

## S3E4 THE PRESENCE OF PAST

**Lily Narration:** I'm really excited to be back with another episode! We are halfway through the 3rd season and I can't wait for the fun episodes I have planned for the rest of the year. Did you know that you can actually help support the show AND get some cool rewards when you set up a monthly pledge at Patreon dot com? If you're already contributing, THANK YOU. And either way, I just love that you're listening right now. But if you want in on this insider action like special songs and video chats and weird portraits of you, visit patreon dot com slash a therapist walks into a bar. Enjoy the show.

Heads up - this episode has some talk about depression and suicidal ideation. Please take care when choosing to listen. Turn it off if you need to. I promise there's some joyful stuff here too.

**Girl:** Well I do sometimes keep a journal. I mean, it's on and off. On days that I feel like writing in my journal, I do write in my journal. But yeah.

**Lily:** Do you know what makes you feel like writing in your journal?

**Girl:** Not really. I just kind of just - "you're gonna write in your journal now!" What I kind of do is just write what's happened during the day. Like little things. Like oh I had cereal for breakfast and stuff.

**Lily:** So tracking facts

**Girl:** I mean sometimes I do like one or two feelings but not usually no.

**Jed:** [reading from diary] January 13th, 1993. Writing in a diary every day is very uh something...I don't like it. January 26th. I took a bath last night...

**Lily:** Right now, in Brooklyn New York, historical research is underway.

**Jed:** [reading from diary] We are learning about puberty in gym that is dumb.

**Lily:** Right now, in Brooklyn New York, historical research is underway. Jedediah Baker and Torrey Paquette are the historians who've embarked on the task of analyzing a primary-source document - the diary of a 12 year old boy in Morrisville, Vermont from 1993. So far they have learned about the boys likes and dislikes -

**Jed:** [reading from diary] I hate homework!

**Lily:** - his jerk brother -

**Jed:** [reading from diary] Josey is an a-hole.

**Lily:** - his mother and father's recent divorce -

**Jed:** [reading from diary] I didn't have divorce group today.

**Lily:** - his friends and crushes -

**Jed:** [reading from diary] Donnie likes Janina. I sort of like her.

**Lily:** - his pet bird, small town restaurants and thrift shops, the latest video game releases, and occasional bits of national news that have filtered into his consciousness.

**Jed:** [reading from diary] People are stupid. Lots of killing is going on.

**Jed:** I'm having some difficulty squaring away the fact that it's me who wrote this diary

**Lily:** That's Jedediah Baker.

**Jed:** Basically I'm doing this because this year is twenty five years since I kept the diary and I kind of - I've always paid a lot of attention to anniversaries, not important anniversaries, [laugh] just like "it's been a year since this event, since that event" and I'm fascinated by that chunk of time and how we measure ourselves against where we were a year ago, where we were two years ago. [01:09:48.26] **Jed:** Like I know two years ago I was just about to slip into this shitty ass time. A year ago I was just getting comfortable with the idea that it was over. And then twenty five years ago this month I hated homework.

**Lily:** But what could Jed's "shitty ass time" 2 years ago have to do with this kid in the diary? There's this cliché, that all therapists want to do is make you talk about the past. Even though I often reassure new clients that I won't make them talk about anything they don't want to, it's not untrue - a lot of us do want to know about your past. Because the past is never actually in the past and the present and the future are intricately tied to it. But like any historical research, piecing our own pasts together is both vital to self-understanding and fraught. And our understanding of history changes with who we are in the present.

I'm Lily Sloane and this is A Therapist Walks Into a Bar.

**Jed:** Am I talking to much?

**Lily:** No. You're being interviewed, Jed.

**Jed:** I know.

**Lily:** Jed's a gregarious, curly-haired, 37 year - bookworm, copywriter, proud plant dad. Bonding over podcasts and a shared joy of diving into our childhoods, we'd been long distance friends for a few months before I got to finally meet him at a bar near his home.

**Jed:** We're in the backyard of one of my favorite bars in Brooklyn - St. Gabrinus, Gabr-i-nus? He was a Saint. [L what was he the saint of] Breweries? That's a guess. But I think it's probably right. We're outside, there's birds chirping. There is a tree with beautiful pink flowers that's dropping it's petals all over us and our drinks. This is one of my favorite places in this burrow.

