

This is Superbook

Albert Abonado

THIS IS SUPERBOOK / by Albert Abonado
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This book is set in a type so small it could be a rumor of a type. You are not even certain that you possess this book, but the dust convinces you that you can fold its pages. Instead, you may be holding a small jar of peanuts, a bouquet of lilies standing in an empty lot surrounded by murmurs. If you are in a house with your hands opened before you, you may be listening to the floors churning below you. Perhaps, the garden in your basement needs attending.

You make plans to descend to see what has managed to survive your neglect, conjure explanations for the vegetation that fails to bloom in a room surrounded by your abandoned upholstery projects. You gather up your charts and diagrams, a small axe, say goodbye to the children in your neighborhood.

You do not know where all of the furniture came from, in what order they arrived or in which rooms they belong. It must be your duty to reassemble everything. You point to the ceiling with your axe and say I can put a moon there. You get to work, carving a series of circles into the beams. Soon you fill your ceiling with entire constellations, satellites that can emit radio signals. In one floating unit, the bones of a monkey. Now, you are getting somewhere. This is how all of your stories begin: a house collapsing around you as you try to build a sky.

This book is set in a cradle, where you laid beside it water from the moon, a tin rabbit. You look into the cradle and discover this type will one day become a deer. You turn to another parent and ask *Whom did I marry?* You cannot smile and lift this type without the type attempting to kick a hole through your cheek. You worry about the day it will wander off into the woods, lured away by the promise of a few weeds, salt under a fingernail. You tell this type to keep its head low in open spaces, that a distant snap is another word for solitude.

You apologize to this type. You cannot help being a steadily approaching object made of dim light. It is autumn and your hair is full of fog. Not much grass remains between the two of you. You have lost count of the number of times this type leapt over your engine to become a white tail surrounded by houses.

This book is set in a type you discovered in a photograph taken on your birthday when you leaned over a table ready to fill a room with darkness. If you were not such a careful reader of your gestures, you could understand how your pursing lips might be misinterpreted by casual observers as an attempt to kiss fire, not the act of a child preparing to extinguish a room full of faces.

Your past self must have known about a future self in which you press a thumb over the face of a relative, scrutinizing the expression of your mother as you tried to remember the flavor of the white cake, counting the number of candles to determine the date. Why else would the shadow from your hair be the cursive to a message scrubbed out of the light? You must have predicted opening yourself inside of an album and peeling the film from your face.

Possibly, what you cast on the wall was meant to remind you of the action figure that would complete your set or became the point when you were aware the night was a tree and you held a part of it in your mouth like the pit of some large fruit, worried it would take root in your throat. All you wanted was an explanation for the faces that resembled moth wings, why they opened and closed, covered with a fine dust once they gathered around you, but you ran out of time before you could finish, before your head became a moon, before the room and everyone in it went dark.

This book is set in a type found in the margins of another book. It is often used to remember state capitals and the Beatitudes, to write essays on Alexander Hamilton. This type is very good with memory. It will make you better at names. You will no longer forget the birthdays of your relatives with this type. You will even remember the taste of food from someone else's mouth.

During the Industrial Age, this was known as the Elephant type. As you read this type, you remember your own sadness can be the size of an elephant. The elephant of your sadness rests beneath a canopy of baobabs remembering its own sadnesses as your friends drift out of you. You remember how you were once a cave where people drew small horned animals on the walls of your body. You remember the sound of their little black shoes as they stepped out.

This book is set in a type that has at its center a volcano that will not stop erupting. At the foot of the volcano is a village whose weather reports must look something like this: ash followed by more ash. You read this type and think about the conversations people would have in a village full of ashes, if they are always asking about the ones who have become coal? Occasionally, someone replies *I am right in front of you. I have been here all along.*

Who could blame the people for their confusion? One minute you are having polite conversations about the migration of birds, if birds still migrated over this town covered in smoke, and the next your friends are a wall of stones. This reminds you of conversations with friends that often feel as if you are doing nothing but rolling the same stone back and forth.

You came to this village to get away, to rest your body only to find yourself on an island being eaten by fire. There were signs. The missing birds. The woman who poured ashes into your coffee. You should have done more than look into her dark eyes. Do not blame this type for the stones that grow in your throat. Do not blame this type for the way your center burns.

This book is set in a type made from limbs in wartime, the ones that exploded, the artificial ones, the phantom ones, the ones made of clay, the ones that rely on psychotropic drugs, the ones that are trying to forget their bodies. Not many books are set in this type, because it often sabotages itself. People often bury this type without first checking to see it isn't also a trap, waiting to be detonated. You must be very brave to make it this far. Congratulations! You deserve to be commended. You deserve a prize. Maybe a medal or a trophy!

