I say a lot without speaking a word.

Scream terror, scream fear, without being heard.

I can be dark and deep, soulful, or mysterious,

I can be bright and blue,

Happy or serious.

I have things to support me,

Keep me protected from harm.

I persuade, I convince, and have my own special charm.

I’m fragile, I’m sensitive,

I need proper care.

Without me, you’re lost,

You can’t go anywhere.

I lie, I cry, I give a lot away.

I can tell you if I love my life, or if I’ve had a terrible day.

Depending where you find me,

I can be a different shape—

Almond, round, or somewhat like a grape.

I keep the darkest secrets,

But at times I just might share.

I observe, I monitor, sometimes I even stare.

They say that I act as windows to a person’s soul.

You need me to read, navigate, and patrol.

Sometimes I may swell,

When you’re overwhelmed or sad.

You can line me up with lots of black to keep a gothic fad.

I’m the best friend who will always guide you through.

I’m the best special offer, you don’t get one, you get two.

Six-Word Memoirs – High School Me

1. I’m not my brothers. They suck.
2. She’s pretty, but hey, I’m funny.
3. Talk to teachers. Parents won’t listen.
4. Join cheerleading and lose your friends.
5. Don’t cheat on people, only homework.
6. Dance, sing, and laugh. Never stop.
7. When in doubt, pray it out.
8. Read what you want. SparkNote *that*.
9. Big forehead and a big heart.
10. Always be tough. They can’t know.

TWITTER MEMOIRS

1. Becoming a teacher is basically making an active choice to forever give up your free time, sanity, and heart to 190 students year after year.
2. We went to Tennessee – my family and me. But all I could do is cry for my babysitter. It broke my working mom’s heart. I love my yaya more.
3. One of my subs left a note that brought a grin to my face. Said, “There’s hope for America,” and my heart grew ten times larger and larger.
4. Will I always be a teacher? Who knows. Maybe when kids get tired of me. Nah, not even then. I’ll annoy them to be excellent forever and ever.

***Congrats, newly minted boyfriend!***

Now, you’ve finally locked down a girlfriend. Next comes the daily yearn for affection and proof of loyalty to keep this girl interested.

And that’s when you must do what many boyfriends do: stop all the wining and dining and get so comfortable she has to question your commitment every day.

Loss of romance and attention in a relationship is a long-standing tradition of boyfriends; 33% of women around the world say it bothers them “a lot” that their significant other isn’t more romantic. The other 67% prefer the company of male escorts.

It’s not just boyfriends who see each girlfriend as a prize to be won. All kinds of professional athletes—basketball, football, soccer players—

their sole purpose is to get the title. Once it’s theirs, they can move on to the next. And if Columbus can sail across the seas in search of land in the name of Spain, so you can in claiming girls, new boyfriend. With my *How to Break Your Girl’s* DVD series, it’s easy to make your girlfriend to forever lose hope in all men.

Ten essentials, just to get you started:

1. **Never respond.** Also known as the Disappearing Act. Having a girlfriend requires too much conversation and checking in. Initiate conversation when *you* want to and let her wonder where you are and what you’re doing. It’ll really drive her crazy!
2. **Never make plans and when you do, flake out on them**. Don’t stress out trying to think about exciting, new things you can do together. Let her figure it out and if it’s lame, hey, you have your boys!
3. **Only talk about you**. You are the most important and most interesting person in her life. Every conversation should revolve around what you did, whom you saw, what you ate, and what you think. *ABOUT EVERYTHING.*
4. **Keep your options open.** Girls love a little competition for attention. Keep things fresh and varied by dating around. Never apologize for seeing these other girls. You choose girls like you choose your ice cream—it depends on your mood.
5. **Don’t compliment her**. If she gets too confident, she might lose sight your importance in her life. The more you bring her down, the worse she feels about herself. There’s nothing better than a weak, insecure girlfriend who *knows* she needs you.
6. **There’s no need for a wallet.** Thanks to progressive feminism, your girl can now cover every date and buy you the latest and greatest. After all, what baby wants, baby gets…so keep the tab OPEN!
7. **Take nothing lightly**. She texted you at 2:02 when she specifically told you she’d text you at 2:00? Yell. Scream. Curse. Throw a fit. Let her know that it’s unacceptable. *You* are the blessing and miracles do not wait.
8. **Lie**. The truth hurts. So spare the girl trouble and keep your dirty secrets to yourself. What she doesn’t know won’t hurt her.
9. **Your relationship with your couch is the most important**. It won’t annoy you. It won’t ask you to change your hair or your clothes. It supports you. It comforts you. Stay on it as long as you can.
10. **Forget her name**. Making her feel special? Empowering her? Please. They have Beyoncé songs for that. There are 143,368,343 females in the U.S. Who cares what her name is?

