

Bad Mistakes and Good Intentions

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There's only so many apologies I can make in advance.

Introduction

I have long been enamored with black and white situations. Particularly when it comes to relationships. I love this kind of storytelling because it gives me a second of clarity; a hero to root for, a villain to jeer. In this world everyone is too complicated to be one or the other and picking sides says more about the person picking than the entire situation.

My view of guilt and innocence, in relation to myself, is usually hampered by mental illness and the fact there currently isn't an accountability scale used to determine just how in control of yourself you are at any given time forever leaves me to question exactly how responsible I am for most of what I do. The occasion that inspired this book is no different. For all I have discerned, I have come to the conclusion that it was fucked, I was fucked, and I'm using entirely too many different definitions of the word "fuck" in one sentence.

I present what you are about to read as the utterly complicated truth of living with bipolar disorder. In the chapbook I am at times neither likable nor relatable. Although I have done so in the past, in this book I won't congratulate myself for putting my experiences into words so grotesquely pointed that my most common response at open mics is nervous laughter. Mental illness can rob you of many abilities but one I have never seemed to possess is a functioning filter.

In the end, my goal for writing this chapbook was selfish. I wrote in order to cope with my own illness and what happened as a result of it with no thought to the person who inspired the work. Since its completion I am still hypomanic, I am still single, I am still using poor coping skills to deal with the episode I'm experiencing, and have no reassuring sentiment about personal growth to convince readers there was some greater purpose to what transpired.

I began this work with an apology and, truly, I am sorry for what I have done. However, I have been hurting others long enough to know apologies are painfully inept and forgiveness is a limited resource. It's been said the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I have enough to build a path to Satan's doorstep.

Company

it didn't make sense to the point where
trying to make it make sense became a part-time job
there was no explaining the need to fuck and fuck again
as if it was more important than breathing

I needed someone to fuck me until I couldn't see straight
the hypomania/bipolar/hypersexuality cocktail was the very finest
neat, no ice, and I wasn't about or able to argue with the sole demand
my body and mind screamed for in stereo
so when he presented himself, naked and assured
I didn't question my good fortune

I was a predator in a rabbit hole where I should have been
prey
I would have been prey had I not been here before and learned
these tunnels and morphed into the kind of animal who ruthlessly
does whatever is required to meet needs, even at the expense of others
I invited him to fuck me and he said he loved me
I chorused back the admission because I adore telling
people I love them and saying it feels so soft in my throat
he fell down the rabbit hole with me when the last thing I needed
was company

Choke

he asked if he could choke me or I told him he could
I don't remember how the conversation started
I just remember him wrapping his fingers around my neck
and choking me as if he was trying to kill me
it occurred to me that he didn't know the correct way
to choke someone when you're in bed with them and actually
don't want them to die, but then, who really does without study
or a teacher or an experienced friend who occasionally puts both of your feet
above
your head and fucks you until orgasm?

I promised to fuck him every day while part of my brain
informed me that I actually didn't want to do that
part of my brain was telling me I was too deep into this rabbit hole
to know what I was promising and I certainly wasn't likely
to fulfill that promise, but who needs that part of your brain
when someone is willing to call you a dirty slut and slap your ass
so hard it leaves a mark?

I saw us in the mirror, a reflection of my form above his
and something was off, not just the fact that I wasn't a skinny blonde
with augmented breasts looking at the camera and feigning pleasure
there was something unnatural about me on top of him and seeing the
reflection of me riding him as if I had no sense
stunned me in my hypomanic trance
I didn't like the look of things
when I saw my wide hips and encompassing thighs

but, really, who needs any of your brain when all you want is throbbing

skin in yours and all you need is the feeling of his weight above you
and the crushing presence of his body?
your brain is nothing when it comes to the haze of sex
the mirror did not convince me otherwise
I wanted him to fuck me and that's what I got, despite all of the voices
in my head that disagreed
and none of the sense I love to claim I have
(I really do, I promise)

I wanted to fog that mirror and live out every fantasy I could with
his hands pulling my hair, but feeling the blood being cut off
from my brain made it clear to me; it wasn't going to happen with him

Lost

there's always one tiny problem
it has short hair
it wears my dresses like it owns them
it pours out of my mouth like acid
mixed with alcohol
one tiny problem

