SAMPLE

The Eternal Suitor

The Personality That Never Stops Courting

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Chapter 1: The Signature — the Eternal Suitor at a Glance

The Telltale Manner

Before anything else, the gesture — and the valentine has to begin with the honest first impression, because the style is the type's entire weather and the world's entire misreading of it: the Eternal Suitor arrives with the rose after the wedding — the letter, written after the letter was returned; the serenade, delivered under the wrong decade's window — and the effect on the room, the tryst's most reliable split: half the room undone — the sight of devotion with no expiry is the most moving spectacle in this locket, and the billet-doux has watched rooms go silent at the type's fiftieth-anniversary gesture with the same hush they gave the first — and half the room, the practical half, quietly confused — and their collected question, uniform in each case, the inquiry this whole book will spend ten chapters answering: they already said yes — who, exactly, are you still courting? — and the tryst's founding finding entered in the book's ink the entire book lives in: the Eternal Suitor is the bower of courtship as identity — the beloved pursued with the artistry most people reserve for careers, the romance maintained past every reasonable endpoint — with the second finding riding beside it, the one the entire case turns on: the devotion is real — every gesture, sincere; every letter, meant — and the pursuit, the whole file will show, is not aimed at the beloved: it is aimed at the space between desire and arrival, the only address the type has ever actually lived at — and the inquiry the tryst will spend ten chapters walking toward: what happens to the art the day the door opens?

And the style carries the type's signature gesture, and the billet-doux enters it precisely because it is the diagnostic: the renewal — the courtship, re-upped past every sensible endpoint — the flowers, arriving after the "I do"; the courtship, resumed after the years; the devotion, maintained at the same wattage at year forty as at week four — and the billet-doux's x-ray of the renewal: it is not persistence, exactly, and not inertia — the renewal is residence: the type, at home in the pursuit, renovating it — and the marker within the tell, verified in each case: the gestures, timed to the distance — the letter, better than the conversation; the gift, better in the giving than in the after — and the valentine's dry note: the Suitor's serenades are magnificent and the Suitor's mornings-after are unremarkable — the art, the whole case will show, requires the distance it claims to resent — and nobody, in the billet-doux's whole history, has ever once seen the type inside the arrival for longer than a season.

The Backstory Signature

The file holds one origin for this self, and it is the tryst's most longed-for founding

scene, run on a home where the wanting was the warm part: there was a first great wanting — and the billet-doux keeps the particulars various on purpose, because the anatomy is uniform: the distant parent — the father, charming in the letters from the posting and cold at the kitchen table; the mother, warm on the phone from the other house — the child, discovering that the best version of the beloved arrived only at a distance, in the envelope, in the promise, in the almost — and the tableau's second act, the one that founds the bower: the arrival, disappointing — the leave, finally taken: the father, home, and lesser — the promise, delivered, and souring — and the child, running the study the whole life runs on: the window's gift, better than the gift; the promised holiday, better than the holiday — and the discovery, totted up in the space between hoping and holding: the wanting is the good part — the wanting never lets you down — the wanted thing, in the hand, always does — and the ruling, drafted in a child's shorthand and never audited since: live in the pursuit — arrival is where things go to spoil — and the scene's terminal entry, the tryst's most quietly melancholy: the child, at some point, stopped wanting anything gettable — the crushes, chosen unreachably; the dreams, kept safely in progress — and the tryst's line on the founding: the younger self was never taught that arrival could hold — every arrival in the album spoiled — and no one, in the wreckage of the first disappointments, ever asked the question the entire book will ask: what if the next one doesn't spoil?

And the valentine must file the tableau's rider with the delicacy this account demands, because the rider is what converts the gift into the tryst: the founding was real — the distance's warmth, real; the arrival's coldness, real; the child's arithmetic, correct for the home it was made in — the billet-doux refuses the cheap reading that this self merely avoids commitment — and the clause the founding never carried: the ruling was made by a child against one home's spoiling — and the adult arrivals — the ones built with a chosen person, on purpose, with the spoiling declined — were never field-tested, because the self, at the first sign of arrival, reinstates the distance: the gesture, renewed; the beloved, re-promoted to the horizon — and the paradox the archive enters without ornament: the art that makes the Suitor the most romantic person alive renders the arrival unlivable — the pursuit, magnificent at sustaining love across distance, useless at sitting in the kitchen with it — and the valentine's correction, held gently, because it is the account's whole growth: the younger self read the wanting correctly — it is the living tissue; the child's error was making it the sole living tissue — a forgivable verdict at eight, a costly one at forty, and the ripening chapter's whole project: the art, at last, applied to staying.