See? You, too, can shatter a girl’s fantasy man!

So order my *How to Break Your Girl’s Heart* series now, and get a head start on her sleepless nights, weight problems, and loss of hope in humanity now!

**AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL 2016**

I’m not the most well-read,

And I don’t always watch the news.

And yes, it’s on my Twitter feed,

That I hear of police abuse.

I have family and friends galore,

Who walk the thin blue line.

So when I hear these stories,

I can’t help but think of mine.

There definitely is injustice,

A clouded judgment of what is right and what is wrong.

But everywhere I look, I tend to hear just one song:

“Black Lives Matter,”

So does mine,

So does yours.

Everyone should feel safe,

In every home, every store.

What troubles me is when people forget,

That everyone has a soul.

Who are we to say what we’d do in that role?

There’s stereotypes all over,

“They do this,” “They do that…”

But we’ll never see our similarities,

If we never sit and chat.

So much anger, so much hatred,

Pulled in every which way.

If it’s not Blacks, it’s Latinos,

It’s Republicans, it’s gays.

I’m not naïve or stupid,

I know there won’t be peace,

All I want is understanding,

A safe space to release.

There’s dangers every day,

In the hood or wearing blue.

But why do we pass criticism,

When it clearly wasn’t you?

There are people that might think,

“Don’t get caught and you won’t get shot,”

But I see them as sons, brothers, nephews,

As students I could’ve taught.

Others see “the system” when they think of cops,

They forget that they, too, are people,

That also wonder when this will stop.

Not one person is perfect, we all make mistakes,

We all hope to earn a living, sometimes no matter what it takes.

You say that he deserved it, he’s a criminal,

He was bad.

What if the reason was to make money because his dad

Had left his mother with so many mouths to feed,

It’s so quick to make a judgment when we’re not the one in need.

And what about the cop who now feels guilty

For ending someone’s life?

Who has a young son at home, as well as a pregnant wife?

When I think of them both,

It’s *fear* that comes to mind.

“It’s you or it’s me…”

They’re both stuck in a bind.

I know not every situation is ever purely black or white,

But sometimes all we see is *COLOR*,

Not what’s wrong or right.

I never want to blindly say,

“I believe this. It must be true.”

‘Cause what you believe might differ from me,

what I feel might be different for you.

Take responsibility for who you are and what you do,

I’m tired of the run-around

From the minority and the ones in blue.

Is there really a solution for this troubled world?

Or will this continually spiral ‘round and ‘round,

As the prejudice whirls and whirls?

How Do You Know Who You Are?

How do you know who you are?

Your parents tell you.

“Don’t touch that.”

“That’s bad for you.”

“Say goodnight to your brothers.”

“It’s Sunday. Time for church.”

“Did you do your homework?”

How do you know who you are?

Your friends show you.

“You’ll love this game.”

“This song is the best!”

“I would *never* wear that!”

“I’ll go with you.”

How do you know who you are?

Your teachers help you.

“What is the author saying here?”

“a2 + b2 = c2”

“Balance the equation to be less acidic.”

How do you know who you are?

Was it up to them?

Do you have no control?

Do you gobble it all up like a mindless troll?

Or at some point, do you decide for yourself?

What pieces to take, which to leave on a shelf?

The truth is some people share their amazing power,

While others leave a little taste that is bitter or sour.

How do you know who you are?

You figure it out.

Sooner or later, you decide what you’re about.

You think to yourself, “They were wrong about that,” or

“I should’ve listened,” “I should’ve known that was crap.”

How do you know who you are?

Do you ever really know?

Or do we change as time passes,

As people come and go?

How do you know who you are…

If you’re always growing, always changing?

Nothing’s ever permanent,

It’s always rearranging.

Today I might be this way,

Tomorrow another.