**Lily:** Why?

**Jed:** It's comfortable, it's quiet. There's this tree, the aforementioned tree which is really coming down on us. I like to be outside but I also want to be comfortable. And this is a place near my house where I know I can do that.

**Lily:** And the best way to hang out with a new friend is to record the whole thing. And since Jed likes comfort so much, I wanted to understand why he's putting so much effort into digging through his early adolescent diary. And what does this have to do with who he is today?

**Ada:** I personally like looking back and reading things that have happened that maybe I've forgotten.

**Lily:** And what do you think the benefit is of remembering?

**Ada:** Well it just - even now I can look back at my journal, and I've only kept it for like a year and a half pretty much - and it makes me happy to read it [L oh] yeah.

**Lily:** Why is this particular historical document important to you?

**Jed:** I have a very bad memory.-I don't have vivid memories of practically anything in my life. So the fact that I wrote down my thoughts and feelings for an entire year plus, twenty five years ago, this is the most complete, the most accurate collection of who I was that I have from basically my whole life.

**Lily:** From the National Archives: "for every type of primary source 1) meet the document 2) observe it's parts 3) try to make sense of it 4) use it as historical evidence."

**Jed:** the thought that I have this collection of - indication of who I was, this consistent and this complete - as complete as it is, from twenty five years ago, that's incredible to me because it's literally all that exists.

**Lily:** But based on Jed's understanding of himself, the existence of this artifact is kind of baffling.

**Jed:** I just hope we figure that out. It is a mystery to me. It's a mystery to everyone. How did I have the stamina to write in this diary every day for over a year? I don't know.

**Lily:** [from national archives] "Don't stop with document analysis though. Analysis is just the foundation."

**Lily:** Jed and his friend Torrey aren't just reading the diary. In January 2018, they started a podcast - The Jedediaries -

[Jedediaries intro song clip]

**Lily:** - to not only document the diary but to also share in an exploration of its contents.

[insert clips from Jedediaries diary - "I ache, I'm tired, oh well, who cares." "I got a magic kit - it sucks."]

**Lily:** Do you think that little Jed was depressed or just kind of mildly dissatisfied?

**Jed:** Do YOU think little Jed was depressed?

**Lily:** I don't know.

**Jed:** As a professional. [laughing] Your reputation's on the line -

**Lily:** And my license.

**Jed:** [laughing] Is it illegal for you to say these sort of things?

**Lily:** Um, kind of.

**Jed:** [laughing] Uh, I do think little Jed was depressed actually. Tired all the time. Totally uncomfortable in his own skin. He was, I was, a person to whom the world happened. This sense of agency. This idea that I could make a change or that I could do something about something I didn't like, didn't exist. It was like the world is how it is, I'm how I am, it's happening to me and there's nothing I can do about it. And I think that's a sign of depression - this concept that there's just nothing to be done. I wasn't capable of believing that I could do something about how I felt.

**Lily:** Change is usually subtle, slow, gradual but it's also usually marked by defining moments.

**Jed:** Two years ago I moved to NY and I fell into the deepest darkest depression of my whole life. I was clinically depressed, I was suicidal, I was seeing multiple therapists, and getting out of it seemed impossible while I was in it.

**Lily:** But this didn't just come out of nowhere.

**Jed:** I have no friends for a while, seventh and eighth grade, and I remember this moment where I was sitting at a desk at school and no one was talking to me and I wasn't talking to anyone and I remember just staring at a desk and thinking the thought, "If I had a gun right now I would kill myself". And I probably told my parents about that and they were like, "we're gonna get you a therapist."

**Jed:** I had spent my whole life thinking that happiness, satisfaction, contentment was somewhere else. The problem was where I was. And this is so trite, but the problem was inside of me all along. And moving to New York, which I thought was going to solve this feeling I had my whole life and I moved to New York and it didn't fix it. And that event,

that's what sort of brought me down and made me crumble. Because it was a last ditch - it was my last chance and it didn't work.

**Jed:** And the benefit of going through that and coming out the other side is now I know, any kind of discontent I feel it isn't real - well, it is real, but it isn't gonna be solved by going somewhere else.

