

Progression

This selection of work outlines a relationship and a period of time in my life. The journal entries as well as poems and dramatic scenes are all a direct result of my being with my boyfriend: the emotions I felt conveyed in writing. The writing-period spans almost two years, ending at the present day. We broke up. By no means does this mean that our relationship is over, or that I am going to stop writing. It is however, the end a significant period of my life.

For Ward

Ek is lief vir jou.

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November 28, 2000

My goodness, it's been a long time since I wrote anything in here. I suppose I just haven't felt the urge to write lately. But...believe it or not, I'm doing really well. I'm actually happy! Although I'm inundated with schoolwork and numerous other exciting things, I'm genuinely content at the moment. First, although I just broke up with Andy (yes, I had a boyfriend for a month, although I neglected to write about him), everything with him is still pretty cool. No awkwardness, nothing. And well, I do kind of have a crush on another guy. I hate to call it a "crush". It sounds so juvenile. His name is Ward. I met him at a party at Steve's a little while ago, and really thought nothing of him, other than the fact that he was potentially the most pretentious guy I'd met in ages. UCC boy. Enough said? But then totally out of the blue, he came and sat down with me in the library about a week ago and started a conversation with me. We talked about so many different things, and everything he had to say was remarkably intelligent. I walked out of that library with my head swimming, trying as hard as I possibly could to figure out why on earth I was going out with a guy as incredibly dull as Andy.

In just over a week, I've had some of the most interesting and intellectual conversations I think I've had in about a year. Since Mark - my disastrous relationship of this time last year; something I do not want to repeat. Just like Mark, Ward's really mysterious, and just as it was with Mark, I have this stupid hope that I may be able to get him to open up to me. I know that I should not be going around trying to change people (as mom so wisely tells me), but I don't know. This time, I think it may really be something.

Hope

Tiny drops of hope
Fill the ducts behind my eyes
Now overflowing

December 17, 2000

Life does all sorts of unexpected things. Now that I've entirely lost my motivation to do any schoolwork, I'm really happy to just sit on the phone for hours talking to Ward. I really like this guy. He's so interesting and intellectually stimulating, and we get along really well. The only "iffy" thing is that he's probably more like the little devil on my left shoulder, making the bad things seem more tempting or more feasible to me, than the angel I should be looking for. But maybe that's a good thing.

He finally half-asked in a round about way, what I was thinking about our "situation" (my answer was equally round-about and half-assed.) I'd say that I'll give it until Christmas. By then something definitely will have happened. Yup, I'm 100% sure.

December 19, 2000

Ward came over after school today. I saw him as we were walking out and I just asked him if he wanted to come over. So I drove him back here and we sat around and talked for a while - about us.

We finally kissed! He told me that his friends have been asking him if we're going out yet, and he told them to come and ask me, because he has no idea. So I said, "I suppose so," and then he kissed me. *Sigh*. It was perfect. It was just natural. It was like our chemistry is so perfect that neither of us can even contain ourselves for the fact that we're together.

December 19, 2000.

I can't stop smiling.

January 1, 2001

I've never been at such a loss for words. This is unbelievable. I'm not thinking, not processing. I'm trying to think of how to word my utter astonishment at this new situation, but I can't. I've never felt like this. This is all so new to me and I didn't even know that it existed. I've never felt this close to myself before, or as comfortable with someone else as I am right now. I don't know why I can't talk about it, but a lot of what I say in my head just doesn't sound right. I feel amazing. I'm so confident with Ward. I know that I can trust him

entirely and not worry about him changing his mind about me.

But at the same time, I wonder why I'm so scared? I wonder why I can't just let down my guard and open up entirely? I didn't even know that I had a guard to put up, so maybe that's why it's impossible to pull it down.

January 2. 2001

The secret is not to tiptoe but to distribute the weight evenly on the soles of your feet. That is how to get upstairs without waking the parents after talking on the phone until four in the morning with your boyfriend. Apparently I use it a lot.