I decided I’m a book,

New pages added daily, story varies,

Same ol’ cover.

Maybe you can’t know who you are,

Because you never stay the same,

And we’re made up of all these people and experiences,

Growing, changing, learning…

And only our name remains.

Family

Family is the most important thing.

Aside from God, they are my everything.

They’ve taught me the basics,

Like how to potty or read,

They’re always there for anything I need.

My brothers are older, they left me out a lot.

When my parents worked,

We just fought and fought.

Now we are older, and feelings have changed.

I’d do anything for them, and I know they’d do the same.

My parents were great,

Showed me the value of hard work,

The importance of honor, and keeping your word.

My teen years marked a big riff

between my mom and me,

I had a mind of my own,

Was always pushing to be free.

No matter how many arguments arise and despite the disagreements,

The annoying pestering that sometimes turned into silent treatments,

I will always put my family first,

They’re more valuable than all,

They are the source of my pride, the reason I stand tall.

I remember the name I strive to represent well,

The appreciation I have for them I’ll never be able to fully tell.

My family will be there through thick and thin,

With them on my team, I will always win.

**Light**

**Light of the world is what we’re supposed to be,**

**But I don’t see that when I turn on the TV.**

**People are killing, there’s hate and corruption.**

**Racial profiling and greed is continually erupting.**

**When we should be positive and spread good news,**

**We use our power to put down and abuse.**

**If everyone was just a little more sincere,**

**The light that we have would reach far and near.**

**Focus on the good, instead of the bad,**

**Illuminate the happy news, not just the sad.**

**As a child of God, I feel it’s my duty,**

**To share my wonder, to share God’s beauty.**

**That among all the turmoil, the deception, the hurt,**

**There’s hope in His love and in His good work.**

**God doesn’t care if you’re yellow, white, black, or brown,**

**If you were born at the top,**

**Or if you’ve been spiraling down.**

**So why do we care so much about labels and race?**

**As far as I’m concerned,**

**We** *all* **fall from grace.**

**Not one of us is perfect, so why do we blame?**

**We’re so quick to judge, and add heat to the flame.**

**Why is it so hard to understand one another?**

**In God’s eyes no one is better,**

**We’re all sisters and brothers.**

**When did we forget that we all have this light?**

**“Turn yours off, mine’s brighter,”**

**focused on who’s wrong or who’s right.**

**How ‘bout instead we learn to just *love*?**

**It’s our purpose on earth, prescribed from above.**

**Be the light in what seems to be a very dark time,**

**When hate has burned out all else, remember to shine.**

Private Nameless

I am beat-down and empty

I wonder what it would’ve been like if I hadn’t signed my life away

I hear the exploding of bombs, families bawling, and the heavy bullets of rifles

I see my brothers and sisters losing faith, losing their purpose, losing themselves

I want to be a proud American but I feel lost in my own skin

I am beat-down and empty

I pretend that I am strong and I’m proud to be here, but I am scared shitless

I feel small and meaningless

I touch my own chest just to check if I’m alive

I worry that I will not come home to my children

I cry for the many fallen soldiers who came before me and those who will fall after

I am beat-down and empty

I understand nothing

I say “Everything will be okay,” but that’s a lie

I dream of a world where war is nonexistent

I try to forget but the images repeat

I hope to find joy in the things I was used to

I am beat-down and empty

*\*A letter written to my fiancé (the 6th grade version of him)*

Dear 6th grade Andrew,

It’s me, Lauren.   We have a few classes together right now, and we hang out with the same people, but you’re not going to believe how different our relationship is going to be in 8 years, and now (*my* now), 16 years.  But, I will get to that later.

First thing you should know is **you’re adorable**.   I know the other girls and I are always squeezing your cheeks and telling you how cute you are and inside, it’s probably miserable for you.  I know you don’t *want* to be cute.  You’re probably thinking to yourself, “cute” is for babies and puppies.  “Cute” is for outfits you can’t help but buy at the mall.  And I know you’re tired of hearing us tell you that you’re like our sweet brother-type friend, but trust me, it will get better for you and maybe, just maybe, you’re exactly what we need.

First of all, you’re wasting your time with Mary-Joyce.  You’ll soon find out that she was only with you because she was “pressured” but she actually likes Alvin.  Did I just shatter your dreams?  She won’t end up with him and she moves back to Vallejo anyway but long story short, she sucks.   It’s going to feel like heartbreak because I mean, she’s your girlfriend, but don’t worry, you can do way better.

