“Lost and Found”
A Collection of Poetry and Ephemera
in the Spirit of
Hypertext and Multimedia Literature

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Preface

I’m looking at the English SIP handbook right now, and it looks like it’s been about a year since I first proposed this SIP. Back then pretty much the only idea I had for it was that I wanted it to be about loss, because that was and continues to be something I grapple with on a day-to-day basis, and that I wanted it to be in the spirit of Shanna Salinas’s “Hypertext and Multimedia Literature” class. I also knew I wanted it to be largely a poetry-based project, chiefly because my poetry was and is much more refined than my prose. I didn’t have much more than that to go on.

I should probably explain a bit about “Hypertext and Multimedia Literature” in case the reader hasn’t been fortunate enough to take that class. I enrolled in that class on the recommendation of Ryan Fong, who noticed how thoroughly I enjoyed some of the more metatextual works in his class “RTW: Beyond Realism”; in particular the book How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe by Charles Yu tickled my fancy. I’ve had an affinity for meta narratives all my life, probably going back to The Monster at the End of this Book written by Jon Stone and starring Sesame Street’s Grover, wherein the lovable, furry old muppet repeatedly attempts to prevent the reader from reaching the end of the book for fear of the titular monster, only for it to be revealed that said monster was Grover all along.

But I digress. I thought How to Live Safely was pretty mind-bending when I was in RTW, but “Hypertext and Multimedia Literature” is on a whole other level. It starts out mostly focused on the mostly web-based, somewhat nebulous world of Hypertext. We read some pretty dense texts on the subject such as N. Katherine Hayles’s “Electronic Literature: What Is It?” and sections from Espen J. Aarseth’s Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature before diving
into the Hypertext proper (although truth be told: I am pretty hopeless at academia so pretty much basically any writing with some modicum of academic rigor seems dense to me. Nevertheless, I do think some of the stuff we read in Hypertext and Multimedia Literature is amongst the most difficult stuff I’ve ever read). One such work we looked at that stands out in my memory to this day is Shelley Jackson’s *my body — a Wunderkammer*. You go to the website and are presented with a self-portrait of the artist in the nude, with various parts of her body singled out and labeled. Clicking on one of the parts brings you to a piece of writing related to it. Each piece of writing is littered with hyperlinks to other pieces of writing. If memory serves, some pieces of writing are only accessible via these hyperlinks, and not through the links on the body portrait itself, but I could be mistaken.

Before long we moved from the digital realm on to physical books that exist in the real world (although *Between Page and Screen* by Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse would blur this line significantly— the physical book contains only inscrutable symbols, but going to the book’s website, granting it access to your webcam, and holding the symbols up to the camera reveal the book’s poems, projected into the space surrounding the book as a form of augmented reality).

The first such book we tackled was Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, which employs a mind-boggling array of techniques ranging from highly unconventional typography to collage to coded messages in order to tell a rich and affecting story with at least 3 or 4 intermingling narrative layers.

The next book we read was Salvador Plascencia’s *The People of Paper*, which features its own author as the antagonist at war with his fictional creations, who are rebelling against him for filling their lives with sadness. It has large swathes of blacked-out text and the occasional
drawing. It sometimes has text arranged in columns and sometimes not. Outwardly it appears to be one of the least complicated works we looked at but in reality it’s probably the most complicated and possibly the smartest book we read. It’s just much more subtle about its cleverness. I don’t think I got it at first. I’m not sure I totally get it yet. It’s excellent.

After *Between Page and Screen* we “read” *Chopsticks*, by Jessica Anthony and Rodrigo Corral. I say “read” because *Chopsticks* is mostly pictures. It uses photographs and documents of everyday objects to tell a love story with a twist.

After *Chopsticks* we read *Nox*, a poetry collection of sorts that’s a facsimile of a physical object that poet and translator Anne Carson created as an epitaph for her late estranged brother. The thing we read is a photocopy of the real thing, complete with repeated pages in order to get inserted objects such as folded-up letters and telegrams from the original from multiple angles. The copy is printed on one long sheet of paper, folded so that it “accordions” out, but can be read basically as a normal book. This is the work I drew the most direct influence from in my SIP, but more on that later.

