

Gwen Niekamp

I Google My Assailant: A Found Essay with Commentary



I used to feel lucky. I used to think of the silver lining: I'd walked away with 1. my life and 2. my virginity, which I still cared about in the Catholic-school sense of the word. When I looked in the mirror afterward, I let my gaze leave the red handprints on my sore, ghost-white neck and settle instead on my face. New eye twitch, same ole half-smile.

I was newly nineteen, a birthday I celebrated in a pink floral A-line and bumblebee-yellow flats. I wore no makeup, sweat myself slick, lobbed a blow-up volleyball over a net. Boys vs. girls.

We, the girls, had all left our Kentucky hometown for far-off colleges, and they, the boys, had all stuck around. They lived together in a fourteen-bedroom former nunnery, pooled their food stamps. Their house was all stained glass and B.O. A kitchen-counter castle made of superglue and Bud Light cans. Bathroom stalls, toilet lids left up and orangey urine splattered on the floors. A fire escape zigzagging up the back of the place—four stories—and when we, the girls, rolled up at dusk, they, the boys, would crawl out their bedroom windows and tightrope the railings in

their Vans. They laughed when we screamed for them to stop. They laughed when Abby hyperventilated.

There was always someone at the nunnery, its doors never locked. Fight Nights, and we'd watch the boys give each other shiners, then bestow hickeys on the big loser. House shows, and we'd watch the boys mosh and fall and trample each other and by the end, everyone would be rolling on the floor, nuzzling and sweet-nothinging. Violence and romance, violence and romance. Most of the time there was enough Colt 45 and weed for everyone to get fucked up—some random thirty-something lived among them and bought the booze—though I didn't drink or smoke then. I was a slow wean off Catholic-school values, but everyone called me "straight-edge" as if they were proud of me, as if this were a challenge for me. On the nights that felt most beautiful to me then, one of the boys wielded his tattoo gun. I never asked for a tattoo, but I remember shadows tall and lovely in lamplight, the buzz of the machine. Couches so ancient and filthy, too floral, too matronly, but somehow still just right. We, the girls, sat two to a cushion, knees touching, heads slumping onto each other's shoulders watching and listening. Sometimes one of us would let herself be whisked to sleep.

I loved some of those boys of my childhood with a heart-fluttering Helga-Pataki intensity, preserving their gum wrappers or scraps of paper with their handwriting on it, but I loved all of those girls in a better way—eternally, intimately, openly. That summer, Anna and I in particular were inseparable. We worked the same day job, washing windows for our middle school teacher's side business, and when we'd petitioned him for the job, we called ourselves a package deal. We talked ceaselessly as we rubbed hundreds of windows clean, and when Anna started getting flirty texts out of the blue from Thomas, someone with whom she'd done children's theatre, I was the first to know. Thomas started coming round to the nunnery with us, and then Thomas started bringing his best friend, who, by season's end, would become My Assailant.¹

¹ For the purpose of this essay, let us pretend "My Assailant" is his legal name.

##

Thirteen years later and I am in my early thirties, have been partnered for the better part of seven years. I wake up in the home my boyfriend and I own together, and every morning I drink green tea in my sunroom office while the dog sleeps at my feet. I pull books from overstuffed shelves to reference. I spend a lot of time thinking and daydreaming. I study and teach and write. Is it so wrong if, every now and then, I Google My Assailant?

##

Let's just say I got into the habit, and one morning when I go to Google My Assailant's name, the homepage has a new feature. When I hover my mouse over the "I'm Feeling Lucky" button, the text spins away, like a slot machine.

I'm Feeling Lucky

becomes

I'm Feeling Funny

becomes

I'm Feeling Playful

becomes

I'm Feeling Stellar

becomes

I'm Feeling Puzzled

and on and on and on.

I get sucked into this cycle, moving the cursor away, then returning it to the button, hoping for a word that describes how I feel.

“I’m Feeling Curious” is the closest it comes, but isn’t there a better adjective? I need one that encompasses mixed feelings: embarrassment, power, rage, indignation, yada yada. No such luck, so I click when it says Curious. I am that, too. Where is My Assailant now? Come out, come out.