I would apologize for it again
if only I hadn't done so a million times
before; like a broken record no one can
figure out how to turn off
as if anything was being accomplished by it
there was only one problem
and it bore my name

I had gotten lost in my own madness
I lost control somewhere along the way
and there is never a clear distinction
between what I am responsible for and
what I'm not
if I could list the ways I fucked up,
I would do so happily, instead of
living in limbo, not knowing if I did
what's right, what's wrong, or just
plain couldn't tell the fucking difference

there's only one problem and it rears
its head to remind me of the limitations
it places in my life, the issues that spring

eternal from its grab bag of symptoms
I let my insanity carry me through
a relationship
and then I let it say yes to his proposal

Doubts

the conversation started out, "I'm having some doubts"
the conversation ended with, "I need to break up with him"
I sat there, letting every negativity that had been building up
loose like mouthy teenagers who hate everything for no discernible reason
I let it loose and let it fly and suddenly I was describing the
most mismatched person I had ever been with while touching my
engagement ring; albatross around my finger

I had done it, I had gone too far, I had made a promise I couldn't keep
and now, purging it from me was the only thing I could think of doing

I knew it would hurt him and I didn't want that
but somehow freeing myself required me to hurt him and when the fantasy is
over and the bubble truly bursts, there is nothing but hurt left to
swim in like an ocean of deflated dreams and popped balloons
I didn't want to hurt him and he pressed me for reasons I couldn't
divulge

I wanted to protect him from the truth, when the truth was a horrible beast
I knew would gnaw him in two and devour the pieces
I told him it was compatibility issues, which was accurate, but
insufficient

I wanted to spout pop culture phrases at him

"irreconcilable differences"

"conscious uncoupling"

"it's not you, it's me"

but it was me, it was me, sick and dangerous with feelings I never should
have explored, it was me, but I didn't think he would listen at this point

he wanted facts and data and details and outlines and I had nothing

to give

I have long accepted that I make very little sense, can't control myself

at all times, and live walking a line between worlds,

neither of which I truly

fit in

but him? he wanted logic

I had none to give

and he was hurt and I was sorry

Casual Destruction

this was the most casual destruction of a human being I had ever witnessed
including the way YouTube videos of murders are lazily
shared on Facebook

I wanted to say, "whoops", shrug a bit, and then go to sleep without his snores
rousing me from my dreams

I wanted the conversation to stop, I wanted the entire breakup to end,
because I didn't have the energy to put into it and if nothing else,
that was a sign of just how little my consciousness had been impacted
the only emotion I felt was guilt, but without any other feelings
it resounded off the corners of the globe for its hollowness

I was more concerned with how I was feeling the aftermath
and I couldn't summon the ability to care

I had gone from madly in love to madly out of fucks
and all of my feelings of remorse were for my own selfish bones

8 Hours Later

I knew I wasn't being forceful enough
I was hedging like the English major I was
I was mincing words, I was avoiding
the utterly gelid truth
I was speaking in circles because of all
the outcomes
I didn't want to deal with
that night,
it was his inability to take
the gentlest statements without
reacting like a crestfallen youngster,
which I was most afraid of

and then he said it, the familiar words
tripping off his tongue
as if he had connected them first

"It makes me wonder if I'm inherently
unlovable"

does it? does it really?
that's odd, because that's the exact
phrasing I used when writing a book
where I was rejected by a lover and
came to painful terms with the fact that
my affection was never going to be
reciprocated
and the one thing you should probably
never do during a breakup with a writer

is quote their own work back to them
in an effort to make them empathize with you
because this hadn't been written for him
or about him or around him or even in the
same universe as him
and those words were mine

he started getting dressed at one point
threatening that he would leave,
daring me to stop him, all the while detailing
to me why I should
I sat on the bed saying nothing, staring at my
zebra sheets as if they held the answer to
the universe
when he dressed completely and I still
had not done my duty to call him back to
bed and ease all of his fears
he threw his hands up in frustration
didn't I know what part I had to play in this?
hadn't I gotten the script?
didn't I know he was the dashing hero
who I was supposed to hold onto for
dear life because look what else has crossed
my path until this point?