This is such a strange and new and wonderful feeling I'm having. I'm not scared to death of it. I'm not questioning my options. My eyes aren't wandering. This is great. And not only is this wonderful for me, but I know that it's equally great for him, and not because I can just tell, but because he actually told me.

I think I'm falling and it's happening a hell of a lot faster than I had ever expected it to. I thought I was scared yesterday, but somehow, talking to him tonight has made it all seem that much easier to deal with and to think about and to understand. It's

fabulous and bizarre and brand new and just plain unexpected. Yesterday I was confused about some guard I had up and today I'm beginning to figure out how to pull it down. Comfort is an amazing thing. It's just something that happens. It happens overnight, whether you expect it or not, and WHAM! You have it and you're different and he's different and you have no idea what to account it to, but it's there. And now all that you can do is hope that it doesn't go away, that all of this that is so brand new has some sort of permanence, at least for a while, and you can actually rely on it. And him.

I said something to Khaleed tonight that even surprised me. I told him that with Andy, I could picture myself still with him after three months when we started going out, but with Ward it's different. It's different because I can't picture myself without him in six month's time. I know it seems terribly premature to say it, but I did, and now I really hope it's true.

Ward asked me if I think we'll last six months and I told him that I really hope so. I do, and it's the first time that I've even been able to say that I don't think there's anyone better for me out there. I can finally stop looking and feel comfortable and

relaxed and happy with someone, and as Ward said, relieved. Relieved that I've found what I was looking so hard for. I can finally stop looking. And I'm happy for it. It's a different kind of happiness. Without even realizing it, my mind flickers and I think of him, and a smile appears immediately on my face.

Your Words Run Over Me

Your words run over me
Like drops of cool, clear liquid
Following the arc of my spine.
Their meaning dissipates
And all that is left
Is the lingering trace of their existence:
The knowledge that something was said.

I recognize your challenge to open up
But I refuse to empty myself out.
To untie the tiny boxes, tied up with twine
and placed into yet another larger box.
To dust out the uppermost crevices of my mind
and allow you to see what I have discovered there.

And still you wait.

The intensity of your eyes dulls down.
You become softer, more reflective.
You no longer seem to need any answers,
But you wait all the same.

My mind clears,
My thoughts become still.
The effect of my words no longer seems devastating.
They flow out in a breath as a gust of wind,
Clearing away the thick dank mist
That covered my mind.

January 11, 2001

Ward has made me realize so many things about myself that I had never thought of before. I'm just getting tired of being perfect. I didn't think that I put on a face, but I so obviously do and I don't want to any more. We talked for hours and after I told him what I was worried about, he opened up to me. He told me that he's scared that he's falling too fast and too hard and that he can't deal with not knowing where or when it's going to stop. He's worried about what will happen when and if I go far away for university and neither of us will know what to do. He told me that he thinks that he's in love with me, but he regretted saying it the minute it came out of his mouth. He meant it but he didn't think that it was fair for him to have said it to me so soon.

But now I've been thinking too much and can't figure out what it is that I've been thinking about. I'm sure that I'm falling in love with him and I think that I'm in love with him, but how can I be sure? I'm so confused about what's happening. I think that we're taking this all way too seriously way too soon. I really do think that I love him, but I don't know if that knowledge really needs to have that

much of an effect on us, and on the way we feel about one another.

(After reading that last paragraph, I think I'm thinking too much.).

January 20, 2001

Ward,

If you could only know how I feel right now, maybe you would understand that what I do isn't intentional. Whenever you're not around at school, I walk around trying as hard as I can to keep my mind on other things because I'm starting to feel more and more like the possessive girlfriend. I don't want that at all, but at the same time, I just want to be with you.

I'm really sorry that you felt like I was juggling you all day yesterday, and it was really insensitive for me not to realise it. It was our first ever anniversary after all. Sometimes I really don't think, and then I manage to get myself into trouble or do things that I really don't mean to do. You know that I really didn't want you to feel bad. I didn't want you to be upset or unhappy. Last night was supposed to be the perfect night.