##

Here’s where luck/curiosity leads me²:

UNIVERSITY IN THE MOUNTAINS				
Cultural Studies Department				
Admissions	Faculty	Current Students	After the Degree	More

Home / Faculty / My Assailant

<p>Contact</p> <p>Follow us on Facebook and Twitter</p> <p>The Chair of His Department Phone number Email address Office hours Office Location</p> <p>The Director of Graduate Studies Phone number Email address Office hours Office location</p>	<p>MY ASSAILANT</p> <p>Education BA, Sociology and Cultural Studies from State University MA, Sociology from Big City University</p> <p>Research Area Cultural Studies, Indigenous Identity, Colonialism, Globalization</p> <p>Why Cultural Studies? Cultural Studies is an activist field, important to intellectual discourse, which intersects with many disciplines. I study the way people claim and reclaim their identities.</p> <p>Why University in the Mountains? I chose University in the Mountains because the archives and resources are incomparable, and the faculty champions student research. Best of all, the department offers a strong community, which creates a safe learning environment. I'm proud to contribute to the culture at University in the Mountains.</p>
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Aha.

² I have paraphrased every search result, changed every name, and tweaked website designs. Let me make this clear: This is not to protect My Assailant; this is to protect myself. I want to avoid plagiarism, copyright infringement, and defamation lawsuits I don't have the energy or financial resources to fight. But I have not compromised the integrity or substance of My Assailant's internet presence.

My Assailant and I have more in common than a day spent in a basement in 2009. We are both Ph.D. students in the Arts and Sciences. We both teach undergraduates. And the kicker: We both spend a lot of time considering identity.

Since the day he became My Assailant, I have lost and reclaimed my identity a thousand times over. Am I weak? Brave? Victim or survivor? Girl or woman? Am I poorly adjusted to adulthood, or am I confident in my age and sexuality and body? Some days, I miss that teenage combo of earnestness and bravado: I wish I still had a sense of adventure, wish I didn't have a PTSD diagnosis stamped on my psychiatric records. Other days, I feel at peace with the fact of my sexual assault, meaning that I know it happened and I'm done trying to bargain with my own memory. Still other days, I wake up, pop a Zoloft, and try to describe to my boyfriend the difference between when I feel a surge of suicidal ideation and when I wish I'd never been born and when I wish My Assailant had killed me when he tried to squeeze the life out of me. (I split hairs.) When My Assailant let me go, I was panting in recovery position, hands on my knees, tears in the ducts of my eyes. Back then I wrote in my journal that it hurt. I looked up at My New Assailant and he grinned. Instinctually I checked my neck for my enduring pulse.

I broke the silence. For want of something better, I said, "You could have killed me." No exclamation.

He was matter-of-fact: "I know."

So it is that I *am* curious now. I'm curious how My Assailant sees himself as contributing to this "safe learning environment" at his university. I hover my cursor over the email addresses in the department contact information box.

"Hello, Chair. Hello, Director. You don't know me but..."

I haven't sent the email and likely never will. Mixed feelings again. I remain unsettled that My Assailant teaches women—girls—who are freshmen, sophomores. I assume many of them are nineteen, as my students are too. As I was then.






At the same time, I'm wary of retribution, of Title IV horror stories, of the way judgment could snap back on me. I panic at

the mere thought of forking over my diaries, archived emails, or psychiatric records for strangers. The way it is now—for me to control what I show you—that agency is what I want the most. It's what, for many years, I thought I'd never recover.

##

Luck runs out and I Google the old-fashioned way.

The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "My Assailant" in a handwritten-style font. Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "All", "News", "Images", "Maps", "Videos", and "More". The search results are displayed below a horizontal line. The first result is "My Assailant at Suburban College (SU - Rate My ...)" with a URL "https://www.ratemyprofessors.com" and a "Show Ratings" link. The second result is "My Assailant Profiles | Facebook" with a URL "https://www.facebook.com" and a "query=My+Assai..." link. The third result is "EDITORIAL - Social Justice Journal" with a URL "http://www.socialjusticejournal.org" and an "editorial" link. The fourth result is "My Assailant | GovSalaries" with a URL "https://govsalaries.com" and an "assailant-my-1234567" link. The fifth result is "SOC 220 – Theories of Class and Power - Courseicle" with a URL "https://www.courseicle.com" and a "suburbancollege" link. The sixth result is a list of redacted text: "... [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], My Assailant, [Redacted]."