After *Nox* we read *S.*, by J.J. Abrams and Doug Dorst. You slide the book out of its box to reveal a stolen library copy of the book *Ship of Theseus* by V.M. Straka. The book and the author are fictional. Within the margins of *Ship of Theseus* is the story of two college students who communicate by passing the book back and forth and writing each other notes on its pages. The book even includes actual physical inserts of objects exchanged by the students— handwritten letters, copies of old telegrams, postcards, a decoder wheel, even a map of the university’s maintenance tunnels scribbled on a napkin. They uncover a conspiracy and fall in love. *Ship of Theseus* contains coded messages, but our marginal narrators are kind enough to decode them for
you if you don’t have the patience to do it yourself. S. is an amazing read, and it makes a great gift to book, especially for book-lovers.

All of these books together ask the following questions: What is literature? What is a story? What is meaning? What even is “books”? And they ask them in such an engaging and intricate way that they’d be fascinating reads even outside the context of a class devoted to them. But within that context they’re way, way better. The kinds of in-depth class discussions we’d have are like nothing else I’d experienced before or since. The student presentations were always interesting and illuminating. The class literally changed the way I look at books, stories, life, and the world. Very few classes can make the same claim—certainly not to the same degree and magnitude. I don’t think I’d be who I am today if I hadn’t taken this class, and I’d recommend it to absolutely anybody.

Given my passion for the subject matter, I think it’s pretty clear why it was so important to me that my SIP be in the same vein. The most direct influence I took was from Nox. It provided a good model for using Hypertext and Multimedia techniques in conjunction with poetry in a way that didn’t require a level of computer wizardry that I simply didn’t have. I don’t really have any idea how you’d go about making something like House of Leaves, and anyway I didn’t have the time or space to make something that big and intricate. So I decided to follow Anne Carson’s example and create a physical object as a vehicle for my poems and other ephemera. I still drew some influence from some of the other books I mentioned above, but not to the extent that I did Nox.

But before I could about creating this object, I had to write the poems. As an overarching theme I settled on “loss.” When I first had the initial inklings of this idea, I think the only real
loss I’d suffered was being dumped (this actually happened while we were reading S. I didn’t deal with it super well, but S. definitely helped). I was also contending on and off with suicidal thoughts (something I still have to manage). Not long after I submitted the preliminary proposal for this SIP, the house I was living in suffered a fire that rendered it inhospitable. As I write this, my favorite movie theater and former workplace is shutting down (this development was too recent to write poems about for inclusion in the finished product but I did include a small tribute at the back). Losing things is the only constant in life. That’s kind of funny, in a way.

The organization of the collection emerged kind of organically. The poems I ended up with could basically be sorted into one of three categories: poems that dealt with the breakup, poems that dealt with the fire, and poems that dealt with looking forward to the future in spite of loss (although some poems about miscellaneous other biographical details are also sprinkled throughout the collection). Because the breakup happened in the dead of winter, I titled that section “Lost in the Snow.” The next section, dealing with the fire, was titled “Lost in the Fire.” The section where I try to turn things a little more optimistic (despite the dismal election results) I called “Found.” The first title I came up with for the project overall was “Paradise Lost and Found” but I thought that was too grandiose a title. So I dropped the word “paradise” and had pretty much the perfect title.

The general lack of traditional form in the poems of this collection was a reflexive reaction to the poems I generated in “Advanced Poetry Workshop.” One of the parameters I’d set for myself in that class was to write every poem in a different form. So by the time I got to this collection I was sick to death of form and just wrote however I felt was appropriate. Sticking so strictly to form in Advanced really helped me with this, though. Adhering so strictly to whatever
rules you’ve imposed on yourself by way of form forces you to think very carefully about how you choose your words and build and break your lines for maximum impact. By freeing myself from the restrictions of form I was able to more freely explore the space of the page while still ending up with a precisely crafted product that deceptively appears to have simply “happened.”

