

“THIS IS



HOW YOU



FALL IN LOVE”

B Y C L A R A J A C K

FOREWORD

“This is how you fall in love” was drawn from the song of the same title by Jeremy Zucker & Chelsea Cutler. I found the song on Spotify by time and chance and I could not get it out of my head. This year was an impressionable one. I grew in so many aspects, I grieved so many times, laughed many more times, finished so many parts of my life and for the first time knew what it really meant to feel alive and feel the light.

Unlike the years before it, this year I was certain of it every time I fell in love. Up until this collection, I had never written about a lover or written a love story so this is a soft one for me.

By November despite having it on my 2021 to do list I had not written a love story. The note was there in my phone “21 BIG LOVE STORY”. There were a lot of fragments that made sense to only me. I had even resigned and taken my L until December 25th. This body of work is my Christmas miracle. The stories kept coming and despite ADHD, I wrote all of them down. Once again, I overcame my writers block. I took parts from all the fragments I had written and real life of course and here she is.

Finally, dearest readers, you know I always love to tell stories about you so this is your mirror. I hope you see how beautiful you look in it. Words will honestly fail me to describe how I want to send this collection to you but please regard it honestly and vulnerably. Before starting, here is the question, “How does one fall in love?” These are the answers I found.

All my love as always,

Clara, x.

~

*For Andrea & for love, what holds me to the light and touches me to the
core.*

#1.

In Spite of Everyone.

You're sitting on a dirty curb outside your hostel. People are talking about things you know if you paid any attention would not interest you. Your lover draws you back to earth when he looks at you. He looks at you and the whole world fades. This is how you fall in love.

#2.

Bare feet in the kitchen.

You spent all night out at a concert where the organizers did not care for the time they put on the flier. You go back to the house you share with a man you met on Twitter. You're sleep deprived, hungry and freezing because Abuja cold showed you Shege by 4am. You're wearing his oversized sweater, tiny panties and you're going to the kitchen bare feet to drink water. This is how you fall in love

#3.

With women of course.

You're at yet another concert with a girl you've been seeing for about two months. This one is exciting because if her boyfriend finds out you'll face something worse than death, homophobia if we're to give it a voice. You've picked up a habit from her like you do all your lovers. This time it is weed. You've excelled at it more than she taught you. So in between one of the performances, you drag the blunt, tap her on the shoulder and blow the smoke right into her mouth. She says you bring her to life. This is how you fall in love.

#4.

With the women who love you.

You're in the club crying over a man who has left you. Your friends are all worried but not wanting to push your healing they say nothing. Instead they take you by the hand and dance with you. The music moves through your body at once and for that morning you are not sad anymore. This is how you fall in love.

#5.

In A Stranger's Kitchen.

It's midnight and you're staying at a strangers house. He just fucked you over the kitchen counter and now you're wearing his shirt not to cover shame but because his AC is new. You're sitting on his kitchen ground and he's lying on your lap. He tells you that the way you smile is enough to uproot him. He tells you that the minute he touched you while kissing, he knew you were the one he had been waiting to touch his entire life. Because your brand of romance is larger than life, This is how you fall in love.

#6.

In thoughtfulness.

It's 11pm & you're texting someone you met earlier at the shops. You mention how you've been lucky enough to strike off some things from your bucket list and he asks to see it. You send him a picture and he comments that he thinks it is wholesome. He plans a date for the next Friday and on some level you're excited. The date is a picnic and when you show up, there is record player on the mat. You find out that he drove 13 hours non-stop to get it from his family house three cities away. He did it because it was on your list and he said it lit your face up. This is how you fall in love.

#7.

With the wind in your hair.

You're walking on a date with a boy you've been dating for about two weeks. It is still new and very exciting. It's night, windy and the street lights are very bright. Abruptly, he stops and says "smile. I want to take your picture right here right now". The wind is in your hair and your smile is very wide. He takes the pictures and says "breathtaking". This is how you fall in love.

#8.

With spoken word at midnight.

You're working at midnight as the freelance life dictates you do and Spotify is keeping you engaged with their brilliant playlists. Suddenly you hear the phrase "I imagine what the first flower said to the first human trying to name half its petals love-me-nots no that is not how anything grows". You play the piece a million more times till you can recite it by heart. This is how you fall in love.

