

BOOK TITLE: IN FULL



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AUTHOR NAME

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I'm not ready to share this yet.

*But you want to save it?*

I want to save it.

*But you save it like this. You save it in a book. You obscure the meaning, but it's there. It's in the ink. It's on the page. It's in the realm of the physical.*

That's not the same as sharing.

*It's exactly the same as sharing.*

And who asked you?

*Who invoked me?*

Well played.

*Do you remember when you met me?*

When I met you? I don't remember it so much as a meeting as you were just already there.

*I was, yes.*

After high school, then. That's when you showed up. That's when life began. That's when I started thinking of myself as a person. That's when I started thinking of others as people, with their own motivations, their own desires, their own incentives and failings.

*And you made it through.*

After a fashion.

*You're here, now. You made it through.*

*She never wanted to be  
What she became;  
The irony of which  
Is not lost on her.*

*Touching.*

Hey now, don't be rude. Aren't you supposed to be my ally?

*I **am** your ally. I'm just not your friend.*

Fair enough.

So you showed up after high school. You showed up after life slid sideways through puberty. I went digging, you know. To find this out.

Oh?

Yeah. June 2004. There you are. I say,

The navy blue I've been seeing at waist level in front of me and to my left is contentment. I'm not entirely sure that it being omnipresent is a good thing, however, considering the colors it's mixed with. Am I really content with longing and hopelessness? It's not out of the question, I suppose that it could just be another aspect of my personality. But that just brings up the question of whether or not it's something I ingrained into myself through habit, something where I just kinda accepted that feeling such things is normal, okay, and what I want; or is it something I was born with, or that we're all born with? Is it a side effect of love, expecting impossible desires and the blind hopelessness that follows the end of a four year undertaking?

And you replied...?

*You're rambling.*

So pleased you remember.

*You're rambling.*

I suppose I am. But there you were. You said *You're rambling* to which I replied "Guilty, conspirator." And that was that. That was us. We never greeted each other. Why would we?

I kept digging, too. You stuck around for a year. I saw you off and on until June 2005. In October, 2004, I said that empathy is cooler in

person. *Why?* you asked. *So you can verify? Don't you trust your feelings?*  
I said I didn't know, and then I begged you not to go.

*Everyone always leaves, don't they?*

Perhaps. It's good to hear from you again. Even after fourteen years, I've missed you.

*And what was the last thing I said to you?*

*I was going to call you emo, or suicidal, but no, not goth.* It was when Ash and Shannon and I found a house to move into.

*I believe I also called you a prick.*

Was I?

Yes.

Am I still?

*Yes, but a different kind.*

You're as chipper now as you were then.

*Yes, but a different kind.*

*Why am I here?*

Aren't you always?

*With you, sure. Why am I bound to words, though? It's been fourteen years.*

Surely that's not all on me. You must play some role in it. I was talking with my partner about doing something autobiographical for my next project, after all.

*I'm the observer and the mirror. All I can do is reflect your choices back at you. Choice itself is not my department.*

After getting *Restless Town* finished, I needed something to do. Some other project that would make me feel like I was being productive.

*Feel, or seem?*

Both. If I sat still, I'd burn up. If I was seen sitting still, clearly I'd be worth less in the eyes of those around me, right?

*Not my department.*

Right.

So I started digging through stuff I'd already done, seeing if any of it could be cleaned up and turned into a new project. I stumbled across *Rum and Coke* and found it mostly clean as it was, so I decided to publish it as a book. Paperback and ebook, I mean, not just the stories online.

*Were you proud of them?*

To an extent. A different me wrote them. A lesser me, in some ways. I was younger, I hadn't quite found my voice and tone. No *Arcana*, no *Disappearance*, no *Getting Lost* or *Post-Self*. All I had was a few scattered tidbits and my mom's words ringing in my ears: "You wrote your own wedding vows, right? I could tell."

A me with a different identity, too. A me that was working on gender through small steps. I hadn't yet picked up the word 'trans' for myself. I was non-binary, presenting male, writing to justify myself. Or maybe to hype myself up. I was writing works about gender and poly problems being worked through to convince myself it was possible.

*They read like parables.*

They were, to me. Each one came with an internal discussion after the last line, *now, what can we take from this?* Something in a circle. Socratic. A talking stick.

