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December 2, 2020

# A Dreamlike State of Life: The Love and Loss Depicted in *Good at Falling*, the Debut Album by The Japanese House

*Amber Bain blurs the line between reality and fantasy with a dreamy pop sound on her debut album.*

Love. Loss. Depression. Grief. These are all themes on the debut album *Good at Falling* by The Japanese House. Amber Bain is the 25-year-old English artist behind the project. Bain originally chose to use a moniker to hide her gender and identity; the name came from a cottage that was furnished in the style of a traditional Japanese tea house, which she vacationed at as a child. Bain is usually classified as an indie pop artist, and she often works in the musical genres of indie pop, dream pop, and synth-pop. Bain

## *Good at Falling*

Artist: The Japanese House

Label: Dirty Hit

Release Date: March 1, 2019

Run Time: 44:14

Available on Spotify and Apple Music



showcases the genres on her first studio album with the use of synthesizers, vocal distortions, and heavy production to create a dreamy, ethereal sound. The album creates a loose narrative of love, heartbreak, and perseverance, heavily influenced by events in Bain's personal life. In the tracks you hear the story of meeting a lover, falling in love and then out of it, and realizing that you will survive the loss of this relationship. The album details the introspection and reflections that Bain has during the course of her relationship with her ex and other tragic events that have happened, creating a work of art that expresses powerful emotion.

I first discovered The Japanese House late in 2018 with her song "Lilo." I was listening to a playlist of slow, chill songs on Spotify, and when I first heard "Lilo" I felt so calm and relaxed. I had never heard anything like it before. When I closed my eyes and just listened to the song, I felt like I was floating, just like the song says. I played "Lilo" on repeat for a long time, and when I checked out the artist's other songs, I was not disappointed. I had high hopes for the first album, and The Japanese House exceeded all my expectations.

The first track, "went to meet her (intro)," represents the chaos of love in life. The distortions to Bain's vocals, the lyrics, the drums, and various animalistic sounds create a tumultuous air which is symbolic of how uncertain love and relationships can feel. Bain opens the album by crying, "Something's wrong, stop," which lends an air of turmoil to the entire

### Track List

1. went to meet her (intro) (2:31)
2. Maybe You're the Reason (3:38)
3. We Talk all the Time (3:15)
4. Wild (3:34)
5. You Seemed so Happy (2:42)
6. Follow My Girl (4:04)
7. somethingfartoogoodtofeel (4:25)
8. Lilo (4:10)
9. Everybody Hates Me (3:09)
10. Marika Is Sleeping (3:03)
11. Worms (3:18)
12. f a r a w a y (2:50)
13. i saw you in a dream (3:20)

track. The chaos of the track resembles the chaos of the event behind the story. A friend of Bain's was attacked, and Bain flew out to Ibiza to be with her. This unsettling feel to the first track sets the stage for the rest of the album in that you can't get too comfortable with life, because it could change at any time.

This track fades into one that is more upbeat and positive called "Maybe You're the Reason." This track seems to evoke the feeling that one might have when first meeting and falling in love with someone. Bain is pondering the meaning life, or if there even is a meaning to life. Here's part of the first verse:

Now tell me something

Is there a point to this?

Or are we living for the feeling

When we look back

On what we did and reminisce?

There seems to be no meaning to anything in life: "I keep looking for something / Even though I know that it's not there." However, this sentiment changes in the chorus as Bain says that maybe loving someone is what gives life meaning. This is the first instance on the album where Bain juxtaposes somewhat depressing lyrics with an upbeat, happier rhythm. When I first heard this song, I didn't focus much on the lyrics, but once I did, I could really relate to it. It's difficult for me to find motivation in life and I often wonder what the point of life is. I really enjoy hearing that people can make life better, maybe not necessarily a romantic partner, but my friends and family always keep me from questioning life too much.

In this first half of the album we hear almost the whole story of the relationship; from the beginning of it in “Maybe You’re the Reason” to the deterioration of it “We Talk all the Time” and “Follow My Girl.” Bain says she “can see a progression” in her relationship and feels powerless to stop it, so instead she just decides to hang on for the ride. By the end of the first half, Bain seems lost and very unsure of her place in the world and in her relationship.

