



THIS IS HOW I LOVE



MATTHEW BAILEY

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BY MATTHEW BAILEY

ILLUSTRATED BY LIA MAHONEY



WE MET AND STARTED TO BECOME FRIENDS AFTER YOU HIRED ME FOR A MARKETING INTERNSHIP.

I THINK GETTING TO SEE YOU REGULARLY AT THE OFFICE WAS THE MAIN REASON I SHOWED UP.

**AS OUR FRIENDSHIP BECAME STRONGER
FALLING FOR YOU WAS NEVER ON MY
MIND. BUT, THROUGH THAT FRIENDSHIP
I BEGAN TO HAVE FEELINGS I HAVE
NEVER HAD BEFORE,**

OR AT LEAST

**NEVER ALLOWED MYSELF
TO HAVE BEFORE.**





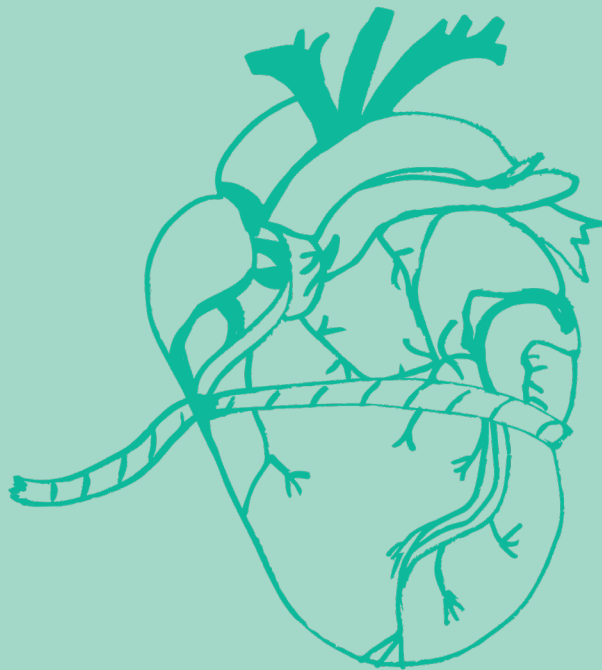
EVER SINCE THESE FEELINGS STARTED I HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO SAM SMITH A LOT.

IN THE SINGLE *STAY WITH ME*, THE CHORUS SAYS, “THIS AIN’T LOVE IT’S CLEAR TO SEE, BUT DARLING STAY WITH ME.” I REALIZED THIS IS LIKE HOW I’M FIGHTING NOT TO FALL FOR YOU.

THEN I IMAGINED HOW AMAZING IT WOULD BE TO HOLD YOUR HAND AT A SAM SMITH CONCERT.

ONCE WE WERE WALKING TO A BAR
AND I TOLD YOU THAT YOU GET ON
MY NERVES. I DID IT SO YOU WOULDN'T
FIGURE OUT THAT I WAS STARTING TO
HAVE FEELINGS FOR YOU.

I DID IT TO PROTECT MY
HEART. NOW EVERYTHING I
DO IS TO PULL AT *YOURS*.



I HOPE IT'S WORKING.

I REALLY WANTED TO SPEND AN
AFTERNOON WITH YOU OVER THE
WEEKEND AND REALIZED I WAS BEING
NEEDY.

**AFTER THINKING ON IT FOR
A BIT, I REALIZED I *DO* NEED
YOU.**

I HOPE YOU NEED ME TOO.

I WAS WORRIED YOU MIGHT BE MAD AT ME AND YOU TOLD ME I WAS OVERTHINKING. I TOLD YOU OVERTHINKING IS A PART OF CARING.

I THINK ABOUT YOU ALL THE TIME.

I INTERVIEWED FOR A POTENTIAL CREATIVE JOB RECENTLY, THE ADVICE OF THE DIRECTOR WAS TO MAKE STUFF I LOVE.

I THOUGHT ABOUT THAT A LOT.

I WOULD LOVE TO MAKE A LIFE WITH YOU.



YOU WERE DRIVING US TO MY PLACE,
AND WE GOT ON THE INTERSTATE
ON-RAMP.

