

The Fool

It has been a horrible spring season in Chicago. Last week was cold and we had snow. It stayed cold all week and this just after our first squirt of warm had fattened the buds on the trees. Many had already begun to split open, showing slivers of white flower or pink, and I studied them every morning to see if they had been killed yet. The hyacinth turned brown, the water in their capillary tubes frozen solid. The tulips wilted and fell. My hopes for a glorious spring faded. It snowed on Easter Sunday, the day the Sun is supposed to come back to the earth, to bring the green. A week later, on my birthday, Sunday, April 15th, I paid out \$1,500 in taxes, the freelancer's curse. The Lakota say that there are four universal hardships in life. When your mother dies. When someone in your family dies out of order of age. When you are surrounded by your enemy. And when there is a long winter...

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The first lines of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* read, "April is the cruellest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain." April is the month of Ares, God of War. It is the month that blue jays eat the young of their songbird neighbors. It is the time that the forces of death and life live in closest proximity, and the balance between them shifts, literally, on the direction of the wind.

Eliot suggests that the cruelty of April stems from the way memory and desire mix in us to stir up a false but necessary hope. I always wonder what being born in the middle of April means for me. To have taken my first breaths, made my first pre-conscious adjustments to life outside the womb, at a time when life's cries are hungriest, most hopeful, and closest to despair. This sort of thought is what brings people to astrology, to consider the cosmic implications of the seasons, to study the exact alignment of the stars in your birth year.

The Tarot card for April is *The Fool*, and when I played those cards it was the one I saw most often. It is really foolish to try too hard to figure yourself out. Like trying to measure the shadow your ruler casts with the ruler itself. But it is my driving source of inspiration. Some people call this kind of bent Quixotic. That after Don Quixote (Quix Oat) who saved an imaginary world by launching spirited attacks on real windmills.

Today, and for the past three, writing has been difficult for me. I wrote about the shooting at Virginia Tech because I felt the shooter's despair. Felt also the grief that is coming for the families. And did not want to see it made tidy in the news. Did not want to let myself think that what happened was not somehow part of the battle that rages inside of me. I got some feedback on what I wrote. That it was morbid, pedantic, full of generalizations and platitudes. It may have been. But only because I could not say what I was trying to say.

Sometimes it is best to let others speak for you. Without further ado: John Donne (1572-1631)

Holy Sonnet XIV:

Batter My Heart, Three-Person'd God

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you

As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;

That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee,'and bend
Your force, to breake, blow, burn and make me new.
I, like an usurpt towne, to'another due,
Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue.
Yet dearley'I love you,'and would be loved faine,
But am betroth'd unto youremie:
Divorce mee,'untie, or breake that knot againe,
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.

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