In the seventh track on the album, “somethingfartoogoodtofeel,” we come to the part where Bain starts to blur reality and fantasy. The second half of the album often feels more like a dream, more detached from the real world. It is not always intentional, but sometimes it seems like Bain is deliberately trying to escape the pain that comes with loss and heartbreak. She almost seems to be disillusioned with everything. She says, “None of it was real / It was something far too good to feel,” as if the happiness of a good relationship was too good to be true. This marks the start of where Bain starts to reflect on her relationship more, rather than just tell the story.

In “Lilo” Bain reflects on the relationship and its timeline so far, specifically the beginning of the relationship. The first verse says that she was alone and “needed someone to depend upon.” Bain’s friend introduced her to someone who seemed very easygoing and accepting of life. Bain says that this person was “floating like a lilo / With your eyes closed, going where the tide goes.” She compares herself to a tide and says that the girl she met easily drifted in the tide, resembling the ease and simplicity of the relationship’s beginning. Bain says that this feeling was exactly what she needed and that it was easy to fall into a relationship with this girl. This was the first song I ever heard from The Japanese House, and I fell in love with the lyrics, the sound, and everything else about the song. Bain effortlessly captured the feeling of weightlessness in this track and evoked intense emotion with the lyrics.

Bain also details her struggle with depression and feeling stuck inside her mind. During “Everybody Hates Me,” she says, “Up in my head / I’m the only one around.” Bain also says that she has “Replaced all of my friends with / A linen sheet, a takeaway box / And an incomplete crossword block.” These attempts at self-consolation have been unsuccessful thus far, and Bain ends on a mantra of “Everybody hates me now,” signaling that she is spiraling deeper into this seemingly inescapable psychological torture that her own mind has created for her. I think just about anyone can relate to this track and the all-encompassing thought that everyone in your life hates you. The depressing lyrics are disguised by light, airy vocals and an upbeat rhythm, recalling the same sentiment from “You Seemed So Happy” earlier in the album. This provides another example of the contrast that Bain uses for many of the tracks, representing the struggle that she goes through during the album’s story.

The twelfth track of the album, “f a r a w a y,” sounds very airy and dreamlike, which is supported by the lyric “I’m lost in space” from the chorus. This song is about the all-encompassing feeling of being in love. Bain says, “And now you’re taking up all of my time / Wherever you are: I’m with you from afar.” Bain is constantly thinking about her partner and it pains her to spend “all these seconds away from her.” The echo on Bain’s vocals and the drawn-out chords give the effect of being “far away” from someone. This may also be symbolic of Bain feeling far away from reality, as many of the tracks on the second half of the album do. It sounds out of reality.

The last track on the album is titled “i saw you in a dream,” and it is an acoustic version of the song “Saw You in a Dream” that The Japanese House released as a single in 2017. The acoustic version is much more stripped back and empty, but in a purposeful way. It feels out of touch with reality, and the lyrics tell us that Bain is dreaming and reminiscing about her former

lover. The first lines in the song tell how Bain can't let go of her lover; "I saw you in a dream," she says, but it was bittersweet because she can't keep herself from waking up and she misses the sight of her former lover. Bain knows that she can't go back to the way it was before, evidenced by the lyrics "You just don't hear me anymore/ And I know that I shouldn't even try / It's a waste of time." Bain said that she wrote this after she found out about a dear friend passing away; this context reveals the grief within the lyrics about loss, not just of a relationship, but of a loved one's life. In the second verse Bain says, "You were the sweetest apparition, such a pretty vision," alluding to her friend's death and subsequent appearance as a kind of spirit in Bain's dreams. The loss of her friend haunts her in this emotional final track of the album, and it completes a work that details the journey through love, heartbreak, loss, and learning to be alone.

Often the blurring of reality and fantasy can be the result of prolonged, intense emotion. The love Bain feels for her partner has her floating, weightless, and content with life. The grief she feels for the loss leaves her disconnecting and untethered to reality. The dreamlike sound of the album makes the emotion come out stronger, as dreams are often a reflection of our current lives. I really enjoy Bain's style and music; I love the dreamy sound, profound lyrics, and fun rhythms. I often go back to this album when I feel stressed out and want to relax, and I can always connect to the lyrics emotionally. The themes this album presents are emotions that everyone can relate to, and I think everyone should at least give this album a try.