—"

"Ask someone else!"

The graying woman was now half-frustrated, half-entertained by the exchange. She prepared herself to deal out what her father would have called a real zinger. "See here," she went on haughtily, "pester me for an answer and I swear you'll find that what you don't know really *can* hurt you!"

A long, awkward silence. Then a sigh so deep the graying woman could hear it from inside.

“Oh, woman, you’ve a harsh tongue! But I mean ya no harm an’ as little inconvenience as ya wish.”

“Then off with you! You’re sullyin’ my peace and defiling my doorstep with your uninvited supplications.” The graying woman had been to university. She’d made little enough use of her degree, but through its acquisition she’d gained a knack for words—a skill that allowed her to communicate practically anything while sounding both official and imperious. She liked sounding official—and imperious. Especially in conversation with strange men.

Yet, few women can keep a cool head in a heated confrontation, and those who can likely did not learn the skill from their husbands.

“But ya gotta listen!”

“No, I—”

“I been lookin’ for someo—”

“Look somewhere else!”

“She means the world to me an’—”

“Don’t care!”

“Ya gotta care,” the man bellowed, “she’s my *wife*!”

The graying woman ceased her volley of words.

“She’s my wife,” the man repeated in lower tones, his frustration plunging into tearful despair. “An’ I don’t know where she run off to. I been tryin’ a find her, but things got so muddled... ah, woman, won’t ya tell me if ya saw her?”

“What... does she look like?” came the meager reply.

In the stranger’s tone lay the kind of longing, enchantment, and unbridled passion that only a man deeply in love could ever hope to display. “She’s the prettiest thing under the moon, ma’am, maybe in all the world. You couldn’t miss her if you tried. What with her rosy cheeks, those flowin’ yella dresses, that raven hair and green eyes like the forest in spring...”

The graying woman bowed her head as her opponent’s words struck home. Then she stared out at the rain through a crack in the curtain’s covering. It was coming down harder and harder...

She unbarred the door.

“Oh for the love of god,” she said, swinging the heavy oak back, “come in!”

The man stared at her for a moment, dazed and surprised. Then he took his chance. He trundled inside, almost having to duck his head to fit the entryway.

He’s a lot bigger in here than he looked out there...

The graying woman had more than a few second thoughts as the stranger dripped his way inside, but the deed was done. She’d cast her lot, and now she’d double down until the doubling paid off—or didn’t. Such had been her way from a little girl.

She led the man over toward the fire, which by now had dwindled. Waving off his thanks as well as an offer to handle the wood, she slung more logs into the hearth, snatched up the poker, and put it to good use. It took considerable time and effort to coax the fire back to full blaze—time in which the man could have asked about his wife. But he sat still with a befuddled expression on his face, as if the last minute’s

conversation had been too much for him. Clearly, the drenching rain—or the strain of parting from his love—had been more troubling for this stranger than the graying woman supposed. She glanced at the deep lines of worry on his forehead. To her own surprise, and for the second time, she took pity on him.

When she'd made the man comfortable—heaped blankets on a chair for him to sit, poured him the last cup of tea (a gallant sacrifice), and waited for his clothes to dry, she broached the subject briskly.

“Now then, sir. Your wife. You tell me you've lost her?”

The man stared blankly at her for a moment. “Ah... yes.”

The woman waited for more. No more, apparently, was forthcoming. Perhaps the man was now uncomfortable, here in a stranger's house, the courage of desperation slipping away. Some tactful encouragement might be in order.

The woman put on a smile, though she couldn't keep the sarcasm from her voice. “Your wife, you said, sir. Your great love, woman of green eyes and ebon tresses...”

That seemed to stir him.

“Yes, yes!” He looked about, as if unsure of his surroundings. “My... wife... she was with me down by the market. Jus' an hour ago, two, eh... maybe three.”

The graying woman narrowed her eyes. “Then why aren't you looking for her there?”

“‘Cuz I *have* looked,” the man said, desperation tinging his voice again. “As sure as I see this very room, I looked, an' she was nowhere to be found!”

"I understand," the woman said slowly, gently, hoping to calm the man's nerves.

"Let's think together. You live here in town, yes?"

