

THE FALL OF A SPARROW

There is no such thing as definitive soup.

Some soups are hot but, hey, some are cold. Some involve bread and rice and pasta. Some are strained water. Some are arguably stew.

In soup: there is no such thing as the real thing. There is the soup of the day.

A large selection of fresh ingredients you have and probably like, mixed up in some kind of ratio you imagine makes sense, warmed in a receptacle that can withstand heat and covered with water – is soup.

The recipe for your best soup is written in slurps, big spoons, licked fingers and the inhaling of steamy smells. There are also recipes in books and they often come with pictures, but the soup you make from what you have, because your friend/ Gran/ attractive flatmate has a cold – that is the Soup.

I guarantee you, and this will depend on you having made it yourself, it will always be a surprise how good that soup tastes. Like food eaten outdoors, like cake mix before it's cake, like writing a novel without using Word – it's surprising how things just work.

Try to make the same soup twice. It's impossible.

Things work and not just because we want them to but because we are ready for them to work. We are ready when we are no longer trying to show that it works. That is the difference between writing an essay to get a First and writing an essay because you have a question so big and so hot that its sharp teeth have a tight grip on the trodden and frayed fringe of your trouser leg and

will not loosen until you have bent down and concentrated all your human, compassionate effort into convincing it that you are going to do everything you have to do to find out the answer and put it to work.

That thing might be hunger. It might be fear. It might be your new date's snuffle. But it will make you make soup.

It will make you make a soup that has not yet been made.

Make more soup more often.

Prepare to be surprised. The readiness is all.