And in many ways it was. Dinner was fabulous. I love talking to you and hearing what you have to say. I love knowing what you think about things and hearing your points of view. I love just being with you.

The next bit was a mess, but coming back to my house to just sit and talk was simply amazing. I love how comfortable we feel around one another and how relaxed and open our relationship has become.

I've become dependant upon you. No matter what I say to convince myself otherwise, I really do need you around to feel truly happy. You bring out the best in me and make me feel like I am really a special person. Maybe I haven't told you enough how lucky I feel to be with you. I just love everything about you. I love you. I know I've said it before, but I just want to make sure you know how much I meant it. It makes me smile just to think of how lucky I am to be with you.

Love always,

Blank Pages

(Scene opens with a young man and woman sitting on a bed facing one another. When the lights come up the woman starts speaking to the audience while the man remains frozen.)

SCENE 1

W: Blank pages. Blank expressions. You want to be read like a page but don't know how to open up or let go. Reading people through their eyes, their smiles, their bodies.... Their bodies moving, twisting away from what they don't want. Hiding what they think they do...

M: I know what you want.

W: Do you?

M: Yes... *(He freezes)*

W: *(To audience)* This is my problem. I would be happy to share what I know, what I feel but I still don't know how to.
It's amazing to me that the people who put up their guard against the whole world every day find it so easy to open up to that person they want to and they can, but for someone like me who never knew that they even had a guard, it's impossible to pull it down. *(She looks straight into his eyes for about 5 seconds and then looks down)*

M: Come on, let go.... Have a little fun.... *(Freezes)*

W: *(looking at man but speaking to audience)* Have a little fun? Do you know who you're talking to? That's got to sound odd to you. It does to me. God, I didn't even know I was doing it...I have fun....

M: You're holding something back. What are you thinking—?

W: *(To audience)* Nothing. I'm not thinking, or I'm trying not to. I thought I was illogical, that I went with the moment. I have fun, do irrational things; I'm impulsive, spur of the moment. Then why when I'm put in a situation in which I want to be, I just don't know how to let go. *(Reaches over and touches his hand)*

M: Just let go.... Trust me.

W: Okay. *(He freezes)*
(To audience) That's another of my issues. Trust. I trust everyone. I'll tell you my whole life story if you want to hear it. I couldn't care what people hear about me because I'm not ashamed of anything I've done, anything I do.

M: Why won't you talk to me? Tell me something.

W: I can't tell you...*(Lights come down to a spot on woman: man freezes and she speaks to audience)* I can't tell him. I feel like he'll see something else. I'm scared. I suppose I'm shy, embarrassed?...I have no idea. All I know is that this doesn't feel like me. How is it possible that someone can come into my life and change it this dramatically in a matter of almost no time. How did this happen so fast? He was supposed to be the private one. He was supposed to be secretive. I was going to change him. I was going to open him up, give him new faith in humankind, make him realise that his incessant cynicism is unnecessary.

How can you be this way? You're so cynical it mystifies me—

Oh what is it you say? Right..."The cynic is the best type of person to be: 90% of the time he's right and the other 10% of the time he's pleasantly surprised."

But why think that way?

I don't understand how to. Maybe that's my flaw. I don't know how to see things the other way around. Always looking through rose-coloured spectacles. The glass is never half empty. Knock it over and it's a quarter full. Idealism. Ideals. Perfection. Are these really the words I want to define my life. Do I want people to say..."Oh look at her, look how happy she is, never a trouble in the world. Oh isn't that nice, everything will always work out for her."

That's of course because everything *always* works out for me. Can people not understand that maybe I hide my problems. That I'm really not that perfect. But no, when I do try to talk about it, it seems feeble. *(Condescending motherly voice:)* "But you're so, well...happy, and balanced...you don't seem miserable at all"

Hah...because I don't know how to be. Because I don't understand the concept of moping. Sulking... It just doesn't come to me.