Google **My Assailant**     

[All](#) [News](#) [Images](#) [Maps](#) [Videos](#) [More](#) [Tools](#)

About 270,000 results (0.43 seconds)
Search Results

My Assailant at Suburban College (SU - Rate My ...
<https://www.ratemyprofessors.com> [Show Ratings](#)

My Assailant is a professor in the Sociology department at Suburban College (SU) - see what their students are saying about them ...
You've visited this page 8 times. Last visit: 2/21/22

My Assailant Profiles | Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com> [public](#) [query=My+Assai...](#)

View the profiles of people named My Assailant. Join Facebook to connect with My Assailant and others you may know. Facebook gives people the power to share...
You've visited this page 4 times. Last visit: 2/21/22

EDITORIAL - Social Justice Journal
<http://www.socialjusticejournal.org> [editorial](#)

My Assailant. Big City University, Big City, USA. socialjusticejrn@gmail.com. Editorial Council.
[Editors redacted.]

My Assailant | GovSalaries
<https://govsalaries.com> [assailant-my-1234567](#)

My Assailant Overview. My Assailant in 2018 was employed in Suburban College Adj and had a reported pay of <\$10,000 according to public records.

SOC 220 – Theories of Class and Power - Courseicle
<https://www.courseicle.com> [suburbancollege](#) [courses](#) [SOC](#)

... [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], [Redacted], My Assailant, [Redacted].

Let's investigate these hits one by one, shall we?

1. My Assailant's RateMyProfessors page.

My Assailant has one review, and it's from his SOC 220: Theories of Class and Power course.

Allow me to paraphrase sentence by sentence:

Professor Assailant is the best teacher I've ever had. Our night class was actually fun because he cares about the material and treats his students like friends. He's also... SEXY!!

Quality: 5.0 / Difficulty: 1.0

I, too, have a page on RateMyProfessors, which I check occasionally to compare with My Assailant's. No student has called me sexy, which relieves me.

2. The Facebook Search Results for "My Assailant."

My Assailant used to send me DMs on Facebook, and I copied them out by hand into a notebook. I would show you, but I hate how polite I was to him in the days after the assault. He asked me on a date, and I didn't respond yes or no; instead, I asked him why he'd done what he'd done. "That doesn't sound like me," he wrote back. "I'm a pansexual feminist."

It would be at least five more years before I learned the word "gaslighting," but I did block him eventually. Then, a couple of years later, I deleted my social media entirely. I could say I don't give a damn about the masquerade of it all, but more truthfully, I hate the idea that he could be looking for me as often as I look for him.

If My Assailant still has a Facebook, it is private and inaccessible to me. I once even made a fake account to see if he'd start showing up in searches. Nothing. But Facebook seems to remember his name. I do too but I still can't bring myself to say it aloud, only type it into Google.

3. My Assailant's name on the masthead of a progressive journal.

In 2012, new bachelor's degree in hand, I moved in with Anna to a little house her parents owned in our hometown. We each paid \$200 in rent, which I paid by walking dogs and working at an indie press and which she paid by working at a local health food store. She brought home recently expired food, and we ate like vegan kings—Brazil nuts, cashew cheese, organic dinosaur kale—and drank like little bitches—two-buck chuck (chardonnay) from Trader Joe's.

Thomas was long gone by then, but once, Anna ran into My Assailant at a concert. "I'd like to see your house," he told her, "But Gwen would never let me inside." He laughed, so Anna says.

Don't blame Anna for talking to him then. At the time, she didn't know he'd assaulted me. For years I didn't even know how to describe what had happened. Not only was I just nineteen, but this was a decade before the #MeToo Movement. Back then, I hate to say, I was under the impression that if it wasn't vaginal rape, I couldn't make a big deal of it. So, I wasn't able to tell Anna what My Assailant had done until I was nearly thirty. Instead, for years, including the years we lived together, I used the only vocabulary I knew: "He's a dick," I said, face contorted with disgust, whenever I heard her say My Assailant's name.