*I know, I was there.*

Of course.

*Why didn't I show up then?*

I was too...something. Too busy, too preoccupied. I was focused too much on identity, too much on The Work, as it were, to reflect. Maybe I was moving too quickly to notice my choices being shown to me.

*You'd mostly stopped [adjective][species] by then, too.*

Life got weird. I was transitioning–

*A choice.*

–I was solidifying my relationship with Judith–

*A choice.*

–I was starting to burn out at work–

*Was that a choice?*

The result of choices, maybe. The result of the choice to start drinking. It is called *Rum and Coke*, after all. The result of the choice to get into computers. The result of the choice to work from home, which itself was the result of a choice to take the previous job so far from home.

*You burned out in part because you burned so hard at the start.*

Was I not supposed to? I had to prove myself.

*To whom?*

You?

*Not my department.*

One of your neighbors, perhaps. A cubicle over, a floor above, something like that.

*Do you anthropomorphize me that much?*

No, I suppose, I don't. You're not my therapist, sitting in a chair across from me and talking me through my problems. You're not person shaped. You're the shape of my hands displaced half an inch behind my own, navy blue and trimmed with sea-foam green.

*You haven't used colors in fourteen years, either.*

What I'm trying to say is that maybe you're back because of nostalgia. \*Restless Town\* was done and couldn't be published yet, and a prideful part of me didn't want it to be my first book, so I pulled \*Rum and Coke\* into shape.

It rubbed my nose in the past. I published it a few weeks ago, and I wasn't done with the past, so I started archiving more data. I dug up my old hard drives. I grabbed stuff from Dreamhost, both files and database backups. I finally unlocked my LJ account and archived that.

*And you work at an archive.*

I go through phases, looking back at the past. I'll spend a few days trying to backdate some log files, or dig through my old scores and publish them — I did that too, alongside *Rum and Coke*, publish a bunch of my old music — or resurrect my notes on *Nanon*, or the like.

*You are quite mercurial.*

A failing. That may play a role in my burnout. I'm only good at something for seven years before it becomes so intolerable that I have to leave. Happened with school.

*So here I am, your ally, twice seven years later.*

I hadn't thought of it that way.

*Portentous. The only way it would've been more so is if it were thrice seven years.*

I ran away thrice seven years ago. In seventh grade, in 1997, no less.

*Ill omens. What will happen to me in seven years?*

Will you leave me for good?

*Can an ally disinherit a mind so easily?*

I'm not comfortable with that question. I'm not comfortable with its implications. Either way, the past is important to me because maybe it can help me figure out the present. Those who don't know history are doomed to blah blah blah.

*And have you figured out your present?*

For me to pull out that trite quote about my own personal history speaks pretty well to my fears of doing things accidentally. I've certainly figured out my present better than twice-seven-years-ago me had figured out his.

When 2007 rolled around, I turned 21. *What if, I thought to myself. What if I decided to see what it feels like to be addicted to something?*

By that point, alcohol was this nebulous thing. I'd roped a few people into getting me alcohol now and then, and it was fine. I'd started brewing and it was whatever. I had beer and it was alright. I went through a mead phase—

*You went through several.*

—I went through a wine phase, and an absinthe phase—

*Don't sell yourself short. You wrote an essay on absinthe.*

—and a gin phase. That's the one that got me. I had a bottle of Beefeater's, what was to become my gin of choice, and I had an inch of it poured over ice and I was standing in the kitchen. Such a wide open space. The kitchen at that apartment was larger than my bedroom now, and it opened onto a living room the size of what we have now. I was standing tall in that vast plain of a room, staring down into my glass and watching the way the ice melting into the gin created swirls of two different kinds of transparent. I was thinking how it was probably due to the different ways the two liquids refracted light, and then I was laughing, because I was staring down into my drink like something out of a bar.

*\*What if I decided to see what it feels like to be addicted to something?\** I thought. I drank every night that week.

*Why ruin your life on accident when you can do it on purpose?*

I don't think I was thinking in those terms at that point.

*Are you now?*

Perhaps.

*Maybe you're just afraid of doing anything by accident.*

Perhaps.

*You're sounding like me more by the day.*

Learn from the best.

