



These Summer Storms

A NOVEL

SARAH
MACLEAN

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

"Deliciously impossible
to put down."
—#1 New York Times
bestselling author
Jodi Picoult

Novels by Sarah MacLean

These Summer Storms

HELL'S BELLES

Bombshell

Heartbreaker

Knockout

THE BAREKNUCKLE BASTARDS

Wicked and the Wallflower

Brazen and the Beast

Daring and the Duke

SCANDAL & SCOUNDREL

The Rogue Not Taken

A Scot in the Dark

The Day of the Duchess

RULES OF SCOUNDRELS

A Rogue by Any Other Name

One Good Earl Deserves a Lover

No Good Duke Goes Unpunished

Never Judge a Lady by Her Cover

LOVE BY NUMBERS

Nine Rules to Break When Romancing a Rake

Ten Ways to Be Adored When Landing a Lord

Eleven Scandals to Start to Win a Duke's Heart

THESE SUMMER STORMS

A NOVEL

SARAH
MACLEAN



BALLANTINE BOOKS
NEW YORK

Ballantine Books
An imprint of Random House
A division of Penguin Random House LLC
1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019
randomhousebooks.com
penguinrandomhouse.com

Copyright © 2025 by Sarah Trabucchi

Penguin Random House values and supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin Random House to continue to publish books for every reader. Please note that no part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems.

BALLANTINE BOOKS & colophon are registered trademarks of Penguin Random House LLC.

Hardcover ISBN 9780593972250
International ISBN 9798217091638
Ebook ISBN 9780593972267

BOOK TEAM: Production editor: Jennifer Rodriguez Managing editor: Pamela Alders •
Production manager: Erin Korenko Copy editor: Briony Everroad • Proofreaders: Deborah
Bader, Claire Maby, Cameron Schoettle

Book design by Elizabeth A. D. Eno, adapted for ebook by Vincent Mancuso

Cover design: Belina Huey
Cover illustration: Robert Hunt

The authorized representative in the EU for product safety and compliance is Penguin Random House Ireland, Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68, Ireland. <https://eu-contact.penguin.ie>

ep_prh_7.3a_152035895_c0_r0

Contents

Dedication

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Greta

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Sam

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

[Emily](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[*Acknowledgments*](#)

[*About the Author*](#)

For Mark & Chiara

CHAPTER

1

THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT TRAINS.

If she marked the minutes of her life, Alice Storm would not be surprised to discover that she'd spent nearly a third of them in transit:

- The shiny crimson bicycle that had been her seventh-birthday present and most prized possession, until her brother had sent it flying into Narragansett Bay, never to be recovered.
- The white rowboat her father had captained into that same salty sea every Saturday in July for her entire childhood, because he insisted on *facing nature as God intended*.
- The endless line of nondescript black town cars with silent drivers that ferried her from private school to private art classes to the Storm family's Park Avenue penthouse, New York City muffled and dim beyond the window.
- The skateboard she'd ridden into a tree one Sunday morning during her first year at Amherst—determined to prove herself a completely ordinary eighteen-year-old—resulting in an arm broken in three places.
- The helicopter that airlifted her to Boston to be pinned back together and returned her to school in time for a nine A.M. Art

History midterm, before her classmates could discover there was nothing ordinary about her.

- The private jets that took her around the globe whenever her father issued an international summons on a whim.
- The commercial jet that had taken her to Prague eighteen months earlier, diamond ring tucked into her boyfriend's carry-on bag.
- The subway car she'd been on that afternoon when her phone had rung and stolen her breath—Incoming call...*Elisabeth Storm* (never *Mom*)—all beige walls and harsh lights and advertisements for clear skin and uncluttered apartments and that one William Carlos Williams poem about plums and iceboxes and forgiveness and the parts of us that will never change.

And still, there was something about trains.

Probably because she'd discovered those herself. All the other ways she'd traveled through the world had belonged to someone else. Were shared with someone else. But trains...they were her secret.