The man nodded. "Not long. We been here ever since the mill to the south shut down, but we got a place, sure."

"And... she's not at home?"

The man shook his head. "Firs' place I looked after town."

"Then where else might she be?"

The man considered. Then he raised a finger. "We were at the market."

The graying woman nodded slowly and tried to keep from rolling her eyes. "Yes, you told me that already. Where were you planning to go afterward?"

"Jus' the market. Then home. We needed... something. Some fruit, a dress, I dunno. She's the one with a head for shoppin' around."

"Did you check the whole town? All the shops? And the library? And the square?"

"I think so."

The graying woman squinted at the man. He was either remarkably slow, or remarkably daft. "You *think* so? You're not sure? You didn't check every last one of them?"

"I looked an' looked, sure I musta looked everywhere!"

The woman sighed. "Alright. But couldn't you get anyone else to help?"

"Well, that's when everythin' started ta get muddled, ya see. I asked around some, but nobody seemed too friendly with the storm brewin'. Then I called for her, an' she didn't answer."

“So you, what, picked a direction, wandered off up the hills, and came to my house utterly by chance? What were you hoping to accomplish?”

The man stared at her sheepishly. “I... was lookin’ for a friendly type.”

The graying woman took a deep, calming breath. She’d been a Catholic, once, but she was sure that even the Good Samaritan hadn’t had to put up with something like *this*. Still, the man had obviously tried what he could think of, and he was visibly distressed. Strange beyond wondering that no one had been willing to help him besides herself. She put a hand to her chin in thought. Had the man’s wife not been within earshot when he called? That seemed odd, if this had been their only errand. If he’d gone around the whole town calling her name, then—

The graying woman shook her head violently. “Goodness man, you still haven’t told me. What was her name?”

Immediately the burly man burst into tears. “That’s the trouble,” he wailed. “I don’t remember!”

Two hours later—or perhaps three, one could barely keep track under such absurd circumstances—the graying woman sat at her window again, watching the now-pounding rain. She’d quizzed the stranger most of that time and gained little for her efforts. He seemed to be suffering from either some intense variety of mental impairment or a peculiar case of amnesia. However, given that he claimed such conditions had never plagued him before, neither option seemed tenable. Then again,

perhaps the man had always had some kind of condition. Perhaps he just couldn't remember!

The graying woman shook her head and went back over the story she'd been told so far. The man and his wife had set out from home—on foot, they lived nearby—to go into town and buy something. That seemed an ironclad fact. As they'd been shopping, the man claimed they had never split up, as it wasn't their habit to do so.

Ah, the happily married. Those were grand days...

When the rain began the couple had redoubled their efforts to get home for fear of being caught in the storm. That's when they had split up, finally, to save time, and *that* is when they'd lost each other. The man had crossed a street or two to a different shop, then returned to the arranged meeting place, but his wife never appeared. Thinking perhaps he'd heard wrong where to meet, or that his watch was running too fast or too slow, the man had waited a brief time before charging back out into the rain to find his wife. He'd gone from shop to shop and searched for hours. He claimed the confusion had begun at this point. Perhaps he'd been distressed with the lingering thought of his wife, not at all dressed for the elements, stuck alone somewhere in the cold. Such fearful thoughts could drown out all others. But surely someone should have helped!

The man claimed the whole town had been in such a hurry that no one had been willing to listen. They'd told him to find his wife in the morning and seek shelter from the gathering storm. How cowardly. How mean! Were all those people really that afraid of a little water?

The graying woman shook her head again and sighed. The very storm the townsfolk had sought to avoid was now battering at the house. The rain had begun to

well and truly sheet, and the wind was alarming. Still, it was nothing a smidge of courage couldn't overcome. The temperatures may have been plummeting now, but one didn't freeze in an instant, especially early in the day at the height of spring. Weren't conditions like these exactly what men always claimed so boldly they'd been made for?

That's the trouble with the masculine sex. They always boast but never act.

The graying woman startled guiltily at her own thought, turning to the half-asleep form of the poor husband who'd wandered onto her doorstep in earnest search for his wife. He'd done what a man should. He *was* courageous, if a bit vexed and denser than usual. He'd shown himself a devoted fellow. A good man. Better than—

Well. Better than most.

