

CH: Whatcha doin' in this club on a Thursday, she say she only here for a girl birthday... She order

A: Ok they're both working.

CH: Ok, so should I go?

A: Yes, whenever you feel inclined to do so.

Narr: I'm Alex, and this is my friend, Chaelee,

5 October 2012

Dear Chaelee,

You need not apologize for being self-centered because a) you're not, and b) I love hearing about you more than hearing about...

Narr: She's reading from a letter she received her sophomore year of high school from an old friend. The letter is written on a piece of lined notebook paper in scrawling black ink.

CH: And then he wrote something in binary at the bottom. And if I remember correctly it said, it said 'P.S. I love you', in binary.

Narr: A list of the ones and zeroes of binary code fills the bottom of the letter.

**Binary code for P.S. I love you. is listed off in the background (01010000 00101110 01010011 00101110 00100000 01001001 00100000 01101100 01101111 01110110 01100101 00100000 01111001 01101111 01110101)

Narr: Chaelee has a history of mixing love and numbers. Throughout high school, she used an elaborate 100 point scale, lovingly dubbed "the Objectifier," to help her quantify her crushes, with categories that ranged from the obvious (attractiveness) to things like work ethic and ambition, each with its own weight. The scale went from -50 to 50, and the highest recorded score was 41 (the recipient of which we referred to almost exclusively as 41 afterward). I think one of the most important things I learned from Chaelee is that emotions and math don't exist as a binary—or that they don't have to, anyway. A long time before the scale, Chaelee and this friend of hers met through robotics club and math team and eventually began exchanging letters in each other's lockers.

If you're reading this I'm assuming that I also got brave enough to actually send this which is unlikely to happen, although on your side, it would seem extremely likely to happen just as earthlings see life as 100% chance of happening.

Anyway, I decided to start writing to you to tell you that you are very special to me, and I love having someone to talk to for the first time ever.

NARR: I don't know exactly what Chaelee's letters in response looked like, but I was struck by the intimacy contained within them .

Anyway, I hope that this letter will bring you as much happiness as I received from yours. Which, by the way, was immense. I have read it many times. I know we will talk much more, so I think an abrupt ending may be excused.

And then he wrote something in binary at the bottom.

Initially, I kind of disregarded the binary, and, so, like, I tried to put it in a binary translator and I think he was like a letter off or something, and so, it wasn't until like, um, he started consistently writing something in binary that I really kind of went back to decipher them.

NARR: For Chaelee and her friend, numbers were more than a method of counting, or even just of encoding secret messages—they had a kind of mystery and magic all of their own.

Alright, so I just want to say something really quick: I'm not really a very superstitious person, but like, I always try to make a wish on 11:11, and I was like thinking about why, because I literally follow no other superstitions. And I think it was because, like, he would always make wishes on 11:11 when we were talking or he would mention it in his letters.

So this is the 16th of September, it's basically just—Oh my god, it's at 11:11. And he writes this:
Dear Chaelee,
Wow! It is 11:11. I made a wish, I may tell you what it was eventually.

NARR: I think I have a pretty good guess as to what it might have been, especially after hearing this letter:

October 18th, 2012

Dear Chaelee,

What should I talk about first? I guess I'll talk about what I should talk about first first. Now that that's settled, I want to explain why I like you. So, begin:

Chaelee, you have an excellent name. I could write it all day: Chaelee, Chaelee, Chaelee, Chaelee, Chaelee, Chaelee. And it's slightly more weird to say, but there are so many ways to shorten it. And you can sing that song from 1776: Here's a Lee, there's a Lee, everywhere's a Lee, Lee. So, I am going to use your name when I talk to you more, even though I hate doing that (I don't know why).

NARR: The more Chaelee read the letters the more in love I fell: with their banter, with the numbers, with the two hopeful high-schoolers who left painfully sincere love letters in each others' lockers, with their tongue-tied honesty.

Chaelee, I like being your favorite. Sorry, I know it's selfish.

Chaelee, I love that you thought I wouldn't look at the back of your letter, because you think I think so little of you that I wouldn't be praying for a back, so I could read your words some more.

Chaelee, I love how you try to impress me, even though you could never seem unimpressive to me.

Chaelee, I love that I can write two pages of reasons. I love you. It's 11:11, wish commencing.

NARR: The date is November 4th, 2012. You are a senior in high school. Hurricane Sandy just hit New York and New Jersey. You are hopelessly in love with a sophomore girl named Chaelee. Skyfall is playing in theatres. You do not know much about what it means to be in love yet. The Obama/Romney election is days away. You decide to write a letter:

November 4th, 2012

Dear Chaelee,

Not sure if I will give this to you, but you said to tell me something I was too scared to, so my question is: what is the difference between two people dating and being really good friends? It seems to me like the primary difference is that dating is monogamous and represents another tier. Also, dating traditionally is hetero, which doesn't make a lot of sense to me. Is love a continuation of like, or is it a different feeling that applies to only opposite sex couples? I guess the other difference is the kissing, hand-holding stuff. And I can see that difference. So then I guess, I'm just not sure if I should pursue that stuff, even when I pine for a hand to hold. That's all.

NARR: I debated with myself a lot about whether or not it's important to know what happened between these two outside the letters. But I think too often love stories feel predetermined when we tell them: all these moments very clearly lead up to the inevitable coupling. Something in these letters felt like the mix of hope and fear and confusion and desperation you feel when you're actually in love with someone. So to all those out there who are pining: this is for you.

[musical interlude]

Ch.; This is his P.S. and the letter itself is from September 18th 2012.

P.S. I was just thinking about how you talked about the permanence of letters, if I become famous, you'd better burn these. Because I'd be ticked if some desperate grad student seizes them as a primary source. I jest of course. Just make sure I'm dead first. Wait, no, don't ever make sure I'm dead. Just—screw it, it doesn't matter, good night.

P.P.S. Hi people from the future.