4. My Assailant's 2018 salary of <\$10,000 year in one of the top-ten most expensive cities in the U.S.

I despise that My Assailant and I have so much in common professionally. He was an adjunct the year of 2018, and so was I—and our pay was nearly identical.

5. A description of a sociology course My Assailant has taught.

The first time I formally met My Assailant, I was walking up to Anna's parents' house, and he was sitting on the porch swing with Thomas. I liked Thomas alright, though I thought Anna

deserved much better. For example, Thomas had a low-sitting pick-up truck with a scantily clad woman rolling a pair of dice painted onto its hood, snake eyes where her nipples would be, a choice supposedly ironic, but what I remember most of all is that one night, Anna climbed in the cab with Thomas, and the rest of us girls lay down in the bed of the truck. Thomas drove us in tight, fast circles through a deserted roundabout. Those of us in the bed had nothing to hold onto but each other, and we screamed and laughed, and I also felt we were towing death, which may have made it more fun. Once we parked, Anna jumped out of the truck and asked the rest of us if we'd had fun, if we could see the stars.

As I approached the porch, Thomas must have said hello. He must have told me Anna was inside her parents' house getting ready or something and that she be out soon. He must have also introduced me and My Assailant, but in my memory, Thomas has flattened into a background character. I remember his truck, the layout of his father's condo from a big party or two he threw that summer, the gist of the texts he used to send Anna. I don't remember his voice.

My Assailant, on the other hand, was gregarious from the get-go. I was wearing a skirt— patchwork, several fabrics—and he asked me about life on the prairie. Then, with barely a minute of introduction between us, he asked me if I liked being a virgin.

I didn't come any closer, just stood there on the path, looking at the boys on the porch. Thomas elbowed him and looked down—embarrassed but also grinning—but My Assailant kept his eyes on me.

I didn't talk back much or argue then. Unless I was with the girls of my childhood, I stayed quiet, navigated the world begrudgingly. I existed begrudgingly, was alive begrudgingly. And so, from that day, I remember less of my reaction and more of My Assailant. He told me I was bright-eyed. He said he bet my parents were professors—and he did not mean this as a compliment.

My father made sales calls. My mother had only just finished her bachelor's degree the year before. All of this surprised My Assailant.

“Well, fuck me,” he said.

##

You’d think in all of my Googling, I’d have found clearer, more recent pictures of My Assailant than these two from 2012, but this is it³:




Figures A (man with paintbrush painting wooden house exterior) and B (group of happy young volunteers embracing at park, ready for work)

No headshot. No wedding website. No obituary portrait. No LinkedIn. No social media, and no photos on My Assailant’s Sister’s profile either. I gather he’s alive. I gather he’s unmarried.

Google has given me some clues, but I largely have to conjecture.

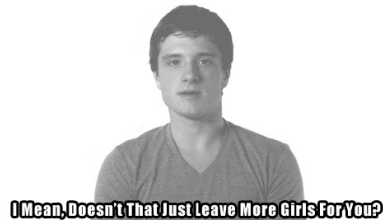
As soon as that summer I met My Assailant ended, I went back to college out of state, and I didn’t see My Assailant again for many years. I even thought I’d forgotten what he looked like.

##

One morning, in my sunroom office, I find myself in the weeds of , deep on its fourth page of search results, when I discover another relevant hit for My Assailant: a Tumblr page from 2011, almost two years to the day after the assault.

³ You didn’t really think I’d show you pictures of My Assailant, did you? These are just stock photos courtesy of Shutterstock. They do, however, give the gist. In 2012, My Assailant did one of those year-long Christian service programs for recent college graduates, and a church he helped to renovate included these photos of him in its monthly bulletin.

I click. There appears a meme of the kid from *The Hunger Games*:



Underneath the gifs, the blogger (a friend? a family friend?) has written a caption: “Isn’t this sooooo My Assailant???? Sorry [My Assailant’s Sister] but its true!” (sic)

It’s a stupid post—two gifs and a two-sentence caption—but it’s the only digital evidence I can find that alludes, however quietly, to My Assailant’s misogyny. However deeply it’s hidden, page four of the search results (of his NICKNAME nonetheless), I do revel in how, when I Google My Assailant, this result appears above his master’s thesis.