he was sure to remind me, as well,
just how many men had fallen short in the past
and how many would continue to do so in the
future if I let him slip through my fingers
I focused on the zebra sheets just as a Sarah
Hagi quote pounded through my brain;

"Lord, give me the confidence of a
mediocre white man"

Lord, give me something

8 hours later I was still convincing him

I wanted to break up

8 hours later, on very little sleep,

my politeness waning, my head throbbing,

I was still assuring him, this is what

I wanted and the prospect of him walking

out of my life forever wasn't a threat

but a welcomed improvement

8 hours later it was over

but then it wasn't

Unrequited

but hadn't I been here before?
he's not the first man to love me only to get my total lack of interest
in return
he was the fourth in a year and while I was mystified as to what drove
men to me, I was doubly mystified as to why they were so insistent that
I became theirs and only theirs
I wasn't in love with him, maybe I had never been (maybe I had)
but he was in love unrequited and I had worn those shoes around town for
entirely
too long

I felt that not returning love was somehow a wrongdoing
I felt it when someone didn't return the love I gave to them
but after being on both sides of the equation, it becomes
blatantly apparent that the entire situation is fucked
and there's nothing to do about it other than write books
about how terrible it is

I didn't want this, but my wishes were secondary to
reality and no amount of me hoping not to be involved
amounted to me no longer being involved
as much as I want to mother, to protect, to be that
gentle voice, I found myself unable to match their feelings
and doubly unable to find myself half as invested in them as
they said they were in me

my guilt and sorrow at the situation seemed all the more ridiculous
the more I ruminated on it,
like a riddle I couldn't make sense of

what did my emotions amount to in the face of his pain?

nothing

I felt even worse about that, but what was that other than an attempt to self-soothe with familiar feelings?

I wore my emotions like an ill-fitting dress that dragged everywhere

I walked, collecting every grimy, dirty scrap of self-loathing I could find

it was only a piece of clothing, right? it was something I could cast off

but I couldn't and mindfulness

couldn't save me from the fabric I was drowning in

my self-pity at that point overwhelmed me and what is more selfish than that?

I had broken his heart and disrupted his entire life for months

when it was over, all I could think about was me and my self-preservation

I persevered, that's for sure and I laid rosemary (for remembrance) on his grave

Damage Control

I infantilized him

I did

I turned him into a child who had no part of his own actions and patted him on the head to say he had no idea what he had gotten himself into when I do nothing but warn non-believers of my utter inability to manage my own life and my constant need for damage control and that wasn't fair

he had read what happened to me when I fell in love with someone and he didn't love me back

he read poetry about himself and our fucking and whatever else was on my mind at the time I sat down at my computer

he knew, he knew all too well who I am and what I do and he claimed he was willing to fight for me, just as I was, and all of the chaos I would inevitably bring

but I can't imagine he expected this

who really would or could or should ever want to?

the clock started ticking the second he kissed me so passionately in the garden of a friend's condo

the clock ticked and ticked and he ran out of time

he was swiftly ushered out of the door he had just been thoroughly welcomed into

and the slam after him echoed off of mountains

Excavation

he waited until I was out of earshot
(or maybe he didn't
that particular detail has been swallowed
by the void of my limping cognition)
before telling a friend just how
poor my decision making skills
were and how completely I had tried
to destroy my life with my romantic
pursuits
whether he said that in front of me,
I'm not sure, but if he did, I know I
didn't care at the time

silly little me, just trying to find love
in all the wrong places, and there he was,
my knight in shining armor to come claim
me for his own so, at long last, my quest
would finally come to an end

my friend informed him that he was wrong,
but she didn't seem to understand that
he was in on the joke, and she was
supposed to be, too
empty-headed me, who stumbles through
relationships with a weak smile
and no ability to discern good situations
from bad ones, I was well known for
my shortcomings and she should have
laughed along, at my inability to

make good choices

it never occurred to him that he was
just another one of my poor decisions
or that he was acting out the same toxic
behavior I had been conditioned with for
entirely too long

yes, I have made bad choices with men,
yes, I have been in situations I regret,
and have had experiences I never wanted to
but equating this to my own lack
of intelligence and forethought is exactly
what I had been taught to do by so many
experienced professors

she brought up what he did only later
(and really? did he think my friend of 15 years
was going to forget that entire conversation?)
and I thought nothing of it
so many people have declared me
incapable of thinking or caring for myself
especially when it comes to dating
and my past has been littered with
unreported experiences I have stopped
trying to justify
what was one more crushing voice to the
chorus of those convinced I didn't know
what I was doing and had no right to
be doing it?

