

A Wednesday in February.

The air smells crisp today, as though the storm has cleaned it.

Above the crackle of leaves skimming across the garden's surface, a bird whose name I don't know is singing.

I was expecting a deluge of rubbish this morning; I knew we'd be the first people in the garden since Storm Ciara. As usual, London caught the lightest touch. The garden has amassed more trash than usual but thankfully, not the destruction I'd anticipated.

sweeping for litter, I find chunks of soggy cardboard and plastic bags billowing through the pond

I'd been worried about the Mizuko Jizō statues, who looked so disturbing when they lost their heads to vandalism before.

But they stand here still and nonchalant
she's passed them by.

two years on
February, again

I remember feeling that the storms were getting worse.
(the storms before the storm)

now

as Storm Eunice rattles at my windows, I realise that this
storm season we have made it down the alphabet to 'E'
already.

Born on this side of the great storm of 1987, I have
never seen
heard
felt
anything quite like this before.

The various offerings throughout the garden seem more or less intact. A few more ribbons than usual have disentangled themselves from the gates.

I pick them up and tie them back onto the cold, robust frame. Its touch is as grounding as ever.

opposite

One of the paint-splatted plastic skulls is so nearly perfectly in place, resting on its side.

now and then she sends a ripple through the Borough

It's blazing bright again and the stones ingrained in the surface shimmer, breathing with her.

Ciara didn't manage to take down the hollyhocks. They are still here; still lanky, still rooted. Still flowering in spite of everything.

Last week, Jen mentioned how strange it was that they were out already. I didn't have the heart to tell her that they never left.

in the southeast corner

Red and white tape has been strung up above the biggest and messiest crack. One end tied to the haggard old buddleia that spills from it, the other to a rickety salvaged chair, spray painted gold.

It has the feel of part crime scene, part deranged seaside visit, part maypole. The chair is placed as it never would otherwise be, facing the wall, and I sit in it. I wonder what happened here to merit this – this crack seems no different than it did two weeks ago.

underneath

crevices

converge

messily

approaching
but never quite
reaching
a centre
cobbling
together
indeterminately
instead

I sit down to write in the garden's sunniest, most naked spot, which in this moment is the Northwest Irish Corner.

The daffodils are out in force. Behind the pyramid, the grass is alight with those starry-cradle purple flowers. Above them, the mistletoe long-since-grafted onto the floundering crabapple tree is thriving.

I look over to the ribbons blowing in the wind and listen for a gentle swishing sound.

They undulate endlessly but still I hear nothing.