##

I didn’t always Google My Assailant. For years, I tried not to think of him, tried to forget his face, his sneer, but then, things changed. Almost a decade after the assault, I saw him again.

2018—Hometown at Christmas. My boyfriend and I drove 64 East into Louisville, ate dinner with my parents and his. Then, Ian and I went to Anna’s place.

Anna still lives in the house we lived in together when we were twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty- three, and being there feels like I am transported back to the time when she was my emergency contact, my closest confidante, my partner. She has made a cozy den of my old bedroom. Some of my magnets are still on her fridge. At that Christmas party, I didn’t knock; I let myself right in.

Anna squealed and ran to me and Ian. Her husband came over, too. We all hugged, took red and green Jell-O shots, freak-danced to Andy Williams’s “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year.”

Beer pong. Ian and I were on fire, sinking shot after shot, him with true form and me with a little flick of the wrist he teased me for. I was feeling the buzz in my body, decided to bow out after four games. I went to Anna's couch to ride it out, to talk with some old friends, and I sat there listening and staring into her terrarium, where her snake languished under the heat lamp. The backdoor opened. I glanced up. Enter My Assailant.

And please remember, before you get mad at Anna for inviting him to her party: 1. he was not invited—he came along with someone who was—and 2. she, the best friend I have in this world, still didn't know what he had done to me.

It's a cliché but it happened when I saw My Assailant: the world slowed and I considered throwing my body against his and slamming him into the cookie table. I looked from cookie table to exit, cookie table to exit, and made my choice, getting up so quickly, I knocked over a chair. I didn't stop. I fled out the front door. No coat, no keys, only my phone. I crouched between two street-parked cars, fumbled my thumbs over my phone's screen. Tap. Tap. Found Ian's name. Pressed call.

"Where did you go?" he asked, no hello, and through shallow breaths, I told him to get my stuff, to leave the party, to take me home. Or anywhere else. Anywhere My Assailant wasn't. We sat in the car and I cried, then we went to my favorite bar, the Pearl, which I love for its name and its Formica tables and fairy lights and slushie machine churning frosé. Ian ordered me a bourbon neat, and, as I brought the tumbler to my lips, I noticed, for the first time, a tremor I've had ever since.

I described it this way, to one of the girls, the next day, though I have redacted My Assailant's name: *see Figures C & D*.

There are more texts. Messages to Ian that I sent from my mother's house in the hours that followed. She was redoing her hardwood floors, so I had to stomp across the subflooring every time I went from bed to bathroom and back. Can't sleep, can't stop crying, can't think straight, can't get dressed. Ian sent love messages and emojis, came to get me the next day, and we drove around our hometown, let the city spring up around us like a pop-up book.



Figures C and D: Text messages dated December 23, 2018, at 11:54 a.m.

The trees free of their leaves, I stole glimpses of the laciest steeple that rises out of the Portland neighborhood—that old church is the nonprofit where I worked my first job. I had had bravado then. And there, just ahead to our left: the Falls of the Ohio. It was laden with history, but for me, it's always been a history that's less about Lewis and Clark and more about the time I found a trilobite on a third-grade field trip. My classmates had clustered around me to oo and ah. Some years after that, when I was in high school, I perched on those fossil beds with friends. The water lapped at the rocky shore—we could hear it but couldn't see it—and in the dark of night, the driftwood around us looked flat and black and detail-less. Nothing to see nearby, so we looked out across the river at the glittering skyline of our city.

To be young is often to feel on the brink of something big, and boy, did I feel it then. And I'm sure I would have lost that feeling either way just by growing up, but I lost it too early. I lost it when My Assailant became My Assailant. That river I used to watch—the Ohio—that river was the one into which My Assailant would, a year or two later, dream of tossing my body. He said that after he choked me: that it came to him in a dream and that if he'd killed me, he would have dissolved my body best he could in a drum of battery acid, then tipped it into the river from the Second Street Bridge.

