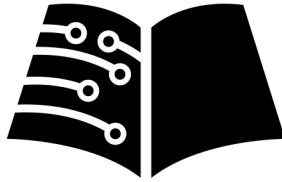
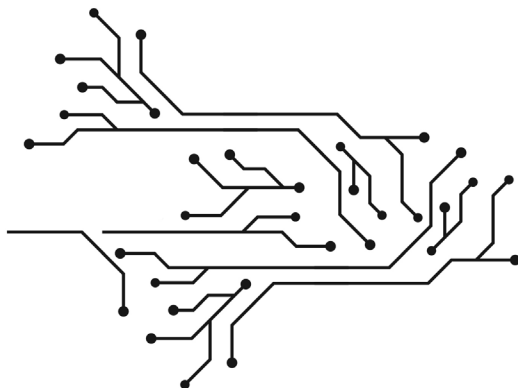


Will



**DON'T**  
TRY TO COMPLETE ME.

I'M MISSING A PIECE.



There's a short circuit. In my head. Sixteen years of malfunction, thanks to faulty wires ... a supercharged current overloading a path of low resistance, exceeding capacity. It's burning out the fuses, tripping the breakers.

I've never been good with words. I prefer to tap. It's simple ... predictable. Not all taps are made equal, you know. No, no, NO. They're jam packed with meaning.

Listen! Note the syncopation, how the emphasis is on the downbeat. That means, 'Hurry up, I'm

excited'. And this is the 'I've just

bored myself into a heart attack'

tap ... often featured in Maths

class. Hang on, here's the best

one! I give up. No, that's what

the tap means! It's what wrestlers

do when they've had enough. They

don't shout *Help!* or *I surrender*. No

way!

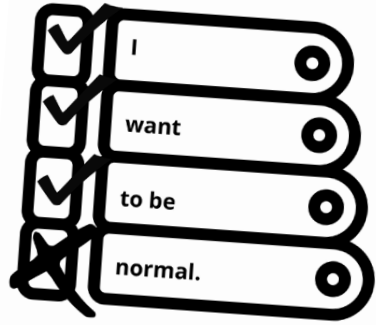


They tap out. And the match is over. Simple.

Sometimes I feel like tapping out.

Calm down! I'm not talking about that! I'm just saying, tapping gives me something to focus on.

Something meaningful.



You know those really sad movies, where the kid's dog dies, and you sit there all misty-eyed, thinking, *I don't even cry. Where's this shit coming from?* Or someone trips when they're walking and you crack up, even though a little voice in your head says, *Hope they didn't hurt themselves.* It's instinct. Your body doing something without your head telling it to.

Listen, do you hear that? You gotta pay attention! It's soft, just a murmur really. Whenever I think of Freya, it's there. The rhythm. It's strong and steady with reverb. A techno beat racing my heart ... that skips and holds, cutting in when I least expect it, flipping time signatures left and right, breaking all the rules.

Last night at the party, I watched Freya from across the room. Twirling her hair around her finger, eyes wide open, taking in everyone and everything around her. And I thought: This is it! This is the night I'm gonna finally tell her how I feel! It took forever to take those steps, and when I finally rocked

up and looked in her eyes, all I could think was, ‘You’re my hub. You’re my connection.’

But I couldn’t get the words out. The thoughts were in my head but the formations were too fast, too random. Freya smiled, leaning in like she couldn’t hear me. Her hand brushed my arm and I could feel my pores opening up to breathe in all her energy. Then whoa, key change, minor to major transposed, gnawing my insides, tightening, tightening all the frazzled wires in my head, till the sweetest riff tuned in and the sound was crisp and clear, the pitch perfect. My mouth opened to make a made a sound I’ve never heard before.

*I love you.*

But the progression was too abrupt, no time to modulate, and before I could suck back the words, they had already rushed in her ears, *feroce*, and she gagged them up, short and sharp ... *staccato*. Something about *friends*.

I don’t talk like other people. I don’t think like other people. Dad’s always telling me, *It’s good to be different*. So why’s school trying to make us all the same? Friendly, sporty, smart. Like Mason, poster boy for school captain. You know, doctors do it too ... use big words, like something has to be named to be understood. Labels that put people in boxes, as



## FRAGMENTS

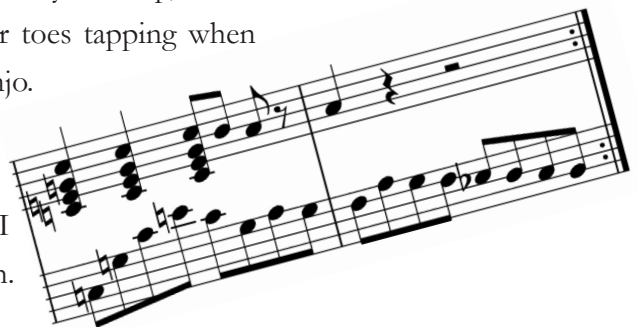
though our 'differentness' is all the same, so all the 'normal' people can feel comfortable in their discomfort, so they can understand, so YOU can understand, something that can't possibly be understood unless it's in your head, unless you're living it every single moment of every day.

You say I'm on the spectrum, that I'm different, but different to who? You? Spectrum's a bullshit word. It's a rainbow with no start or finish, something that makes you feel good but when you reach out to touch it, nothing's there.

I don't want any meds! I don't wanna 'even out' my mood. I don't wanna patch job, I need to 'increase capacity' to prevent overload. It's simple engineering. No meds are gonna show me how to connect ... how to find the right words to express how I feel. They didn't work for Dad. When he left, there were so many words flying between him and Mum, diving and swooping, attacking, then none for a long time.

Language is tricky. It's meant to bring people together but I reckon it does the opposite. Because the words don't have meaning, it's the emotion that comes behind them. The chords that make you weep, when caressed on a violin, but get your toes tapping when strummed on a banjo.

I reckon I  
can work things  
out on my own. If I  
can find the rhythm.



MAURA PIERLOT

I just need to learn the beats and stresses, the run-ons and pauses, so I know the words and patterns that make sense. The ones that produce a sound so pure ... when they come together in harmony.



# LIES

EVERYONE WANTS  
TO BE ME.

I WANT TO BE  
NORMAL.

GIRLS LOVE ME.

I'M FINE. REALLY.

I KNOW EXACTLY  
WHO I AM.

I'VE GOT THE WORLD  
AT MY FEET.

IT'S ALL GOOD.  
SERIOUSLY.

I CAN LOOK  
AFTER MYSELF.