

★ **I Thought You Loved Me****MariNaomi**

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A memoir and meditation on friendship, separation, memory, and forgiveness, *I Thought You Loved Me* is a riveting real-life mystery told in inventive graphic novel form.

By revisiting old letters, notes, journals, and calendars, author and artist MariNaomi probes her relationship with Jodie, a former friend whose sudden disappearance years ago left behind many unanswered questions. At the time of Jodie's departure, MariNaomi was given only a vague and unsatisfying explanation as to why Jodie "can't be your friend anymore." Here, she looks into her past, as well as the present via social media. Amid heartache and a lingering sense of absence, new revelations from mutual friends, enemies, and acquaintances allow her to put the pieces together, leading to an emotional confrontation with Jodie, and the possibility of once again moving forward together as friends.

The book's art and storytelling style are an inventive hybrid of drawn images, photographs, and text, the latter featuring a wide array of fonts. The result of this combination, along with MariNaomi's willingness to share personal details, is a story that resonates with texture, intimacy, and elements of voyeurism. Though the specifics of the tangled web of relationships and experiences recounted here might be considered unusual in some circles, the feelings depicted and the simple need to know "why?" are relatable and appealing. Even minor elements of the story, like the inability to recall a certain person mentioned throughout a journal, are a poignant example of the casual cruelties of time and memory.

Dazzling in theme, story, and visuals, *I Thought You Loved Me* is a standout graphic memoir.

PETER DABBENE (January / February 2023)

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