

# An Ode to Spring, from the End of Winter, to the Start of Summer

*Background, backdrop, backtrack*

(one has to keep perspective, one has to have context)

The year is 2024. Dramatic to say the least, the past 4 years. The world of the protagonist turned upside down and remaining upside down. Brexit, a pandemic, abuse scandals (good v bad), a genocide (ongoing), the war in the Ukraine (ongoing), three serious relationships (over), two marriage proposals (diamonds are *not* forever), and the acceleration of everything that is AI (who knows).

This is the mindset at the outset of year 5.

*January*

‘You’re writing about Christopher, right?’ my boss, the vampire, eyeballing me remarked, ‘I understand it completely’ she whispered, with a little wink and a knowing smile. I had written about love and lovers, mothers and yoga, death and the stars. Of course it was about Christopher, wasn’t it obvious? How could any of that refer to anyone but Christopher, least of all to *me*?

However, though I told her nothing, I smiled inside, 'Christopher and I – our lives seemingly inextricably intertwined. Mirroring one another's heartbreak, tragedy and neuroticism. Cute. Cosmic twins.'

In writing about Christopher's work I see a reflection of my own life. It's like writing your own diary.

Cue the jolt of adrenaline at 3am – is it possible to say too much? Of course it is.

### *February*

"... on the top, yes, there, no up further.... Can you reach ok? Um, no, maybe... wait, hang on... yes, yes, there... oh fuck, don't... no, try again... yes, the top, that's what I said.... why are you... no, Christ..."

With you and I, it's always going to be top-shelf, be it this way or that. Don't question it.

It's always going to be exquisitely definite, yet at the same time slipping, always slipping (yes, we are anxious avoidant).

Sometimes it often feels as though these exquisitely definite slippages can only be felt by those who speak the same language; for those who can read the slide of hand, the turn of cheek, the twinkle and the twist. But oh, for those few, how the filth and fizz flies! Nameless and formless, with such power, such command, such grace, it glides over little ol' everyday heartaches and the most mundane modernities.

But you ask me how is it that something so masterful can be shattered so easily and so routinely? With the vaguest touch of one who can't read it, the twinkle and the twist can suddenly go poof! Is it that this *thing* has to hide itself – be muted – in order to survive? Is this why its glisten must

become a secret, unto itself, unto its native babes? So I say, let's not box this ecstasy into neat, intellectualised words here nor linear, logical narratives there. Let's slip it down into the crevices and push it high among the shadows. We say, sponge us down sweet loves. Sponge us down of all this dust, for the twinkle and twist is safe within. It will not let us leave. Stuck up there. Top-shelf baby.

### *March*

She (brass) loved this hard, rickety body against her own (we nod to the fan).<sup>i</sup> She could feel its pulsing rhythm so she wrapped her limbs around it again and held tighter. She knew that she'd never want to let this go. She'd been so clingy lately. It was difficult letting go of anything. Even when the broadband technician had repeatedly failed to show up this week, she had felt it deeply. It was as though she'd been stood-up by a lover. Likewise, her acupuncturist had, little by little, been leaving her alone in the treatment room for longer and longer periods. At her last appointment, she'd had a panic attack thinking he was never going to return. She'd be left there abandoned on the table, like an overheated pincushion, splayed out, legs akimbo, immobilised.

After weeks of self-psychologising, prying apart this clingy, clam-like propensity, she decided to blame her ex. He'd seemed so icy at the end (was that only November?). No wait, icy is the wrong word – as ice can indeed melt – rather, he'd been just plain *blank*. And this inscrutable silent distance killed her inside.

So that here now, she continued to push against this electric body. This machine never stopped circling around, it never stopped breathing under her limbs, whispering to her, its welcome feathery air against her skin. No silence, no distance, only a constant, reliable presence, intimate across every surface of her, inside and out.

*April / Over the past 3 decades*

She fell  
in love with  
a Frenchman  
a salesman  
three alcoholics  
a Prince  
and a genius

Not necessarily in that order  
Each to varying degrees  
And over a lifetime of years

Lately though, she'd been ridiculously prone to falling in love – swiftly, conclusively, and repeatedly. Maybe it was a simple quirk of getting older – a growing absolute, deep-seated, all-consuming want for love. Her mum always said that two is better than one; a pair is a team and a team can achieve anything together. Why wouldn't one crave to be a pair?

But this sudden recurrent ease of dropping into love seems to her to be extra-ordinary, beyond her own will, logic, or desire. The twinkle and the twist is now on steroids. In quick succession since the ex froze over (November), the roll call has been lining up:

A comedian  
The Diplomat  
and – almost, just this month – an American

This and these loves are real and unflinching – Top-Shelf – hot and full against the ice and *blankness* of yesteryear. I, or she has to work hard to overcome the heartache each time one love inevitably ends. It doesn't seem fair; all this impossible sparkle dying so quickly each time, like fireworks disappearing to dust, into the eternity of the night sky.

*May*

We – I and she – land the blame firmly on our, or her ex (again). On a daily/nightly basis, she and I and we are resisting the urge to jump in the car and drive all the way along that beautiful winding, rising road, straight from our place to his or yours, which was once ours, where trees and lake and lambs abound. It's not for want of revenge (if only). These days, we – she or I – feel deeply the true meaning of Love/Hate as two sides of a coin. Yet mostly any urges are urges for love and nothing less, despite what *blankness* can do to a soul. But I ask her and you and us and myself, 'who wouldn't yearn for the stench of sheep shit and mother's milk? The glorious filth of life dripping through your fingertips? The gold among the guts?'

But, alas we cry in unison, that was the place, not the person!

What is it that is truly yearned for? What is it that has been actually lost? Can it be true that maybe it had been a year-long winter with him (November)? When you wake up to realise that you've been starved, it's no wonder that you, I or she binge on love appearing out of nowhere and everywhere, from any and all directions.

So with wise, if slow, realisations she and we stay put. No bucolic road trip to fill hollow holes.

No comedian  
No Diplomat  
And no – almost, just last month – American

(While out in the open fields, high above the city, he is standing and looking, scanning up and down, across and over, shifting his weight off his bad knee while he stoops to check the heaving underbelly. Every thing and every body is full and brimming, and ready to birth or burst. All sits upon his

shoulders, or so he thinks. So he continues to stoop and his knee continues to burn. He doesn't allow for any thing or any feeling other than what is there now before him. And it is this that is both his saviour and his pallbearer. For how is he or we or I to continue to bring forth life, when no life stirs within him or he or us? There is no spark, no twinkle, no twist).

So she and we stay put.

We stay put and slowly learn how to bundle that clingy energy inside rather than out. To bundle and build until it transforms into a radiant glow within; warms the heart, the womb, the mind and soul. Until it's so strong that it's enough to stop short of falling in love again (with the – almost – American), and it's enough to burn off the blankness of yesteryear. Limbs can now become wrapped around one and another's limbs (she and we and I), wrapped around one and another's cool skin (no rickety man nor machine in sight) and move to the rhythm of one and another's breath. We become our own fan – a fan of one's own – breath-by-breath urging our merging, twinkling babes to never let this one go. To never let this go.

Fuck the phone. And fuck it if it never rings again.<sup>ii</sup>

Rachael Gilbourne, 2024

<sup>i</sup> At the time of writing, a dusty, industrial fan hauled from Cairo to Carlow was to whirl from the gallery walls, with a stretch of brass hugging it tight.

<sup>ii</sup> At another time of writing, two landline phones were to 'speak' to one another across the gallery; dialing up, ringing out.

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