

February 2022

Foreword

Hi Everyone,

It's been a busy few weeks, and I have a lot to share. But first, as usual, I'd like to take the opportunity to feel like a flight steward and extend a warm welcome to the frequent readers.

I've got a job offer, had a fantastic weekend with friends from London visiting, a 10 day long trip to Turkey and London, with more on the horizon.

The offer

I'm excited to disclose my job hunt has led to my first full-time offer in the Global Consumer Banking Division with Citi in London. I've not had a change of heart, it still lies in the lab, but until better options emerge, I'm glad to have secured some stability for the immediate future.

Certain details remain to be determined, particularly with the start date they want overlapping with university considerably, so here's to hoping there's no hiccups. If those of you currently working in the industry have any top tips for me, I'm all ears.

It really does feel like a numbers and probability game. I had an exam the day of a BofA assessment centre, and there were no alternative provisions. Equally, there are still rejections coming in every day. Everything considered, I'd be lying if I didn't say I wasn't grinning all day when I heard back, and I feel blessed to have friends who felt happiness *for* me.

I am particularly interested to hear of what paying taxes entitles Tier 2 visa holders to in terms of access to public services. I'm also still looking for someone who works in the division at the moment to gauge how reasonable the salary is for the hours, and equally, if any of you are willing to share, the salaries in your divisions for graduate programs for your typical hours.

I'd only considered Citi when I'd spoken to one of you, probably at Naseem's party on the 5th of October – thank you.

The visit

What's in a fragrance? We're not exposed to them on demand in the same way as other senses and so they remain more special, I think. A whiff of jasmine immediately takes me warm spring skies at home in Dubai. It's why I like to spray correspondence with some perfume – the one sense I can't email. The discussion also lends itself to questioning the claim of identity that gifts of perfume entail.

Currently however, the most pertinent fragrance around me is a medium-note biased sweet, fruity, floral perfume trapped in my bathroom, acting as a temporary reminder of the fantastic weekend to have gone by.

Adya and Rose came up to visit from London, giving me an excuse to forget about everything else for two and a bit days. Adya had the chance to check out a little bit of the Northern Quarter's vibe with us heading for pizza (where I tried my first-ever Calzone) and ducking into a bowling and arcade centre after dinner, where she promptly had me grappling with her ping pong skills. The calzone I'll repeat, the ping pong...eh why not; Adya doesn't otherwise make me run around.

Rose joined us the next morning, bringing with her a bouquet of tulips, marking the first time I've been gifted any. Flowers naturally tie in with fragrance, getting increasingly dense and sickly sweet as they begin to wilt. Oh to go out with a bang.¹

I've been asked whether I primarily tend to live in the past, present or future. I want to say the past features least, but there are certain thoughts that persist. At the moment, it's how I forgot to add a dash of chilli flakes to the otherwise strong avocado-egg-za'atar we whipped up for breakfast. Cooking for other people is a double-edged sword, especially if the guests get involved. I think it's a fantastic way to bond and spend time not to mention the lasting memories good food creates, but equally, mistakes are more impactful.

From there, we head out to the Peak District, aiming for the Trinnacle – not far from the Dovestone Reservoir viewpoint I previously ticked off. For the sake of time, we decided to drive it instead of the train+walk option, and that proved to be an experience. I'd not driven a manual car for any considerable distance since passing my test about two years ago, so I went on a short, uneventful 40-minute drive two days prior to refine my skill. When it came to driving through the weekend rush, things were slightly more involved, and it led to all three of us supporting the driving effort with navigational and other aids. A few unexpected stalls didn't help either, but as expected, the way back was much smoother. I don't know if they'll want to repeat the experience, but I certainly hope they felt sufficiently safe.

As we got started with the trail, conditions weren't bad. We had a nice view of a reservoir and it wasn't raining, though the already wet and boggy ground reinforced Adya's concerns with how feasible the endeavour was. As we steadily crept up, a bad weather front set in, and rain turned to hail. The winds were channelled through the surrounding peaks, and though I didn't have an anemometer, I'd estimate them to be between 30-40 mph. I was lucky that Adya and Rose maintained the right attitude and had the grit to see things through. When things take a turn for the difficult, it really does come down to the support you can offer each other. Eventually, we reached a ridge line with a very slow incline that wrapped around a peak. In the interest of time and to get shelter from the incessantly battering winds, we decided to go off the trail and crest the peak early to rejoin the trail on the other side. Unfortunately for us, the top was also very much a plateau, but with rivulets and bog making up most of the terrain. After Rose nearly had her boot pulled off her foot, we proceeded with more caution, though we'd long abandoned any hopes of keeping our feet dry. Eventually, the Trinnacle came into sight and we briefly ducked out of the worst of the wind. As we arrived, two mad men were atop the rock formation – about 8 metres high and sheer, with a few hundred meters to drop.

As they left, we spent a few moments appreciating the scene in front of us. In the backdrop, a reservoir nearly overflowing with a narrow country road highlighting the connected nature of English national parks. In between, the fast-moving rain and hail clearly forming sheets, and right in front of us, water and wind eroded spires that we would later analyse to find monkeys, snakes, and even Ganesha embodied.

It's worth pointing out that despite the challenge we faced, the conversation remained as varied and engaging as ever. Surpassing food, good conversation most strongly reinforces the good times feeling to me in hindsight, even if the details aren't recollected. Both of them are amongst the easiest to have that flow with at the moment. Rose, in particular, is a gifted conversation starter,

¹ As a side note, research the tulip market bubble in the Netherlands. Fascinating.

coming up with the most random question that then sparks an hour or two of flitting from topic to topic not just with me but also with anyone else I've observed her with.

The situation continued to get increasingly uncomfortable on the way back, with us drenched despite our waterproof layers and therefore much colder. We attempted to crest the peak again to take the shortest path possible, but the bearing I picked was out and we spent about ten extra minutes exposed to the worst of the elements. It may sound relatively minor but at that time, everything counted. When we finally returned to the trail head, we were especially glad to have brought the car as we sat and warmed up in the cabin, appreciating how sapping the hour long walk to the station would have been. Once we'd showered off and warmed up at home, I put together chole chawal (Punjabi style chickpea curry) that left me very proud and made for perfect comfort food after the day's rigour.

The gist of the rest of the weekend continued to be food and conversation, so I'll wrap up this section here, but not before stating for the record it was one of the nicest weekends I've had in Manchester, and of course, mentioning I now have a bansuri in G which meant it was a lot easier to play in conjunction with Adya's singing which led to much time slipping away. Rose left slightly before Adya, which left Adya and I sipping coffee from the corner armchairs that many of you have seen in pictures. Overlooking the non-existent sunset, the vibe slowed and relaxed – tangibly in my case with the speed I speak. There are certain moments one wishes lasts a little longer but alas the trains wait for no one.

Looking Ahead

I intended to write about Turkey as well, but seeing how much I've put on paper for a two day weekend, I think a separate email when I have some more time to spare may be a better option.

It's a busy time. I'm planning to go to Northern Ireland next weekend finally, to see Zack and brush up on the accent. Uni goes up and down in waves, but the societies keep me reliably occupied a few days of the week. I plan to be in London from 10-13 March for my own Imperial grad, and my parents may come visit as well, and I'm sure they will be keen to meet some of you. There's also a trip to Iceland on the horizon which I am very excited for.

If any of you would like to come up and visit before May, drop some dates and let's see what's doable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gauri', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.