#9.

In the Silent holding hands.

You went to see a play for the first time since your aunt who introduced you to theatre passed. The play itself is a happy one and it is beautiful but you find yourself crying for your aunt because of all of the lights she will not see. He reaches over to hold your hand because he can hear the silent tears. You don't exactly hold it back but you let yours rest in his and allow ease flow into your body. This is how you fall in love.

#10.

With Growth.

You have a favorite poem. You've had one ever since you stumbled upon it when you were 15. You recite it to yourself often because it makes you happy. One day you take the book out of the shelf and read it for the first time in a long time. It reminds you of the girl you used to be and the woman you are now. The growth has been satisfying. This is how you fall in love.

#11.

Honestly, Vulnerably & Specifically.

You have made my peace with it somewhat but you know the universe is always listening so you still wish. For Christmas you want someone whom you would wake up to for 1000 mornings grateful you slept beside them in your own apartment. You plead with everything inside all of us. You're asking in the same way you intend to handle it. Honestly, vulnerably, specifically. This is how you fall in love.

#12.

In French.

You're sleeping with a rich man so now you think you can buy sardines. That's why you put 5 in the cart. Both of you are shopping because he just moved in and he trusts your eyes to make his serviced apartment a home. It's been 3 months but PTSD still makes you refer to him as casual. You no longer bring an overnight bag because you never leave and almost all your stuff is there anyways. At the end of the aisle he says "is there anything we don't have at home that we need?" Home, we? He now speaks French. You cannot believe it. This is how you fall in love.

#13.

With Care.

You can handle your drink on any given day but America never has good plans for you so they send their honey whiskey. You gulp it with a cold coke and your lover is beside you trying to catch your own breath. The night is a blur and the next morning is Dante's fantasy. You hurl all over the bathroom floor. There he is again cleaning up after you and the minute you get up from the bowl he kisses your forehead. You cannot look at yourself how can he look at you. He bathes you in the quiet bath tub but you can hear his heart beat against his chest very loudly you don't need a stethoscope. For some things Magic is enough. Every time his hand glazes your flesh you cannot even feel the water. You raise your head one time for him to wash your face. When you open your eyes he kisses you again. This is how you fall in love.

#14.

With your sneaky link.

You haven't seen your sneaky link in two months. Not since you moved away from that cursed city to one where you could breathe easier. At this point you don't even know why you still refer to yourselves as such. You spend entire days on FaceTime and hear each other's voices in the background of songs. He finally lands in your city and your excitement feels like sin. The minute you get to yours you can eat him. The sex feels very familiar because even now you look him in the eyes and tell him you want him to cum inside you. He slowly strokes until he is about to then he grips you tightly and sighs in your ear. His breath hot against your neck. He whispers "I missed you". Instead of something smart mouthed that would hide affection you reply while using your index finger to trace the birthmark on the nape Of his neck, "me too". This is how you fall in love.

#15.

In Braille.

You're having a bad day and decide to stay in your friend's room. That night she does everything in her power to cheer you up. Food, familiar movies and music. But your eyes and frankly your heart are still very heavy. Sometimes you just wish pain would go away. But it doesn't. Not for you who feels things in its entirety. Your friend understands expressions in silence and instead traces lines with her hand on your arm, your own special kind of Braille. Slowly, you drift off and before you're completely gone, you notice she has covered you with the blanket so you don't get cold. This is how you fall in love.

#16.

With Unearthing People.

You read somewhere; "Love is always supposed to be strong and certain enough to unearth you. That's why when people want to talk about it's presence they say love is in the air." What bullshit you thought. No one is that impressionable to you because hands down you're awesome. If anybody was ever to unearth you, it'd be you and you're like the best man you know. That is until you meet him. The day you go on a date with him you laugh in your mind because you are so sure you are completely fucked. This man will break your baby gay heart and you will run to Britney Spears to hold you. My God thank You she is out of retirement. But he doesn't. He is the softest person you have ever met. One night he is talking about something you do not completely understand but you understand when he says some people love each other so much sometimes when one is about to die the other says "stop, I'm coming with you". You reckon what you read all those months ago before you met him and you finally give in. It feels like you've been sitting on a chair with one bad leg and finally get up. Your back thanks you. You give in because Sometimes you meet people and your life stops, surrenders and gives in to being altered, shaken to the core & turned around for their heart beat. That vulnerability & trust is what holds you to the light. This is how you fall in love.