These poems were also an exercise in voice. One thing I pretty consistently get praised for in writing workshops is my distinctive voice. People can generally tell whether I’ve written something without even having to see my name. I had to take this natural affinity and hone it into a more controlled tone for the subject matter— one of my worst writing habits is constantly trying to inject humor just to keep myself interested. Which is not to say that the Lost & Found poems are humorless; just that they are less overtly funny than the kind of stuff I write off the cuff and have a little bit more of a wry tone than my natural voice. Some poems were cut because they were just too damn depressing— and I left in at least two poems about contemplating suicide, and one about a murder, if that gives you any idea how dark the stuff on the cutting room floor might be.

Even as I wrote poems, I worked on materials I would need for the next phase of my project. I took photographs of the Kalamazoo College campus and the surrounding area and the nearby cemetery (a frequent subject of these poems) and worked on composing playlists (the cue I took from Chopsticks), although I would be fine-tuning these playlists until the very end of the project.

Once the poems were written and put into some sort of order, I could begin to craft the object that would contain them. I picked up a Moleskine notebook from Barnes and Noble (the notebook itself inspired a poem— the first page of it said “in case of loss, pleas return to: / as a
reward: "$" and this was too perfect for my theme to just leave it alone). I had my photographs printed at Walgreen’s. I made copies of things I wanted to include snippets of but not destroy—namely, and old love note from my ex and some pages from a couple of my favorite comics (plus a quote from S. that was particularly meaningful to me in the wake of my breakup). I created the cover image in GIMP, a free and open-source version of Photoshop. The base image is the photo I took of my house on fire. I printed it out and affixed it to the cover of the notebook with double-sided tape. Once I figured out how I wanted the extra materials arranged relative to the poems, it was simply a matter of gluing it all in place. Unlike the loose ephemera of S., my supplemental materials can’t be moved about or lost (for the most part— the back of the book has a few loose things on it, but that’s different, as will become apparent). But my project only took up the first sixty or so pages of the notebook— what to do with the rest of it?

Why, hollow it out of course. This past summer I picked up hollowing out books as a minor hobby. It’s kind of a lengthy, messy, mind-numbing task, but it’s not unrewarding. It basically involves gluing the pages together by their edges and then cutting out the middles with an X-ACTO knife. There’s more to it than that, but I’m not going to get into that here. If you’re really interested I highly recommend Heather Rivers’s tutorial on the subject. That’s how I learned. It should be the first thing that comes up if you google “how to hollow out a book,” which is what I did. I filled the hollow part of the notebook with pennies, scraps of the love note that I didn’t use (I cut it apart and rearranged the words into a poem, but there were a lot of words I had to leave out for largely grammatical reasons), a button Shanna gave me, a pin I picked up at the historical Alamo in Texas (which I wore during my last days of employment at the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema), and a pair of keys left over from the old house. One of the keys
is broken. These were pretty much the only things small enough to fit in the hollow part of the notebook. But by filling the back of my book with these mostly-real (the note was a photocopy) partly-discarded objects I turned the book into a sort of literal lost and found.

Once this was done, there was one more thing I had to do: put it up on Tumblr. I scanned it page by page. I had to upload the pages in reverse order so that they appear in the correct order when the blog is viewed. There were a couple of reasons uploading to Tumblr was a necessary step: first of all, this thing I made was unwieldy and hard to read. The pages with photographs glued to them are much stiffer than the other pages. You have to be careful not to spill anything out of the back. It doesn’t really close properly. I couldn’t turn this thing in and expect it to come out the same. Second, the playlists only exist in the physical object as pieces of paper. But on the Tumblr I included links to playlists I made on YouTube with the relevant pages. That way, anybody can listen to the music I picked to go along with each part. The Tumblr is probably the ideal way to experience this thing. You miss out on some of the texture of the real thing, but in some ways I think that makes the object more special. I think only my family have really gotten to take a good look at it. And they’re probably the only ones who ever will, because this thing would be basically impossible to publish. It’s a truly unique piece of work. Most of the people who ever get to know it will only be able to do so through a facsimile of the real thing. The Tumblr of my SIP can be found at lostandfoundsip.tumblr.com

