



16

Rain never falls

Kieren Kresevic

The front wheel gyrated rapidly, rusty bolts clanging within their loose sockets in carefree abandon. With no brakes and a virtuosic lack of steering coming from the half-finished handle bars, Romero veered haphazardly towards the school. White gravel crunched and rearranged itself as he felt the satisfying disintegration between the dry earth and the worn rubber tread that his father insisted was still good. By the time he was drawing up to the original *adobe* gates of the school he appeared to be an elusive desert mirage, riding through a heavenly halo of white clay dust that filled him with the scent of dry and bitter yearnings.

Romero sat isolated, staring at the local *serrano* children who congregated around him. Tanned and dressed in their traditionally lurid-coloured ponchos, they stared incredulously at the pale-skinned boy in their midst.

Everyone and everything was covered in the same eternal dust that had come with the drought. His teacher worst of all: small chalk-clappings falling from every shift in the folds of her loose skin like air exhaled in the bitterly cold mornings. He stared down at his stale tamales, covered in a fine white powder that was not sugar. Closing his eyes, he thought back to his home, before they had come here.



The bittersweet air came in recurrent gusts, breaking through the respirations of the city's inhabitants. Sitting in Manolo, his favourite caf  teria in the flourishing barrio of Miraflores, Romero

looked out onto the local bourgeoisie who streamed past in technicolour arrays. As his teeth slowly sank through the delicate pastry and into the sweet meat filling, he drank in his surroundings, inhaling the rich scent of his city.

In the evening he took shelter from a monsoonal storm within the glass-panelled house, surrounded by the wafting scents of the guava trees in the garden and the gentle chirrup of the parrots nestled beneath the leaves. A warm glow emanated from the kitchen as his cousins arrived and they talked and laughed softly amid the tapping fall of the rain outside.



His shallow reverie was broken as his only companion, Chavo, fair skin broiling under the morning rays, skidded up to him. Chavo hovered beside him on a cloud of dust, shattering his escape from the never-ending clay plains.

‘Como va la viña, eh?’

‘Why are you asking me? You know better. No grapes are ever going to grow in this wasteland,’ he proclaimed as he crumbled the omnipresent gravel in his calloused hands. It was the same white-clay terracotta that permeated the entire valley from mountainous hill to endless plateau, which was inhabited by a mere scattering of naive and incommunicable natives.

‘The rain will come, we just have to wait.’

‘There’s no rain here, just my father’s stupidity ... even *they* are moving further up the mountains,’ Romero tilted his head at the grinning locals milling around them.

Rain doesn’t fall on the fruits of mistake, he thought to himself, remembering the day that saw him lose his home and arrive here in this solitary, noncultivable land.



His *padre*, Franco, had arrived home from the *plaza de armas* at the city's heart early that day, lifted Lucia up in one arm and announced, 'We're going home! Back to my country, out of this hell!' Even after twenty years, Franco still referred to Romero's country as hell, and did not hesitate to completely discount their own ardent desires before undertaking the decision that they should leave Romero's home for a foreign land.

Franco paused and looked up with a rare glint of joy in his eyes. 'Do you remember the stories I told you, *chiquito*, of the mountains, the rivers, the ancient, cobbled streets? That's where we're going, son ... to *my place*.'

Romero remembered the bitterness and resentment his father bore to all other things. The grimace at every meal, the endless complaints of his corrupt workers, his complete disdain for any of the locals.

His father coupled his criticisms of Romero's home with never-ending stories of his own hometown, the vast sweeping grasslands and undulating hills, the goats he used to herd and the ancient towns erected millennia before. Yet this did little to entice Romero to the idea of leaving home. His father's stories were merely vague images he had no connection to; the half-forgotten recollections of an ageing man who still could not be happy in the place where his sons had grown up.

The next day, Romero's corrupt *policía* brother brought around a buyer, agreed on a deal and handed his father a cheque to buy their tickets, and a notice to leave.



Romero arrived home, once more surrounded in his clay-dust cloud, a perpetual companion in the bleak landscape. All he wanted was to go back home, to *his* home; that was his dream. Out of this barren plain cursed with drought and solitude. The certainty, however, that they were hopelessly broke and alone in this native town, bore down on him; his father's inability to have

simply accepted his new country crushed Romero into a rusted, worn frame.

That night he crept out of his father's house, glancing with disdain at the barren fields of white gravel that they had painstakingly sown with seeds, and inhaled the dry, clogging air that had pervaded his life for too long. As he rested in the abandoned church, waiting for the first train heading anywhere away from there, he heard a thunderous peal cry out at his farewell. *Forget your hollow dreams, I have my own, maldito, I want to go home.*

The hollow tapping of the church bell woke Romero at first light. The slight reverberations of the bell sounded as if a jaded monk was tugging at the rope, lacking the vitality to unleash the full peals of sanctity his master required.

He rose as the sun did, slow yet eager. As he stepped outside, he closed his eyes, savouring the bell's echoes. He tasted the forgotten humidity of his true home's gardens, the quiet chirruping of birds. He breathed deeply, remembering the moist, fragrant air among the clogging dust. His father had led them here, but now he was free to leave.

Romero opened his eyes and stood aghast at the sight before him. He had not just been remembering.

The rain had come.



Kieren Kresevic wrote this in 2014 when he was in Year 12 at Sydney Church of England Grammar School (SHORE) in New South Wales.