#17.

In Time.

His timing is always impeccable. That is it for this one. His spirit is so in tune with yours he knows the right moment to call. You are thinking of him but capitalism is on your neck. In the moment you mention his name with your mind's voice he calls. This is how you fall in love.

At First Sight.

You're sitting on your swing chair overlooking everything in your eye range in a balcony apartment in a southern city and it is going great until your heart decides without telling you that she wants to trip and fall in love. You're laughing because sometimes we are so silly as people. There are a thousand ladders in front of you but you can't get up because so tragically, so utterly yet so truly you have fallen in love. This person is your person. You feel it in every fiber of your being. On that first day you saw her through the balcony smiling at something else you couldn't see. Who knew the poets were right. Love at first sight. Ugh your friends would laugh at you. The stud of the group. This is the content that wins comedy awards. But there is no denying it. You can't even see her smile clearly because myopia won't let you be great but you know that when you're asked three years down the line. This first time in mind's eye, this is how you fall in love.

In Being Known.

Christmas is in seven days and you've been seeing this girl since August. She is softer than you are and you appreciate it because sometimes you can hide your smile but you're grateful she's full of magic. She brings it up sometime in November that you should exchange gifts. Of course. Just because you're not as soft doesn't mean you're a bad lover. If anything you learn your lovers properly so you're great at gifting. You've been through this many times so you're not hopeful for the gift she will give you but you know she will squeal when she gets yours. On Christmas Day after sex she jumps on the bed and asks for her gift. You give her and you're right she squeals. She says the nasty things she will do to you will require you to rest the entire Boxing Day. You smile and laugh because you're looking forward to it. She brings out your gift and it is a book you read in girls scouts lifetimes ago and have been looking for. It's a first edition. You remember saying it to her in passing the night you watched that episode of friends. Oh the unbearable lightness of being known in order to be properly loved. You want to cry but you also want to do nasty things to her. This is how you fall in love.

#20.

In Italian.

Ti piace ricordare i tuoi amanti. Ti fanno sentire meno solo quando se ne vanno. La tua stanza è un'opera d'arte di te e del tuo amore. Questo non doveva durare, ma hai preso il suo braccialetto ma questa volta hai lasciato la giacca. Qualche tempo dopo torna. Non solo per il suo braccialetto, ma porta anche la tua giacca. Quello che non pensavi sarebbe stato quello che è rimasto. È così che ti innamori.

#21.

Time After Time.

You heard something that left a bad taste in your mouth today. You've been certain about only one other person in your entire life. You knew when he was sad, you knew when he was insanely happy. You knew it because like the Greeks said, your souls were one at the beginning. Said person told you today that he was going to date someone else because of something as temporal as distance. You wished him luck not to be polite but because he would need it. You needed luck and an extra cup to survive life trying to ignore desire. Survival. That is what is waiting for him in his new love. He only dared to live with you. He would deceive himself and his new love that you were a once upon a time but he knows as well as you that you are the only one who can dance in tune to the beat of his heart. Something about it is written in the stars. Probably the fact that you're both compatible water signs. He told you of his new love because he wanted you to say something. He told you once that your words altered his life every time. He made a joke of it and called you a prophet. You said what needed to be said. Good luck. You didn't need to tell him you love him because he knows it. You're not worried that this love will get in the way of anything. It'll just be like talking to him through closed doors or keyholes. Music flows through anything so when you talk he will hear but more than that he will listen no matter who is beside him. You know he will return and in the mean time you will miss him. You will collect bed stamps however because every lover between

you and him will be like a new city and you like to travel. You won't sit around waiting for him of course not you're way too antsy for that. Instead you will fall in love a million times over. You will both get jealous when you get with someone that isn't the other. You will moan each other's name quietly while you fuck the living day lights out of someone else. But when it's time for the writing in the stars to end, you will find each other. This new love of his doesn't bother you because it is not the end. It'd be too easy, too boring. When it comes to loud demanding souls like yours, the universe gives time after time. Lifetimes to explore how deeply a human soul can actually fall in love with another in spite of anything. You will fall in love with each other now, again, time after time. A ritual you both will repeat until death. This is how you fall in love.