As a capstone project, “Lost & Found” pretty accurately captures almost all of my experiences here at Kalamazoo College. Its form embodies some of the most important classes I’ve taken— namely the poetry workshops and Hypertext and Multimedia Literature. I also took a lot of theatre classes— nearly enough for a minor. Fundamentals of Acting, which I was lucky
enough to take with Todd Espeland in the first quarter of my first year at K, was another one of those classes that changed the way I looked myself and the world in a major way. This gets a nod in the poem “To State the Obvious,” where I wax philosophical about the difference between lying and acting. Speaking of which, I took a couple of philosophy classes. These are referenced mainly by “Imagine Sisyphus Happy” which is about Camus’s ideas about the absurdity of life and finding a reason not to commit suicide. The subject matter of the poems, of course, covers the personal stuff I was going through at the time while all of this school stuff happened. If the entirety of my experience at Kalamazoo College could be expressed in a physical object, this would be it. And working on it helped me understand that loss isn’t just a part of life—it’s the essence of living. And it helped me be ok with that. This project allowed me to put my past to bed. Now I just have to get on with my future.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to Diane Seuss, not only for her guiding hand on this project but throughout my career at Kalamazoo College. I don’t know if I would have made it through this thing without you, Di, and for that I’m eternally grateful. Thanks to Ryan Fong for recommending I take Hypertext and Multimedia literature, and extra-special thanks to Shanna Salinas for teaching it and taking a look at my SIP while it was still in progress and reassuring me I was on the right track. And for giving me that button. Thanks to Sara McKinney. This project wouldn’t have been possible without you, but it wouldn’t have been possible with you, either.
You should smile more. Wider.

As a reward, enjoy your eternal happiness!

This is what happy feels like.

You are happy.

If nothing, congratulations!

What’s wrong with you?

The problem may be internal:

If this doesn’t work,

from the available materials,

try and make one

If no such piece exists,

you were truly happy.

The last place

please return to

In case of loss,
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track 1</th>
<th>Track 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Liar (It Takes One to Know One)</td>
<td>Liar (It Takes One to Know One)</td>
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<td>Call Off Your Ghost</td>
<td>Call Off Your Ghost</td>
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<td>Light Up, Light Up</td>
<td>Light Up, Light Up</td>
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<td>The Piss &amp; The Pass</td>
<td>The Piss &amp; The Pass</td>
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<td>Go to Hell, for Heaven's Sake</td>
<td>Go to Hell, for Heaven's Sake</td>
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<td>Stupid</td>
<td>Single</td>
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<td>Motion</td>
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<td>Against Me</td>
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**Lost in the Snow**

*Duration: 40 minutes*
If only you could
or how you long to do it again
or that My Chemical Romance was playing
than it gave you a sick, semi-erotic thrill.
You won’t say
It hurt.
Yes, you’ll say.

Ike how many times you’ll have to answer the question, “Did it hurt?”

It’s just one of those things you don’t think about until it happens.

Still, it shocked me to see the place closed

can reasonably expect to last
next to the used CD shop and the comic exchange

Certainly longer than the lagoon place

through the skin for a lifetime, it no longer
The scene was the needle sends an echo
I guess that’s probably true of most tattoos.

This tattoo on my chest proved more permanent

3rd Coast
Cemetery Poem

or in my childhood bed,
or in the churchyard, or on the pier,
They wouldn't mind if we kissed here.
They'd want us to poke fun at their gravestones.
The dead would want us to have a good time.

... when we went on our first date.
I like a cemetery in springtime,
but dead underneath
Beautiful in the outside.

It's your best friend. It says it feels the same way and
if it's ok to leave later, on the walk home with this object, you tell it
for you, and before the party even really begins you ask the object
if it doesn't matter as long as it's there. Still, it's a stressful situation
puts you with this object. You go anywhere: Do anything.
Invited you to this party you don't normally go to

The object of your desire comes closer.
Bul in the end this only makes them stronger.

of my memory.

I run them through the halls.

Every night I exercise these demons.

contemplated by time and torment.

filled with terrible keepsakes;

My brain is a haunted house

Haunted House

Today is the ghost of an anniversary.

the kind of darkness that lends you no sense of space:

or more Images from my face:

and it's either a million miles away

It's pitch black, whatever it is.

At least I think that's the night sky.

through the ceiling, blank and moon or stars.

and you can see the night sky

but does not close.

