

# The Flux of Wintry Stillness

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*Days of coldest  
winter will leave its mark  
roots of shiver laid*

It was cold, it was serene, I was in awe, I was miserable.

Such as it always is with a long winter's run. I remember them all, and they all bleed together into a solitary memory, of feeling free in the burrowed deep, because I know that the clouds will break, the sun will come out, and the snow will melt. A new day shines bright, in the offing. But not yet.

In the lonesome of a snow-filled field, a bitter cold slamming itself into your exposed face, you lay yourself bare to the rawness of the moment. The why of you, the wails of yesteryear, the disarray of right now, the unsettledness of what may or may not come next—it swirls about like the blur of snow that is falling all about and laying the foundation of the ground you are traversing. And in just that moment, where you realize none of the dots are connecting, a rabbit stirs from the bushes and darts across the path, pausing ever so briefly to notice you, this creature in the snow. Your eyes lock and it is just you and the rabbit. Then, it jumps away and into the distance. You are the only witness to this moment, and this moment is now gone. Later you will have the urge to tell someone about the encounter, but you decide not to. It is just for you.

This could be the fall of a last leaf. The remains of a tree's last stand. The final ripples on water that, come morning, will be solid ice. It is just you and the wind on these coldest of days, making your way from here to there, as you have done so many times before.

On any given run, I listen to all manner of music. And, of course, a running playlist is absolved from any and all judgement, no matter what songs it may contain. Whatever gets you going, and keeps you going, until you cross the finish line, imagined or real. But in winter, I find myself cycling, on repeat, one piece of music in particular: "Metamorphosis Two" by Philip Glass. Why? Because you get to go places in your mind when you are going the long way around in the frighteningly frigid cold, and this music takes you further, where time and space collapse and extract the infinity of change. There is a rise, and a fall, and a repetitive structure to the piece. The solo piano notes slow to a crawl, then speed up in a furious crescendo, faltering at the precipice of an ear tingling height. Unleashed in the come-down is a cascade of memories that drift away with the windswept snow across a frozen lake. It is melancholy, but also hopeful. It is music that befits the desolation of an empty expanse under dark, wintry clouds, a solitary figure cutting across the landscape. That is me, from another time. I remember the memory of it, right as I am doing it in the here and now.

*Beyond the furthest  
where the sun's burn turns its back  
tempt the air and fly*

Winter encapsulates the brink of change. We hunker down for it, and while hunkered down, we are tested. If you cannot feel your toes, or your fingers, or your face, are you even really there? The answer is in the heart, which beats a hardier warmth with each



Philip Glass

"Metamorphosis  
Two"

Solo Piano

08/1989

Sony BMG Music

foot forward. When the time comes, and there is no mistaking it, for we will breathe it in on the very morning in which it arrives, we burst out of the bunker and see the day anew. How we managed in the shorter and darker days determines the path of this new dawn.

Snow falling off a lone statue and landing at the base with a quiet thud. A red bird landing on a branch, collapsing an icicle castle. The remnants of a snow angel disappearing back into the landscape.

There are the other seasons, of course, and with every season by nature comes the stir of lessons and change. Spring is the shimmer of the green grass. Summer is for sweating. Fall offers up the colors of beautiful decay.

And yet, when winter comes, and the worst of its weather arrives, that's when I think it is the best time to go for the longest of runs. You'll end up feeling the bitter cold down to the bone. Your lungs may not forgive you. Towards the end of the run, your frozen feet may actually turn on you, no longer willing to take the pounding you are giving them. Extra effort is required to make less and less progress, and yet, you are still moving forward.

But you will carry on, and by doing so you will find yourself in the stretch of a landscape with no one in sight, an entire expanse of snow without a single footprint in it, the thunderous hum of wind against the backdrop of a piano hitting all the right notes under an unwieldy winter sky. There's too much room for your thoughts to coalesce, swirling about in the fast-moving clouds, and it provides a welcome moment of seeing what matters most in the nothingness of a cold day laid bare. There is simply no denying that you are a beacon of beating heart heat, trudging your way along a path that, at least in this singular moment, no one has ever forged before.

*Wind whipped freezing cold  
all the way to rattled bone  
next bend, and again*