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For the person I was when I started writing this, and
the person I am now.

AUTHORS NOTE

Since I was a child, books have been my everlasting friend. Growing up as an only child could get lonely sometimes, but my Dad always told me to pick up a book if I felt dull or yearning for adventure. It's not that I did not necessarily flourish in social situations. Still, books were and still are my refuge when I wanted to step back and find comfort and safety if life was possibly confusing or uncertain. Books took me to places I never believed I could travel and introduced me to things I had never considered. Books were constant companions during childhood and adolescence. Literature influenced my life, and here's how.

From my early years to the beginning of high school, I struggled with revealing my honest self to others—inhabiting a reserved role. While I did have strong bonds with my friends, the degree to which I displayed my candid self was minimal. I participated in a reasonable amount of the typical adolescent activities, such as football games, parties, and school dances, but felt out of place. My friends knew me from the outside, but more of me still needed to be illustrated. I did not enable myself to be fully vulnerable, which held me back in traditional life encounters and connections with people. I depended extensively on books to immerse myself in a fictitious world during this period. Books could engage me in the risks and exhilarations I was unwilling to expose. I particularly loved J.R. Tolkien's mythological stories. His Lord of the Rings trilogy led me to a world of escapism with bravery, friendship, and homely warmth. I lusted for the courage and connections his characters have. I became captivated by these other fictional worlds to fill my life's void. I would read the stories, which would be a short-term solution, but putting

them down would bring me back to a harsh reality. Although I have not lost this sense of idealism, I have, luckily, expanded away from my forcibly hidden self. My reading experience is no longer what it once was; it now serves a different motive.

Naturally, I decided to become an English major in college, where my passion and appreciation for books are more remote and investigative than before college. I am carrying on with my experiences of reading more productively. As an English major, I can comprehend the ideas, intricacies, and emotions of previous writers and worlds, both fictitious and real. I embrace how books have inspired me to learn more about humankind and become more empathetic.

Where I formerly idealized my interior self, I've begun romanticizing my personal progress - striving to be the best version of myself. Reading is primarily about studying the mind: evaluating characters, their interactions with one another, and their reactions to specific circumstances in their environments. I still overlap with the personalities I read about, but instead of comparing myself to them, I can maintain enough space to live my expressive life.

Romain Rolland, a French novelist, says, "No one ever reads a book. He reads himself through books, either to discover or to control himself". I feel this is correct, and discovering what makes this strategy efficient leads you closer to understanding yourself.

For instance, I became explicitly passionate about women's rights and reading various texts, fiction and non-fiction, that helped me understand the history and evolution of feminism. With this passion, I also saw the frustrations I have experienced in my own life. The empathy and emotion I engaged in reading these texts reflected me, demonstrating that reading allows you to connect with the narrative's

creator and investigate your own thoughts.

Along the process, I got explicitly passionate about writing. I generally journaled and penned poetry here and there until high school, when I began writing for the school newspaper and learned that my peers also liked my work. This gave me greater confidence to write outside of my spiral-bound notepad. I was astonished when people liked my writing. Perhaps because I believed my writings were too intimate for anybody to relate to. But I was mistaken. I utilized writing to express my feelings since I was never good at addressing them. Writing allowed me to recover while providing possibilities for introspection, discovery, and self-growth. This book's collection of writings delves into my healing journey.

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To Dreamland

How Funny.

That people put makeup on to go to the grocery store,

as if you're going to meet the love of your life in the produce
department.

How Funny.

The way we eerily look through our windows as our lawn is
getting mowed,

as if the lawnmowers will say "up yours" and disappear.

How funny.

That we ask our parents who their favorite sibling is,

as if they will actually tell us the truth.

How funny.

That we are all the masters of dwelling on what could go
wrong,

as if we aren't just trying to protect ourselves from loss.

How funny.

That we know love and joy is achievable and truly fantastic,

As if we don't get too scared because we also know we can lose
this intense joy in a matter of moments.

How funny.

The way life is so uncertain,

As if the earth does not revolve around the sun every day.