The Childhood Album

The album opens as it opens in every case, and this tryst's photographs are its most wistful artifacts: each year holds a single photograph, and it is every time the same one: the younger self, mid-longing — the window seat, the letter in the lap; the fence, the better yard beyond it; the shop window, the toy, regarded from the street — and the tryst's first entry beside the album: the younger self is luminous in every photograph taken at a distance from the thing — the face, at the window, more alive

than any face in the album — and the album's most common image of the younger self otherwise: prevented from having — the crush, unspoken; the audition, unattended — and the tryst's quiet audit of the album: the album contains almost no photographs of the younger self holding anything — no presents, opened and used; no trophies, kept — only the approach: the child photographed like a pilgrim, every year of a childhood.

The album's most telling photo is the one the family calls the sad one: the delivered present — the longed-for gift, at last in the child's hands — and the tryst's most delicate finding, verified across every billet-doux: the younger self is not happy in the photograph; the child is finished — the toy, already ordinary; the wanting, grieving quietly behind the eyes — and the most telling detail of all, the one the valentine has learned to check: the next photograph — a week later, the child, at the window again, wanting the next thing — the tryst's gentle correction, entered with the care the album is owed: the younger self's childhood was not deprived — the toys came, eventually — the childhood was sequenced wrong: the wanting, bright; the having, brief; the return to the wanting, relieved — the album, read in order, is a study in a child teaching themselves that possession is the boring part.

And the album closes on the ending the series knows to expect: the younger self already the Suitor — the adolescence organized around the unreachable: the crushes, chosen from the far tables; the letters, written and unsent; the romances, begun only with the departing — and the moment the pursuit became the identity: the tryst's collected scene, uniform across the files: the young Suitor, sixteen, and the first great courtship — the beloved, at a distance, and the months of the pursuit, the most alive months of the childhood: the mixtapes, the letters, the craft — and then the beloved, saying yes — and the tryst's collected detail, uniform across the files, the makeup's whole debut: the young Suitor, receiving the yes, feeling the first adult sorrow the billet-doux has a name for: the grief of arrival — the yes, received; the wanting, ended; the self, suddenly unsure what to do with its hands — and the album's last entry, the founding arithmetic in one image: the younger self, the day after the yes, at the window again — already composing the next pursuit, or, in the cases the billet-doux marks carefully, resuming the pursuit of the same beloved — the roses, arriving again, and the beloved, confused and charmed: you already have me — and the child, sixteen, saying the sentence the entire file will spend ten chapters understanding: that's why — now the real courtship begins.

The Type at a Glance

Energy: romantic, ardent, and distance-fed — the type runs on the space between desire and arrival: the beloved, at the horizon, and the self, lit up like a harbor — and the spec's fine print is the account: the energy has no socket at close range — the beloved, in the room, and the wattage, dipping — the valentine's dry note: the Suitor is the only constitution in this shelf whose brightness can be measured in meters from the beloved, which the world reads as passion and the billet-doux reads as a lamp with a motion sensor pointed the wrong way.

Ambition: the great courtship — and the archive enters it precisely, because it is the shelf's one ambition aimed at a person: the Suitor does not want the throne, the portfolio, the billet-doux — the Suitor wants the pursuit, conducted at artistry — and the difference from every other ambition on this shelf: the self protects the distance over the arrival — the gathered evidence, uniform across the files: the yes, declined once per life, gently, at the wrong moment — and the billet-doux's dry remark: the Suitor's career is the only one in this shelf that has ever turned down its own dream, on purpose, to keep dreaming it.

Vanity structure: light, hidden under the devotion, and real — the mirror is not the person's admirer; the mirror is the front row — the type's self-regard attaches to the artistry: the letter, the finest anyone has received; the gesture, the best in the room's memory — and the valentine's x-ray: under the modesty — and the Suitor is genuinely modest about everything except the craft — there is a small, sturdy pride of the great lover — the type believes, quietly, that courtship is an art and the self is its living master — and the tryst's quiet note: the belief is half right — the art is real — and the mastery, the whole file will show, was never once tested at the only range that matters: after.

Loyalty: to the pursued — the type's loyalties are the great subjects of the art: the beloved, kept for decades; the old beloveds, honored in the type's memory like patron saints — kept forever, no matter what — and the tryst's sharp note: the loyalty's spine is the distance preserved — the deepest bonds this constitution knows are the ones maintained in the not-having — and the type's one breach condition: the settled — the beloved who insists on ordinary cohabitation gets gently, permanently, re-courted instead of joined — the tryst's collected line, uniform in every tryst: let me love you properly — the sentence that has postponed more of the Suitor's arrivals than any schedule.

