

## London 2020

Remember the time he yelled at me for liking Taylor Swift?

He was the first London boy

And that should have been the end.

But I hung on, even when he ended things (*he* was the one to end things???)

I agreed when he said let's be friends.

And then I met you.

Michael.

You were not the love of my life.

I know that now.

You were just some guy with commitment issues and a nervous tick who called me twice a day during lockdown and brought me a chocolate egg the size of my head when we finally saw each other again.

And I thought, God, this is so much better than the first London boy.

I don't think I'll ever forget that fucking egg.

Or the way that you kissed me on the neck at the beginning of that cruel summer.

When I led you upstairs I thought we were showing the world that I had healed.

That the girl who got torn apart by an angry, envious man had moved on.

Look at her, she won, she's in London surviving the apocalypse with her lover.

But at the first sign of "normal times" you bailed.

Well, it wasn't the first sign but the end of the first wave.

Before we all knew what that meant.

You remembered that you like to hang out with your friends.

And you didn't have time to heal the broken girl who needed all of you.

You realized I wasn't a healer, just a distraction.

Maybe I was someone who helped fix the broken parts of you as well.

But I'm a slow healer and you can just slap a Band-Aid over yourself and call it a job.  
Keep calm and carry on, I suppose.

Later, still clinging to whatever shreds of healing that remain,  
I sat at the bus stop in Shoreditch waiting for yet another man.

Who was late because he forgot we had a date.

And I thought to myself: how did we go from kisses on my neck, from healing, from  
tenderness to this?

So I started to cry, and the wound opened back up for the whole city to see.

Even now, the memories fill me with the most painful longing and regret.

My time with you taught me how fucking broken I was.

The best of times, the worst of times, indeed.

Because how can you be broken surrounded by castles and two for one cocktails?

I'm going back to London for the first time since 2020.

Back to the scene of the crime, as it were.

I'm going to walk around the park where we walked, say goodbye to all the ghosts.

London is *my* fucking city, not yours, even though you were born there and I was not, and  
you will not ruin it for me.

I know I won't see you again, but if I did, you'd probably say something like

"So sorry it didn't work out."

And I would nod politely whilst thinking of ways to get violent revenge.

## Swipe Session

I just want you to know that you didn't change me.

London changed me.

The pandemic changed me.

Writing a novel changed me.

But you did not.

My latest Tinder match told me he was "in no hurry to hitch himself to someone's wagon."

Which is just the most bullshit way of saying that you're not looking for anything serious.

Of course, sex isn't serious.

People do it all the time.

That's why he thought that if he put enough compliments into me

I'd give away my body for free.

I can't blame him for trying.

It worked when I was twenty-one.

And twenty-five.

But now that I'm almost twenty-eight I'm starting to see through the bullshit.

So maybe in that sense

You did change me.

I know my worth now.

Even so, I paid for the premium versions of dating apps.

But I don't think they're working.

So when I open my calendar to write myself a reminder  
To cancel them before I am billed again  
I see that the little robot who lives in my phone has made a suggestion.  
When I type cancel, he thinks I meant to type “Newcastle.”  
Which is where I went on holiday  
With the last boy who thought it would be fun to try me on and then fling me across the  
room when I wasn’t a perfect fit.  
Like I am not a woman but a pair of shoes or a jacket.  
Hanging on the racks of the Oxford Street Primark, waiting for someone to buy me.  
We shopped at Primark together when we went away  
And wore our coordinating outfits to dinner that night.  
And I thought I had found the one.  
Needless to say, I was wrong.  
So now I swipe left and right and get left on read or ghost men who message me and  
expect me to carry the conversation.  
And it’s all just so fucking disappointing.

## **Present Liz**

I am terrified of being misunderstood.

That's what kept me from poetry in the first place.

But now it seems I can't stop writing these silly little poems about my feelings.

My inspiration has disappeared in the California wind.

There's never any rain.

Forgive me reader.

I'll let you know when it returns.

You know what.

I think I'm going to try to write a happy poem instead.

I've noticed that when I sit down to write, it's often the painful stuff that surfaces.

But it's not all pain these days.

Plenty of things bring me pleasure.

And I have hope.

I see the beauty of the ocean that I live near and I am grateful

That I can walk there whenever I want.

I enjoy my little routine.

And that I am finding a better balance.

And one day, I might even love someone who loves me back.

It will all be revealed in time.

I know, very optimistic.

Not my usual style.

## **Golden Gate Transit**

The bus driver waves at every bus he sees that is going the opposite way.

It comes to me so clearly on the bus.

The past two years, the memories waiting to swallow me whole.

Like they always do when I cannot be present Liz.

And the cast of characters blur together in my mind.

London, you and I, boiling water for tea or hot chocolate, the silent train ride home, my mother meeting me at the airport.

It's all there, waiting for me when I dare to let my composure slip.

I wish more people thought I was funny.

My personality shines through my words when I let it.

But no one is around to listen because I pushed them all away.

I take off my mask, take a big breath.

You got this, I tell myself.

But do I?

## **Ships in the Night**

The tourists are filming the Evergreen shipping boats

as they pass each other on the water.

Okay, I'll admit it

I snapped a photo too.

People walk by with their dogs

And babies that I long to squish.

The older couple looked at me strange when I asked if I could share their table.

I am not the only person alone here

But I might be the only one plagued by the thing that sets me apart from others.

The thing that I don't have a name for yet.

I photograph my apple turnover; post it with the boat pic and a caption that reads "did someone order a hangover cure?"

I'm so normal, so relatable.

The older couple leaves and three younger people replace them.

One asks if I'm using this chair and I smile and tell him to go for it.

I compost my pastry bag and walk away.

Off to find somewhere more anonymous, where I can avoid being seen.

But inspiration calls and I sit on the edge of the farmers market to write.

When I finish my poem I check Instagram.

No new likes on my post.

Damn, my disguise didn't work.

