



Storm Season

Pene Henson

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Love conquers obstacles in this delicate romance.

An unlikely romance blooms between a trendy music journalist and a solitary ranger in Pene Henson's *Storm Season*. Their relationship highlights the transformative power of love, pushing both women past their comfort zones and encouraging them to reach for long-buried dreams.

Storm Season opens with city girl Lien Hong reluctantly preparing for a camping trip with her closest friends. A heavy storm causes the trip to go awry, ultimately leading to Lien's falling into a gully. Separated from her friends, Lien gets rescued by a competent loner, Claudia Sokolov. As the storm traps them together in Claudie's cabin, both women grapple with a magnetic attraction. But once the storm passes, the women are left wondering how to proceed with their relationship.

Possibility and chance permeate the romance. While Lien's accident injures her, it allows her to meet Claudie. Even though Claudie's past as a rising musician seems narratively convenient, it gives her opportunity to reenter Lien's life. Despite these fateful coincidences, personal insecurities cloud their prospects and inject realism into the story. Lien's past inability to commit to partners casts a shadow on her attempts to pursue Claudie. How can two women with such different life goals maintain a healthy relationship?

The narrative's handling of LGBTQ relationships is refreshing. Missing are all-too-familiar incidents of homophobia or transphobia. Lien's previous relationship with a man is met with little derision or hostility. In addition, the numerous queer characters encompass a wide spectrum of portrayals that span many positive experiences. *Storm Season* presents a comforting narrative in a society that is not always accepting.

In Pene Henson's delicate romance, conflict arises from individual goals and pasts. Lien and Claudie's efforts to maintain their relationship confirm that love can conquer all—provided people are willing to take the chance.

VERNIEDA VERGARA (March/April 2017)

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