(Lights come back up)

M: Come on. There's got to be something you can say. Talk to me.

W: *(To audience but directed at man)* What am I thinking about? I want to talk to you! I want to more than anything else. I don't know what's happening. I'm thinking things that I can't word. How can I not word these things? This is so peculiar.
Only, I don't know what to say.

(She stands up and walks around the room never taking her eyes from his face. She returns to the bed and sits facing him)

with her face only a few inches from his, remaining here for quite a few seconds.)

(To him) I'm enjoying just looking at you.

M: No one's ever said that to me before. I never expected it to be said.

W: Well, I never expected this.

M: I hoped for it.

W: I never even knew that it was something to be hoped for.

M: So this is really totally new to you?

W: Why do you think I'm so scared? *(leans over and kisses him)*

SCENE 2

(The man and woman are sitting on the same bed as before but in different places. This scene is less static than the last and the woman, who begins the scene sitting cross-legged, moves around the bed during the conversation.)

W: *(To audience)* People are intriguing. You never know what they're really like until you can actually get them to peel away the layers and in doing that, make themselves entirely vulnerable to you.

(To man) You know you're an entirely different person when you're with me. It's so strange.

M: I can be myself when I'm with you.

W: Why can't you be yourself all the time?

M: Because...because I don't want to be vulnerable. I don't want people to be able to hurt me. If they can't see me then it doesn't really matter what they think. I'm someone different and they don't know me, so it doesn't matter.

W: It doesn't matter that they would like the person you really are?

M: Who knows, maybe they wouldn't.

W: I do...*(smiles)*

M: But you seemed to like the other me too. And that's not always the way it is. Why? What made you want to know me?

W: I thought I could see who you possibly were. I wanted to open you up. See what was inside.

M: You wanted to change me.

W: You don't need changing. I used to think that the little quirks that bug me would manage to drive me away from a relationship--

M: My smoking?

W: You already know that. But now I don't care. I really don't care.

M: Maybe I just needed someone to make me want to quit. I didn't have anyone to be better for...and I think that maybe, just maybe you're worth it ...*(Kisses her)*

(Lights come down to a spot on woman)

W: *(To audience)* I don't know what this is and I don't know what I'm doing. I've never been so sure and yet

so unsure about anything before in my whole life. I'm amazed not only by him, but also by myself. I never realized what I was missing. I did know that something had to be out there. Love. True love: something that I had no grasp or understanding of. I had of course experienced all of the symptoms before. The sleepless nights, feelings of absolute joy, feelings of emptiness...none of that is new to me. But somehow now I don't have to worry about those things because I know that he feels exactly the same way.

SCENE 3

(The man is sitting in the room at the edge of the bed speaking to the audience, the woman is asleep in the bed.)

M: Why when you are almost positive about something, does doubt always try to creep into your mind and poison all of your thoughts? I am used to this – it's the way I am, the person I've grown to be. Looking for the worst possible outcome; the tiny little glitch, and preparing for it. But now there is no glitch. I can't think of a worst possible...and it unsettles me.

Live for the moment. I know that I do that. I live by it. Every single situation, every day, every hour, every minute...is made up of an infinite number of moments. Some of these moments later become prominent: they stick out in your mind, remain clear in your memory. These are the ones to remember. The ones that mean something; that you know that no matter what, you probably won't forget.

(He looks over at her for a few moments)

Lately, all of these have been with her. I look at her in a certain way and I know that that look in her eyes will remain etched in my mind forever. There are some people who can look at you as if they can see right into

you, as if they aren't looking at your face but instead right into your head, seeing your thoughts as if they were written on a screen right behind your eyes. Some of the looks she has given me feel as though they could have burned holes right through me and into my skin, into my head, exposing my brain for the whole world to see.