**Lily:** Making the Jedediaries now, kind of makes sense in a chronologically tidy sort of way. It's 25 years later. A quarter century.

**Jed:** I've been dealing with it a lot this year and thinking this would be a much more interesting show if reading the diary from twenty three years ago - if these were the events that were destroying my psyche and sending me into a depression - this would have been a much more interesting podcast. But there's a little bit of distance now from the version of me that I was before I got hella depressed.

**Lily:** Do you think you could have done it then?

**Jed:** Oh that's a great question. Maybe not. I mean, I can barely do it now and I feel fine. [laugh] Um, no probably not. Because I've been trying - this is the biggest undertaking I've taken in my entire life. As far as a creative project.

**Lily:** Who we are when look into the past matters just as much as the past that we're looking into. It's hard to say what this show might have been like if they'd taken this on in the midst of Jed's darkest hour. Having been in therapy a long time, I'm always amazed at how the meaning I make from the old stuff changes depending on where I'm at in my own growth.

**Girl:** I just think it's fun to look back and read things that have happened. For whatever reason.

**Lily:** Do you think you remember those things more because you've written them down?

**Girl:** No. No. No.

**Lily:** When you go back and read it are you ever like "I wrote this?"

**Girl:** Sometimes. It hasn't been that long yet so...but that can definitely happen.

**Lily:** That happens to me all the time. [laughing] Is your journal something where sometimes there's secrets in it that you don't want other people to see or is it something you wouldn't mind if anyone found it?

**Girl:** I really wouldn't mind that much.

**Lily Mortified Performance:** October eleventh. These past two months I changed a lot. I had my first sexual experience which was fun I suppose but because he's a fucking asshole it means nothing. The bright side is that he didn't exactly get any. Only me - Which might be why I didn't hear from him again, I dunno. [laughing] As I was saying, I made many decisions and came to many realizations over the past week. I smoked weed. I quit the play. And I LOVE THIRD EYE BLIND" [cheers/boo's].

**Lily:** I was 16 when I wrote that. And I've been reading it on stage in front of hundreds of strangers in a show called Mortified for the past decade. The first time, I was 24 and it hadn't been all that long since I'd written these words, feeling all the angsty despair of a kind of outsider teenager who was trying to figure out how to feel love while my parents rocky marriage was coming to an end. Standing on stage, I just hoped no one noticed how much I was shaking. I was pretty unsure if anyone would think it was funny or understand.

One of my favorite revelations from my diary is that even in matters of hopeless romantic longing, I was fairly organized. And now, I really like that about myself.

**Lily Mortified Performance:** So I had this little post-it I'd found I'd stuck in my diary. And it says "why am I thinking about those stupid bastard boys? Oh I know! It's cuz I can't fucking have any of them!" And then there's two columns, one is for boy and one is for reason - that I can't have him. So, "boy: Brandon, Reason: has girlfriend. Boy: Doug, Reason: is ex boyfriend. Boy: Maynard, Reason: lead singer of Tool" [laughing].

**Lily:** For a lot of those years I was performing, I was in therapy trying to figure out how to relate to men along with a lot of other things. But I also spent my twenties in long term relationships. I thought teenage me who was always pathetically pining for someone, was replaced by young adult me thinking I found someone and was on course to getting as far away from teenage me as fucking possible. I kept doing the show, but after the joy of sharing this part of myself wore off, it just started to feel like I was laughing at a caricature of myself. I wasn't really connecting to the girl in the diary anymore - the obsessing about boys, the philosophy 101 musings about the meaninglessness of it all.

**Lily Mortified Performance:** May nineteenth. Exactly one month later, death again. -I don't understand how my cycle works- I am so scared of dying. Maybe it's because I don't see anything past life. I can't see anything but nothingness and empty space. A carcass rotting or ashes slowly disintegrating into the earth. [laughing] -god I'm so dramatic- So now I think about this and I've been crying for the past hour. Oh what a day. Maybe listening to Ani DiFranco isn't the best idea. [loud laughs]

**Lily:** In my twenties I had a serious boyfriend - well, a short series of them - I had a career path, I was a GROWN UP. I remember my therapist even wondering if doing the show was healthy for me. Was I using it to publicly mock and distance myself from an important part of who I am?