but him? my white knight? the man who
would shift my success rate into
unending, dazzling achievement?
he sat there in judgement of me for all
the mistakes I made and paid for in
trauma and misery?
this brave warrior who was going to save
me was none other than the same
belittling fool who told me to be more
careful when I hadn't committed the crime

I have stacked my mistakes to the
ceiling and had to dig out paths to get
from one end of the room to the other
my good intentions make a poor shovel
but the one thing I don't need while
I excavate myself from yet another
disaster, is someone assuring me
this endless archaeology is all
I will ever have

Three Months

he would tell me forever
he would sing it in soft, whispered tones into my ear as if forever
is a concept human beings can manage to operate around
I never said it back because I don't believe in forever, and, perhaps,
on some level, I didn't believe in him
if anything, I believe relationships last for as long as they do and their
ending is not always a terrible thing to be mourned
life marches on regardless of your concepts of it and I long decided
I would not get in its way when it decided to leave me behind
I tried to explain this to him
once
I could see the hurt in his eyes and hear his damaged tone
he wanted to believe in forever, he needed it
and I was the awful person taking that away
so I stopped
he had his forever
but it lasted three months

Disasters I Call Relationships

my emotions about the breakup were completely selfish
I still had them and they insisted on letting me know just how much
they wanted to be brooded over, like every other character flaw I find
sitting on my doorstep
I returned to the only comforts I knew and when I drank the pain
away, at least I got to see my feelings melt into glasses of wine
and my head fog to the point of incoherence
I had stopped drinking when I was with him, but somehow I doubted
it was him that had stopped me
there's an argument for causation and correlation in here somewhere, but
who really cares?

after his departure I took on a headache that lasted for days and didn't stop
with any pain reliever I fed it

I drowned myself in Riesling and went to work the next day with no
hangover

I had tried to bribe fate again for another second chance
and fate laughed, reminding me of all my previous
attempts at the disasters I called relationships

I may have survived more engagements than the average Klingon warship,
but somehow that survival seems hollow
at times I would have preferred my death over another round of this hopeless
feeling and even more hopeless attempts at coping

How Hard I Try

I had given every warning ever needed
and yet, I felt as if I still hadn't done enough
because he had loved me, he had fallen, and I had, ultimately,
been unable to reciprocate

when everything fell apart and I knew I couldn't continue what
I had started, I ached to both excuse myself for not properly
warning him and accuse him of ignoring to every caution
I had ever laid down with blaring sirens and blinding spotlights

you had to know I was the devil, bound in chains I had never forged
but couldn't break
you had to know I would do something like this, similar to this,
familiar to this, part of this
and yet you walked with your wings tucked in and held my hand
and assured me I was the most ethereal vision

and I still can't convince you that I'm not
at first I blamed my lack of communication, after all, how could I not
have let it slip just how terribly and thoroughly I can and had hurt
people who had loved me
but then I started to blame you for not listening to me
my angel, you walked into hell to retrieve me and refused to see me for
who I was and what do I have if not who I am?

I'm not sure if I'm mad at you for not seeing the future or not seeing
the warning signs or not seeing the scars on my naked body that told
the story of every battle I had fought and sorely lost
all in search of something I never worked hard enough for

even my anger makes no sense, but why would I need sense when
nothing else I do is based off of it and it can be heartily stated
I'm not even sure of what it actually is

I wanted to love you
I wanted to give you everything you gave me
but I couldn't and sometimes I wonder, if it would ever be possible
for me to do that with anyone, let alone you
I can't be the angel you need me to be, I can't be your heavenly perfection
I'm bound to hell and one thing that really doesn't matter down here
is how hard I try