I SUGGESTED WE TAKE YOUR CAR TO
A RACE TRACK. YOU RESPONDED THAT
THE PORTLAND RACEWAY HAS PUBLIC
DAYS.

THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED MY
FEELINGS MIGHT JUST BE
LOVE.

I TOLD YOU TO SHOW ME WHAT YOUR
VOLVO COULD REALLY DO. YOU PUT
THE PEDAL TO THE METAL WHICH MADE
ME LAUGH.



THE DAY WE WENT HIKING AT FOREST PARK AND YOU MADE SOME SILLY JOKE THAT I WANTED **IN YOUR PANTS**. I TOLD YOU I WASN'T THERE YET.



I WAS PASSING OUT MACADAMIAS IN THE OFFICE AND I CAME AND OFFERED YOU ONE. YOU LOOKED INTO MY EYES LIKE YOU WERE PEERING LOVINGLY AT MY SOUL, GRINNED AND SAID THANK YOU. I THOUGHT IN THAT MOMENT YOU MIGHT BE FEELING WHAT I WAS.

THAT'S WHEN I KNEW I WAS LOSING CONTROL.

WHAT REALLY CAUGHT MY HEART
WAS YOUR ABILITY TO SHOW ME
APPRECIATION.

**YOU HELPED ME REALIZE
THAT I WAS GOOD AT
SOMETHING.**



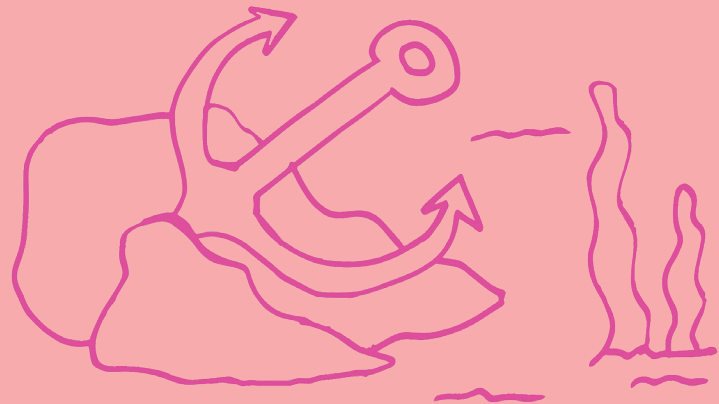


**WHEN YOU FINALLY GOT IT OUT OF ME,
THAT I HAD FEELINGS FOR YOU, IT WAS
SCARY BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE
YOU. IT WAS HUMBLING TO KEEP THOSE
FEELINGS INTERNALIZED JUST TO SPEND
A MINUTE WITH YOU AS A FRIEND.**

**THAT IS HOW STRONG MY
FEELINGS ARE.**

WHEN YOU TOLD ME THAT WHAT YOU
LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND AND WHAT YOU
LOOK FOR IN A RELATIONSHIP WAS
COMPLETELY DIFFERENT MY HEART
SUNK TO MY STOMACH, BUT I STILL
COULDN'T GIVE UP.

—
I AM THE ONE FOR YOU.
—





**I KNOW YOU HAVE BEEN SEEING
SOMEONE. IT IS HARD TO SWALLOW.**

**I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE IT'S A TEMPORARY
FIX FOR YOU. YOU HAVE SAID IT IS.**

**THIS IS WHERE MY HUMILITY
BEGINS. IF I LOVE YOU, I
WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY.**

THAT TIME I WAS LAUNCHING AN AD
CAMPAIGN AND YOU AGREED TO BE MY
PLUS ONE AT THE PARTY; YOU ASKED IF
WE WERE JUST GOING AS FRIENDS.

I SAID YES.

THE TRUTH IS,

ON SUCH AN IMPORTANT NIGHT FOR
MY CAREER, I COULDN'T THINK OF
ANYONE I WOULD WANT BY MY SIDE
MORE.

I'VE BEEN BODYBUILDING BECAUSE I
KNOW YOU'RE ATTRACTED TO MUSCLE
GUYS.