*And so you set about with a will.*

Like magic. I set forth my will with a stated goal and made it happen. My spell was spoken and washed down with liquor. I drank nearly every day from then on out. I spent thousands of dollars on alcohol over the next ten years. I went through more mead phases and more beer phases. I went through a distillation phase. Magic is empowerment through attention to detail.

*The MEAD principle. Cute.*

I drank hard with the choir, and then I left school and drank hard with the programmers. If there's one thing that most programmers do better than computers, it's drinking, after all.

I did some work at a bar, even. Just making their menu and website for them in exchange for free drinks.

*You mastered  $\text{\LaTeX}$  that way. A very you thing to do.*

I did well at it. I still have one of the menus and some of the paper laying around somewhere. I did that until the bartender left and, when I asked for my next payment from the owner, he flipped out at me and threatened to sue me for impersonating him. I don't think I realized Raffi, the bar manager who hired me, was already on his way out.

I drank my way out of one job and through a good chunk of another. I drank until I got better at it than I was at software. I drank myself into burnout. I drank until I collapsed.

*You used up your spell slots. You ran out of will. You had to quit by accident.*

I worked to quit, I'll have you know. It wasn't easy. It took meds and some rough nights.

*You were less of a person then than you were when you started drinking. The you who started drinking by focusing on **starting drinking** was more real than the you who collapsed in the kitchen from a PNES and stopped drinking because she was completely empty of intention.*

Should I start the daily drinking again, then?

*You're more of a person now than you were when you started drinking.*

That, coming from you, is a glowing endorsement.

*You may have been more of a person when you started than when you stopped, but you weren't much of one, even then.*

When I was young, back before I knew what mental health entailed, what anxiety and abuse and depression really meant, I was convinced I was having semi-regular mental breakdowns. That was the phrase I used then, because I was unsure of what it meant to have a panic attack.

This was before LiveJournal, of course. This was before I was writing on the internet, or even really on the internet at all. This was before you.

*No, it wasn't.*

Right.

When I ran away, my dad found my paper journal. I had kept it infrequently, as something about daily journaling to a seventh-grader felt dishonest, stupid. What could I possibly write about?

In the journal, I mentioned on a few occasions that I'd had a mental breakdown. My dad called me several times over the next few days after my mom found me, and in one of those calls, he yelled at me about that. "Do you really think you're crazy?" he said. "Do you need to be taken to an asylum?"

I told him no. I whispered it. I murmured it. I wasn't crazy. I didn't need to go to an asylum. I just felt like time stopped for me and the world around me sped up. I just felt like I was holding on by the barest amount of friction on my fingertips. The whorls of my fingerprints providing my only grasp on reality.

*That was me saying hi.*

Blunt-force greeting?

*I was quiet as a mouse.*

I have the words now. I have the vocabulary. I can say derealization, depersonalization, dissociation. I can say panic attack and anxiety and depression and hypomania. I can say *ah, **this** is what is happening now.*

*You have emotions now, is what you have. Those were your mental breakdowns.*

Dad didn't believe in those. Not for boys. *Mood's a thing for cattle and loveplay, right? Emotions are for women.*

*He was half-right.*

I suppose he was.

I think of myself as a trans woman, not a woman. I think of past me as male, not female. To an extent, I think of past me as cisgender. I was a guy. I was that gay guy who tumbled out the other side of puberty and was left to figure out what the fuck. I am not who I was.

*You have ship-of-Theseus'd yourself into what you are.*

I was not Madison. I am not Matthew. I can't deny his existence, though. He was him, and to erase that, to toe the party line and say I've always known that I was Madison, would do a disservice to him.

He got in all those relationships. He loved so hard it hurt. He dreamed of being held. He struggled with the words.

He fought. He enacted his cruelty in countless subtle ways. He promised himself he'd be better than his dad and failed more often than not.

He rode the same crests of hypomania and crashed just as hard after. Once, he tried to schedule his hobbies into his day so thoroughly that he forgot to schedule meals, then, having failed two weeks later, considered shooting himself in the head. Anxiety rode him just as thoroughly. Once, dead convinced that he had meningitis, he wrote a note apologizing to loved ones and left it on the bedstand.

He was just as mercurial, too. The brewing phase—

*Phases. Plural.*

—the gun phase, the photography phase and all its subphases: digital, film, cross-processing, rangefinders.