When I'm in Louisville, just by virtue of being in Louisville, I'm churning up the past. What I'm trying to say is that a long time ago, I sewed myself into the fabric of the city. Things are personal. The landmarks I care most about are personal. Here, in my hometown, the city in which I lived until I was twenty-six, I keep versions of who I used to be preserved on seemingly random street corners, on seemingly random bridges, on seemingly random sheets of limestone which stairstep down into the river. In Louisville, I see myself at eighteen, nineteen, memorialized by these places where she spent her time, by these places where, it never it occurred to her then, she wasn't safe.

That night, after Ian and I drove around our city, I went to Anna's. I worked up the courage to tell her My Assailant was My Assailant. We cried in each other's arms.

##

Maddeningly to me, My Assailant has a minimal internet presence. I've wondered if it's intentional. My internet presence sure is.

In college and then in our early twenties, we, the girls, put ourselves out there, posted pictures of ourselves taking body shots off our best friends, posted pictures of our friends tonguing strangers in the club, then had the audacity to tag them. We commented on the photos "fml" and got on with it. We fell in love with randos on ChatRoulette, then had to block them when they weren't as they first seemed. We had sex over Skype. We filmed and filmed and posted and posted.

I am more discerning now. There's little trace of me aside from some essays I've published. If My Assailant Googles me, I don't want him to find anything except what I've carefully curated. May he find only essays like these, essays which, I hope, will make him squirm.

##

My inventory of My Assailant's digital footprint also includes the following:

1. His master's thesis on drug addiction, which I don't have the energy to paraphrase. In his acknowledgments section he dedicates his work to a man we both knew from our hometown who was dead at 21 of an oxymorphone overdose, a man who'd raped a friend of mine after our prom. (Does My Assailant know and/or care?)
2. An underwhelming Prezi My Assailant made during a year of college spent abroad.
3. My Assailant's uncle's obituary.
4. My Assailant's parents' address in our hometown—a 3,000-sqft four-bed-four-bath. This infuriates me since he's the one who had the nerve to assume I was a rich kid.
5. My Assailant's family tree on MyHeritage.com.
6. A PDF of an issue of My Assailant's high school paper; he was on the masthead.
7. An academic paper—by My Assailant, et. al.—on sexuality and criminality. Of course.

And I've gone deeper. I've paid for information, like his current address. I know it must sound so silly, so paranoid, or worse, so creepy, and believe me, I feel ashamed to admit it. But once, a few months after seeing him at that Christmas party, before I drove into Louisville again to visit my parents, I needed to make sure My Assailant didn't live in our hometown anymore, that the chance I'd run into him was slim to none. I needed that address.

##

I fear him still, and there are only so many ways I can show you. I worry this is my undoing; that I can't get over it. I catch myself six hours into building a fake website to rip off his faculty page. Another day gone because I recreated his Google search results in painstaking detail. All this time spent searching, paraphrasing, reformatting. I've combed Shutterstock to find models striking the exact pose of photos taken of him a full decade ago. I know the names of his parents, his sister, his cousins. I feel simultaneously like I know too much about My Assailant to be sane and still too little to be safe.

When I worry my reaction—in my thirties to something that happened to me at nineteen—is unreasonable, I visit my old diaries. The one from the summer I met My Assailant is bound like a book. Screen-printed robots march along the cloth cover. Inside is this:

