

IN THIS RAIN

When I was fifteen, I read in the paper how two teenage boys stoned a flamingo to death at Lincoln Park Zoo. Thirty years later, I think of this as I listen in my bedroom to early morning rain that begins quietly, like a shell held to the ear, but is steady and strong now. I have a sister I no longer talk to, a dead father I quarrel with nightly. He had large hands, my father, and tenderness towards animals, especially birds. Why are his eyes never blue in my dreams, why does he never laugh as he did when he was alive, laugh so hard he could never finish his joke, but would start to cry instead? She was alive when attendants found her, coral plumes scattered and smeared with blood. He did not understand cruelty any more than I do, although we were both capable of administering small, deliberate doses of it to each other. There are things I am not sure we are expected to forgive. There are others we must. I need to walk in this rain.