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Experimental Romance Novel



The summer between my freshman and sophomore years of college, I stayed at an artist collaborative for two months. The building was a converted thrift store, still piled high with old clothes, toys, and junk. One of the toys was a doll, which someone had painted with red paint to look like blood. Another of the toys was a Fisher Price doctor's kit. The collaborative was interested in the ways these old objects could become new art. I wrote a story about an 11-year-old girl with social problems who finds the doll on the side of the road and takes it home to care for it. And then I sent the story to a little magazine. And then the little magazine printed the story. And then I forgot about it.

And then I couldn't forget about it. So a couple years later, I came back to it. And I wrote another story about the girl's mother. And I wrote another story about the boy the girl has a crush on. And I wrote another story about the boy's sister. And a story about their teacher. And a story about their lunch monitor. And some stories about more than one of them at once. So now I'm working on a novel. It will be about the girl and the boy trying to start a relationship. It will be about the boy trying to date someone his sister hates. It will be about the girl's mother worrying about her daughter.

It will be about how three kids' private conflicts cause ripples through their peers. It will be about everyone else around them and how everyone has separate stories that are also all interrelated.

And it will tell these stories in a variety of ways. Some will be told in the first person, and the third, and maybe the second. Some will be in the present tense, some in past. Some will be written kind of like a play. Some will be written in abstract forms that can't be explained any other way. Some might be written as a comic, or worked on collaboratively. And these perspectives and styles will spin off in a number of directions, but still somehow come back together into something bigger than any of them apart.

I love playing and experimenting with writing. I love the idea that there are things that are only expressible, or more expressible, through innovation. But I also just love the feeling of twisting language, spinning style, and messing with form. I just find it so much fun. I want to try new things and discover what works.

Donald Barthelme once wrote "Fragments are the only forms I trust." I'm still not sure what it means, but it's a quote with which I've always identified a lot. I think it's something about how I think: I can't conceive of stories on a big scale. At the same time, I also like the feeling a piece of writing can give only when one fiction is sustained over a long duration. Writing something this long is something I've never done before, but something I'd like to do. A collection of interweaving stories seems like the right mix of these two things: my ability to write short things and my desire to write something long.

But also, why these stories in this style? First, because I've fallen in love with my characters. I think they are interesting, and compelling, and there's something about child characters and the contradictory ways we read them that I can't put down (and the challenge of writing well about children is fun). But also because they offer a certain sort of substance, an emotional layer for the innovative styles to uncover and express in a new way. And on some level I can't explain, I just know the two are right for each other.