

Look at me now

November 5, 2018

Have you ever had the feeling you are with the wrong person because there is such chemistry with someone else? This is all about that forbidden thrill.

This was inspired by a song I really love. It's in Swedish so most of you would not understand it, but if you want to listen to the wonderful melody anyway, search Spotify for 'Se på mig nu' – Petter (feat. Linnea Henriksson), meaning 'Look at me now'. It is a bittersweet duet about two persons finding themselves in the same place but with other people, and both with the hidden feeling that it is actually they who should be together.

Credits to Tony Grounds and BBC in the usual way, and Petter for the inspiration (which I think would amuse him as OGFF is probably not his type of thing.)

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He sat in the cab taking them from his and Elvis' shared flat where they all had had a few drinks before heading for a new club downtown. He was not sure he was up for it, but the others had insisted and called him a bore, so he had thrown in the towel and joined. Elvis was in the front seat beside the driver, him in the back with the girls. Rebecka sat next to him, pressing herself more into him than was really motivated, as they shared the spacious backseat only with her friend Lana. He suddenly wished that she would give him some space. He had wished that quite often lately.

He did not talk to the girls, barely listened to them chatting with half an ear and instead gazed out of the window and let his mind drift, watching the city lights and the dark sky and the moon mirrored in the water as they crossed a bridge over the river. It was beautiful really, the lights reflected on the falling snowflakes, making them look like a rain of crystals, or maybe the stars coming down to earth. He did not feel especially affected by the alcohol, his mind was clear, yet absent - and he felt empty. Like he often had lately.

Once again, he asked himself what he was doing here. Not here in this taxi, but in this situation, this life. He felt like he was trapped, trapped by habit, trapped by expectations. They had been going out for so long, him and Bex, and where they now found themselves in life, it was expected by everyone that they would take their relationship to the next level any day. Expected that they would move in together, get engaged, get married, have kids, live happily ever after. Everyone thought they were the perfect couple. Except, lately, him. He was not sure exactly what he was doubting. Everything?

He just felt out of place, was not sure if he loved her in the way he ought to, or if he by now just felt affection for the girl he had once loved and still cared very much for. When you have been with someone for long, grown together and entwined your lives and families, how do you separate those two feelings? Love and affection, and in addition the complicating feeling of never wanting to hurt that person. What if you simply have a temporary dip and any actions would be premature and something you regret? How do you know? *He* did not, and that was why he was sitting here, a somewhat reluctant boyfriend, who did not know for sure if he was in or out and unable to resolve the deadlock in his mind.

He wanted something more out of life, but he did not know what.

-OG-

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She was preparing herself for a night of fun with friends and was filled with excitement and anticipation. Some evenings you just get a feeling that something special is going to happen, like it holds an elusive promise yet to be fulfilled, and even if you do not know what that may be, you want to prepare by looking your very best. Molly had such a premonition this evening and felt all giddy while getting ready. She had been shaving (legs and other vital parts), masking (Korean sheet masque for extra glow), done a hair repair deep nourishing treatment masque and curled her hair, and lastly carefully put on makeup, to look radiant but as if she was not really wearing much makeup at all. It had easily taken a couple of hours, but she enjoyed it. It was a bit like having a luxury spa, but at home in her own small and cluttered bathroom. Now she was sipping a glass of white wine from the bottle her friend Jackie had brought with her and seriously said;

"I have a good feeling about tonight."

Which made them both giggle.

-OG-

They got out of the taxi and stood on the pavement, waiting meanwhile Elvis paid the driver. Everywhere lights were shimmering in the darkness, reflecting in the puddles of water, snow still falling but not settling on the ground. It was the first snow of the year, feeling fresh and magic. His let his gaze wander over the long queue outside the night club's entrance and he wondered if it had been a mistake to come here when it was so crowded.

Then he saw her, standing to the left of the door. He was not sure what it was with her that caught his eye, but she stood out from the crowd and he found it impossible to tear away once he got stuck. That girl. She did not see him, she was laughing together with a friend, throwing her head back and laughing a tingling, deliberating laughter. Intoxicating. She was too far away for him to see the colour of her eyes, but the hair was long, dark, a cascade down her back and the snowflakes had stuck in it like shimmering little pearls. She was something special and he did not want to stop looking, but Bex was by his side, pulled his arm, demanding attention. He gave it to her briefly, so she was satisfied and turned to Lana again, and he let his eyes return to the queue. Then her eyes met his. The wide smile she had on slowly vanished from her face and they just stared, eyes locked into one another without either of them being able to break contact. Sparkles. Not until Bex pulled his elbow again and whispered in his ear, and he thought

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he saw an expression of disappointment pass quickly over the girl's face before she turned to her friend and disappeared into the night club. He felt empty, deprived of something when she went away and now he wanted nothing more than going into that club, his reluctance from before gone – although he had no idea what he would do if he saw her. It was not like he could go over talking to her when he already had company. And not *any* company, his girlfriend.

