

All Things End by Hozier: A Lyrical Ouroboros

A Lyrical breakdown by Matthew A. Michelangelo

"A two-tonne weight around my chest feels like / it just dropped a twenty-storey height."

The first line of the start places the listener in the body, not the mind or the spirit, or as an observer of the narrator. That's important because grief, heartbreak, and even revelations all begin physically. You don't intellectualize pain at first; you carry it, you feel it, whether or not you know the root of the somatic reason you may be feeling a certain way. Maybe you feel the chest tighten, your throat resistant to comply, your breath shorten, the invisible pressure pressing against your sternum. Twenty-storey is a direct metaphor for that gut-stopping, heart-disorienting feeling of a revelation, whether good or bad, which is a personal lens for you to decide for yourself based on context. Later in the song, this imagery comes back changed, however, moving one to the rest of the verse:

"If there was anyone to ever get through this life / With their heart still intact, they didn't do it right / The last time I felt your weight on my chest, you said / We didn't get it right, but love, we did our best / And we will again."

This reads thematically like a personal philosophy and a rendition of many quotes before this song and after this song, one of which recently trended on TikTok a few years ago: "Yes, the grief is never-ending — but so is the warmth of breath, and so are the strange ways love will find you again, again, again..." I was unable to find a credited author for this quote, or even a credible source for its origins; however, some long-standing philosophies and theologies support this verse by Hozier, such as Buddhist teachings that suffering never entirely disappears but transforms. It's saying 'to live is to be touched by suffering, and if the heart is untouched by loss, then that's a heart that never truly used.'

We also see stoicism in this verse, as in much of Hozier's work, and the stoic principles of "A good life requires courage, love, and moral engagement. To avoid pain, love, grief, and loss is to avoid life because these human experiences do not invalidate love, pain, or even masculinity; they validate its depth." I could go on; however, I believe that would require me to set the record straight about modern "stoicism," which has diverged from and deformed Stoic philosophy altogether to the point its not real stoicism. So, I digress.

The last time I felt your weight on my chest, you said / we didn't get it right, but love, we did our best."

We have this duality of polarity at play here, the intimacy of the last time being comfortably heavy and emotionally heavy. This is almost a paradoxical feeling to express by nature, which is why I believe you can only understand the concept if you have felt it. The "weight" shifts from a soothing, familiar presence to the same chest suffocated with the remembrance that this is the last time I will feel this warmth. That's how grief really works. It doesn't disappear; it evolves, it weaves itself into a quilt of everyone you have ever loved, that has ever hurt you, and shrouds you in a familiar, persistent feeling, whether positively or negatively, that is not my place to decide. However, there is an argument to be made that it's sweet that grief gives you one consistent thing in your life. I think it gets messy when we don't let it go, or you recontextualize. There's something beautifully literary about that pivot thought—the articulation of burden and tenderness as one.

"All that we intend is scrawled in sand / it slips right through our hand."

A more simplistic line in context to this song, though, there are only so many literary devices to explain the permanence of fleetingness. Writing in sand is something we've all done. We know the ocean will wash it away, but we do it anyway. This pre-chorus is really the anchor point. It's the awareness that everything you do will wash away — and the decision to write it anyway. It reminds me of Camus' absurd hero, the one who keeps pushing the boulder up the hill even though it will roll back down. Meaning isn't found in the permanence of what we make; it's in the act of creating itself. The argument we see a lot in humanity is "if nothing in life matters, then what's the point?" which is the point. Everything matters then because we make it matter. In my opinion, it's also a quiet rebuke to the capitalist myth of "legacy." The idea that we need to be remembered to matter. Hozier and so many others infer: "*No, you only need to be concerned with starting.*" Love, art, and identity aren't and will never be sustainable statues, not anymore. "Legacy" is a lie written in sand; it's brief, dissolving, and very human.

"I have never known a silence like the one fallen here."

Now here comes the kind of silence that isn't peace. The silence after a truth lands, after your world as you knew it breaks, after a goodbye that won't be undone. It's the sound of those weeps that won't come out; they just stay stuck in your throat and bulge all the tendons in your neck. That is what this line is, and this is where the song stops narrating for a bit and starts witnessing.

“Never watched my future darken in a single tear.”

This line cuts me twice — once for what it says, and again for how it says it. It’s not melodramatic, it’s observational. It’s a weird in-between place of being very aware of the body, and dissociation. The “future” darkens, Hozier doesn’t use explodes, shatters, tears, etc., He uses “darkens” Like a candle that only has a bit of wick to burn- you know it’s going out regardless, all you can do is let it burn or blow it out. You can feel the influence of existentialism here — not just as theory, but as experience. To know something is ending is to feel your own finitude staring back at you.

“When people say that something is forever / either way, it ends.”

It’s easy to mistake permanence for devotion, but Hozier untangles that illusion with plain wording. Endings don’t mean something failed; they just mean something lived long enough to complete its purpose. Just because you say it won’t happen doesn’t mean it won’t happen. There are no rewritings of the laws of the universe; no one gets a freebie, no one is an exception. The refrain — *“and all things end”* — reminds me of self mantras, if you will, when you’re about to jump into a lake, and you whisper to yourself, “just do it” over and over again. It’s the lyrical equivalent of working yourself up. The song doesn’t resolve grief by denying it; it resolves grief by *allowing* it. Something we all have forgotten to do. To feel emotions lets them go. To hold them in is to admit to yourself that you don’t trust yourself, and that you’re scared of yourself and your capabilities.

“Just knowing / that everything will end / we should not change our plan / when we begin again.”

This is the thesis — not just of the song, but of being alive. Knowing it all ends should not stop us from trying. We see stoic principles reemerge here, as well as this radical surrendering. Hozier is saying when we do anything again, there is no need to sit there and overly fixate on how to do it better, just let it happen, that’s what life means to be anyway. It’s Romantic and existential all at once. Like Keats’s negative capability meets Nietzsche’s *amor fati* (Real Stoicism by the way). *Amor fati* means “Love of Fate,” which is to live fully, embracing what will die. To love fully means accepting loss before it happens. *Amor fati* encourages embracing all that happens in life. The good, the bad, the joyful or painful moments—as necessary and even as desirable, viewing challenges not as obstacles to survive, but as experiences for growth. An Affirmation of one’s being. It’s about radically accepting, loving your reality, not just enduring it— you don’t have to like your reality, we get love and like messed up, but to meet your life with a childlike unconditional love and wonder is to see everything as essential to your journey, transforming suffering into strength. Maybe that’s the real rebellion — to keep creating, connecting, risking tenderness even after knowing it all turns to dust. We begin again not out of naïveté, but out of courage. It’s easy to do the same thing. It’s

hard to try something new and then, at times, sit with “shit... that wasn't really the most helpful thing” or whatever it may be.

Musically and lyrically, the song loops back on itself. The repetition of “*we begin again*” and “*and all things end*” feels like waves — relentless, cleansing, infinite. By the time the song closes, it hasn’t changed the world, and maybe didn't change any listeners either, on a grand scheme. Because if the song did, well then the song would undermine itself. “*All Things End*” by Hozier isn’t a song about heartbreak on a deeper level; it’s a song about consciousness. It’s about learning to live in full awareness of endings without letting that awareness hollow you out. It’s not hopeless, cynical, or morbid. It’s human.

Everything does end. The song, the feeling, the body, the mind, our names on a gravestone, but we do it all again anyway. That’s the miracle: that despite knowing how temporary it all is, we still reach for each other, still write confessions in the sand, we still begin again.