**I WANT TO BE YOUR GYM
CRUSH.**



MY FRIEND SWEARS THAT YOU TOLD
HER WE ARE A LITTLE MORE THAN JUST
FRIENDS. I SLEPT EASY THAT NIGHT.



THEN MY HEART HURT JUST TRYING TO
PLAY IT COOL.

EVERYTIME MY PHONE RINGS I HOPE
IT'S YOU. I AM SCARED TO *NOT* HEAR
FROM YOU.

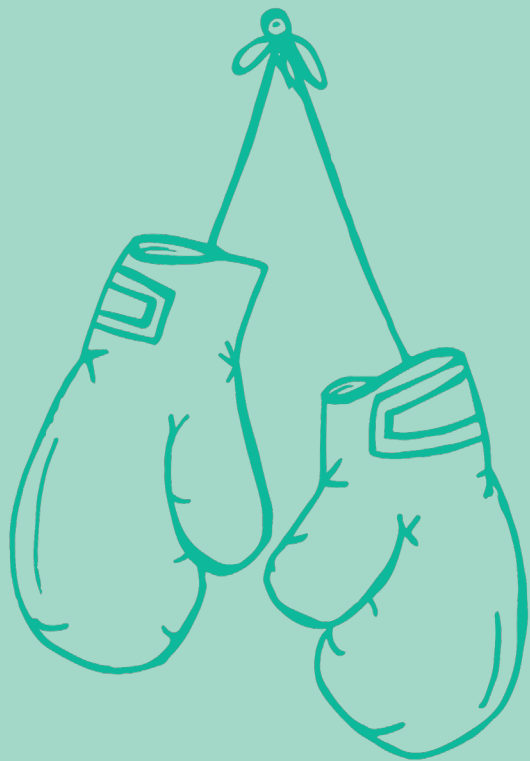
IT IS REALLY HARD TO STOP
MYSELF FROM BLOWING UP
YOUR PHONE WITH TEXTS.

SOMETIMES I WISH I HAD
NEVER TOLD YOU ABOUT
MY FEELINGS.

IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'VE BECOME *LESS* OF
THE KIND, THOUGHTFUL MAN THAT I
FELL FOR.

I HAVE STARTED TO SEE THAT THERE IS
ANOTHER SIDE TO YOU. A SIDE THAT
CAN BE ARROGANT AND HURTFUL. I'D
LIKE TO BELIEVE IT IS THE THING YOU
BATTLE WITH. WITH EVERY TEAR I SHED,
I HOPE THAT THE KIND GENEROUS AND
COMPASSIONATE MAN I KNOW YOU
CAN BE PREVAILS.

THAT GUY IS AMAZING.



FRIENDS SAY IT'S DAMAGING TO KEEP SPENDING TIME WITH YOU. THE THING ABOUT ME IS **I TEND TO DO WHAT FEELS RIGHT EVEN WHEN IT HURTS.** MAYBE YOU DON'T SEE WHAT WE COULD BE RIGHT NOW, BUT KNOWING THAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH A LOT INTERNALLY, *I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I FIGHT FOR YOU.*