Overdoses

I've attempted to end my life enough times to have tasted suicide but
never satisfied the desire
I should be dead right now, by my own hand, and if the world was logical,
I probably would be
but I'm here and I fell in love with you long enough to drag you into
the madness that has nearly killed me on several occasions
the madness that stares back at me from mirrors

but love, oh love, the one thing I've been searching for
the thing I have been dreaming of, since Disney's Sleeping Beauty played
on the family VCR, love, is another kind of suicide
I craved this death with the will of mountain movers
but as hard as I loved and as destructively as I managed
I never actually died and in some ways, I crave the relief

if something was going to kill me, why not love?
why not the one thing I put ahead of so much and gained
so little from?
why not the emotion that steered my illness, led to more horrible
decisions than I could ever imagine, and left me sobbing on the floor
on more than one occasion
love is something that has never managed to kill me
but then again, neither have the overdoses

Love Yourself

Love Yourself advice is the strangest kind of advice
because it acts as if loving yourself is something you must do now,
must do tomorrow, and must do at all times or you are failing yourself
and this failure compounds your already established problem with self-love
and makes you feel even worse

I can usually muster up the energy to love myself
I can sometimes manage it even when my brain does things
I don't agree with and there's no escaping the consequences
but a lot of the time I don't like myself and see no reason why I should

I doubly do not see a reason why anyone should tell me I need
to feel otherwise and encourage me to look on bright sides I long dimmed
and hurried rainbows of technicolor fantasy I am informed I am too old to
believe in

but in this paradox of loving myself, liking myself, hating myself,
and harming myself I find this same self hurling insults at me
and believing them, rehashing the times I have failed, times I have
done harm, times I have fallen short, and even a scrap of evidence
is the most damning conviction

and when I get like this, the controversy of not loving oneself and the
horrible crime against whatever or whomever someone claims it is
is complete, I wonder what why this love is going to save me when
so many other kinds of love failed

Not Giving Up

he said he wasn't giving up on us as if there was an 'us' to
not give up on

I sat in his car, shaking
my survival instincts telling me I shouldn't do
anything to anger him
(like tell him what I was really feeling)
when he was driving and in complete control
of the situation

I sat in silent horror and listened to him cry
I listened to him tell me about how he been
writing poetry, as if that was some kind of
short falling I had pointed out to him or
something I had taunted him with during the
8 hour breakup
something I had ever indicated I wanted
in a mate

I gave up trying to convince him otherwise
at this point, his inability to take what I was
saying seriously was no longer my fault
I had done enough warning, I had been clear
enough, there were no more warnings I could
give that would not be as soundly ignored as their
predecessors

I gave up, I gave up, I gave it all up

Picking Sides

I wish someone could have
stopped me
you were misinformed
I was incapable
but when a force of nature
heads toward your home
you're more likely to prepare
for the worst than
hope for the best

if I could make an argument
in this entire situation
I would still be able to
counter it and do so with
evidence and conviction
I can't pick a side, not
even mine, because I know
the barbs I have flung before
and know there is no
innocence and no blame
that is ever absolute

I wish you could have
stopped me
I wish you would have
told me no
I wish I didn't drag you down
and make you hurt
and blame you for

not seeing this sooner
than the flash it took
for me to destroy everything
I built out of thin air
and wishes

No Space for Consideration

his hands on my back, her facing me
I sat, awkward, with a musical toy in my hand as he touched my
breasts beneath my shirt
I knew what was going to happen, I had had plenty of time
to prepare for it, but somehow when it arrived, my confidence
faltered and I was overcome with anxiety
I could only play off-tune notes as his hands explored me and she looked on

he was two doors down as this was happening
fate or chance conspired to place his apartment two doors away from
a pair of friends who I was now sitting in bed with, already damp,
waiting for what I knew was going to unfold
and when it did the last thing on my mind was him or his reaction

she kissed me
the thoughts that swirled in my head as clothes came off,
my legs parted, my body responded to each and every touch,
had only to do with the moment I was locked in, the pleasure
I was feeling, and the aching need it was filling

driving home, after dressing and hugging and floating on a high
I had never experienced before, I felt the familiar pang of guilt
I had hurt someone, I felt nothing from this hurt, and while
he was sitting alone in his room, I had found my body entwined
with passion and no space left for consideration