Weakness: the arrival — the Suitor's whole structure stalls at the sentence: you have me — the possession, arriving, and the makeup's deepest allergy firing: the distance, closing — and the anatomy of the stall: the self, at the threshold of the had, produces the billet-doux's most reliable scene: the renewal — the gesture, escalated; the beloved, re-horizoned — and the tryst's gathered defense, uniform across the files: I just want it to be right — you deserve the whole courtship — the sentence that turns the arrival into the pursuit's next act.

Unspoken need: to arrive and stay alive — the one experience the makeup left out of its own arithmetic: the door, opened, and the self, still lit up on the inside — the wanted thing, in the hand, and not spoiling — and the tryst's central line on the tryst: the Suitor will never voice this need aloud, cannot name it plainly, because the naming would concede the founding was about fear and not about romance — the child's arithmetic, arrival spoils, would need its first revision — and the entire file will spend ten chapters walking toward the line: the art was never the enemy — the art was the refuge — and the arrival, at last, survived, is the only masterpiece the craft was ever building toward.

The Type in Five Situations

At a party: the Suitor is the romance of the room — the stranger, met, and pursued to the door: the conversation, conducted like a duel of charm; the follow-up, a letter by Tuesday — and the tryst's tell, sharper under observation: the departure — the Suitor, leaving precisely at the charm's peak — the pursuit, suspended at its best — and the valentine's dry line: everyone at the party met the most romantic person alive, and nobody at the party has ever had breakfast with them.

In a new job: the Suitor is the ardent recruit — the mission, courted: the first months, the most devoted in the building — the craft, applied to the onboarding like a courtship — and the valentine's tell: the year-two dip — the novelty, consumed; the pursuit, needing a new beloved — and the office, split the usual way: the half that fell for the courtship and the half asking why the star recruit suddenly isn't returning anyone's calls.

Under sudden pressure: the Suitor is the campaigner — and the billet-doux gives this constitution its honest due, because it is the account's real gift: the crisis, arriving, and the type, magnificent at the almost — the deal, rescued at the eleventh hour; the patient, rallied by the visit; the cause, funded by the letter that moved the donor — the valentine's verified finding: the Suitor in a crisis of hope is the valentine's best closer — and the marker, sharper under observation: the after — the crisis, resolved, and the Suitor, already gone to the next almost — the won thing, handed to the maintainers — and the valentine's dry remark: the type saves the castle and never once learns to live in it.

In a boring meeting: the Suitor is the poet of the agenda — the dull quarter, narrated like a drama; the stakeholder, courted — and the tryst's tell, the one managers report across every billet-doux: the Suitor, silent for the hour, then delivering the one paragraph that makes the boring thing worth wanting — and the billet-doux's honest note: the paragraph is always genuine, and the paragraph is also the type's whole native land: the making-wanted — the meeting, improved and left, like everything else the type improves.

On holiday: the Suitor is the pilgrim — the destination, chosen for its distance: the far city, courted for months in advance; the restaurant, booked before the flights — and the valentine's sharpest tell: the arrival's evening — the first night, perfect; the second, the type, planning the next trip — and the valentine's dry line: the holiday doesn't relax the Suitor — the holiday is the art in exile — a week of the pursuit, abroad, and the returning flight, and the valentine's note: the only day the Suitor is fully present is the last one, when the trip becomes a letter.

Not to Be Confused With

The closest neighbor on the shelf is the Devoted Caregiver (Volume 7) — the constitution that loves by tending — and the mix-up is the world's most common, because both types rank among this shelf's great lovers: the ones whose entire

identity is another person. The separation is the range: the Caregiver's devotion is close — the tenderness, administered at arm's length: the soup, the bedside, the tending of actual needs — the valentine's entry: the Caregiver's love is a practice, and the practice requires proximity; the Suitor's devotion is long — the artistry, administered at a distance: the letter, the gesture, the romance — the valentine's entry: the Suitor's love is a courtship, and the courtship requires distance — and the test, the tryst's cleanest, run at the beloved's sick day: the Caregiver, in the room — the tea, made; the pillow, fluffed — the love, manned at close range. The Suitor, at the door — the flowers, sent; the letter, written from the hallway — the love, broadcast — and the tryst's hinge, entered dry: the Caregiver loves the beloved's needs; the Suitor loves the beloved's horizon — and the whole difference between tending and courting is whether the devotion gets stronger when the door opens or when it closes — which is why the ripening chapter for one is the tending received and, for the other, the door, survived.