They did not come with flight plans, no siblings jockeying for position inside, no mothers calling for champagne, no fathers playing silent judge. They did not come unmoored. Instead they remained locked into their path, weighty and competent, unchanging. Unable to be sent over a cliff and into the sea. A marvel of modernity that ran counter to all the technology that came after them. Solid. Even. Stable. Constant.

Alice dropped her suitcase onto the luggage rack inside the door of the train car and found the first empty row, tossing her worn olive green canvas satchel onto the aisle seat and sliding over to the window, hoping that a Wednesday night on the 9:32 P.M. Northeast Regional would reward her with a row to herself in the last few hours of peace before what was to come.

Before she faced the barrage of family—with one glaring, irreversible absence.

Through the window, on the train platform beyond, a group of twenty-somethings tumbled down the escalator, laughing and shouting, a collection of duffels and weekender bags, bright smiles, sundresses, shorts and sunglasses, as though night hadn't fallen outside. And maybe it hadn't for them. Maybe they were in that gorgeous moment in life when there was no such thing as the dark. Instead, it was all daytime, full of promise and empty of fear.

Behind them, a freckle-faced, redheaded family of five, a teenager in hoodie and headphones, twin girls no older than ten, and their parents, loaded down with suitcases and backpacks and a *Paris Review* tote that might have once been for literary cachet, but was now for stainless steel water bottles and organic snacks.

A middle-aged Black woman in flowing linen, her tiny silver roller bag the only evidence that she was traveling. A tall, stern-faced white man in his thirties, leather duffel in hand, backpack slung over his shoulder. An elderly, ruddy-cheeked man in a cream-colored windbreaker, pushed in a wheelchair by an Amtrak employee in a trademark red cap.

One by one, they piled onto the train.

Alice had been wrong; the train wouldn't be empty. Instead, it would be packed full—laden with a few hundred New Yorkers headed north for a weekend of cobalt skies and gray-green ocean during the most magical time of year in New England, when the rest of the world was back to school and work and Northeasterners were spoiled with one last week of sun-soaked seclusion, clinging to the promise of endless summer.

She'd forgotten it was Labor Day weekend.

The lapse in memory seemed impossible, considering she'd left her freshly painted, newly organized classroom in Brooklyn six hours earlier, planning her own final long summer weekend as she waited for the subway. Pilates that afternoon. The Grand Army Plaza farmers' market for the last of the heirloom tomatoes. Governors Island on Saturday with Gabi and Roxanne, who insisted she leave her empty apartment. A long Sunday, painting in the last of the summer glow, before school made the days too short for sunlight.

Then her phone rang, and she'd forgotten.

Leaning back against the rough fabric of her seat, Alice focused on the train schedule, announced over a staticky loudspeaker, the conductor's voice thick with New England—*Old Saybrook, New London, Wickford*—loud enough to keep people from the wrong train, Amtrak hoped—*Providence, Back Bay, South Station*—loud enough to keep her from remembering.

The train lurched into motion, the awkward first step before it gained speed and momentum, heavy and smooth. Familiar comfort.

Next stop, New Rochelle.

She exhaled. Four hours to what came next.

"Is someone with you?"

It shouldn't have surprised her but she startled anyway, straightening to meet the serious, gray gaze of the man she'd seen on the platform earlier—tall and stern. Taller now that he was close. Sterner, too.

Dark brows rose, punctuating the question as he tilted his chin in the direction of the seat next to her, where her ancient canvas satchel sat, forgotten.

No one was with her.

"No." She grabbed the bag and shoved it to her feet. "Sorry."

The noise he made in reply was almost impossible to hear above the sound of the train on the track, the white noise of the air-conditioning, the slide of his overnight bag onto the rack above. He folded himself into the space she'd cleared, knees pressed to the back of the seat in front of him.

On another day, she might have paid closer attention, but she did not have time for noticing him. In fact, she vaguely resented his presence for reminding her that she was single again, for filling up the seat with his long legs and the kind of judgment that came from strangers who had no idea that you'd had *a day*.