Elvis always knew the right people, in this case the guard and they were able to skip past the whole queue like they were VIP. He felt an urgent need to find her, to know where she was.

-OG-

Even if she had spent the better part of the afternoon preparing herself like she would meet the love of her life, she had not seriously expected that anything like it would happen, but when she met the eyes of the tall stranger standing on the side of the queue it was like the world stood still for a while – except for her pulse which suddenly was racing faster. Even from a distance, it was clear that he was looking right at her. Not at the person next to her, not somewhere over her shoulder – right at her and she looked at him, their eyes locked. His eyes were so dark, so she thought they must be brown, the hair dark too, curly and a bit dishevelled by the wind and falling snow. The collar of his black wool coat was turned up and he had his hands buried in his pockets, his face looked calm and serious, not like the regular happy clubber. There was something in him that made her want to leave the queue and go over to him, ask his name and put her hands in his pockets and take his to warm her. Stand in his space and lean her head to his chest. She almost considered if she would at least go over and say hi or something normal, when she noticed the blonde girl by his side, who took a possessive hold of his elbow and made him break the eye contact. He had a girlfriend already. Off course. She shrugged her shoulders and went inside with Jackie, trying to forget those beautiful brown eyes.

-OG-

His attention was divided during the rest of the evening, with 10% focus on his company, 90% focus on her. In almost every moment he knew where she was in the room, if she was by the bar, or on the dance floor, even when he was not looking at her. Of course, he could not look at her all the time, he did not want to be obvious – not to her, not to Bex, but he could not help being drawn in her direction. He heard someone call out a name 'Molly', and she reacted. He was relieved to see it was another girl, there seemed to be no boyfriend, at least not here with

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her. But what did it matter, really, when *he* had company? He could not answer, he just knew he felt relief. Suddenly she was close, only a few feet away. People in between them, but if he had taken a step forward and reached out his hand he would have been able to touch her. He thought she might be aware of him too, but he did not know for sure. Suddenly she tilted her head up and looked straight at him. Electricity. He felt his heart pounding so much it threatened to jump out of his chest. If it had not been for the loud music, people would probably have heard. He could not understand it, how could he feel like this, like he was on fire? She was a stranger, she was no one to him, he knew nothing about her, yet he knew he had never felt this strong. Never with Bex, never with anyone. What the fuck was this? Then her friend took her hand and pulled her away to the dance floor.

-OG-

There he was again, standing close to the bar with his group of friends, with the apparent girlfriend by his side. She could not ignore him. She was not one who used to chase after others' men, but there was something about him, she did not know what, but it was pulling her to him with invisible strings.

She looked at him and whispered to herself; *'Please, look at me. I have stupidly been in front of the mirror for hours to find you, I just didn't know it then. Let me trade places with her if so only for one minute. Please, look at me now.'*

He did not, but then the crowd moved her, so she came closer to him, almost without moving her own feet, like she was floating slightly above the floor. The interruption made her stop looking at him for a while and when she turned her head up, he was there and their eyes met again - did not let go. It was intentional, she felt sure about that. He was not looking at her by coincidence, he wanted something from her, but she did not know what to make of it. He smiled a shy smile but was it really for her. How could it be when he had a girlfriend? Then Jackie pulled Molly with her and the magic moment was over.

-OG-

He made conversation, although he did not really have the faintest idea about what and his mouth felt so dry he did not know how he managed to articulate the words. Bex was ever-present by his side, touching his arm with the certainty of someone who think they have

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exclusive right to you, which she actually did, but he felt himself flinch. She did not notice. He turned to the bar and ordered drinks for them, the waiting time while the bartender mixed them allowing him to try to collect himself, sort his thoughts, then he glanced towards the dance floor and was lost. Again. She was dancing, her dress was shimmering, she was glowing, her movements setting him into a trance. He felt the base vibrate through his body, in sync with his heartbeats and when their eyes met again it was only her there. Him and her. He felt his cheeks flush with embarrassment, or was it desire? Still he could not turn away and she gave him a shy smile. Her eyes seemed to be twinkling. Who was she? He needed to know.