As she continued to think, the graying woman studied the rain. There was still something strange about it, an unnatural quality that was impossible to explain. She'd watched storms like this many times, but never seen the rain fall so. It didn't just slant with the wind, but swirled, almost like snow. She imagined she saw patterns in those dancing drops—hints of shapes and figures fading in and out of vision. But every time she blinked, they were gone.

A faint groan emanated from behind the graying woman. Turning, she saw that the stranger had woken from a brief slumber and was now blinking in the shadows cast by the dying fire. He took a deep breath and stretched, then settled his arms back onto the chair rests with a sigh. Was he falling back asleep? No, for suddenly, he frowned. Slowly, his gaze turned to his left hand. He seemed to deflate, then. Perhaps it was the sight of the simple gold ring; perhaps it was the lack of another warm hand in his.

Apparently, he'd remembered his situation. But there was little that could be done—not now, as the storm redoubled and night fell with the rain. He shouldn't worry so. Doubtless someone had helped his poor wife to reasonable shelter and a good meal, even if they'd been curt with him. One simply did not leave a lady out in the rain.

The graying woman beckoned the man out of his melancholy with a soft voice. "I see you're awake. Are you alright?"

The man stared at her with an expression that said "no" as clearly as if he'd spoken.

"Well, there's nothing we can do now. We'll just have to wait and see. Would you like to watch the rain with me? I find it calming—most of the time."

The man grunted and pulled his chair toward the window. He stared out the panes for a long minute, then squinted, as if something had caught his eye.

"Odd, isn't it?" the graying woman said. "Have you ever seen rain like that before?"

The man blinked. "No. Not ever. It's... strange." Without warning, he jerked up in his seat. "Hey! I remembered somethin'!"

The graying woman leaned in, a new urgency in her voice. "What? Something useful? Something about your wife?"

"Something... something." The man's eyes went glassy again, and it appeared he was already beginning to forget. But he stared out the window and seemed to get ahold of it again. He went on in a low voice.

“My wife said somethin’ about the rain. Said people ‘round here call it strange too. They tell stories about the rain, say it’s dangerous. They say if you walk out in’t, no one knows what could happen to you. Folks’ve been lost, they say.”

Outside, a peel of thunder lit up the night, punctuating the man’s words eerily. The downpour showed no signs of stopping. The wind whipped rain into frenzied flurries that beat against the window, as if the tempestuous elements were alive, trying their best to get in. But the man stared out into the storm and seemed to find his lost thoughts there.

“That’s why the townfolk wouldn’t help me. That’s why Lucy an’ I never split up! That’s what she was tryin’a *tell* me!”

“Hold on,” the graying woman exclaimed, “and never mind that superstition. You said her name!”

“Whose name? Lucy?”

“There, there, you said it again!”

“Why... I did. I did, didn’t I? I remembered!”

The graying woman laughed aloud. “Yes, yes, at last you have!” And some bemused part of her reflected on the universally acknowledged fact that no one ever remembers anything while trying to do so.

“Lucy! Lucy!” the man cried. “Oh, Lucy! Lucy Everson!”

The graying woman couldn’t stop smiling as she joined in the burly man’s relief. “Yes, Lucy! That’s all you need! You’ll stay with me until the storm blows over. Then, first thing in the morning, set out to town and ask everyone you met yesterday if they’ve

seen a Lucy Everson with black hair and green eyes. It's not a large town, and the sun brings out the best in people. Someone will point your way. You'll be sure to find her!"

The man smiled back with a fierce joy that reminded the graying woman of her youth. But soon the smile faded. The man turned away thoughtfully, almost mournfully, and went back to staring out the window.

"I'll see 'er. I'll find 'er. But it shouldn'a been like this. I remember now—I was the one who suggested we split up. She knew about the rain. She warned me, an' still... do ya think she'll be cross?"

The graying woman considered. She put no stock in the silly superstitions the man had spouted, but if the girl did, there was only one conclusion. The reluctant hostess grinned. "Of course she will. She's a woman, and a wife, no less! She'll probably berate you up and down for hours."