It has a door which looks;

This is the room where I died.

Do you remember this place?

Memorial Day
You are an angel. Beware of those who collect feathers.

Take me on your mighty wings
Anyone can fall
But even angels are subject to gravity.

Coarse and heavy, foolish and wise,
You are all once admiring and fragile,
In any moldered
grown to shock the lack of faith
and all the beauty on earth—
You are all the light in heaven.
You are divinity itself.

The doctors can't explain it.
This happens after every meal
because you taste your breakfast again.
Hold it in—maybe you can make it to a bathroom.
If you try to keep it in, you'll vomit for sure.
If you let it all out again, you might not feel any better.

A steady stream points from your mouth.
The first definite sign is the drool—
In your throat or in your stomach.

You're not sure where the feeling starts.
How to Hollow Out a Book

Step 1: Choose your victim. Go down to the used book shop or a thrift store, and just pick one that looks interesting.

Step 2: Do NOT read it. It will be too painful if you know your enemy.

Step 3: Give the pages together by their edges. It will take a while to dry.

Step 4: Slice the insides out with a razor. It will not be easy. There will be blood and there will be ink. Collect the remains in a pile to be disposed of later.

Step 5: Hide your secrets inside. If you don't have any secrets, substitute.

apparently unsheathed

watching you pool into the forest

possibly forevermore; leaving me stuck

The scar issue will dam my movements

These aren't wounds that heal clean.

Healing my own wounds:
you left me broken,
and by claiming your way out
and your beast is in machine,
I've got a mind like a steel trap.

Hearts and Knives
Kissing is a conversation. 
Listen and respond.

Communication is key.

That's up for the two of you to decide.

What do you say? 
Slick? Slushy? 
Shut up?

Hickies are a point of contention.

Without breaking the skin.
Scrub just enough to leave a mark.

Just let her know you're there.

Rather than hard.

Your bite should be sharp.

Lessons in Savagery

Don't blink.

and find yourself in these gazing back.

Caze into those amber eyes.

Feel in love with a monster.

Give a monster a hug.

With their torsos and their phillipicks.

Defend them from the snarling hounds.

Instead, pet them.

Bite only with monsters.
To outweigh the evil of my existence
Bathing to produce enough good
Eating over the voices
Stealing food from the mouths of the hungry
Taking the place of someone more deserving
I'm blocking someone's view
But I can't help but feel
I try my best to do the right thing

I know what you're thinking anymore?

Try again: Iぼought myself.
I don't use the coin bank you bought me.

Now I need pennies for my job and I pick them off the ground.
I wasn't worth it to me to keep them around.
Even though I know how much one was worth.

I couldn't see the value in a penny back then.
but it never comes.
Then you wait for the withdrawal to hit.
So you make your stead just a couple weeks.
and find it's a pill short of suicide.
And the next day a few more.
So the next day you take a few more.

and your feelings are forgotten.
every sensation is pleasant.
and in the fog that follows
so you take a few.

Why not live a little at the end of your life?
Or even have a drink.
never done any drugs occasionally before—

After all, you've been a good boy your whole life—
so you take a few for fun.
and you hope plenty more than that.
If only takes eighteen of these pills to kill a person.

Vicious

Lord knows I do.

find comfort in that.

Know that your death secures my elevation.
Let the water take you. Feel your skin go cold.
Hold still, now. Don't struggle.

mistakes.
of little
very handy for getting rid

was really too much. It's lucky this has not happened.
was all in good fun, but coming to my house.
You understand. That line by the side of the road
of entertaining your womanly whims. Kef.

I cannot risk eternal damnation for the sake
What has a man of God if not his virtue?

Saint Cenogen
Some people are liars. They willfully deceive others for personal gain and...
The boy wraps me up most nights. He walks through dark matter with weird fetishism. He says, "No shade" on my school bag. The boy sends me obelisks. He says, "Interesting things".
Dear Mrs. Fortune,

I'm writing this letter even though I know it won't reach you. Or, it may not.

I don't know if you're still alive, whether she was ever (or that you understand it). You're not the woman you once were (or let go through the mail and arrive at your address, and you may even read it, of course, as well as some other pieces of mail, not just these letters).