#22.

With other People's People.

You have learned that not everyone knows how to touch you. Properly. You never really worried about it because you just resolved that if you didn't find the one that came fully made, you would make your own. Teach them how to touch you. But you found him and this is even more terrifying. Someone else's husband cannot be the person who was crafted to touch you in a way that illuminated your body. God forbid. This is very tragic. But can we really choose these things? You want to rationalize your way out of this one. If someone's husband makes you happy, there's so much love in sharing. You're lying down here in the darkness beside him listening to Ruth sing about heartbreak. My God you know you will be next. He is running his hands up and down your arm. His finger is writing words you can't read on your body. You're moaning because you're at peace. Silently, gracefully. You're allowing yourself drift to sleep knowing that any morning you wake up beside him your heart can shatter into a million pieces. Some of them so tiny you will never be able to find them again. You fall asleep nonetheless. This is how you fall in love.

#23.

With the little things your lover missed the first time.

You're in that city you hate with all your might for work. You hate that city for a lot of reasons but top of the list is that it reminds you of things you never pursued because you never let fear let go of its grip on your neck. Your plan was to breeze in and breeze out. But because you're incredibly good at your job you're done a day earlier than you expected. Now you have about thirty hours to kill. What do you want to do? You remember one of the things you let go a while back. You won't die in twenty four hours or you hope so you text him. "I'm in Lagos, can I come over? Please send me your address". He responds faster than you can change your mind. Soon you're in an Uber with your luggage going to this not so stranger's house. When you get there he's standing outside smoking and he has a wide smile on his face. The last time you saw him he had the same smile on his face. Smiling came easy to him. You're full of a lot of emotions but fear is on top of the list. You're always afraid when meeting people even though you've met them a million times. He takes your box and easily carries it into his house. A box you struggled to carry, he carried like it was a bag of empty plates. He welcomes you to his not so lavish but will do house. His words not yours. He refuses to call it his home you noticed. It's been a while you've seen him so there are both a million things to say but a million ways to start so you're lost. In the vacuum he doesn't take his eyes off you. He breaks the ice by asking you about your work. By the time you start talking about how

much you enjoy it, it becomes easy to move into other conversations. You congratulate him on his sold out exhibition but you do not tell him you bought one of the paintings. He tells you that it is a shame you didn't see the exhibition because you were the resounding muse. You know this because the portrait you bought was of your breasts and neck. He asks if you're hungry and what time your flight is the next day. You tell him you're not hungry and your flight is mid-day the next day. He says that's enough time to catch up and remarks that you still eat like a rat. Somehow you feel warm that he remembers. Like he always did before you left that city, he grabs your neck tenderly and kisses you. He uses his tongue to tease your tongue and when you open your mouth to moan he uses his tongue again to lick your bottom lip slightly. It feels like a tickle. It makes you smile and suddenly you don't remember what you were so afraid of. You're grateful he is not as shy as you are because since you walked into his gate and saw him smoking that blunt you wanted his lips on yours. He says with his baritone voice while his tongue is still touching yours that you still taste so good. He goes on to kiss your neck down to your breasts. He has a new piercing on both his ears and out of curiosity you kiss the left one. He shudders and remarks that he would now add that to his list of soft spots except it was only you who brought it alive. You use your tongue to tease the tiny earring and he moans your name. It satisfies you and now you want to run your fingers on the lines on his chest. He whispers that he wants to flip you over and fuck you but he'll make you wait. You keep kissing each other and midway he says you should kiss him like you missed him because he knows you did. He's not wrong. You play the last time you saw him in your head and