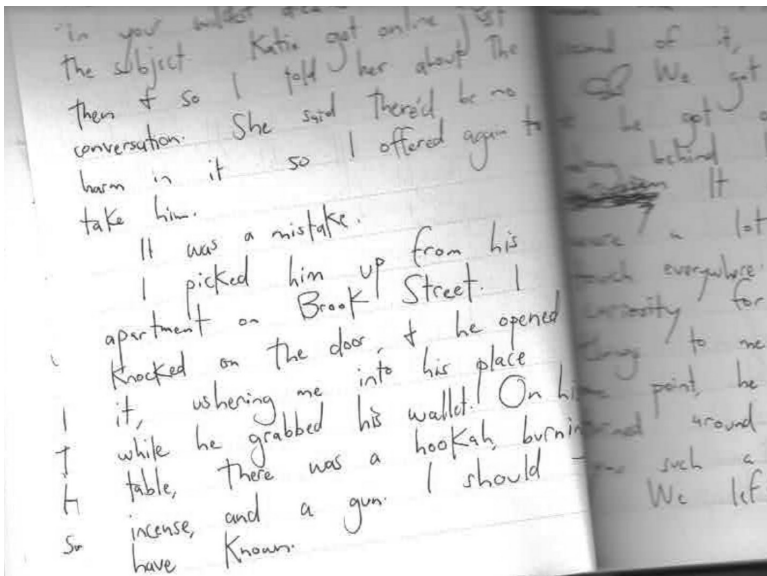


Figure E: Excerpt from a journal entry, dated August 16, 2009 at 4:41 p.m.

Maybe you notice how, in the midst of my recounting, I drew a butterfly near the seam.

##

There is no resolution or conclusion for the girl who wrote that diary entry. That's the whole point. Something happened when I was nineteen that I still think about every day at thirty-one.

I have scoured the web so thoroughly—believe me; this has been my side project ever since I ran into My Assailant at that Christmas party. I have looked at—and I say this sheepishly—forty pages of Google search results for each iteration of his name. I have looked at his sister's, his mother's, his father's, every cousin he has listed with him in his uncle's obituary. I am not sure I have dredged up everything, and very likely, he uses parts of the web with usernames I have no way of guessing. But I have been as meticulous as I know how to be. I am almost certain I have found everything there is to find.

And so, I end on good news. No more searching. Instead, this:

Google



Alerts

Monitor the web for interesting new content

My Assailant

Corey Van Landingham

Annual Report; or, The Achievements of the Junior Colleague

I restored the Capitol and the theatre of Pompey, both works at great expense without inscribing my own name on either.

[...]

I am *pontifex maximus, augur, quindecimvir sacris, septemvir epulonum, frater arvalis, sodalist Titius, fetialis*.

—*The Achievements of the Divine Augustus*, AD 14

AD 2020

1. At the age of 34, on my own responsibility and at my own expense, I raised the question of whether this meeting could be an e-mail.
2. In the new decade, my colleagues populated the screen in little boxes. One was always flitting pale, green-screened on a verdant beach; one would shake her head with furious assent; one so still I thought him a photograph. Another ate rice cake after plain rice cake, looking directly into the camera, into me.
3. I, too, tried to fill some void.
 2. I ordered, on credit, powdered banana for eccentric cookies, CBD bath bombs, a cocktail herb garden with rose quartz window box, silk robes. A water bottle that cheered on my personal hydration progress. *If at thirst you don't succeed... Sip sip hooray!*
 3. In the past academic year I joined three wine clubs, cancelled two—a successful step forward in my research.

4. I am *saccharine, too modest, a nice face to look at in meetings, a flyover state, an active listener, trembling crescendo, turning my sentences up, always game.*
5. In the past academic year, I have killed every living thing I own.
6. I undertook many civil and foreign missions to expand the Program.
 2. Wineless online receptions with cardboard Associate Deans. Remote lunches—I fetched one yogurt from the refrigerator—on how to improve retention, morale, experience, recreation centers, evaluations, success, alert systems, our branding, our mascot, our advances on Advancement, in the Big Ten.
 3. Copyrighted insignia, one large block I in “Urbana Orange” (*Pantone: 7417 C).
 4. * *“Be sure not to represent/replace one university in another’s primary color.”*
7. I was offered minor parts on seven committees to represent the Department, all of which I accepted.
 2. *Program*, not Department—a new skill I have acquired this past year in service to the Department, when I invited the Department to the Department Virtual Recruiting Event. In a public apology: “Please be assured, I do not consider the Program its own separate Department.”
 3. E-mail header: “Please excuse my momentary lapse!”
 4. “No Program is an island!”
8. In the past year, I wrote a book with so much *I* I had to remove my office mirror. Bluish oval, owl feather my father found tucked into the mounting. I looked too old to be a daughter still.

