

ONE: APRIL 2018

TONIGHT, EVE TELLS ROISIN, they are going to the reservoir. It has been planned for weeks, apparently. It is a humid, uncharacteristically hot day in April – there are rumours of a summer heatwave – and Edinburgh has a soft orange tint to it. The air reeks of hops, but nobody cares because the whole city is out drinking cans in a park with warm sunburn lines down their shoulders where their bra straps betrayed them.

Roisin and Eve are sitting in Roisin's flat, each in a corner of the empty bath. They have propped open the window with a short plank of wood. The sun is pouring in, they're picking at a bag of strawberry laces, and they've been drinking berry-flavoured wine all afternoon in fuzzy room-temperature sips. Eve bought it from Oddbins instead of from the supermarket, but Roisin thinks it just tastes like Echo Falls. She thinks that any wine tastes like Echo Falls when it's drunk from a mug in a bath. She does not tell Eve this.

Eve thinks that it's best practice to be tipsy in warm weather, so that you remember the summer in a haze rather than a stark white light. Like putting an Instagram filter on your own memories. Roisin leans her head back against the cool tiles and watches the sun ripple on the white walls.

'You must have forgotten, I definitely told you.'

'Yeah, I think you probably did,' Roisin lies. 'Which reservoir?'

'Is there more than one?'

Roisin hesitates, not sure if Eve doesn't know that there is more than one, or if she means there's only one good one so why would you go anywhere else?

'Yeah, there's more than one,' Roisin says, deciding on the former.

'Right yeah, of course.' Eve motions at her for more wine. Roisin leans over the side of the bath and tops up her mug with the contents of the sticky bottle, licking the top afterward to stop it dripping.

'Anyway,' Eve says. 'Claire said she'd drive us, so we don't need to know which one.'

She takes a sip and sticks her head out of the window, eyes closed against the sun.

Claire is Eve's boyfriend's twin sister, a self-defined free spirit. She has a husband who she calls her *partner*. Roisin has never met him, and she sometimes wonders if Claire has made him up. Roisin does not like being

around Claire. She makes her feel very young, and very small.

‘Isn’t Claire great? She gave me this last week.’

Eve sticks her pasty leg out and pulls up her long skirt to display a silver anklet. Roisin tells her it’s gorgeous, and Eve twists her foot backwards and forwards, admiring herself.

Roisin’s flatmate Calum slouches through, chaps softly on the door and tries very hard not to make eye contact with either of them. He asks the floor if it’d like a cup of tea, and Roisin tells him that would be nice. Eve waggles her wine at him in response. He slouches off.

‘He’s a wee freak,’ Eve says. She leans even further out of the window. He is, but mostly he just doesn’t like Eve.

Cal has a proper job. He gets up at eight every day, packs a lunch and a flask of tea, and then he puts on a little backpack and goes and sits behind a computer until five. This is why he has the big room and Roisin has the boxroom with the bed on a platform which she has to climb a ladder to get to.

Roisin used to work in a café on Leith Walk. The whole place was a symptom of gentrification with its monstera plants and its cold brew and its vegan raw cakes that nobody who lives in proximity to Leith Walk could possibly want. She got sacked last week

after sleeping through a shift. It was her third no-show in a fortnight. When you are traipsing over North Bridge at four o'clock in the morning with a friend like Eve, matters like work and paying rent seem pretty trivial. Roisin applied for an overdraft last week, but RBS declined her. This was a revelation: that you can be so shit with money that a bank won't allow you to get into debt.

Eve does not have a job either. She arrived without warning one windy Saturday because her parents had been pissing her off. She asked if she could sleep on the sofa for a week, and Roisin of course said yes, but the week-mark passed without comment, and Eve has not mentioned leaving since. She has only been crashing for a couple of months, but in that time she has managed to mark the flat indelibly with her presence.

She does not pay rent, but she keeps buying things. She has a hundred different throws and cushions, and the floor of the living room is littered with Lush makeup and weird hair potions from the herbal skincare shop across from Leith Walk Oddbins. She keeps collecting prints of Portobello from cafés in Abbeyhill, and she has pinned them to the walls. She has bought a tall rhododendron with huge blowsy red flowers. You are not supposed to keep them as houseplants; it is wilting softly into its mud. She has placed it proudly into a very heavy terracotta pot.

