

**“Everything is a story.
But not everyone deserves to hear it.”**

Dear Reader,

Many years ago, an image in a fashion magazine caught my eye. It was a fashion spread advertising clothes, but the images featured a happy, smiling woman with a kind robot friend.

That image of friendly technology was the kernel that inspired *Other Evolutions*. The book is a meditation on grief and how it can transform and shape a person but also on technology and how it continues to influence and change our relationships with ourselves and with others, including our relationship with death.

When I began to write this book, I had these ideas floating in mind. In the middle of writing, the loss suddenly became very real; an uncle of mine unexpectedly died and I experienced that loss in a profound and life-changing way. It also changed the way I was writing in *Other Evolutions*.

Touching my uncle’s things, going through his apartment, seeing documents that, if he were living, he would never have allowed me to see, and observing the photographic and digital footprints that survived him made me feel both closer and further away from him. Seeing the detritus of his life, there were so many questions I wanted to ask him. Questions I never would have thought to ask him while he was alive and which, conversely, could never be answered now that he was dead.

I had a difficult relationship with my uncle, one that was not particularly close. Because of this, he never would have believed how profoundly his death affected me, and still does. He would have been surprised to know that, in the years following his death, I thought of him often, that I am thinking of him now as I write these words. I wish I could tell him this and we could laugh together, but the very nature of death is that I can’t.

I invite you then, reader, to read these words, and this book, he is no longer able to read. It is a story set in my beloved Ottawa, the only home my uncle ever knew, and the only one I have ever known. It is a story about an imperfect family that superficially resembles my own, but is not my own. It is a story about Alma, a young girl who becomes a woman, and how she allows the death of someone she loves to consume her.

I hope that those who have experienced loss, and even those fortunate enough to have not, will find something they recognize in *Other Evolutions*. I hope they allow themselves to remember their loved ones as imperfect and flawed, as we all are in life and in death.

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