

TUNE INTO ENGLISH

Taylor Swift's Cruel Summer



La superstar del Tennessee rivisita il cliché della storia d'amore estiva con un brano dal tono vendicativo e un ritmo particolarmente coinvolgente.

One of the biggest hits of recent times, *Cruel Summer* by American singer Taylor Swift was written in 2016, recorded for her 2019 album "Lovers", and not released until 2023. Although she had described the song as "pride and joy¹" on the album, she acknowledged that releasing a single with that title during the pandemic was "a not-so-great² idea". The enthusiastic reaction to the song when performed during Swift's 2023 Eras Tour finally prompted³ its late release⁴.

The song was written when Swift was embarking on a six-year relationship with English actor Joe Alwyn, and the song is about feelings of uncertainty and desperation that accompanied the romance. In the first verse, the singer is excited about her new love story and in the second, defiantly⁵ commits⁶ to it despite⁷ the cautions⁸ of her love interest. She ultimately reveals her fragility in the bridge⁹, admitting that, despite putting on a brave face¹⁰, she's not as "fine" as she says. Swift told iHeartRadio she liked doing "ranting¹¹ bridges, here it's the biggest moment of the song."

A phenomenal success, the song became Swift's tenth number one in the US and spent an incredible twenty-nine weeks in the UK Top 10. Swift has said it "has some of her favourite lyrics" and the critics agreed: this year *Rolling Stone* magazine included it in its updated list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time. ☒

Taylor Swift at the 2019 Billboard Music Awards held at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas.



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LOWER INTERMEDIATE B1

GLOSSARY

- 1 **pride and joy:** orgoglio e gioia
- 2 **not-so-great:** non proprio grandiosa
- 3 **to prompt:** spingere
- 4 **late release:** pubblicazione tardiva
- 5 **defiantly:** con aria di sfida
- 6 **to commit:** impegnarsi
- 7 **despite:** nonostante
- 8 **cautions:** cautele
- 9 **bridge:** ponte
- 10 **to put a brave face:** farsi coraggio
- 11 **ranting:** vociante
- 12 **to roll the dice:** lanciare i dadi
- 13 **to roll one's eyes:** alzare gli occhi al cielo
- 14 **shame:** vergogna
- 15 **embarrassment:** imbarazzo
- 16 **to mess up:** combinare un casino
- 17 **to bleed:** sanguinare
- 18 **to sneak in:** intrufolarsi
- 19 **gate:** porta
- 20 **to grin:** sorridere

Fever dream high: a high (noun) is a form of excitement, during a tumultuous dream.

with a price: the phrase "to come with a price" means there will be something to pay, some sacrifice.

blue: this colour is often used as an adjective to describe feeling sad or depressed.

'em: a spoken or sung abbreviation of them.

hang your head low: to have one's head turned downward because of shame¹⁴ or embarrassment¹⁵.

screw it up: a phrasal verb meaning to mess something up¹⁶.

cut the headlights: slang for 'switch off'.

wanna: 'want to' is often shortened in songs and spoken English to make them flow more naturally.



Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the official song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.

Fever dream high in the quiet of the night

You know that I caught it

Bad, bad boy

Shiny toy **with a price**

You know that I bought it

Killing me slow, out the window

I'm always waiting for you **to be waiting below**

Devils roll the dice¹², angels roll their eyes¹³

What doesn't kill me makes me want you more

[Chorus]

And it's new, the shape of your body

It's **blue**, the feeling I've got

And it's ooh, whoa, oh

It's a cruel summer

It's cool, that's what I tell **'em**

No rules in breakable heaven

But ooh, whoa oh

It's a cruel summer

With you

Hang your head low

In the glow of the vending machine

I'm not dying

You say that we'll just **screw it up** in these **trying times**

We're not trying

So **cut the headlights**, summer's a knife

I'm always waiting for you just **to cut to the bone**

Devils roll the dice, angels roll their eyes

And if I **bleed**¹⁷, **you'll be the last to know**

[Chorus]

I'm drunk in the back of the car

And I cried like a baby coming home from the bar (oh)

Said, "I'm fine," but it wasn't true

I don't wanna keep secrets just to keep you

And I **snuck in**¹⁸ through the garden gate¹⁹

Every night that summer just to seal my fate (oh)

And I screamed for whatever it's worth

"I love you," ain't that the worst thing you ever heard?

He looks up **grinning**²⁰ like a devil

[Chorus]

I'm drunk in the back of the car

And I cried like a baby coming home from the bar (oh)

Said, "I'm fine," but it wasn't true

I don't **wanna** keep secrets just to keep you

And I snuck in through the garden gate

Every night that summer just **to seal my fate** (oh)

And I screamed **for whatever it's worth**

"I love you," **ain't** that the worst thing you ever heard?

Fergal Kavanagh runs the website www.tuneintoenglish.com, the web's largest free resource for learning English through pop music.



to be waiting below: this is a reference to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* balcony scene.

What doesn't kill me makes me want you more: this is a play on the 19th century aphorism "what doesn't kill me, makes me stronger" by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

trying times: a period of difficulty.

to cut to the bone: the phrase "to cut to the bone" means to reduce something to its minimum amount.

you'll be the last to know: the phrase "to cut to the bone" means to reduce something to its minimum amount.

to seal my fate: a phrase meaning to make something unpleasant inevitable.

for whatever it's worth: a phrase meaning it's not that important.

ain't: slang for 'isn't', often used in songs.