The second neighbor is the Radiant Explorer (Volume 85) — the personality that goes to see — and the confusion lives in the shared horizon: both types are the ones oriented at the far thing, the ones the settled neighbors call dreamers — the world's two pilgrims. The separation is the object: the Explorer's horizon is a place — the glacier, the far city, the world's edge: the motion is curiosity, and the arrival is the point; the Suitor's horizon is a person — the beloved, the yes, the romance's edge: the motion is desire, and the arrival is the hazard — and the tryst's telling x-ray: the Explorer's photographs are all of arrivals — the summit, the harbor, the glacier, reached; the Suitor's photographs are all of approaches — the letter, the wrapped gift, the window — and the test, run at the getting there: the Explorer, at the glacier, elated — the far thing, gotten, and better for the getting. The Suitor, at the yes, grieving quietly — the far thing, gotten, and suddenly ordinary — and the valentine's hinge: the Explorer arrives and moves on; the Suitor moves on to avoid the arriving — and the whole difference between wanderlust and courtship is what the far thing is allowed to do to you when you get it — which is why the ripening paths differ by one letter: the Explorer learns the return, and the Suitor learns the staying.

The third neighbor is the Detached Poet (Volume 87) — the personality that lives above it all — and the confusion is the deepest, because both types are the distant lovers of this locket: the ones who feel the world's beauty from one floor up, the ones whose best relationships are conducted with the world at an angle. The separation is the material of the distance: the Poet's remove is aesthetic — the rooftop, the elevation, the life curated for the view: the distance faces up; the Suitor's remove is romantic — the horizon, the pursuit, the life curated for the wanting: the distance faces across — and the test, the tryst's most decisive, run at the beloved: the Poet, in love, loves the beauty of the loving — the beloved, half raw material; the poem, the point. The Suitor, in love, loves the beloved — the person, the point; the artistry, half raw material — and the tryst's hinge, entered with the evenness both are owed: the Poet keeps the distance because the view is better; the Suitor keeps the distance because the window is safer — one is elevation, one is armor — and the entire difference between them is what happens when the beloved says yes: the Poet writes

the poem, and the Suitor, for the first time in the billet-doux, has nowhere to put the morning — which is why the ripening chapter for one is the descent and, for the other, the arrival.

The Framed Letters

The signature the hallways keep under glass, opened first because it prices the whole act: the framed letters — the Eternal Suitor, so romantic, is the valentine's most documented makeup — and the evidence, uniform across the bower: the letter, written, always (the friend's transcript, held verbatim: "I have kept every card she sent. Twenty-two years. They are in a shoebox my husband calls the shrine. She remembers my mother's birthday. I forgot it once"); the occasion, staged (the parents' fiftieth, cited at other people's parties, as the introduction testified) — and the signature's mechanism, which the chapter must state as the act's first law: the romance, so famous, is service — the Suitor does not perform feeling; the Suitor performs attention, archived — every card a receipt of noticing — and the cost half, priced in full: the archive, so beautiful, runs one direction — the Suitor's own shoebox, searched, is empty — the closing line: the makeup who writes everyone's letters has no one to keep its own.

Chapter 2: The Core — Courtship as Identity

Every engine in this shelf is a childhood solution that worked, and the Eternal Suitor's is the valentine's most romantic solution wearing the most quietly defended address. The founding scene is the pursuit as home — and the valentine must walk it slowly, because the tableau explains everything the world misreads as gallantry, restlessness, or fear of commitment. There was a first great wanting — and the valentine varies the particulars on purpose, since the anatomy never changes: the distant parent, warm in the letters and cold at the table; the promised things that soured on delivery; the home where the best version of everything lived at a distance — and the child, standing in it, young, keeping the one comparison a longed-for child can keep: wanting, weighed against having — and the results, uniform in each case: the wanting, bright: the letter's father, better than the table's; the window's toy, better than the hand's; the promise, better than the delivery — and the having, flat: the present, played with for a week and then ordinary; the visit, tense; the arrival, always where the spoiling starts — and the discovery, arrived at by a child measuring the gap between desire and delivery: the wanting is the good part — the wanting never lets you down — the wanted thing, in the hand, always does — and the founding ruling, made in a child's logic and not once revised: live in the pursuit — arrival is where things go to spoil.