But then, for whatever reason, I didn't get called in to participate in the show for a few years. And at the same time, a lot changed in my life. I suffered a devastating breakup that left me feeling 100 percent certain I did NOT have it all figured out and, for the first time since I was 20, I stayed single for a good long soul searching length of time (end date still pending). And even feelings about career and adulthood as I ventured into creative work I only dreamed of doing seriously when I was younger - that was shifting too. Oh and our country went to shit and my

family went through some big uncomfortable changes. All of this has left me feeling more vulnerable than I've felt since I was a teenager.

And this is when the producers at Mortified invited me back on stage.

**Lily Mortified Performance:** April nineteenth. I never realized until a few minutes ago how truly dangerous pms can be. Why am I feeling so sorry for myself? I thought I was alright and then I was soaking in the bathtub listening to music and I started to think about suicide. Not doing it! Just the whole thing in general. I started thinking about holding my breath under water and I began sliding down a little deeper. But then I remembered how much it hurts to have water go up your nose and the angle I was at would have made it impossible for that not to happen. I sat back up. I don't wanna die. And if I did I wouldn't want to die while taking a bath because I would not want to be found naked.

**Lily:** Now, getting up there and reading these words, the meaning is transformed. I'm suddenly embodying younger me because she IS me and the stories she tells relate directly to my experience of vulnerability now, as a woman in my thirties. Luckily, I have better tools to cope. But I get her and I don't want to push her away. She's showing up at just the right time.

**Lily Mortified Performance:** This whole experience has me completely disturbed and I need to tell someone. But I know my mom will make too big a deal out of it and everyone else will just make fun of me behind my back because I'm such a fucking drama queen.  
[laughs]

**Lily:** And sharing her with an audience reminds me I wasn't as alone then as I thought I was and I'm not alone now.

[scene sounds: playing with kids in yard]

**Lily:** Oh there's a fort? Ok!

**Boy:** Right up here.

**Lily:** Oh so this is the fort, so the fort is a hammock for one.

**Girl:** Yes. It is actually my fort because I pretty much built it all by myself. Actually my dad helped me put in the hooks.

**Lily:** This is all your design.

**Lily:** There's no primary source document that's free of context or perspective. Who's writing it? Why? Who's the intended audience? A diary may be private, or at least intended to be, but our experiences are a mix of alone and shared. Jed and I both reveal something about our relationships to people in our lives and leave some key information out either because we're pushing away our thoughts and feelings or because there's a lot we just weren't aware of.

**Jed:** Yeah, I think i considered myself to be a victim, basically, twenty five years ago. A victim of my brother who was a bully and was mean to me, a victim of the kids at school...

**Lily:** Through making the Jedediaries, Jed has had the chance to reevaluate some of his story. Before he lived in NY, he spent a few years in San Francisco.

**Jed:** Moving to CA made me friends with my brother for the first time in my life. Really friends. So before I moved to SF where my brother lived, we were more like associates, we would talk occasionally but not very close. And he lived in SF and I moved to SF and I lived right around the corner from him. I could see - he owns a bakery, I could see his bakery from my bedroom. So we hung out like once a week at least for several years and we became friends and close in a way that we never did. We became close in a way that we never had been before. But even through that, my conception of him as a younger brother twenty five years ago, was like an unrelenting bully, like he had it out for me and he was always hurting me and beating me up and by looking through the diary, I mean he was a bully to me, but I realize that my conception of our relationship when I was younger was not - it wasn't the full story, like anything. We were both kind of processing the divorce differently.

**Lily:** So making this podcast and reading through the diary means Jed and Josey having been talking about it - and that we get to listen in on those conversations.

[clip from Jedediaries]

**Jed:** [on phone with brother] Let me read this entry entry to you - I think that's the best way to do this. "January 10th, 1993. Josey is a jerk. I hate him so much. [Josey: oh god] He strangled me a lot today. [Josey laughing] Nothing else happened. [Josey: Jesus Christ] Today I went skiing." Um so that's - you know, why did you strangle me a lot that day?