That you were preparing to have *multiple days*.

Five days. And then she was out. She could survive five days.

She cleared her throat and adjusted her position in the seat, closing her eyes, trying to lose herself in the rhythmic thud of the wheels as the train

shot out of the tunnel in Queens and they left New York City behind.

An hour into the ride, they pressed east along the southern coast of New England, and Alice, unable to sleep, phone dead, and lacking capacity to focus on the book she'd shoved into her bag as she'd rushed from her apartment that afternoon, peered into the inky darkness outside the window, where Long Island Sound lay still and flat and invisible in the distance, beyond the saltwater marshland of the Connecticut coast.

It would have been impossible to see anyway, thanks to the late hour and the dark sky, but the view had competition—the fluorescent lights reflecting the inside of the train car against the glass, casting a pale glow over the cluttered shelf across the aisle, full of sleeping bags and suitcases and a large tote bag with electric pink piping, pickleball paddle jammed into the side pocket. Beneath the collection of travel detritus, two teenage girls laughed at a curly-haired boy hanging over the seat in front of them, a goofy smile on his face. On another night, Alice might have smiled at the picture they made—late-summer perfection. But tonight, it was a different part of the reflection that distracted her. The bright, shining rectangle glowing in her neighbor's lap.

His phone was open to some social app, one with endless scroll.

He should turn that off. Endless scroll rotted a person's brain. It had been rotting hers before she boarded the train, searching for the dopamine hit of makeup tutorials and cat videos...antidotes to her mother's call—the first she'd made to Alice in five years.

Her seatmate paused, a headline impossibly large against the darkness outside. She had no trouble reading the text in the mirrored reflection.

TRAILBLAZING GENIUS FRANKLIN STORM, DEAD AT 70

His thumb hovered over the link.

Don't, she willed, not sure she would be able to look away, even though she knew the story within. Had known it since she was born. Franklin Storm had stepped into his parents' garage in North Boston at the age of seventeen and changed computing and the world with \$1,107 and a dream.

He'd made computers large and small, brought them into homes and schools, and placed them in pockets and on wrists the world over.

That was the first paragraph. The ones that followed would be about his company, his vast collection of art, his philanthropy, his charm, his daredevil tendencies (no one should be too surprised by a gliding accident, really). And then, his family.

There'd be photos, probably from his seventieth birthday, taken that past April—the ones Alice had pored over in the Style section of the *Times*. Captions. A footnote about the child not pictured (not invited). A reminder of why.

Don't open it.

He didn't. Alice breathed again.

Swallowing the urge to tell him to read a book or something, she reached down and pulled a newspaper out of her bag. She hadn't held a print newspaper since she was a kid, when a stack of them would be delivered to the apartment every morning.

Still, she smoothed her hand over the front page of that morning's *New York Times*, printed twenty hours earlier, rendered instantly obsolete in this world where (allegedly) BREAKING NEWS came all day, all hours, directly to a person's preferred rectangle, there, then gone. Turned instantly into the past to make room for the future—a shift so quick that the present simply disappeared.

Why had she bought it? Alice rubbed a thumb across the words, tattooing herself with the ink of yesterday's news—the Before. Tomorrow's paper would be the After.

The top of the fold on the front page would be devoted to her father's death—the biggest story of the week. Of the year.

Longer for Alice (and her therapist).

She traced a headline about inflation. Another about unhoused New Yorkers. A third about the solar power revolution. Stories that were more important than anything the paper would say the next day.

Stories she couldn't read because there, in her peripheral vision, her seatmate had turned over his phone, and the back of it gleamed smooth,

black obsidian, without any reflection, its only mark a swirling silver *S*, like the eye of a hurricane.

Years ago, when she was young, that insignia had words that came with it—repeated over and over on television commercials. Radio plays. Print advertisements. The whole world knew them.

*Storm Inside*TM

The world didn't know the half of it.