"Your drinks are ready!" The bartender shouted in his ear, it seemed like he had sought his attention for some time. Charles turned around to take the drinks and then handed them to Elvis, Bex and Lana. When he finally looked at the dance floor again, she was gone, and he did not see her again.

-OG-

Suddenly Jackie felt nauseous, she had had much more than Molly to drink and Molly hastily dragged her in the direction of the toilets. She did not want her friend to vomit on the dance floor, not for Jackie's sake, not for her own sake. She did not want *him* to remember her like the girl involved in a vomit incident. She wanted him to remember her – period. She sat with Jackie in a toilet cubicle for a while, held her hair away from her face, dabbed away the cold sweat which appeared on her forehead, wiped her mouth clean afterwards. Behaved like a best friend even if she felt desperate to get back out there and found out what this was – this connection between her and him. But Jackie really was not well and finally she capitulated and got them a taxi and brought Jackie home, much to her own disappointment.

-OG-

A month later, Elvis suggested they would return to the same night club. The girls were immediately on it, they had had such a good time there. Only Charles was reluctant. In hindsight he thought he had behaved like a fool that evening, staring at a girl he did not know, like a smitten teenage boy. He had spent the month trying to convince himself that there had been nothing special, that he just had been drunk, even though he knew that he had not been drinking much. In fact, he had felt sober until he was intoxicated by the strong feelings for that girl, Molly, as her friend had called her. He was nervous about what might happen if he went

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there again. Either she was not there, and he might be disappointed, or she was there, and then he might be in trouble. Or maybe everything would be fine, she would just be anyone and then he might as well find out. Bex jumped at this opportunity to have some fun together, things had been different lately. They had either been fighting over all sorts of small things, or Charles had been absent minded, like he was somewhere else. It felt like they were drifting apart. Maybe an evening of fun together was what they needed to get back on track. Charles noticed her hopeful expectations and felt sad somehow. He had so much love for Bex, he just felt so damn distant to her these days and his mind kept returning to that girl who did not mean anything to him. Like he could not keep from torturing himself and turning away from what was safe and known.

-OG-

Jackie and Molly had returned to the club every weekend since Molly first saw him there. Jackie had joked about how Molly had become quite the clubber, previously the girls had only gone out like that once in a while and in between met with friends in pubs or at home. Finally, Molly had to let Jackie in on that she was hoping to see a certain bloke again. Jackie laughed;

"Is it possible that Molly the elusive finally has fallen for someone? This is too good to miss out on, you can count on me."

"He might have a girlfriend."

"If it's meant to be..."

Molly blushed, she did not like the thought of coming between a couple. Jackie saw it, and also knew what kind of person Molly was, and put her hand on Molly's knee.

"Molly, if everything was good between them he would not look at you. Whatever happens is his responsibility, not yours."

Molly was not convinced that was how things worked out, and probably she had imagined any interest anyway, but still could not *not* hope that she would meet him again. She felt she needed an antidote to get him out of her system. So far, the search for him had been unsuccessful though, they had had fun club nights but every time they finally had gone home, she had felt

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an aching disappointment because she had not met him. Even though she was here for his sake this evening again she tried to ignore that, tried to focus on having fun, not feed any false hopes. She and Jackie were dancing, dancing to a song she loved, she closed her eyes half-way and allowed herself to just be moved by the music meanwhile the spinning disco ball drew silver patterns on her bare skin. Suddenly she had the feeling that someone was watching her, opened her eyes and there he was. Not far away and with his gaze fixed on her. The warm feeling that shot through her body, like the blood in her veins had accelerated to lightning speed. She had been waiting for him and now he was here, it felt like they knew each other, like she ought to go to him, but in reality, there was nothing that motivated that. Only the invisible strings pulling again.

-OG-

Just like the first time, he saw her before she saw him. She seemed absorbed in her dance and looked so beautiful. The reflections from the disco ball painted pattern on her skin and hair, like crystals, made him think of the snowflakes she had had in her hair when he first saw her in the queue. He could not help staring, but when she suddenly opened her eyes fully and with a surprised look on her face met his, he suddenly felt shy and looked away. Who was he to stare at this unknown girl? Why could he not help himself? His thoughts were spinning. What if she was not here alone? Even if it had seemed so last time, she could have found someone since then. As beautiful as she was, it was more than likely. Yet, he was strangely rooted where he was, like his feet were cast in concrete and he realised that the days that had passed since he last had seen her, had been filled with longing to see her again. He had needed to be here with her again, in the darkness of the night, his feelings protected from showing by the surrounding crowd, able to allow himself to watch her without being exposed. He felt in this moment he would do anything to be with her, leave Bex. If he had had a ring on his finger he would have pulled it off and thrown in a corner. He felt that if he followed his heart, things could not go wrong. Maybe everything would fall apart, but right now he felt he had already fallen. He could only see her, like the room was spinning around with only them left in the middle. Nothing had changed from the first time, if so, he only felt it stronger, like a thirst that could not be extinguished if he could not be with her.