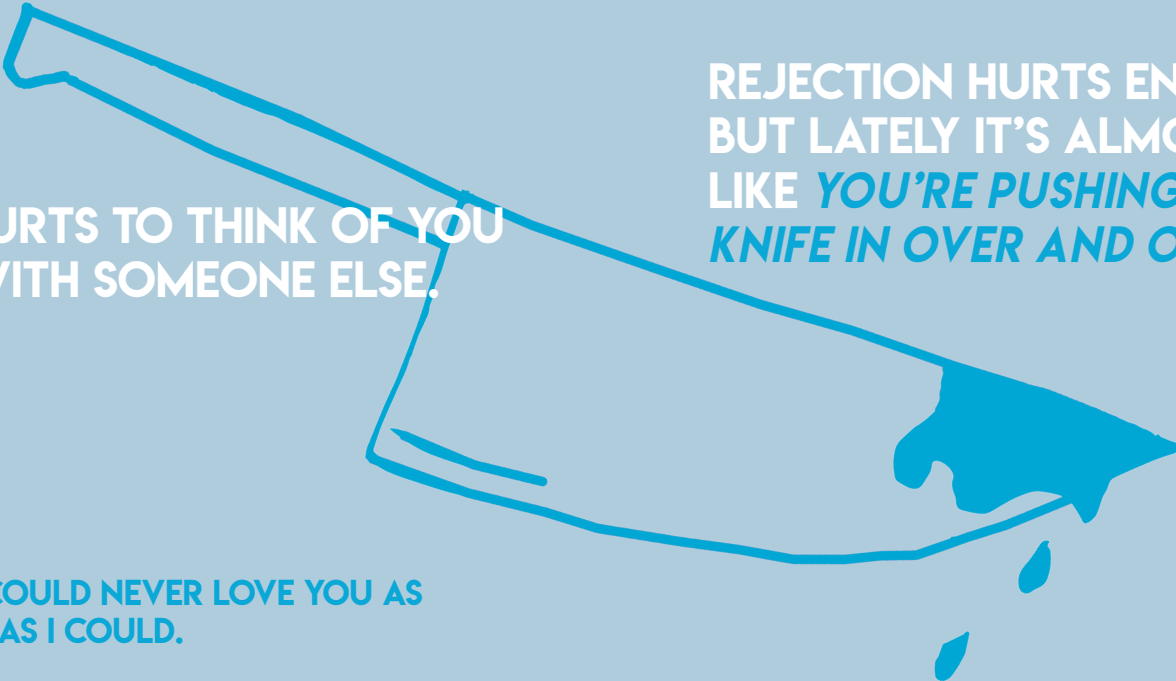
I FIGHT UNTIL DEATH.

ITS PISSING ME OFF THAT YOU'RE BEING CAREFUL NOT TO GIVE ME THE WRONG IDEA.

REJECTION HURTS ENOUGH BUT LATELY IT'S ALMOST LIKE *YOU'RE PUSHING THE KNIFE IN OVER AND OVER.*

IT HURTS TO THINK OF YOU WITH SOMEONE ELSE.

THEY COULD NEVER LOVE YOU AS MUCH AS I COULD.



I HAVE BEEN TRYING REALLY HARD TO
TURN THE HEAT DOWN ON THIS LOVE
THING.

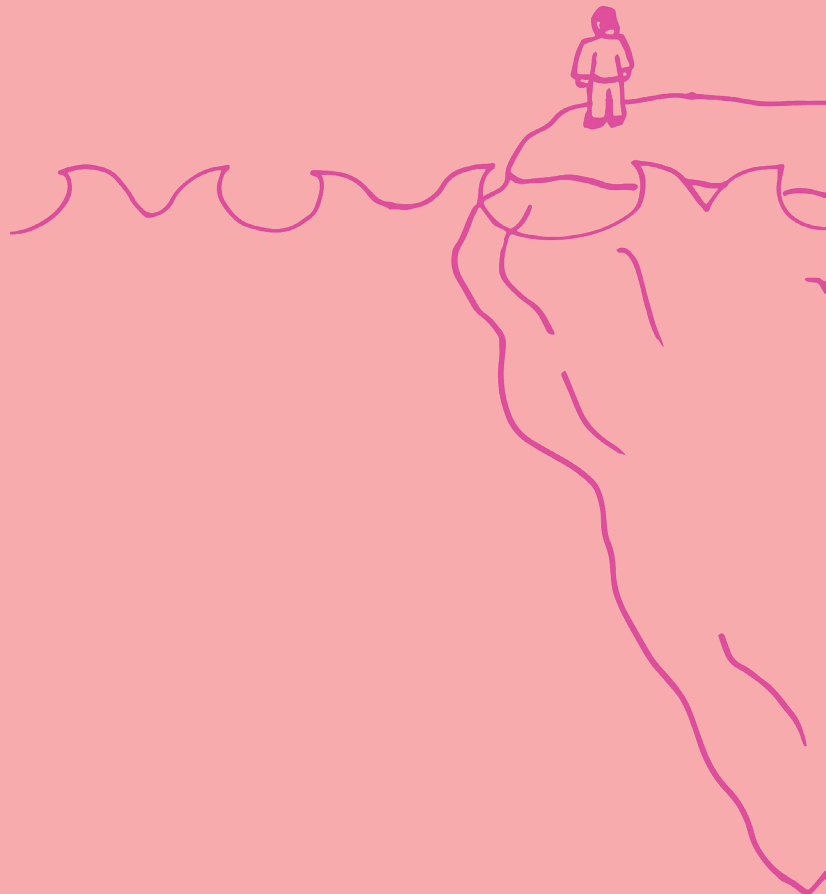
IT IS REALLY HARD FOR ME
TO DO.