The sofa where she sleeps is not quite as comfortably fluffy as it used to be. Eve has indented it permanently with her form. For a while she took the sheets and the duvet off the sofa and tucked them up into a neat pile in the corner every morning after she woke up. She stopped doing this a while ago. Roisin can't remember when.

Roisin kicks Eve's legs off of her, clambers out of the bath and stumbles through to the kitchen. The wine has affected her more than she thought it had, and the room seems to tilt gently.

Something floral is wafting its way towards her. Cal has made himself a wee 'tea station' on the kitchen windowsill so he can spy on their neighbours while he makes a cuppa. There is a girl across the street who they are both in love with. She hangs out of her window every morning with a cigarette and a tiny wee espresso cup, and she dances, flailing her arms about to a beat neither of them can hear. A sheet of A4 printer paper is taped to her window – it reads FUCK in scrawling sharpie. Eve thinks she is attention-seeking.

Cal is making himself Earl Grey tea in the nice teapot, with the nice tea leaves. Eve bought them. Roisin doesn't think she knows he's been nicking them.

'We're going to the reservoir tonight if you want to come?' Roisin asks him. She really wants him to come, but she doesn't want him to know that.

‘Who’s we?’

‘Eve, her boyfriend and Claire.’

She leans against the sink and watches him try to avoid eye contact with her. His brow is tightly furrowed, and he’s squashing the leaves hard against the side of the strainer with a teaspoon.

‘D’you want to come then?’

‘Mm, a would, but am shattered, thanks though.’

She squints at him. The sun has painted him a golden-brown aura, which Roisin finds interesting because he always read to her as a golden-brown kind of person. She promised Cal that this afternoon she would speak to Eve about her moving out, but she hasn’t.

Eve is fun! Fucking about with her is like being a teenager again, and Roisin doesn’t want it to end. Since Eve arrived and started paying for her drink, Roisin’s days off have turned into a never-ending conveyor belt of wine in the park, beer on Portobello beach, gin and tonics in hot, sweaty, blue-tinted clubs with underagers dancing like their lives depend on it, all surrounded by Eve’s very best friends who she met yesterday or a week ago or just this very second darling! She’s made more friends here in two months than Roisin has in years. And now they’re Roisin’s friends too because she is friends with Eve, and when they recognise her they go, Oh! You’re Eve’s pal

right? And it's like she has entry into a secret club and the password is Eve12345!

Roisin thinks instead that if he wants to ask her to leave then he should do it himself. It's not her responsibility just because she's her friend. He leaves with his cup of tea, and she leans against the kitchen sink, letting her head spin pleasantly. The girl across the road is leaning out of the window smoking in a sombre, French-film kind of way.

Eve calls through a fifteen-minute warning: Claire has just texted her, she's on her way. Roisin isn't sure if she can face this. She thinks she'd like to stand at this window and watch the girl blow smoke rings all evening instead.

She takes one of Cal's locally brewed IPAs from the fridge (green sharpie marking his territory in a half-moon C) and goes back through to the bathroom. She clambers into the bath and starts to drink it in long gulps.

'Slow down, Roisin, wow.'

Eve looks at her, head tilted analytically. 'Claire's gone sober,' she tells her. 'She's gone on this diet. You know, maybe you should try it too. It's so important to treat your body well, you know, not load it up with chemicals and crap.'

She peels a strawberry lace out of the packet and into her mouth.

Her eyes light up when she talks about Claire.

Roisin often thinks that she could talk about her all day long without pause for breath.

She often catches her staring at Claire's hands. They're tanned and lean with very short nails, and she has lots of artfully mismatched stick-and-poke hand tattoos she got from friends and acquaintances in far-flung cities, and if you ask her about them she'll go into excruciating detail about exactly when and where and from whom she got them. She does have very nice hands, but nobody looks at them like Eve does. Eve looks at them like she's imagining what they would feel like inside her.

Roisin can't see the smoking girl from the bathroom window. Eve might be able to, but Roisin is sitting in the wrong side of the bath. The sun has moved slightly so now Eve gets it all, while Roisin is sitting in partial shade. And her back is pressed uncomfortably against the taps. Eve tilts her head back and closes her eyes, drinking the light in.



The car window is open, and the cool air buffets against Roisin's skin, whipping her hair back gently. She can see rolling hills, tiny wee burns running through the valleys of soft moss, sparrows and swallows and thumb-sized blue tits chasing after each other.