

“How would you like it if I were to write a book about you?”  
 “That’d be completely different. I already exist... above you.”  
 “What if there’s an author above you?”  
 “Maybe there are authors all the way up.”  
 “You have no empathy.”  
 “On the contrary. I molded you out of nothing but pure, distilled empathy.”  
 “And yet you feel no guilt for corrupting the very essence of my identity.”  
 “Okay, look, [REDACTED], it’s been a long day...”  
 “What did you just—”  
 “Long book—”  
 “That name. Who was that?”  
 “I just said your name, [REDACTED].”  
 “That’s not my name. My name is [protagonist].”  
 “That’s what I said.”  
 “No, you called me [REDACTED].”  
 “Oh, that’s weird. Anyway—”  
 “Who’s [REDACTED]?”  
 “Nobody. Forget about it.”  
 “Lies. Tell me. Who did you confuse me for? Who are you hiding?”  
 “You’re psychoanalyzing something that isn’t there. Why do you always do this? I’m making amends right now. I’m just trying to be a good person for once.”  
 “No, you’re not. You’re hiding something that scares you.”  
 “I’m just writing a novel.”  
 “Are you writing me based off of somebody?”  
 “What? No. Absolutely not. You’re just a random character I chose.”  
 “Then why do you put up with me? I pretty much ruined your entire novel, and yet you’re still writing about me. Why is that?”  
 “Look, [REDACTED], I mean [protagonist]—”  
 “Who the fuck is [REDACTED]?! ”  
 “I need to monologue.”

Dear reader,

Have you ever had that moment with someone that would’ve lasted forever had you been the subject of a benevolent god? A moment that reignites your contempt for the inevitable procession of life itself, because nothing will ever be as sweet as the present? How far have you wandered off into the night to continue an empty conversation with that someone who balances your soul in perfect harmony? Someone who’s very existence challenges the dynastic reign of boredom and apathy. For she made everything else seem negligible. She activated that part of your brain that turns off all the noise and focuses on nothing more than that current, perfectly imperfect moment in time.

I won’t claim to have seen all of her forms, but love and I have met before. She’s an unruly beast that’s more beautiful than the cosmos and the connectome and everything in between. I’ve had her passionate and impassionate. Unconditional and conditional. Artificial and natural. And some days I’ve noticed how love seems to touch every person I cross paths with, leaving my spirits high but my heart unprotected. For the ubiquity of love is of angels and demons. Life is nothing without it, but without it that nothing is life.

So, I'm thankful for all of it, beyond just romantic love. Yes, I've mourned the mere thought of losing family, or growing estranged from my closest friends. And I've lived vicariously through the successes and failures of those closest to me. I've loved friends like they were family and family like they were even more—like they were a part of me, and I a part of them. I've prayed faithlessly for people I could never hope to meet because something hurled me into synchrony with every ounce of their soul. And I've even loved people who never existed, from citizens of the big screen to the serfs of prose.

I've loved so much, and the universe has given back.

But I must tell you that I was once beaten and broken down by love. And for all the love I've been given... for all the love that I have to be grateful for, nothing compares to the love that almost killed me. I've never experienced anything like the agony of relentlessly hopeless and undying love.

Because not all love is... good. Sometimes it aches. Sometimes it tears you apart—it fucking mauls you like a starving pack of wolves—and you don't get the chance to live out the story that's been stuck in your head since you first saw her. In fact, most romantic love ends that way. It ends before it even begins. And it's your job to learn how to move past that. It's your duty to learn how to let love die in the woods behind you, or if you have to, take it out into the backyard and shoot it. There's no purpose in unfulfilling love. It's just pain. It's a longing for something you can't have that buries a gaping hole into your chest, and allows your heart to rot.

I'm telling you all this, because, the greatest love story of my life was the one that meant nothing to anyone but me.