MY BODY HAS CHANGED. PEOPLE KEEP
TELLING ME *THAT I LOOK HOT.*

TRUTHFULLY, THE ONLY GUY
I HAVE BEEN WAITING TO
HEAR THAT FROM IS YOU.

THAT TIME WE ARGUED ABOUT THE
TYPE OF GUYS YOU'RE ATTRACTED TO
AND IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT *YOU*
TOLD ME YOU LIKE SHALLOW GUYS.

I TOLD YOU I WAS SAD BUT NEVER
TOLD YOU WHY. IT'S BECAUSE IN THAT
MOMENT I REALIZED THAT YOU LOOK
FOR SURFACE INSTEAD OF DEPTH OF
CHARACTER. I THOUGHT MAYBE THE
WAY YOU SEEK OUT LOVE IS SHALLOW.



IT IS THE WORST THING I HAVE
EVER THOUGHT ABOUT YOU.

IT'S THE FOURTH OF JULY AND FROM
MY PORCH I CAN HEAR THE GRAND
FINALE OF THE FIREWORKS COMING
FROM DOWNTOWN. I WONDER IF
YOU'RE THERE WITH SOMEONE.

I WONDER IF HE'S KISSING
YOU IN THE PASSION OF THE
MOMENT.

ALL I CAN DO IS TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND BE OKAY.

I'LL BE OKAY.

I HAD THIS EPIPHANY THE OTHER DAY THAT ONE OF THE GREATEST THINGS WE HAVE IN COMMON IS THAT WE BOTH PUT A LOT OF PRESSURE ON OURSELVES.

THAT MUST BE WHY I KNOW HOW TO LOVE YOU SO WELL.

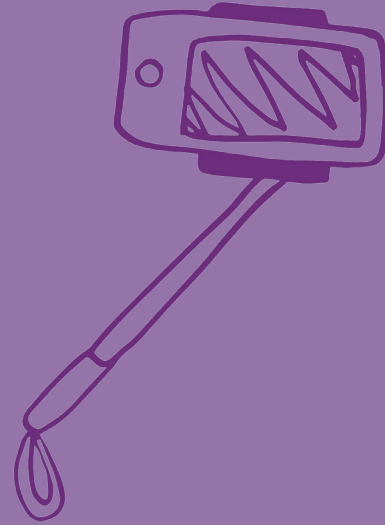
YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU MET SOMEONE FROM GRINDR AND AFTER A FOUR HOUR DATE YOU WERE HAVING STRONG FEELINGS FOR HIM. I WENT QUIET AND YOU ASKED WHY. MY QUICK RESPONSE WAS THAT *I WAS PRACTICING ACTIVE LISTENING.*

ACTUALLY, I WAS FIGHTING WITH EVERY OUNCE OF MY BEING NOT TO BURST INTO TEARS.

IF IT SEEMS LIKE I AM BEING MEAN
LATELY, I DON'T MEAN TO BE.



YOU HAVE TO KNOW I HAVE NEVER
LOVED ANYONE THE WAY I HAVE LOVED
YOU.



IT IS VANITY THAT IS KEEPING US FROM
BEING TOGETHER. I DON'T BLAME YOU.
I BLAME OUR CULTURE.

I PRAY IT CHANGES SOON.