9. Too young to be ranking my colleagues for merit raises.
 2. I can measure my own merit in little bitter-orange jam jars from hotels where I felt, briefly, buoyant before reading to an audience of three.
 3. I can measure my productivity in the slim bottles of Sèvre et Maine I pushed to the bottom of the recycling bin, the quick pour of Campari into my La Croix.
 4. I have suggested that we use the raise hands function during meetings.
 5. I have not suggested that the men might talk a little less.
 6. “Your annual report is not the time for modesty.”
10. I am *mismanaged time, a righteous tendency, streaming garbage, struggling with a little sadness today, written in water, no quorum.*
11. In a grant proposal, the first person was discouraged. So the passive voice was used.
12. In a day-long meeting—“Retreat” they called it, and I wanted to—after microwaving my coffee a third time, I counted all the “I”s in Augustus’s *Achievements*.
 2. It was sitting in a large stack of books near my desk, gathering dust.
 3. We were discussing again what constituted Excellence.
13. “I made the sea peaceful and freed it of pirates,”
 2. —group-texted upon the retirement of a senior colleague,

3. upon the relocation of a senior colleague,
 4. upon the death of a senior colleague.
14. E-mail header: "Sorry to bother!"
15. To mimic my human presence, I began inserting smiley faces into my e-mails.
2. I was advised by a senior colleague that this betrayed a jejune effeminacy.
 3. I was advised by a senior colleague to keep union support private.
 4. I was advised by a senior colleague not to raise questions about the small number of women senior colleagues.
 5. I was advised by a senior colleague to keep my exclamation points to a minimum.
 6. In the past year, I have received advising and mentorship from senior colleagues.
16. Dog wheeling its hindlegs, trumpet flower climbing the streetlamp, neighbor's compost pile spilling into our driveway, squirrels at dawn.
2. Models of productivity.
 3. In the past year, I have watched *Friends* again, twice.
 4. Upon my death, carve that in bronze tablets.
17. As far as service, I drove a senior colleague to the doctor's office, sat with him, in the frozen parking lot, after. I have read the first

novel draft of a senior colleague in Mathematics. I remembered Administrative Professionals' Day, which I remembered not to call Secretary's Day. Brought expensive donuts. A card without inscribing my own name.

18. I scanned meeting minutes, muttered banal trochees on mute.

2. I found pride in being told my own minutes "were impeccable."

3. In another meeting, a senior colleague reminded us that good minutes mean bad writing.

4. "You can redact more in the passive voice."

5. This is one of the items that was discussed by the committee, before adjourning at 5:12 pm.

19. For three weeks I did not think of ending my life. Then, "Are you sure you want to shut down your computer now?"

20. As for teaching, I have remained committed to general enthusiasm and leniency.

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21. Robert's Rules of Order, Robert's Rules of Order

22. Upon returning to the building, we found in our mailboxes one silver, clickable pen. University insignia, shoddy ink.

2. The Department inscribed my name on a plastic placard, drilled it onto my office door. It took me a month to realize it was misspelled.

3. It took a month to realize I had called the Head a Chair.

4. I woke sweat-soaked, e-mailed myself a reminder: Apologize to Head!

23. 113. The amount of “I” in the emperor’s ten short pages, 35 brief sections.

2. Engraved in bronze pillars upon his death.

3. In my annual report, I used only 27.

4. “You must make yourself legible to the university.”

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5. My book, my book, my book, My Book

6. None of the originals have survived.

24. I am a *naïve junior colleague, seldom standing, self-centered, not reproduced/reprinted without permission from the university, ash and vinegar, not quite as meek as I seem.*

25. After ten days sick in my bedroom, I took a walk.

2. Lone daffodil slanted from the prairie wind. *Italicized I*, I thought, still feverish.

3. Spring like a chemical peel.

4. Spring like a siren.

26. I restored the tradition of underwear.

27. When a student entered the meeting room, I tried not to look at my own face.

28. I am *pyrrhic, pointillist, prone to self-pity, open to feedback, a polar glare.*

2. I am *thanking the Department, thinking of the Program, thinking of you in these difficult days, respectfully submitted, mindful of your time, Yours.*