

A Garden for Raina (Beautifully Unbroken)

Michelle St Claire



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The university admissions letter slips out of Raina's trembling hands. She sits down slowly on the edge of her unmade bed. For several minutes, Raina stares at the fancy letter laying on the floor.

She has been accepted. Raina blinks in disbelief at the enormity of this quiet news. She has been accepted to the most prestigious university in the country. She has been accepted with a full scholarship, including books and dormitory. She has been accepted in spite of her immature fears and troubling doubts.

This means that in three months, Raina will be leaving home. Having no siblings, Raina will say farewell to her long-time best friends, Kim and Tony. She will triumphantly hang up her greasy work apron at the local fast-food joint. And, of course, Raina will be leaving her single mother behind.

Raina is overjoyed and torn by the thought of leaving her mother. Her mother, the tormenter. Her mother who never smiles. Who never caresses her daughter's face. Who never tells her daughter she loves her. Or that she's proud of her. Or that she even *cares*.

As expected, Raina's mother, Ms. Calyx, learns of the news and refuses to let Raina go. Mother and daughter clash horribly, inflicting upon each other painful assaults of anger and isolation. Eventually, the ache of familial love and the timid first steps toward adulthood encourage Raina to swallow her fears and tenderly engage her mother.

Ms. Calyx readily accepts Raina's olive branch offering. Mother reveals a long held secret that was torturing her for many years like an insatiable invisible villain. Gradually, mother and daughter see each other in a new light of forgiveness, love, and deeper understanding.

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