I'm writing this letter even though I know it won't reach you. Or, it may not.

I don't know if you're still alive, whether she was ever (or that you understand it). You're not the woman you once were (or let go through the mail and arrive at your address, and you may even read it, of course, as well as some other pieces of mail, not just these letters).

Sincerely,

[Handwritten text]
and a smoldering crater with your charred remains at the bottom.

Two minutes can be the difference between an unnoticeable shield of a house or a fire fighter blowing you out of your shoes. The fire marshal interview is each one of your house or individually. You find out if you had called 911.

There's a fire fighter breathing down your neck. There's no story. There's no smoking. There's no interest and no sympathy. There's a store, a fire fighter. There's fire fighters inside your house. Do you have a fire extinguisher? Does it work? Do you know how to use it? Do you know where it is? May be you're in your kitchen. Does it work? And if it's not a fire, maybe you're in your kitchen. Does it work?
If you cannot read your instructions, open this process
to your instruction. Any instructions should spell out instructions
on how to deal with your specific emergency.

When you are finished crying, open your hands.

When that's done, gather all the pieces
of glass in litigious islands and keep them there.

When you are finished crying, open your hands.

It will be longer than you expect
until the next time you cry.

Whisper the details of your emergency
in your hand in order to break it
in extreme cases. You may need to know the glass
and make sure every shard
is as detailed as possible.

I tried to stop writing.
I tried to stop writing.

My life has pretty much followed this pattern since then:

Iquit basketball right then and there.

I rolled off and fell to the floor. Zero points.

My parents tell me that when I was a toddler
they gave me a toddler-sized basketball hoop.

I've been a quitter longer than I can remember.
The white keys on the Casio will remain speckled forever.

Or is that just how the frame looks now?

Was that Maigd Voura poster always so grinny?

And when you pull it back, your hands come away soot-stained.

Even months later you might still heath an old favorie.

Books are another story.

I've cover up the scent.

You wash your clothes with vinegar

And with a lingering sense of loss.

But not like a camphor. More acid, rather than that.

At first everything smells like smoke.

It's funny, what comes clean and what doesn't.

Smoke Damage

Maybe the new one will actually smell something.

We'll build a new one.

and he collapses under his own weight

until he can't anymore.

So he stands there and looks like a man.

there's nowhere to run.

The whole world is on fire, though.

A rude awakening.

This something giant has suffered.

pull back to the burning windmill.

The towers expect them, so they are.

The windmill in this town are just for show.

but know that it never meant anything.

Picture a windmill in flames.

Don Quijote in Park Township.
The modern era would have died soon afterward. I think if I had been born in almost any time before some people say they were born in the wrong time and need stories to breathe comfortably. I also have no sense of direction even one foot in front of my face undiscovered were lost to me, but now I can't see back then only the distant details was totally indiscernible to me. On the microwave oven across the room I glanced up and the digital readout when I woke I wondered what time it was. I had my nose in a book, as usual, and couldn't read it. I was eight years old.

I remember the first time I looked at a clock.

Time to get your eyes checked.

It's helpful for people like me. Who are easily lost amidst the man-made. The trails are color-coded and marked with spray paint.
My living neighbors rarely give such consideration if you don’t disturb their places. They won’t disturb your rest. Ghosts are benign creatures. In my experience the dead make better neighbors than the living.

But I was afraid to touch them. Should I try to stand it back up? Of the weather-worn grave—the lopped tombstone.

Although I never knew the etiquette, I like to think they enjoyed the company every chance I got. I would visit the graves of long-dead strangers before the fire.

I miss living in the side yard of an old cemetery. Perhaps more emotionally.

I miss having a cemetery in my backyard.
Nature, doesn't have a plan. Nature just happens. Our cities are our heroes, and weapons of mass destruction our savior. High-knowledge comes from our honey. A skyscraper is no more unnatural than an ant hill. Everything we do is a part of the process. Humans are a product of nature. They are part of the process of nature. Humans do not exist outside of nature. 3. There is nothing unnatural. There is only the neo-natural.