Focus on school.  You are going to rock at it.  In fact, you’ll promote middle school and graduate high school with honors and a way higher GPA than mine (FYI I’ll kick your academic ass in college though).   You won’t have all the experience in the world with girls and that will frustrate you because you are one of the sweetest guys ever but again, girls suck.  You’re the only one who actually lets us play basketball and we’ll remember that. FOREVER.

Speaking of FOREVER, in case you’re wondering, you will not always be chubby.  You’re going to work out like crazy after high school and boy, do you GROW UP!   *Damn, boyyeeee!*You’re going to get an awesome job and excel in things that matter while the guys that focused on all the wrong things during school struggle and try to keep up with YOU.

Don’t lose sight of who you are.  Your parents raised you to be such a respectable gentleman, and I don’t want you to ever think being an asshole would be better.  It isn’t.  Keep your heart as caring as it is, just don’t let people take advantage of you.   You are **rare**.   They say “Nice guys finish last,” and I will tell you right now, you are number freaking one.

I’m going to date some wrong people, and you’re going to date some WHOREable girls.  And yes, I meant to spell it that way.  But guess what?  You and I end up together.  WHAAAAT? I know.  Did you just spit out your orange juice in shock?  I totally don’t see you that way, right?  I can picture 6th grade us, you round little thing and me, the string bean. HAHAHA. Eventually, I finally wise up and throw out the douchebags and you finally ditch the bitches.   You know what does it?  Our mutual confusion at how we’ve been screwed over.  I’d explain our entire love story, but where’s the fun in that?

You are a great friend, will be an amazing boyfriend, and in 17 years, the best fiancé. Keep doing you, boo.  I already love you.

Love,

Lauren

Your freaking future wife!

**My New Name**

It’s crazy to me that in a year or so, I will go by a different name.  Right now, no one really calls me by my last name anyway, and I’ve decided that my students will still call me Ms. Antonio at school, but I don’t know.  It still feels strange.

By the time I get married, I will have been Lauren Joy Lacuesta Antonio for 27 years.   In some way, I feel like I’m losing part of my identity.

I like my last name.  No, scratch that I *love* my last name.  It’s strong.  It’s uncommon.   It’s *familiar*.  I have always been proud to come from my family.  My dad has ten siblings.  Of the ten, only **four** of them were boys and thus, only **four** carried the name.

I guess the gender majority is generational because the families that came from almost all of those ten siblings only spawned one girl each.

I don’t really worry about not being able to carry on my last name through time.  I’ve always known I would take my future husband’s last name.  There are some issues of gender inequality that definitely do need to be addressed to this very day, but for me, personally, taking my husband’s last name was never a problem.

What I *do* have a problem with is what I’m trading my last name in *for*.  Not necessarily due to power-struggle or anything like that.  It’s just, not pretty.   Masulit.  First of all, it’s not easy to say.  I’ve heard this name since the 6th grade and only our fellow Filipino compadres know how to properly pronounce it.

They say “mah-sew-LEET” or “MAS-ooh-lit,” and either way, it’s wrong.  I’m not used to people pronouncing any part of my name wrong.  I can imagine my future irritation.

**Masungit**. Holy hell. If I had a dollar for every time a Filipino laughed at how Andrew’s last name sounds.  “Masungit” translated to English is “peevish” or “easily-angered.” What a negative connotation to my new last name!  It was always funny to me that Andrew carried this with him because he is the utter OPPOSITE of its meaning.  He is *so* easy-going, always smiling, and hardly ever lets anything bother him.  As for me, the only time this would apply is during that time of month. HAHAHA. TMI?

Masulit.  So what does my new last name actually mean?   It means **to maximize** in Tagalog.   Most people don’t know this because it’s not a very common word.   This meaning, I love.   With my new last name, I will maximize my life.  Maximize my potential.  Maximize my opportunities.  Maximize the time I spend with my family and friends.  Maximize my classroom time with my students.  Make everything the best it could possibly be.   Make my new life as Mrs. Masulit the best it could possibly be.

**Lauren Joy Antonio Masulit**.   A new name for a new life as a new wife.