The man turned back in dismay, but when he saw the expression on the graying woman's face, he couldn't suppress a grin of his own. "She probly would, wouldn' she? But Lord knows I'd deserve it, chargin' off like that. Ah, but a lip lashin'd be gentle next ta sittin' here without 'er. Blasted rain! If it weren' for that drizzle, she'da been in my arms tonight!"

The graying woman had been ready to laugh again, but something about what the man said struck a low chord in her. She remembered her own husband, many years ago now, and the nights she'd spent next to fires like this one, wrapped so tightly, so trustingly in her own lover's arms. There had been good years, after all. Years before the fights, the debts, the drink. But she couldn't smile at them anymore. They were so far away, yet too near, too painfully near to forget. All the good memories had turned to

poison within her, sullied by bruises and bitterness. She couldn't hold on to them, but had not the courage or grace to let go. A single tear ran down the graying woman's pale cheek, like rain down shattered glass.

The burly man sobered instantly. "Wha's the matter, woman? Ya alright?"

She wiped the tear from her face and nodded firmly. "I'm fine."

An awkward silence stretched.

"You married, sometime?" the man finally asked. "You a widow?"

The graying woman turned her gaze to the rain-spattered glass. Sometimes it seemed like she'd spent half her life staring out this window. "I could have been. I... would have been."

The burly man puzzled over that for a moment. Then he nodded, understanding. In his young eyes lay a sympathy so deep, all the rain from all the windows in the world could not have filled it.

"I'm sorry. I didn' mean ta... well, an' now I have. I'll just say this. Memories mean somethin'—somethin' good, somethin' bad. For each one you gotta pay. An' Lord knows they ain't cheap."

"I've paid a long time," the graying woman said, staring down at her faded dress and worn shoes, her slender hands that were beginning to wrinkle. "I've paid... everything. I'm tired of paying."

The man nodded slowly. He let the rain beat its staccato rhythm on the window for a while. Then he braved the stony silence.

“Ya been real kind to me here. You got a good somethin’ in yer heart. I don’ know whatchya been through, an’ nobody in this world ever told me I had a lotta wisdom. But I tell ya what I know. When there ain’t no forgettin’... there’s gotta be forgivin’.”

The graying woman did not look up. “Forgiveness?” She laughed a low, bitter laugh. “It’s long past time for that.”

The man shook his head, careful but insistent. “Ain’t past time. Why, time ain’t got nothin’ to do with it.”

“I don’t care,” the woman snapped suddenly. She forgot herself, that she had told this stranger nothing of her pain. “He deserves no forgiveness of mine. He’ll get no appeasement, no surrender from me. On the day it no longer hurts—on that day, I’ll forgive.” Her hands clenched to fists in her lap.

“But it always hurts. Ain’t that the way of it?” And the man spoke of love, but the woman heard only of hate.

“What do you know?” she asked her visitor sharply. “Have you lost your wife—for good, I mean, not for a night, and not because of your own stupidity?”

Her harsh words tore into the man this time, as none had before. He glanced away. The graying woman forged on.

“Just you wait. It’ll be your turn one day. Or maybe you’ll get lucky, and you’ll love that Lucy Everson until you’re in the grave. But I know better. I know the way of a man.”

“Thas’ the trouble, ma’am,” the stranger replied softly. “All you seen is the way of a man. I tell ya there’s a better way, an’ I been tryna walk it.”

The graying woman opened her mouth to reply, but was cut off by the boom of thunder.

She shook her head and cursed at the elements. “I don’t want to forgive. I don’t want to pay. I just want... to forget.” Knowing the words were half a lie. Knowing she had not the strength, for to forget would mean to let go, and there was still that picture frame in the bedroom, the one she’d slept by for nearly twenty years and never touched.

But the man’s story and the words of the townspeople seemed to echo in the graying woman’s ears with the next bolt of lightning and the next crack of thunder, until finally she understood what the stranger sitting next to her had been trying to say—what he had been warned of. And the graying woman thought that maybe she didn’t have to loosen her grip on the love she’d once treasured, or the hate she had nurtured for so long. If she could not release the pain, perhaps she could abandon it.

“Where ya goin’?” the man asked in surprise as she jerked from her chair and all but ran through the deepening shadows of the great room.