*Yeah, he was a prick.*

You said I still am, but a different kind.

*In all fondness.*

How kind.

All this to say, I have not always known I was trans. To pretend such would be to erase a real, actual person who tried his best more often than not.

*Have you answered Theseus' question?*

I don't know.

July 2nd, 2004, shortly after midnight.

My emotions are gaining distinct colors, like a kind of twisted synaesthesia. There's definitely a sense of physical location associated with each emotion, and it's not always internal. There may also be a tactile part to this, but I have yet to experience it in any different places or with any different touches, so it may just be one continuous headache that goes latent occasionally.

An example: when pondering \*\*\*\*, a luminescent fuschia color that seems to be flowing in the right hemisphere of my brain; when thinking of \*\*\*\*\* and snuggling, a warm, earthy brown with a little bit of green in a pine-needle-ish pattern about a foot and a half in front of me and slightly to the left; tiredness is off-white everywhere and blind hopelessness is bright blue wrapped around my mind. The headache moves around, but it's mostly at the lower, back, right side of my head. Ibuprofin works well.

This isn't what I meant when I was talking about beautiful pain.

Current mood: Bright blue with a tinge of purple, but mostly off white and hazy.



July 3rd, 2004, shortly after midnight.

Greens covering my chest and shoulders warmly are happiness.



*And that's when I showed up, yes?*

Yeah, later that day.

The navy blue I've been seeing at waist level in front of me and to my left is contentment. I'm not entirely sure that it being omnipresent is a good thing, however, considering the colors it's mixed with. Am I really content with longing and hopelessness? It's not out of the question, I suppose that it could just be another aspect of my personality. But that just brings up the question of whether or not it's something I ingrained into myself through habit, something where I just kinda accepted that feeling such things is normal, okay, and what I want; or is it something I was born with, or that we're all born with? Is it a side effect of love, expecting impossible desires and the blind hopelessness that follows the end of a four year undertaking?

*Whatever, you're rambling.*

Guilty, conspirator.

*And these pictures?*

All from years later. The color thing comes and goes, like you.

April 8, 2004

The undersides  
off gray  
of clouds  
drift

while I  
    on the path  
stand  
above  
    where the crow flies  
me.  
Off  
    with purple  
gray, I  
    wandering  
ponder, should  
    in a perfect  
        were there such a thing  
world  
be a  
    though the word is plain  
color with it's own  
    to name  
        as they say  
creates  
word.  
It soothes.

Sometimes I'm overcome by the numinous. Sometimes it's colors,  
sometimes it's you, sometimes it's a silence swelling within my chest,  
stealing breath.

*He would be riding on the subway or writing formulas on the  
blackboard or having a meal or (as now) sitting and talking*

*to someone across a table, and it would envelop him like a soundless tsunami.*

That's a post-rock song title.

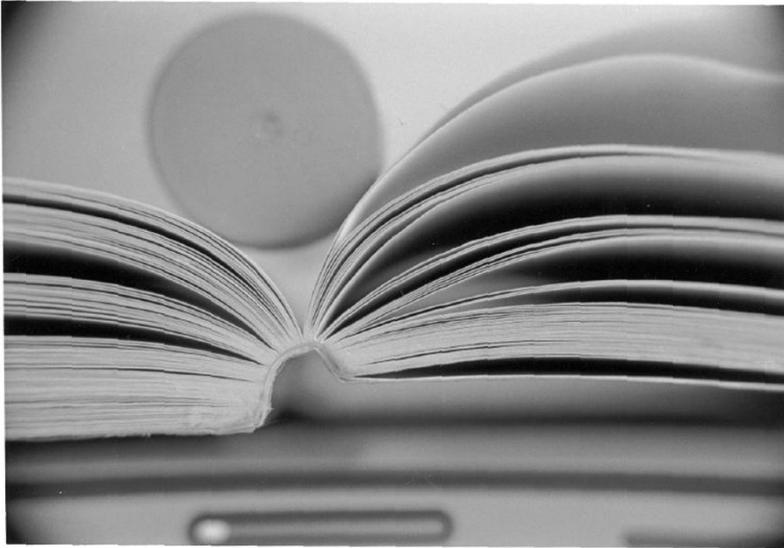
*Is it wrong?*



I'll take a picture, lasso a color, and desaturate everything else. Sometimes, it's fun. I do it to Falcon's eyes a lot because they're so pretty.