This should scare me. I know that it scares her. I can feel the insecurities welling up inside of her, unsure of what to think. Measuring up how involved to become before preparing herself for a landslide. And it is my fault. There won't be a disaster, but how is she to know that? I tell her. I just speak and whatever words come out are what she hears. She even hears my inner dialogue, the things that have absolutely no effect on the lives of other, or myself for that matter, but she has grown accustomed to hearing my thinking, my rationale, my observations.

I have begun to plan, to plan my life around her. To see myself with her in the following weeks, months...all of the events include her somehow and would not feel right without her. I want to know what happens, what happens when I leave. Will I go away? Or will I stay here for her. Can I stay here? Can I rationally base these decisions on the hopes that we will stay together? Can I? No. So why can I not see us apart?

SCENE 4

(The scene opens with the man still sitting on the bed and the woman sitting on the floor in front of it writing in a journal.)

M: I miss you when you're not around. I know how terribly clichéd that may sound, or possessive, and that's not how I feel. It's just that when you fell asleep last night all I wanted to do was to wake you and talk to you, but

I knew I couldn't. For lack of better words, you're so incredibly special to me. This is surreal. I never ever expected this. Not now, not the way my life seemed to be going.

(The woman closes the book and looks at the man, she then gets up and perches on the corner of the bed)

W: *(Playfully)* Oh, here comes the cynicism! Well maybe this is the pleasant surprise which can stop you from expecting the worst in everything always.

M: You may be shocked to hear this, but I actually am somewhat of an idealist. *(He grabs hold of her arm and pulls her toward him on the bed, as he gets her close to him she jumps up onto her knees and looks at him playfully.)*

W: *(Teasingly/sarcastically)* Oh! The shock! I could have told you that. Otherwise I would have been asking what you were doing trying to have a relationship with someone like me. Believe it or not, I am the ideal girlfriend. And unfortunately that's the reason that most guys chase after me. I'm like a prize, you see: a pretty girl you can show off to your friends. But you know that I want none of that. There has to be something of a challenge in it for me too.

M: Oh, because I was so difficult for you to get. You had me in a second.

W: Yes, but you didn't let on. Most guys are terribly obvious about it. It's rather shameful actually, amusing too. And then there was the fact that you are such a private person. That in itself was a challenge. Can I get him to open up to me? That was my challenge...

M: *(Pretending to be deeply shocked and offended)* You just want to change me! That's all it was – I'm a

project for you aren't I? Someone for you to mould into your view of a perfect, ideal boy.

W: In comes the idealism. But no, you're perfect just as you are.

SCENE 5

(The woman is cross-legged sitting on the bed with her journal lying about a foot in front of her, the man is leaning back on the headboard.)

W: Have you ever felt as though you were high on something but not quite sure how? Like you had just downed an entire glass of champagne and it had gone straight to your head and made you dizzy and giddy and unsure of what to do with yourself? Have you ever tried to make yourself stop laughing when there was nothing that you wanted to do more in the whole world than just laugh and laugh until everything fell away into nothingness and all that was left there was you surrounded by clean pure whiteness and your thoughts all flowed around you as if you were writing them or painting pictures with your mind? I paint pictures all the time. I imagine things as they are and then draw them in my head. Or sometimes even on paper so that I will never lose the thought or the moment that I so desperately wanted to capture. I've learned to capture that moment – he taught me that. To live for the moment and store them away so that one day when you need them you can pull them off a shelf and pick them out of their labelled boxes to admire and remark on how wonderful they were.

So now I have two storage places: my mind and my pages - the pages of my life. The simplified version of me, of my thoughts and feelings and basically everything that I can't get out in words but somehow manage to spit out onto the paper.

(The man leans forward, looks at the woman and picks up the journal. He pages through it and looks at her, hesitating and unsure of whether or not he should read it.)

W: Go ahead, you may just find what you're looking for in there.

(They look directly at one another for a few seconds and the lights fade)