How funny.

That we go to the gym every day to be the next Kylie Jenner,

as if she went to the gym to look like that too.

How funny.

That hating yourself can be so easy,

As if your body is an apology.

How funny.

That we act as if our bodies are a mistake in need of correc-
tion,

As if it isn't the only thing in life, no matter the circumstances
that is present and prepared for whatever the world throws
at you.

How funny.

That we engrave our names into tree trunks

as if that were enough guidance to prevent getting lost.

How funny.

That we watch laughter come from a window lit far into the
night,

as if we'd even notice the others which were dark and always
silent.

How funny.

That life lets you have a sandwich, and cake for your late-night
desert,

as if life won't then send you back to bed, to dreamland.

How funny.

Now; off to invent your own dreamland.

Greyed Rainbow

Jackson Pollock 1953



A Poem for You

Because of the person, you used to be

Chaotic as hell but

Defiant, and brave.

Everybody's favorite yet,

Forever independent.

Gaudy, in a good way.

Honoring your commitment to me, though,

I let you lie; your clothes were askew

Just like you said, who was I?

Kidding.

Love could bloom again if only you chose to nurture it,

Merely, you chose to let it die.

Never say that I left you no choice because you always have a
choice to love

Or not to, and you chose the latter.

Pretty face, pretty clothes, pretty

Quiet I was, how

Rasin, my hands felt from washing the

Smell of her off of me.

Terribly taboo it felt,

Using a lone daisy in your vast garden of roses.

Vain and glory would never cut it

Wouldn't you? You were the

X in toxic. Yet now,

You know what they say. "Out with the old, in with the new",

Zero. We were always just inevitably sitting

Below ground zero.

Bittersweet

Laura Volkerding 1965



Broken Winged Bird

She didn't kiss frogs, she kissed deadly jawed sharks

Maybe she is not the page you dog-ear

But she would not leave her mates lone in darks

She happens to be the book you forget and clear

You were the lesson that made her realize

Redemption does not wash up on the shore

All she wanted was some of equalize

Yet you made her out to be such a bore

Always the villains win, we tend to fret

She did too but need yet to rewrite

Life is a broken-winged bird, make a bet

A dove, something of love, be pure and white

Yet, she soared and roared, and truly became

A woman, a power, he not to blame



Untitled Film Still

Cindy Sherman 1980

Cyber Stockholm

They wrap tight ropes around our neck in a field of software
which we reside,

Restricting our knowledge of what forms our society.

The air they force us to breathe is filled with anxiety,

All in order to make their check satisfied

Black tiny boxes keep our hands occupied.

We run like sheep trapped between metal fencing; desperate
for sobriety.

Our minds now have their keyboard slowly condensing for
their variety.

They watch, smiling from the top of the hillside.

These Black Holes have turned our relationships with technol-
ogy into strife,

Affecting us more than the eye is allowed to see.

The hearts on the page can fastly turn to a knife,

Gazing wistfully at the rectangular mirror to be.

It will not be long until we see that this is not meant to be life.

It is not long until the sheep will break free and see that they
are the ones who hold the key.

Tugging Boats

Kamisaka Sekka 1909



Waiting

Should we be opposed to the idea of waiting?

Wanting to wait for someone.

A mind game maybe,

But maybe worth it.

Climbing up the stairs

Coming home in darkness

An ambitiously fun night you had

Only to come home wounded.

It's simply toxic,

All the games.

An Infidelity of the mind

To put full trust in somebody is a terrifying act

A pretty girl with much more to offer than her figure

Preyed upon

Like a vulture lurking for its next victim

Except for this time, the vulture doesn't take everything from
their victim

Just their light.

Little by little.

Her light was being dimmed.

So maybe we shouldn't be opposed to waiting

Waiting for the person that pursues you

Who will make an ordinary moment feel magical

So if I wait for you,

Would your wall lower for me?

Allegory of Chastity

Lorenzo Lotto 1480 - 1556/1557



Traffic Jam

Healing is not linear.