The graying woman did not stop to reply as she opened the door to her bedroom and strode to the nightstand. It was only then that she slowed and questioned if she could really do it. With trembling fingers she grasped the picture frame and turned it to display the firm jaw, the blue eyes, the blond hair of the man she’d once loved.

She faltered.

Then she imagined that same handsome face, contorted with rage, in the moments before his fist came hurtling down like a hammer, pounding a younger girl, turning her from youth and stubborn strength to a fragile, trembling nail. A firm resolve took her. She was not that timid, mewling *thing* anymore. She was what she’d always been when life left her unaided and alone. Indomitable.

The graying woman held the picture frame in a firm hand and walked steadily back out the door. The man said something in a concerned tone, but the roaring in her ears drowned out his voice as she crossed the great room. With a yell she threw open the heavy oak of the front door to a new peal of thunder. Wind tore at her skirts and sliced through the thin fabric of her dress. Rain poured through the doorframe like a wave.

With a cry the big man moved to shut the door, but already the graying woman had stepped through. The fierceness of the storm grew tenfold, wind whipping her hair and clothes so fiercely that she wondered if her dress would simply fly off into the night. The rain swirled about her in a maelstrom, soaking her. She could barely see ten feet ahead. She wiped blurred eyes with an arm already so sopping wet that it did more harm than good. The cold was unimaginable, and her steps faltered in the face of it. Dimly, the voice of the man could be heard.

“Stop, woman! Come back! Come back, I say! You’ll lose it all!”

The graying woman slowed but did not stop, shaking her head and parting her lips in a grim smile. “I know.”

Her eyes flashed and she set her jaw against the fury of nature. Her steps grew longer, more determined. They came faster and faster. Then all at once she was running, flying, as if her youth had finally come back to her. She pumped her arms and legs and did not stumble, breathing hard, seeing nothing, feeling everything. The wind blew firm against her like vast ocean tides, the rain so cold it seemed to pierce her skin like needles. She gloried in each shiver, breath, and step. But the effort grew. Her labored breaths turned to gasps. The floodgates of the heavens had been opened so

that sprinting felt like swimming at the bottom of a lake. At last the cold and wet numbed everything—her hands, her feet, her mind.

And she forgot about the oath she'd made to a kind man long ago, the same one a brute had broken five years later. She forgot the golden days they'd spent together, and all the nights she'd cried herself to sleep. So entranced was the dripping woman that she did not notice when the storm-slicked picture frame slipped from her numb fingers.

She ran on.

Only when she could run no longer did she pant her way to a stop and look up. Angry, black clouds blotted out the light of the moon. Lightning flashed like open wounds upon the sky. Trees swayed and bowed, penitents at prayer to an angry god. The rain twisted and eddied, seeming to strike from every direction at once. Here it flashed down. There, inexplicably, it rose, as if the drops had no gravity to themselves. As if the amnesic storm had forgotten which way was up.

The woman smiled, deeply this time and without malice. "I am who I am!" she shouted into the night. "I am who I am!"

All the sharp lines and soft words of the past blurred as the mysterious storm did its work. She threw her memories to the wind, laughed madly until she had no more breath, until she had forgotten the reasons to cry. She forgot the sting of that fierce hand on her cheek, and even the warmth of those tender fingers intertwined with hers. She left it all behind and danced, danced, danced with the rain.

There in the doorway of a house the rain-snatched woman had forgotten stood a man she would never remember. He looked out at the gaping maw of the storm into which that ill-fated woman had run. As she reveled in newness, in losing all her terrible loss, she could not have known with what frank pity he stared out at her disappearing form. He dared not go out to rescue her, for that would be a mighty chance to take, and he had a duty to a lass. He shut the door against the rain and sank back into the chair by the window.

He sighed deeply, unmoving, staring down at the floor. He prayed some, but mostly thought. He thought a long time about the woman, and a long time about how worried his wife must be, wherever she was, and how it hurt to be so far from her arms. Even if she were angry, even if she berated him and shook her fist and tilted her chin up in that haughty way she knew he hated, he would find her and be there for all of it. And the one thought that struck him that stormy night as he considered these things would stay with him for the rest of his life.

Why has no one ever told us?

When we lose the agony of love, we lose the love with it.