*And sometimes it's something more.*

Yeah. Sometimes it's a compulsion. Sometimes a picture will latch onto me and never let me go. Sometimes I'll remove all color.



Sometimes I'll blow out the background because the foreground is so completely overwhelming.



Sometimes I'll skew colors all in one direction.



It's not an artistic decision. Not *just*, at least. It's always something more.

Inter ĝuo kaj timo  
Estas loko de tro da signifo.  
Apud kompreno, ekster saĝo,  
Tamen ĝi tutampleksas.  
Mi kompareble malgrandas  
Kaj ĝi tro granda estas.  
Nekomprenebla  
Nekontestebla,  
Senmova kaj ĉiam ŝanĝiĝema.

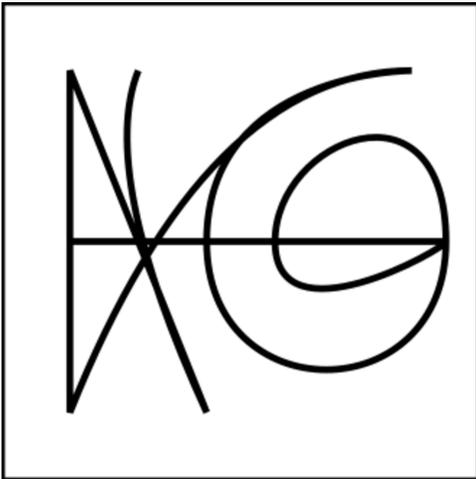
Between joy and fear  
Is a place of too much meaning.  
Next to understanding, outside wisdom,  
It nonetheless expands.  
I'm so small beside it  
and it is too big.  
Incomprehensible,  
Incontestible,  
Unmoving and always changing.

A sigil need not just be lines and curves.

*Or maybe it's just mania.*

It may be.

*Tell me about mania.*



*Lines and curves, lines and curves.  
Beginning now.*

Seven o'clock, and the 13th Street crowd was headed to dinner, or focusing on a postprandial stroll.

Jacob was focused on lines. On arcs and straight edges. On corners and angles.

No.

Wait, what? Why are you asking? Weren't you there?

*I was. I...am?*

I don't think I'm hypomanic now. On my way, perhaps. I can't sleep.

*I may be, then. Tell me about mania.*

No, tell me why you're asking.

*I'm more of a liminal creature, myself. It's hard to keep an ally around when depression slowly shuts down avenue after avenue of reaching one. You, as a reflection of me, become distorted while manic. Fun-house mirrors and blind-spots. I want to hear about it.*

No.

Later.

I took a sleep aid. I'm not getting into this now. I was all prepped to write about poly stuff, but you started banging on the door.

[Read what I've already written](/birds).

*I was there when you wrote those.*

So? Does that not clarify it?

*Will anything?*

*The cans of spray-lubricant had clanked onto the counter, earlier that afternoon. Three of them, some of the cheap kind. The poor stoat behind the till scanned them numbly, seemingly on autopilot.*

*To see someone with such dead eyes had led down some strange alley and into what felt like second-hand embarrassment for Jacob. Second-hand to what, he couldn't tell. Either way, the transaction had itched, and he had shifted his weight from paw to paw until it was done.*

*Finally able to tap in the pin for his card, that itch had been scratched. The digits of the number across the pad always traced a pleasant, angular rune, and then the coyote was done, hurrying out of the store. The bag of cans had been dumped unceremoniously into one of the panniers of his bike, his tail clipped quickly to his thigh, and he had been off.*

His breathing slowed and the jittery, speedy vibrations in his mind smoothed out.

The heat along those lines grew, dull black iron turning first into a burgundy red, then glowing, picking up more towards cherry.

*Spring turning to summer had the days warm, but not uncomfortably so. The air still held enough spring in it that the light long-sleeved shirt Jacob wore never got too warm, even with the exertion of the brisk ride home.*

Eyes focused on surroundings briefly, hunting for a patch he knew had to be somewhere here. Wander north, magnetic attraction.

*Ducking into the apartment had taken only seconds, enough for him to toss two of the purchased cans on a counter and another into a backpack, then back out into the evening air. Back onto his bike. Back on the road.*

Likely not.