Healing is like being in bumper-to-bumper traffic and wanting so badly just to take the next exit and turn back around.

But instead, you sit through the agonizing pattern of stop-and-go for what seems like forever.

Until you finally pass the wreckage, and everybody turns their heads to witness the damage, only to quickly speed up after gazing

You've been through the worst traffic, and now the destination seems more in sight.

And when you, at last, reach your desired situation, it almost feels illicit

Illegitimate and fake

Because how could it be at your long-awaited, desired destination

That the wounds of your journey are still visible?

Maybe because the process of healing does not resolve when the wounds are no longer visible

It ends when the wounds no longer ache
 You can not put a band-aid on a bruise within
 But you can remember all the lost roads
 Unlit corners
 Heavy graft and heartbreak
 And consider that you have not yet reached your destination
 But you are constantly on your way there

Deep South Untitled (Three Drips)

Sally Mann 1999



Champion

You Become What You Think
 And only you can control your perspective.
 While you may think you have the most awful luck imaginable
 You constantly watch people around you succeed
 And wonder what they did to deserve that and not you
 You work hard; I see you
 You think you are being set up and the world is out to get you
 So what is the problem?
 You can ponder all of these things
 Or
 You can decide to see that you are actually being set up for
 something remarkable.
 You can choose to focus on all of the mayhem happening
 around you

Or you can decide to look for the good that is surfacing

You can choose to live in a state of victimhood,

Or you can decide to live from the stance of a champion

You become what you think

Pineda Island Recreation Center, Mobile, Alabama, Perspective

Bertrand Goldberg 1960



Friendship?

Do you know what I think about a lot? The pain of *gradually* losing trust. Trust takes time to build, and you gave me that time. You gave me the best kind of love imaginable, friendship. I never found it easy to make friends. Well, technically, I always had a lot of friends. But I still felt quite lonely. You made me feel seen. We explained our past pains to each other and bonded in a way I never thought was real. True unconditional friendship was only shown in movies. Not in real life. The worst pain is getting hurt by someone to whom you explained your pain to. You played the victim in a crime you committed.

Sacred to Friendship (Valentine)

Unknown Artist

American or English, 19th century



Lack Of

Your absence is quite unfamiliar to me. It's been months and most mornings I still reach over to hold you, just to get a handful of the empty sheets. I feel that you forgot that a pretty frame is only a pretty frame until it's not. Or that love is not only good for the body but good for the soul. Lust is deadly, and we all become prey to it, but we must not let it consume us to the point of hurting one another. Hopefully one day you will see. And not let it hurt another.

Woman at Her Toilette

Berthe Morisot
French, 1841-1895



Ambiguous

I am starting to think about you with less pain, less ache,
and less grief. You have become nothing but a bittersweet
name.

Ambiguous Obstacles

Vera Berdich
American, 1915-2003



Regardless

You know what his lips taste like but has he told you what
scares him? When he looks at you is it like love or like lust?
Regardless I hope when you look at him back, you see me.

The Lovers

Cecil Buller
Canadian, 1886-1973



Absense

I asked my heart today if it remembers you. It does. But not in the way you might think. It remembers, but does not crave it. When your name passes by, it doesn't cling to it like flies. It accepts your absence but no longer prays for your return.

Absent Portrait

Manuel Alvarez Bravo
Mexican, 1902–2002



Tangled Thoughts

I don't think he liked me very much. At one point, you even said you hated me. Actually, I think he liked me a lot at some point. I'm just not so sure when he stopped. Or if he ever really stopped. Or if he was scared. Actually, I felt him slipping away as he stood in front of me. Even with his arms wrapped around me, it felt like his hands had someplace they would just rather be. And I can't seem to accept it. I hoped he would realize eventually that I am worth being loved. But he never did. But there must come a time where you recognize that to grieve someone, hurts a lot less than forcing them to be a part of you. And I know I should never beg to be treated right to be loved, but just once, I wanted someone to be afraid of losing me.

Study of a Female Head

Sir Edward Burne-Jones British
1890



Colophon

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Book Content Images

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