Most readers do not reach this point. They usually turn their attention elsewhere, perhaps to flowerpots full of pixie dust or to return this book to the library because they are offended children might reach for it. They see this surplus of hands and do not know what to do with them, if they are supposed to shake these hands and thank them for all the good work they have done, or if what the hands really need are a good manicure, someone to brush the dirt out, to clip their fingernails, to fill a jar with all the shrapnel they removed from the bones.

If you are reading this type, it must be printed on a cigarette. Right now, you are inhaling this sentence followed by the next one. You are watching this sentence slowly reduced to the ash that drifts in the air around you or observing your face burning in a mirror. This type should come with a warning: This type may be responsible for your chronic cough, your birth defects. This type may be the reason you will never have enough oxygen.

This book is set in a type intended for rodents. You may wonder how you are capable of reading the language of mammals whose droppings you find in your utensil drawer, the ones who nibble at your traps. You do not believe your eyes are small enough to interpret their subtle gestures. You touch your forearm, brush your upper lip with your finger to check you are not slowly becoming a rodent, one who learned how to read and has since forgotten a life spent converting homes into an elaborate labyrinth of tunnels.

You know yourself well enough to say, if anything, you would remember the joy of standing in the silence of a new hole, that this has nothing to do with the way you associate the night with the taste of drywall, which you attribute to your habit of stumbling in the dark. And that urge to run at the sound of footsteps? You were only looking for a better angle to see who is coming from the light.

This book is set in a type that has planted eggs in other books and then moved on. This is considered bad parenting in some circles, to drop trou and move on, to not offer any financial support, but that is how things are done around here, how one builds character. One egg will eventually become a famous musician; another will accurately predict weather patterns. Occasionally, an egg can only get as far as middle-management, but that's okay. Everyone has a role to play. Not every type is born with the finesse to unite disparate texts or has a body that can fill a manifesto. Not every type will be complimented for its economy, its spare lines or be read in bathrooms to alleviate stress. Not every type will sleep tucked between someone's legs, which turns out to be an excellent way to align the spine.

This book is set in a type that does not understand people who listen to any other version of Van Halen that has a lead singer besides David Lee Roth. If you are one of those people who prefers Gary Cherone or Sammy Hagar, this type does not understand you. This type thinks you have a tiny head. Sorry. You are entitled to your opinion, but you are also wrong.

This book is set in a type that has started to eyeball other smaller, more vulnerable types. This type keeps snapping at our fingers. We try to isolate it, find other practical uses like leaving it in a field to keep the dandelions and raspberries from overwhelming our gardens or hanging it in strips from our ceiling to manage the population of mosquitos.

This is how we put the spiders out of business, how the economy collapsed. How could any of us have predicted that we would wipe out entire ecologies with the same hand we used in our journals, hoping our confessions would consume themselves? Who among us believed we would be at our tables, eating in spoonfuls the shape of our appetites, causing our gum lines to recede while whole stories chewed their way out of our stomachs.

This book is set in a type that was once a very famous type. You may also be someone who is very famous so you know what it is like to wear very famous underwear and eat very famous strawberries. You let the refrigerator light wash over you every morning because that too is famous, and you admire the touch of something famous besides yourself. Has anyone ever told you how fabulous you are for reading this book? This type appreciates your attention, and wants to thank you. You are rare and exotic. Come closer. Lean in. When you are this close to this type, you glow. Yes, your head may be made of glass, but this type will be gentle. This type will pluck free every seedling of light from your cheeks and send them flying into the open faces of your neighbors.

This book is set in a type that is only possible because of the potato. As you read this, I hope you are not worrying about a fungus that might threaten this type, how this might be the last time you see this type because the variety of potato is not native and susceptible to parasites. There will come a day when this type is no longer possible because the end of potatoes is inevitable, just as the ends of telephones and small dogs are inevitable. I hope this concern does not drive you to raid the shelves of your local grocery store. I hope the lemon is not the reason you second-guess the state of your sentences. I hope you do not deny yourself the imperfect pleasure of the eggplant. I hope this type does not leave you hungry for more.

This book is set in a type that thinks about Paul Rudd too much. Paul Rudd does not want to talk about this type, so do not bother asking him if he thinks in analogs or winter. Do not talk about water damage or eroding literature. Do not say “Paul Rudd, I want to cover you in wine.” Paul Rudd has a notorious temper that has caused problems with his favorite baristas. Even Alicia Silverstone will not acknowledge Paul Rudd. Go ahead. Ask her. She has beautiful blonde hair and was in all of those Aerosmith videos and she will not acknowledge Paul Rudd even though they made out at the end of *Clueless*! Who does that? Who kisses their stepbrother and just walks away?