I will say, though, that I missed some stuff in my investigation earlier. You did come back for three brief days in November, 2013. It was at a liminal time, but you didn't stick around.

*I'll remind you that you ignored me for one of those posts.*

Point.

Let's get into mania later. We owe each other that. For now, bed. And tomorrow, something a little less harrowing.

*Ah yes. Polyamory. Known for being easy peasy, lemon squeezy.*

Cherry red and up to yellow, starting to put off enough glow that it crept into his vision, a light-leak in the camera of his eyes.

*Making it to the 13th Street Plaza had taken longer than expected, but perhaps that was for the best. The flames would shine brighter in twilight.*

North, north along Linden. North to cross the plaza. North to pass the fountain.

*Jacob had parked his bike at a rack in front of one of the 12th street shops, locking it with care. Of his two prized possessions, the bike was the most practical, and the thought of losing it was something he would barely allow to register. He would be more than just upset, he'd be fucked. The commute to work would go from twenty minutes to more than an hour on the bus system, a fact he knew well from when it was too cold to ride. He'd saved up for three months to get this bike, a fantastic upgrade from what he'd had in college.*

He could barely see now. Yellow brightened, headed more towards white. A sun made of lines, graceful arcs and definitive straightedges.

*The other prized possession was less immediately practical, yet even more dear than the bike. The small sketchbook, barely more than a few inches on each side, was truly irreplaceable. That sat snugly in his pocket; the backpack was too risky, even his apartment wasn't safe enough.*

Toward the courthouse.

Jacob was panting now. Cool as the evening was getting, it was no match for the searing symbol locked in his thoughts. Burning, some part of him reddening, blistering, flaking and charring.

*His Sigillarium sat distinct from his notes. Those were ash now, long gone. Their pages had held letters, all unique, warped and twisted through repeated passes of his pen, slipping and sliding together into some place between*

*joy and fear, a place of too much  
meaning.*

Past the courthouse now. And there, along the brick wall that surrounded the guarded parking lot. A place for moving the guilty to prison, maybe? There was the icy patch, freezing in the still-warm evening.

*Once the meaning grew  
overwhelming—he'd know  
the moment when it came—the  
Sigillarium was brought out,  
opened reverently to the next  
blank page, and impressed with  
the new sigil. He used a dip pen  
with India ink into which he'd  
stirred several drops of blood. As  
the ink dried, Jacob did his best to  
start the process of forgetting.*

Strange place, strange place. Empty, yet meaningful. Locked up. Guilty and innocent. Shackled, manacled, clanking and clinking in chains. The patch on the wall likely wasn't actually cold to the touch, yet he knew if he touched it, frostbite would follow.

*Forgetting took days, weeks,  
months. It began with closing*

*the Sigillarium, locking away intent and meaning while Jacob forgot the words themselves. He wouldn't look at the sigil again until the night before.*

Obscured though his vision was, Jacob turned around, using his peripheral vision as best he could to check for others around.

Empty street.

*Doubtless there were cameras who had seen him, but intent never left a visible mark, so no one had ever come after him. Intent was psychological. Magical graffiti for no one to see and everyone to feel. He would begin internalizing the symbol the night before, and hold it in his mind until the moment of, when it once more became unbearable.*

Smooth movements. Smooth and sure. He took the can, focused on the frigid patch, and began spraying. He couldn't do it too quickly, even if he did need to hurry. There needed to be enough penetrating oil left to burn.

*Then he would bike and hunt for  
the cold he knew peppered the  
town.*

The sigil was one unbroken line. One line that contained all those arcs and curves and straightaways and angles and corners. All sprayed dead center in the midst of that patch layering intent over what meaning was already there.

Quickly, before he even capped the can, he fished his lighter out of his pocket and gave the wheel a rasp just at the final endpoint of the line.

Blue flames, tinged yellow at the tips, spread fast, curling along the sigil, branching and curving whenever it came across a point where lines crossed.

All that fire in his mind wound up on stone.

All that patch of ice began to thaw.

The coyote was already on his way back to the plaza, can of lubricant back in his bag and all that unbearable meaning seeping from him as he slipped into the evening crowd.





Madison Scott-Clary