1. Life is an interrelation between Sciences.

It's not so think about it:
Death, infinite death.
Life is temporary. Little control. Cell death.
Immunity is an asset.
Memory is a war.
Is there a difference?
And what, really, and then forgetting.
If can be experienced.

1. Matter and energy

An Astronomical Observation

Tell me of Dirt we happen to live on
We named a planet mostly covered in water
This was not an act of humility
It was our earth dirt (or we named dirt after our planet)
We named the other planets in our solar system after gods
A Zoo Story.

This may or may not be factually accurate, but I remember it as true.

There’s a neighborhood in my hometown that used to be a zoo. A long time ago some rich guy moved out to the coast of Lake Michigan and established a private zoo on his property. Importing animals from all over. I don’t know what kind of animals he kept there. What exotic thing could survive long in Michigan? Anyway, people live there now. The gate at the entrance still stands. There are houses where the cages used to be.
Fire doesn't just burn.
And every breath taken
unleashes more chaos
into the universe,
bringing us that much closer
to the end of all things.

Even the lifegiving sun
is an agent of ultimate destruction.

2nd Law

Exhale

and the Lord giveth
and the Lord taketh away

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Railroad

The keening wail of the train whistle ties me to the tracks, like a damsel in distress in a Western. But there’s no hero coming to save me, and anyway I put myself in this position. I lay my temple on the rail and watch the road go on forever, hoping the train comes from the opposite direction.

I’ve heard that the most stressful part of being a train conductor is bearing witness to so many suicide attempts. I’ve heard that most people who attempt suicide instantly regret it. I’ve heard my friends and family tell me that they love me.

I can’t hear the train whistle anymore, so I get up and live to die another day.
Morrison, Grant & Frank Quitely.

All-Star Superman, issue 10, DC Comics, 2008, p. 11.
For just one more day
of the universe together
life to hold the fabric
inside clings for dear
or metal, immersed against
a hide twisted piece
so much depends on

Safety Pin

You can't remember how you got here
The air smells like burnt flesh and rotten meat
 hungrily breath open wide:
starting, squawking, staggering toward you,
cough to cover the earth far as you can see—
and these, a whole flock of these things—
and you look up from this one, "bird"
 catch it, in its throat
and a choked, smoky song
with that wind stuns
but it's just kept going
like somebody winning its neck
but it's twisted and wrong.
It's supposed to look like a bird,
Hail Swallow
Imagining he likes a good workout,
imagining he takes pride in his punishment,
imagine Sisyphus isn’t sorry for offending the gods.

imagining his mind numb from losing count of his failures;
imagine his body bruised and beaten like Rocky at the end of Rocky;
imagine Sisyphus swearing so hard you can’t see his tears.
imagine him smiling as it rolls back down, cushioning him underneath.
imagine he likes pushing that boulder up that hill again and again.

Happy. Sisyphus Happy.
and none of it hurts
and it's all beautiful
so I don't have to work
and it's all free
and there's a museum and a library and a movie theater and an arcade
and all my favorite bands tour there
whenever I want,
and all my friends can visit
and never run out
where it's always overcast
in a cold desert,
in an abandoned city
I want to live

After Graduation
Dear Me,

It’s ok that you still think about Ms. Fortune sometimes. It doesn’t mean you owe her anything. You can still move on with your life. It’s ok you lost your chosen family. The fire left it structurally unsound. Uninhabitable. You can build another one. You’ve done it before. It’s ok the world went crazy. Or maybe it didn’t go crazy. It just stopped pretending to be sane. Now you know what you’re dealing with. It’s ok to not be ok. Just try to leave things a little better than you found them, and let that be enough. If you can do that, you’ll be ok. Loss isn’t just a part of life. It’s the essence of living. And that’s ok.

Love,
yourself

Morrison, Grant & Frank Quitely. 

*All-Star Superman*, issue 12. DC Comics, 2008, p. 15
Watchmen, Issue 12, DC Comics, 1987, p. 27

Moore, Alan & Dave Gibbons

...BY YOU MEAN WHAT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE DONE?

NOTHING EVER ENDS, BRIAN

DON'T BE OUT THERE, AL.

I WAS OUT THERE BEFORE YOU.