This book is set in a type where someone left a flock of sheep to graze. Someone released the chupacabra into this field. Now, there are no more sheep. Now all the conversations have lost their heads. There is only a chupacabra lying on its back, stroking a stomach filled with lamb, sucking on the last bit of marrow with a tuft of wool behind each ear. No one believes you when you say that you saw a chupacabra with its mouth full of livestock. They tell you that you must have seen a fox or a satellite falling out of orbit. They say *Maybe you are dehydrated and standing in the sun for too long. Maybe you should not drink so early in the morning.* Perhaps your therapist is right. Perhaps you should just ask the chupacabra what it wants. You start to wonder if this is really a story about the chupacabra, or if the chupacabra is a metaphor, but you do not know what about yourself is closest to chupacabra, what part of you might be found in an open field under starlight with a face full of other people's sheep.

This book is set in a type from the future. You probably should not look at it, although you cannot help it. It is the future after all, and who does not want to know the shapes of their descendents. This type really wants to tell you what to expect from the universe. Not telling you actually hurts this type's teeth, but this type just got back from a midnight screening of *Back to the Future* where it came away with two valuable lessons: Christopher Lloyd is above time and this type has no intention of creating a paradox that will destroy the universe, of folding time-space into an omelet. Know that when the future does eventually come, you are a really wonderful person with really wonderful teeth.

This book was set in an obituary before people began to press their lilies into it or tried burying their precious heirlooms. So many came away from their readings with fingernails darkened by whole plot lines. So many endings concealed by stone. To say *Let's embalm our libraries* was not uncommon. Months passed before everyone could get the smell of formaldehyde out of their coats, a time in which they considered dissecting one another, a time in which romance paperbacks were mausoleums for their favorite sex positions. Who knows how many drafts were burned in memory of this type, how many volumes of errors blackened their lungs because this was not how they imagined it would go down, how anyone saw it coming? No one thought it would end like this.

This book is set in a type that is the sequel to another type. See the previous type before you see this one or you will just be confused. Confusion will cause you to turn to the person beside you or to text a friend asking about the other type. The people who surround you will not understand what you are talking about since they have not seen the other type either, but now they are angry because you did not include a spoiler alert. Nobody will want to talk to you then. Who knows what else you will ruin? They will isolate you because your ruin may be contagious. Trust me, you do not want to be that person!

This book is set in a type that thinks you do too much. Relax. Put your feet on a place that it does not normally go. You probably never realized your feet could go there. You probably walked by that same spot several times a day and never thought to yourself maybe this would be a good spot to rest your feet. Maybe you will find this activity relaxing and surprising, and you will reconsider all the surfaces that you felt were once unsuitable for your feet. You know very little about chakras, but maybe this activity will be good for your lungs and improve your flexibility. Maybe you will finally realize that this whole time all you ever wanted was a birdhouse and a small herb garden, a chinchilla you could name after Emmanuel Lewis. You're welcome.

This book is set in a type that does not want to be the last thing you see before you die. It cannot bear that responsibility. If you are feeling ill at this moment, please put this book down. Go see a doctor. You are not hopeless, but there is nothing in this type that will help you. This type does not want your eulogy to be about the type that offered you no comfort, no clarity in your waning hours. If this type had a choice, it would surround itself with puppies and loved ones. Hurry, you may not have much time. You may not make it to the end of this sentence or the next. Find a puppy to love, or, if puppies are not your thing, find something else that is willing to let you hold it.

This book is set in Albert Abonado. Many people wonder if this type is named after Albert Abonado, which is a reasonable question to ask, one that leads some to google Albert Abonado, and inevitably leads them to another Albert Abonado. That Albert Abonado assures you he has nothing to do with this Albert Abonado. There is even a video of that Albert Abonado losing a Judo match in 2007, although that Albert Abonado would prefer it if you did not watch the video since he has seen the video many times. Instead, that Albert Abonado encourages you to consider your other responsibilities, that if the holidays are approaching, you should probably start writing cards to send to your loved ones. You could set those cards in Albert Abonado. You could include in your card a note about how you came across Albert Abonado while reading this book. It might look something like this. You might mention the title of the book even if it isn't the most interesting book. You might tell someone you love how Albert Abonado changed your life.

Some of these poems have appeared, some in slightly altered versions, in the following magazines: *alice blue*, *The Awl*, *The Southampton Review*, *Sixth Finch*, *Fourteen Hills*.