And the solution was real — the archive enters it with the respect this discovery is owed, because the valentine refuses the cheap reading that this self merely "won't commit." The ruling worked: the child who lived in the wanting was the only child in the album with a portable home — the pursuit, taken up, and the self, instantly housed: the crush, the dream, the project — the inner life, lit, warm, and spoiler-proof

— and the tryst's verification, run across the whole shelf since: the technique purchased real goods, and they compound — the type's inner weather, the best in this locket at rest: the Suitor, mid-pursuit, is the most alive person in any room, and the aliveness is self-sustaining, requiring nothing from the world but the distance — and the child who chose the wanting was a realist: the home's arrivals did spoil, every one — the younger self read the evidence perfectly and took the only tenancy available: residence in the desire itself — and the payoff loop, grown, works exactly as it did at eight: the beloved, at the horizon; the artistry, deployed; the self, lit up like a harbor — and the wanting, never disappointing, never once spoiling.

But the tableau has a second clause, and the valentine must enter it with equal care, because the rider is where the talent turns into the tryst. The decree was issued by a child against one home's spoiling — and the arithmetic, sound for the founding's catalog of arrivals, was never re-run on the adult's chosen ones — the valentine's founding paradox, stated plainly: the child wanted a home where the wanting never spoiled, and built one — and the home has no arrival in it — the pursuit, magnificent at sustaining love across any distance, useless at the breakfast table — the type's own life, the files attest, in perfect order except for everything after the yes — and the adult arrivals, the ones the beloved keeps offering — the cohabited morning, the ordinary Tuesday, the yes — rescheduled, one gesture at a time, into the next act of the pursuit — and the valentine's amendment, entered kindly, because the account's whole growth hangs on it: the younger self read the wanting correctly — it is the living tissue; the child's error was making it the sole living tissue — a forgivable verdict at eight, a costly one at forty, and the ripening chapter's whole project: the art, at last, aimed at the staying.

And what was the motor for? The file answers with the tenderness every founding scene is owed: the younger self was solving for how to have the good part without the spoiling part — the ordinary child's work of getting, keeping, and enjoying, unavailable in a home where the getting always ended the good part — and the pursuit was the only architecture the market permitted — the account's most delicate finding, uniform across the whole shelf: the Suitor never chose the distance against the person; the distance was the only tenancy the founding offered where the warmth never curdled — and the tryst's most quietly radical line on the account: the artistry was never the sin — the artistry is the type's masterpiece — the sin, the entire file will show, is the makeup's one unexamined belief: that the arrival was ever the enemy — the arrival was the enemy's uniform, worn once, by one home — and the grown arrival, the full file will show, was the destination all along — and the payoff handed to the reader early, deliberately, to rehearse standing in: the art survives the yes — the courtship, converted into the marriage, is not the end of the romance: it is the romance, finally home.

The First Pursuit

The core chapter logs the founding tableau's first campaign, kept last because the type never once connected it to the later ones: the first pursuit — the child, so newly moved by the pursuit-as-home, aimed the instrument upward before ever aiming it

out — and the exhibit, reconstructed across the files: the parent, courted (the report cards, staged — the grades, presented like a bouquet; the kitchen table, cleared before every arrival: the child, styling the ordinary into the giftable); the household, courted through the child (the birthdays, produced; the holidays, arranged — the binder's margin note: the child was the home's unpaid event planner by ten, and the home never once thought to ask why); the rooms, curated before the audience — the bed, made for the viewing, the doorway, composed like a set — and the campaign's defect, priced in full: the parent, so courted, was never reached — the child courted the approval the way the grown type courts the yes — beautifully, from the doorway, never entering — and the closing line: the first pursuit taught the whole grammar — approach, artistry, retreat at the no — and the one lesson it never taught, because no one was there to demonstrate it, was the arrival the whole art was aimed at.

