

Gregory Sherl

{IN HIS WORDS}

Today I woke up in love. Yesterday, I did, too. And the day before that. That said, three months ago, she was a stranger to me. I met her, and my life was upended. It was a reminder that sometimes, in spite of all of our culturally jaded tendencies, love still happens.

I should confess that this isn't my first time falling in love, and my track record isn't pretty. I'm at the tail end of my twenties, and for me, these have been years of transitions, of false starts, of heartache. I bought two engagement rings in the span of five years—two rings, two fingers, and one ring never made it on. The other made it on but came back off two months later. I sold both rings and bought half of a year's worth of health insurance and, without enough of a sense of irony, a lot of cigarettes.

Still, I believe in love—resolutely. I can't help it. It's more than a predisposition. It might be a serious condition.

And that's why when Julianna Baggott approached me about working on the novel that would become *The Future for Curious People*, I said yes. What immediately attracted me to *The Future for Curious People*—in addition to the opportunity of working with Julianna, a mentor and a writer I greatly admire—was how much I wanted it to be true: this idea of scratching the *what if* and skipping the pain of sleeping alone. I wanted to walk into an envisioning office and see some glimpse—no matter how small or fuzzy—of what my own love life might have in store for me. If Dr. Chin had existed over the past decade—his big billboard reading, NOW OFFERING THE FUTURE FOR CURIOUS PEOPLE!—it could've saved me a solid amount of suffering.

In *The Future for Curious People*, I wanted to tell the truth about the pain and confusion of being in your twenties while also giving my characters hope. I wanted the book to speak to my friends. I wanted pages in which they saw themselves and people they know. I wanted them to really fully

imagine what it would be like to fit the helmet on their head, take the pill, and type in the name of their first love, who ended up dropping out of law school and is now folding cardigans at the Gap. I wanted a book that would move from friend to friend—especially those who know each other so well they can rifle through their past relationships and rehash the what-could-have-beens together.

What came out is a love story with a fabulist twist about a broken engagement, a crappy garage band, a lost pear brooch, best friends, and boat shoes—and most of all a boy named Godfrey and a girl named Evelyn who meet and keep meeting, in the present and future.

Hopefully this is a novel that doesn't just exist in its fabulist bubble. Eventually, I want the reader to understand that the future is here, as each moment leans into the next, and when they pop their copy open on a standing-room-only subway car surrounded by people they've never seen before, I want these characters to remind them that possibilities surround us and that our lives are meant to be upended.

The Future for Curious People is more than just a book of hope. It's the buildup right after the second chorus of your favorite love song; it's a bedtime story to read on your honeymoon. And hopefully it's also a spark. Sometimes all it takes to set things in motion is a pebble against a window in the dead of a Baltimore winter.

I used to worry that I believed too much in love, but now I realize that everyone else just doesn't believe in it enough. The messy kind of love is my favorite; it's the most real. The idea of fate, of predestination—that you are who you are and you will always be that version of yourself—leaves nothing but what's settled. And I refuse to settle—especially on the matter of love. The characters in *The Future for the Curious People* refuse to settle. There is hope in every moment, and from the first page, *The Future for Curious People* argues this passionately.

I'm more convinced than ever that love grows us up.