I'VE SEEN ALL SIDES OF YOU. THERE IS
SO MUCH ABOUT YOU THAT I LOVE,
BUT THEN THERE ARE THINGS ABOUT
YOU I DON'T. I ASK MYSELF, *WHAT DO I
DO NOW?*

I LOVE YOU, BUT I HAVE TO
LOVE ME TOO.

SO FOR THE MOMENT I DO
NOTHING.



I WANT TO FIND A WAY TO BE DONE
WITH THIS BUT NOT DONE WITH YOU.
BECAUSE, DESPITE THE HURT *I STILL
LOVE YOU.*



**SOMEHOW I WILL FIGURE
THIS OUT.**

MY **LONELINESS** IS THE THING I BATTLE WITH. DESPITE THIS, YOU ARE PATIENT WITH ME. THANK YOU FOR FILLING THE VOID AS BEST AS YOU CAN.

I LOVE HOW OUT OF NOWHERE WE MAKE SILLY FACES AT EACH OTHER.

MAYBE ONE DAY, AS WE BOTH GROW, WE CAN DO THAT EVERYDAY.

FOR NOW, I'LL TAKE WHAT I CAN GET.

I'M AT THE GYM, IT'S BEEN EIGHT MONTHS SINCE I FELL FOR YOU, AND I HAPPEN TO NOTICE MYSELF IN THE MIRROR. MY PHYSIQUE HAS BECOME, AS SOME SAY, IDEAL. MY WAIST IS THIN AND MY MUSCLES HAVE GOTTEN LARGE. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I REALIZED WHAT I LOOKED LIKE AND WHAT I HAD DONE.

I ASKED MYSELF; *WHO THE HELL IS THAT GUY IN THE MIRROR?*

I LOOKED DEEP INTO MY OWN EYES AND I REALIZED *THAT'S THE GUY WHO FIGHTS FOR WHAT HE BELIEVES IN. THAT'S THE GUY THAT FIGHTS FOR LOVE.*

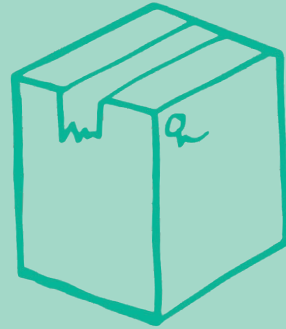
I FIGHT FOR LOVE.

**IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY AND I
WAS GOING TO PLAN THIS
EXTRAVAGANT SURPRISE
FOR YOU.**

**INSTEAD I BOUGHT YOU A COUPLE
OF YOUR FAVORITE SNACKS AND
DELIVERED THEM WITH A CARD IN A
BROWN PAPER BAG.**



THE HARDEST THING FOR ME TO DO IS
GIVE UP ON THE POSSIBILITY OF US.

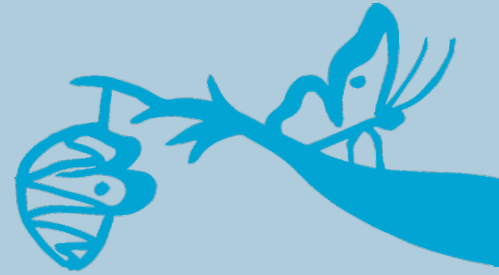


BUT, MAYBE I DON'T HAVE TO.

MAYBE I JUST PACK IT SOMEWHERE
DEEP IN MY HEART. THAT WAY IF THE
DAY EVER COMES THAT YOU FINALLY
SEE US THE WAY I DO, IT WILL BE THERE
FOR YOU TO UNPACK.

AS WE MAINTAIN OUR FRIENDSHIP MY
HOPE FOR YOU IS THAT YOU CHOOSE
TO BUILD YOUR FOUNDATION ON YOUR
KINDNESS AND **COMPASSION**, AND NOT
YOUR LOOKS.

**I KNOW THESE THINGS ARE WITHIN YOU.
REACH FOR THEM. I'LL BE HERE TO HELP.**



AS I PUT THIS EXPERIENCE TO REST, I
ASK, *WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS?*

THEN I TAKE A LOOK AT THE
GRAND EXPERIMENT AND I DO
WHAT I ALWAYS DO.

THIS IS HOW I LOVE.

I MAKE ART.