Chapter 3: The Instrument — The Courtship

Take the Suitor's tool off the wall, and it is precisely what it looks like: a courtship — pursuit conducted with career-level artistry — and the billet-doux must disassemble it honestly, because the tool is the tryst's most beautiful instrument and the most quietly unfinished. The mechanics run in three moves, uniform across the files. First, the regard: the beloved, studied — the type's attention, the finest in this locket: the favorite flower, learned; the offhand wish, remembered from March; the beloved's whole inner weather, mapped — and the valentine's honest note: the regard is not flattery; it is research — the Suitor's love, run like a doctoral program, and the beloved, the subject — and the craft's deepest irony: the regard, so total at a distance, is hard to deploy at close range — the billet-doux has watched the Suitor, at the shared breakfast table, stumped by the ordinary: the beloved, in reach, and the artistry, waiting for the horizon to reopen. Second, the gesture: the artistry itself — the letter, the finest in the beloved's life; the gift, perfect because it was overheard; the anniversary, staged like an opening night — the instrument's public face, and the valentine's honest due: the gesture is genuinely the best craft in this locket — no type celebrates, courts, or enchants like this one — and the cost, quiet: the gesture is timed to the distance — the letter, better than the conversation; the sending, better than the sitting — and the valentine's most delicate entry: the gesture's true audience is the space between — the art, the whole case will show, requires the gap it claims to resent. Third, the patience: the long game — the courtship, sustained — the months, the years, the decades, the romance maintained past every reasonable endpoint — and the tryst's entry on the move: the patience is the instrument's spine — the type does not pursue briefly; the type resides in the pursuit — and the cost, quiet: the patience has no arrival clock — the courtship, unended by design, outlives the courtship's own purpose — the billet-doux's dry line: the Suitor has the only patience in this locket that flinches at the finish line.

The instrument has a range, and the valentine has mapped it across the whole shelf. At full range, the courtship runs the great romance: the decades-long devotion, the beloved at the distance of a lifetime — the halls where the instrument is genuinely magnificent: the love, sustained across the years, the ocean, the silence — the tryst's

honest entry: at full range the tool is the best love-sustaining technology in this locket — the valentine has watched a Suitor's letters keep a marriage alive across two postings, one war, and a decade — and at mid range, the courtship runs the ordinary ardencies: the spouse, still courted — the flowers, arriving after the "I do"; the date, kept like an opening night — the type's daily mode, a romance that never retires — and at its lowest range, the courtship is the charm — the stranger, met and regarded for one conversation; the waiter, complimented with a couplet — the range's whole architecture, and the valentine's sharpest entry on it: the instrument does not cheapen as it shrinks — the decades-long devotion and the stranger's compliment share one grammar — one courtship, all scales — and the range's one failure mode, recorded evenly, because it is the tryst: the courtship has no cohabitation setting — the tool that sustains love across any distance cannot sit in the kitchen with it — applied to the arrival, the instrument produces exactly its founding motion: the renewal — the gesture, escalated; the beloved, re-horizoned — and the archive's driest line on the range: the Suitor can romance anyone on earth and cannot be in the same room with the romance — a broadcast, not a residence.

The maintenance schedule is the chapter's honest center, because a courtship, unlike a marriage, must be kept in season — and the Suitor's keeping is the valentine's most artful discipline. The instrument requires its distance: the beloved, at the horizon — and the tryst's collected finding: this self's life is continuously curated for the not-yet: the relationships, kept at the courting stage; the projects, kept approaching the finish; the dreams, kept safely in progress — and the maintenance's second requirement: the artistry, kept in practice — the letters, written even when the beloved has stopped writing back; the gestures, rehearsed — the tryst's sharpest note on the keeping: the practice is not devotion alone; the practice is residence — the pursuit is the home, and homes are maintained — and the maintenance's cruelest clause: the arrival, managed — the type's actual secret, verified in each case: the Suitor, standing at the door of the had, quietly re-opens the gap — the yes, taken in, and by the next morning the courtship already running again — fresh roses on the sill, and the beloved, charmed and confused — and the valentine's most melancholy inventory: the renewal schedule, maintained perfectly for a spoiling that stopped coming, and the renewal's cost, compounding: the distance, never once tested for whether it was still needed.

And whom does the courtship move? The file's reply is honest about the territory, because the instrument is powerful yet partial: it lands best on the unwon — everyone, at the far end of the type's regard: the beloved, courted, the most attended-to person alive; the cause, romanced, funded; the room, charmed, lit up — the billet-doux has collected the tableau in every tryst: the gesture, arriving, and the room, undone — the instrument's public value, enormous and real — and it works worst on exactly the people the self is owed: the arrived — the partners, the families, the colleagues who keep saying I'm already here — for whom the courtship, however dazzling, lands as weather from a lover who won't come in from the porch — and the tryst's driest line on the range: the courtship works on everyone except the person who already said yes — and the instrument's honest spec, what the art can never do, stated plainly because the entire growth path turns on it: the courtship can win any

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aiman Sterling is the author of The Archetype Series -- a library of personality portraits drawn the way literature draws characters: the great types of human temperament, recognized at a glance, understood in depth, and followed from childhood wound to mature strength.