I walked back to the apartment we were supposed to share
with a tinge of sadness to my step
but when I couldn't summon the wherewithal needed to turn

my guilt into something productive, I abandoned my thoughts
of him entirely

I didn't want to think about him

I didn't want to worry about his delicate feelings

my life had moved on; to new experiences and new territory

in the passage of time, all that is former is forgotten

and in that moment, so was he

Louise Belcher's Dead Eyes

he got me a present

I first heard of this through my roommate as if the information wasn't going to be reported back to me as soon as the Facebook message was marked as read

it was a vinyl Pop figurine for my desk at work

Louise Belcher from Bob's Burgers clutching her Kuchi Kopi,
her eyes dark and vacant

I pretended not to know I was fully aware of what it was and that it was destined for me when he came over for some reason, I can't recall, and dropped off the Pop while he was there.

at first, there had been a glimmer of excitement about receiving my favorite character's Pop from one of my favorite shows

but as I held it in my hands and saw her plastic face and lifeless expression, I wanted to throw the box at him

exactly what did he think he was accomplishing with this?

were Louise Belcher's dead eyes going to convince me he was the only man for me?

did I now owe him ten dollars worth of affection in exchange for his present?
was his attention to my details going to be his redemption from the glaringly obvious fact we were not compatible and I would never be happy or satisfied with him?

the simple gift had become loaded with double meanings and that night,
staring at her

from across the living room, I regretted accepting the gift at all

I didn't want it now

I didn't want it to exist

not with those strings
not with that meaning behind it
not with him still thinking he was getting his true love a gift to show the
depth of his
feelings which were never going to be reciprocated

Louise never made it to my desk
she sat on a placemat on the bar for days
clutching her Kuchi Kopi for dear life in the dark
she looked so lonely on the bar, I eventually gave her away
last I saw her, she was sitting in my friends' closet
she still looked lonely
especially when I closed the closet door

Disgusting

you make me feel disgusting
I long to crawl out of my skin to
destroy what you have touched
every hollow cavity inside my body
wells with aching bile every time
I think of any aspect of your existence
the thought of being in the same room
with you makes me detach my
consciousness and dizzily float
towards another plane where you
are not real and you will not take
up space in my reality

when any instance of your existence is recalled
I either am forced to admit to myself
what a compelling mistake I made or
others are all too willing to do it for me
of all the paths my illness has led me down
with gentle words and soft handholding
I regret this one the most because I can
never decide just who is more at fault
and the indecision fills me with a
painful uncertainty that lapses back into
the self-loathing I've become such an
expert in over the years

I hate you for making me feel like this,
I loathe every part of your perpetuation
with every devastating lightning strike

flooding my synapses
I've lost the ability to see you as a person
you are now the embodiment of
each anxiety I carry around in my
shallow pockets
you are turning me into the monster
I have always feared I would become
all with the most earnest of inquires
into my t-shirt size

when the final page turns, it will
never be the decision of who is
right or who is wrong that
ends any chance this ever had of
culminating in friendship
if your continued permanence in my life
doesn't destroy me, then I will destroy myself
over it
and in the end, if love is doing what is best
for someone else
love requires you to hate me so much you never
speak to me again

Floor Mats

I lied to him again and again
I lied to myself just as many times
I left the truth in a no man's land
at night with a gun and no ammunition
and wished it well
and then, once everything was still,
and there were no more reasons to lie
I invented one

I made him up out of bytes and data
he found my photos and
pressed Like as if he pressing
his body against mine
I met him in my new car,
with the black floor mats I found
myself mindlessly staring at
for most of the encounter
he asked me what I wanted
and I lied
he asked me if I wanted to stop
and I lied
he asked me if I was enjoying myself
and I lied

I had no reason to lie to him
there was nothing in it for me
to gain and certainly
nothing for me to hide
but somehow the truth

had become a twisted enemy
and anymore honesty would have
robbed me of my last bit of
sense

so I lied like I couldn't stop
and when it was over and
I was sitting in a parking space
in front of the apartment
sobbing into my new
steering wheel, the "new car"
scent clogging my nostrils
I begged forgiveness for
every lie that had ever spilled
from my lips like the blackest
toxin

if I had asked anyone, him included,
for forgiven in this situation,
they probably would have
granted it
there was one person
left and realizing who it was
just made me sob harder
of all the people I needed forgiveness
from, I knew the last person
who would bestow it
was me