not of your own will but you start to kiss him deeper. By this time your other hand is trying to find his dick so he can put it in you. He helps you find it and while he is on top of you, you stop kissing so he can look into your eyes while his dick you enters your wet vagina. He mutters something you don't catch but you know you heard the word home. He strokes you slowly. You can see that he still remembers you love his slow strokes. You ask him to call you his little slut and he does. He puts both your hands above your head and holds it with his left hand while he holds your waist with his right hand. You tell him that you missed him fucking you. You tell him that you want him to look you in the eyes and cum inside you. He whispers "not yet" and slides out of you. He proceeds to kiss your neck then your breasts and goes down to your navel. He raises your left thigh to his lip and runs his tongue down it. He kisses your thigh then your knee and finally your vagina. He asks you how you like to be eaten and that you should direct him. Borrowing from the girl who taught you what head should feel like, you tell him where you want his tongue to be and what you want it to do. He is a fast learner as usual and you start moaning his name. Breaking it into three syllables one at a time because that is what your tongue can take. He brings his mouth up to yours and says he wants you to taste yourself. You kiss him and this time you use your tongue to lick his bottom lip and he likes it. You tell him you want to take him in your mouth while he pulls your hair. He obliges you and before long he's moaning your name and fuck in different rotations. He slips back inside you and this time he cums while looking into your eyes as you told him to. Your legs are quivering and he says that by this time you should be hungry. He takes you to his current

favorite place saying you'll like the food. The service takes a lot of time and he tells the waiter that if they take any more time he'll start to eat you. You smile remembering what it feels like when he does eat you. The waiter clearly wants a show because the delivery takes eons and before long you're dry humping him at his favorite food place. This time he nibbles on your neck and kisses cream off your lips. Everything about what he is doing to you is unhygienic but you cannot stop him. The waiter comes and clears his throat so you have to get off his lap. When you do, you're blushing because your shyness has returned. The food is awesome he was right. While you're eating, he whispers to you that he has body paint at home and would like to paint on you before fucking you in his studio. You contemplate how much it would cost to move your flight to the end of the week because if he does that your legs will not drag you out of his house the next day. You smile at his paint sex idea and he tells you to move back because he cannot do everything he wants to do to you in one day. You remind him of his earlier statement that one day was enough to catch up and he remarks that he was lying. You eat out of his plate from old habit and he also drinks the remaining of your milkshake. You don't want him to feel this comfortable because it'll be harder for you to leave but you're the one you're afraid is more comfortable. After lunch while waiting for your Uber he kisses you outside the restaurant and you sigh when he pulls back. This is what would have made you stay the first time. If he loved you a tad louder. Not everything you did before, not the paint sex you're anticipating, yes with them in view but this way he kissed you no matter who could see, is how you fall in love.

#24.

Sometimes, only you at first.

*You know who your next love will be. He wears glasses and his nose scrunches when he smiles. He has very pretty dentition and is the calmest person you've met in real life. You've been talking for about a month now and you're already experiencing a last day/ New Year activity. He's very soft spoken, calm and like you've been praying for, he has arrived. For this one you're seeing yourself often make the first move but he always reciprocates. For you sometimes making the first move might seem lonely because that song is playing in the back of your head, "I hope you'll catch me when I land". You set all these tests in your head to see if he'll pass and he does with flying colors. Doctors are smart you remark. You're still not sure but yet every day you sew a new seed of kindness you call it in whatever it is you people are in. You think it has a nice ineffable ring to it. "We're in something" you say when your friends ask about him. It's been three months and you're worried all your first steps and sewn seeds are going to die of loneliness because he hasn't asked you to be his girlfriend. Slowly you start to recline because you'd rather save parcels before your heart shatters completely. You start to shorten your statements and dull your own excitement. However before your last seed withers he notices and comes clean. He tells you in his car how he knew he wanted to be with you the first day he texted you but he let fear grip him. However he wants to say "**Silencio Bruno**" and hold your hand. Paying love forward doesn't go to waste and your seeds aren't sewn in vain. The day you fall he's there to catch you. This is how you fall in love.*

THE AUTHOR

Clara Jack is a 21 year old writer who lives and works in Abuja Nigeria. She graduated in November 2021 with a degree in Law. She is an ADHD thriver and her hobbies include art and wine. She does not know to write about herself in length so she shys away from doing it. Her consolation however is this; If you are reading this, you probably already know who she is and if not you will definitely find out. Clara baby is life.



Photo Credits:

Rye Restaurant, Victoria Island, Lagos. 17th December 2021.

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