-OG-

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He broke eye contact, but his gaze always seemed to return. Why was he looking at her if he already had a girlfriend? Could he please stop? Could he please *not* stop? Then the blonde appeared by his side again, she had not been an illusion last time, she was still very much present and still looked like she owned him. And loved him. Molly had no right, but how she wished he would continue to look at her. If only for one minute, it could be her by his side, in his arms, whispering in his ear, placing her lips to his. Inside she whispered to some unknown power in the universe for help 'Please, please'.

"Is that him?" Jackie hissed in her ear.

"Yes, don't stare."

"But you are!"

"Believe me, I'm trying not to, especially since his girlfriend is there too."

"Sure you're not just imagining?"

"No, look, the blonde there beside him."

"If he's flirting with you with her there, he's an asshole. You're worth better Molly."

She shook her head, but she could only agree. A guy who would flirt with his girlfriend present, who might even be the unfaithful kind, that was not someone for her.

-OG-

All he wanted, was to go over there and take her hands, entwine them in his and kiss her and then leave with her. But he knew that was not how this would end, this was not some fairy tale and that was not who he was. This was reality where he had a big problem, he was falling head over heels for someone who was not his girlfriend. He had a girlfriend who he thought the world off, who he did not want to hurt or treat badly, he would never be able to start something new on a foundation that meant cheating on her. What he already had done, the looks, the feelings he could not help - that was too much, that was crossing a line. He would have to get his act together, he could have this no more. Molly had broken their eye contact, now seemed to avoid looking at him, which made it all easier. She would probably not even notice that he

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went, she did not notice him now, by Bex' side. Then her eyes met his one last time and it felt like it was tearing him apart, like a beam of light cutting through him. Then someone was pulling him backwards, but not her. Bex. And he slowly left, walking backwards, away from her. Home with Bex.

-OG-

She saw him, leaving with his girlfriend. The right thing to do when one has a girlfriend, and it felt like her last hope disappeared with him, the small chance there had been was gone. She had hoped he would be alone here tonight. He had not and that was that. She would not come here again, at least not with the vain hope of finding him. What was the point of spending an evening staring at and pining for someone who was already taken? It would only hurt her. Time to return to who she had been before she set eyes on him, find someone else, somewhere else. But she had loved when he looked at her, she had wanted to get to know him, like an all-consuming need deep inside her. It seemed it was not meant to be, but she could not help feeling that it was, despite everything.

-OG-

It was one of the first spring days and people had started sitting outside cafés to take their coffee again. For Charles it felt like a fresh start. He had broken up with Bex some months ago, a few days after that evening in the club. He knew he would not have felt like he had for that girl if everything was like it should with Bex. Maybe nothing would ever happen with Molly, maybe she was not even a nice person if one got to know her, but he could not stay with Bex either way. His heart was not in it anymore and as long as he was with her, it would not be right to explore anything else. He had to move on and see where it lead. It had been heart breaking and difficult, losing not only someone he had loved but also a friend. Staying friends when one of two is still in love and has other hopes is very difficult. Still it was a relief and he knew he had made the right decision. Elvis and he had gone back to the night club a couple of times, but he never saw her again, so maybe it was not meant to be. Anyway, spring – it could only mean that good things were coming, he thought to himself.

"Do you want another one of those?"

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He looked up, and there she stood, and nodded towards his empty coffee cup. Exhilarating amazement. Tingling sensation.

"You work here?"

"No, but it looked like maybe you needed another coffee? And maybe some company?" she smiled but did not look quite as confident as her words.

He smiled widely back at her, with a warm fussy feeling in the pit of his stomach and wanted to erase every ounce of insecurity she might feel.

"I'd love that. Both the coffee and the company."

He reached out his hand. She took it. The first touch - and nothing else existed except heart beats.

"I'm Molly."

"Charles. Nice to finally meet you."

A/N: The song ends with him leaving with his girlfriend, but as you might know I'm a HEA person, hence they had to meet again. Hope you enjoyed.