

Chapter 1 – The Window and the Rain

The rain fell in endless sheets, hammering against the small shack's window. Thunder rumbled through the sky, flashing bright light into the dim room. Sally, a young girl with shimmering silver hair, sat at the sill and stared into the downpour. Droplets traced crooked paths down the glass, blurring the outside world into a shapeless gray. With a sigh, she whispered to herself, "Why does it always rain here? Why is there never any other weather? Living here is boring when all it does is rain."

She rose from the window with a weary slowness. Her clothes were patched and torn, faint stains smudged across the faded fabric. The cramped room behind her left little comfort—just a thin bed, a wobbling dresser, and no real space to call her own. Then, cutting through the storm's noise, came the sharp voice of her mother. "What are you doing in your room? It's time to get the groceries, Sally!"

Sally's hand hesitated on the door handle, but she forced her voice to sound steady. "I was just on my way, Mother." The door creaked open to reveal her family. Outside the shack, on the porch of their larger home, stood her parents—Jenny, tall and severe, and Ken, shorter but equally cold. Her siblings were there too: Zachary, the oldest, smirking as always, and Lina, the youngest, bouncing with impatience. "Don't forget my special cereal," Zachary called. Lina chimed in, "Ooo, get me chips and cookies!"

Sally frowned. "If you want so much, come with me and get it yourself." But her father's glare silenced her. "That's not how you speak to your siblings. You're the middle child—your job is to do all the shopping. They're too busy." Sally swallowed her words, nodded silently, and turned toward the rain-slick street. The storm had no sympathy for her as she trudged toward the grocery store.

Chapter 2 – The Weight of Chores

The supermarket smelled faintly of wet coats and polished floors. Sally moved quietly through the aisles, her basket filling with meat, rice, and vegetables before she added Zachary's cereal and Lina's snacks. Her mind spun with the same bitter thoughts: *What does being the middle child have to do with me doing everything? Why is it always me?*

At the checkout, the cashier's voice broke through her haze. "That'll be \$27.99, miss." Sally's stomach twisted. She pulled crumpled bills from her pocket and whispered, "I only have twenty-five." The cashier frowned sympathetically. "The cookies are the only thing you can leave behind."

Her heart ached as she nodded. "Yes... that's fine. At least they'll still have something." The walk home was heavier than the bags she carried. By the time she reached the house, her

siblings were already waiting around the dining table, eager to see their prizes. Sally unpacked the groceries one by one.

Lina's face darkened. "Where are my cookies?" Sally stammered, "I... I couldn't afford them." Ken slammed his hand against the table. "How dare you come back empty-handed?" Sally's voice cracked. "You didn't give me enough money! It was twenty-eight dollars—" But Jenny's hand flew before she finished, striking her across the cheek. Over and over, the punishment landed until Sally's face burned scarlet. Jenny's voice cut deep. "This is what happens when you fail. If you don't have enough, find a way. You are never to come back missing anything again."

Chapter 3 – Shack of Tears

Dinner that night was a blur. Sally cooked the food, her hands trembling, and placed the plates in front of her family. They ate without thanks, without even acknowledging her existence—until the meal was done. Then came the commands. "Clean the table. Wash the dishes."

When the last dish was scrubbed, she fled back to her shack, shoulders shaking. Alone at last, she collapsed onto her bed. "I hate my life," she sobbed. "No one cares about me. They only mistreat me. My room isn't even in the house—it's just this shack in the yard. They didn't want me with them in their fancy rooms. I'm nothing." Her tears soaked the pillow until exhaustion pulled her into sleep.

Morning came with pounding on her door. "I know you're not sleeping, girl! You have chores," Jenny shouted. Sally stumbled out, her hair tangled, her body sore. "Why must it always be me? Why can't Zachary and Lina help?" she demanded.

"How dare you!" Jenny snapped. "Your siblings are busy pursuing fame. Unlike you, they are worth something." Ken's words struck harder than a slap: "You were born different. Ugly. Not like your siblings." Sally's world tilted. Rage burned in her chest, the sky above cracking open with heavier rain.

Chapter 4 – A Stranger

Her parents announced they'd be away for two days, throwing two crumpled dollars into her hand. "That's for your food. Be grateful," Jenny said. The car drove off, leaving Sally behind. She sighed, finished her chores, then went to take a walk for herself.

She dressed in the nicest clothes she could find: a light blue shirt, white jeans, clean shoes. For once, she felt almost human. At a park, she found a swing set facing a shimmering lake. For the first time in years, her lips curved into a smile. The sun even peeked through the clouds. "Maybe this place will be mine," she whispered.

But as she crossed a street to head home, the sky darkened again. Rain pounded down. A car rushed through a red light—straight at her. Sally froze, but suddenly strong arms shoved her aside. Both she and the stranger tumbled onto the wet sidewalk.

When she opened her eyes, a handsome young man was helping her up. “Are you alright? I didn’t mean to fall on you—I just didn’t want you to be hurt.” Sally blinked through raindrops, her heart pounding. “I’m okay... thanks to you. You saved my life. I’m Sally.” He smiled warmly. “And I’m Max. A beautiful girl like you doesn’t deserve to be hit by a car.” The rain faded, sunlight spilling across them both. In that moment, it was as if the world itself wanted them together.

Chapter 5 – The Storm at Home

For two days, while her family was gone, Sally and Max spent every moment together. The sun lingered in the sky, as though it too had found joy. But when her family’s car returned, Sally’s chest filled with dread. “It’s best if we don’t see each other anymore,” she whispered. Max frowned. “Did I do something wrong?” She shook her head. “No... but if my family finds out, I’ll be punished.”

Back at home, the insults returned sharper than ever. “You’re not only ugly, you’re worthless,” Ken spat. The clouds rolled back in, thunder shaking the walls. Sally clenched her fists. “How do you expect me to make dinner with no money for groceries?” Her voice shook the very air, the storm echoing her fury. Days blurred with shouting, slaps, and bitter arguments.

Then came the final blow. Jenny stood in the doorway, suitcase in hand. “We’re leaving. Your siblings got acting contracts in the States. We don’t have time for someone like you.” Sally froze. “You’re... leaving me?” Her voice cracked. Ken’s reply was cold. “You’re not worth it.”

Chapter 6 – Sunshine at Last

The door shut behind them, their car vanishing down the road. For the first time, Sally’s shack was silent. No shouts. No slaps. Only the sun—brighter than ever before—spilled over the yard. Sally ran to the park, her silver hair glowing in the light. Max was already there, waiting.

“They’re gone!” she cried, breathless with joy. “I’m free!” He caught her in his arms, and together they sank onto the swing set. For once, Sally felt the air was hers.

“Remember when I told you I didn’t understand why it always rained?” she asked softly. Max nodded. Sally’s eyes shone. “I figured it out. The rain was tied to me somehow. When I was sad or hurt, it poured. When I was happy, the sun came out. My parents called me different to shame me, but I was right. My emotions control the weather.”

Max took her hand. "Then let's make every day a sunny one, Sally. You deserve happiness, not storms." She smiled through tears, lifting her face to the sky. "I might not know why I have this power or where it came from, and I do not wish to know. I just want to focus on moving forward with good health and happiness". For once, the clouds stayed away. The camera of life pulled back, framing a girl who had finally found both love and freedom.