**Josey:** Oh god. Oh my goodness. Why did I strangle you a lot that day? I mean I was an angry little boy and unfortunately I found an outlet for that anger in strangling you. [Jed laughing] I do not approve of it and if i were there now not only would I say, "Josey don't strangle your brother" but I would not allow it to happen.

**Lily:** Josey admits he took out his aggression on Jed but then there's this message he left after hearing about a particularly bloody entry that challenged Jed's memory of his brother.

[clip from Jedediaries]

**Josey:** Brother. Oh my god. Hearing you say that I hit you in the nose with the chairlift bar - that moment has been forever seared into my consciousness. It broke my heart when that happened. It made me SO sad. I'm still sad about it. Seeing how bad it hurt



you. I remember there was blood - it was a little traumatic. And yeah you thought that I did it on purpose. You were so upset with me. And I really didn't do it on purpose. Oh my god. It's crazy. I remember it so clearly. I felt bad about it for so long. I still feel bad about it. Jesus I promise you brother I didn't do it on purpose. And I'm sorry that it happened...I could cry.

[back to Jed interview]

**Jed:** Everyone else was living their lives at the same time and paradoxically going through the diary which was very specific to me and my time, I'm learning that everyone else had their own stuff to deal with. I mean, everybody was dealing with the divorce. It had just happened. Our lives were blown apart. All of our lives. And I think I was dealing with it by being very sad and tired. Josey was dealing with it by being very aggressive and angry. Our parents were dealing with it in their own ways. And it's making me look at that divorce as an event. Which I never really thought about it, it was twenty five, twenty six years ago. And it probably had more of an effect on me then I realized.

**Lily:** We build on the work we've already done but we don't exactly "get over" stuff - it keeps cycling back, though who we are when we encounter it again has likely shifted.

**Jed:** I used to do this thing a lot - I don't do it anymore - but I'd feel bad about feeling bad. And now I just feel bad. And that's progress. [laughing]

**Lily:** It struck me that for both Jed and me, our parents divorces served as a backdrop but were rarely mentioned in our diaries, if at all. And I don't think this was accidental nor was it conscious. Little Jed did occasionally mention divorce related activities (like a divorce support group he went to), but he never drew a line between the divorce and any distress he was feeling.

**Jed:** I definitely was dealing with it, but I don't think I was dealing with it enough. But I mean at some point, you deal with it all you can, I mean what are you gonna do? You're a kid. You've got life to live. You can't talk about it all the time.

**Lily:** And I COULD talk all the time. But not about IT. My diary was chock full of emotional outpouring from my 15 to 18 year old self. Grief, longing, rage...all feelings you might expect someone to have in response to a divorce - were all directed elsewhere. In fact, I barely mentioned my parents at all.

Between Jed and I, you might find clues to how we were coping - Jed, weighed down by a general tiredness and dissatisfaction and me, directing all of my emotional volatility anywhere except towards the very most vulnerable, impossible thing. And for both of us, these reactions and coping strategies still ring true.

**Jed:** I think that's clear in the diary. I think twenty five years ago I'm very discontent and I'm imagining a life that's not what I had and from then until a few years ago, that's what I was searching for.

**Lily:** But I also learned from listening to the Jedediaries, that some of the good stuff stays with us too.

[clip from Jedediaries]

**Jed:** "June 26th. I am home. Yay. I miss Vinnie and Phil and Jade and Ben. The Circus was ok. Whoa!" I can still do a cartwheel today [Torrey: oh really?] I mean clearly I learned how to do a cartwheel this week 25 years ago, a skill I still maintain. Can you do a cartwheel?

**Torrey:** No I can't.

**Jed:** Oh, come on.

**Torrey:** No really I've tried and am terrible at it...this is no place to do a cartwheel.

**Jed:** [laughing] I got a look in my eye and I stared at Torrey and thought "I'm gonna teach this man how to do a cartwheel right here right now."

**Lily:** We don't just leave the past in the past because the past always comes back. If we accept that our stories about ourselves are going to change, we can make use of them in a flexible, evolving way.

**Girl:** I'm eleven years old.

**Lily:** How long have you been eleven years old? Is that like something you've been doing your whole life or did you work up to that?

**Girl:** Well, you know I was kinda born eleven.

**Lily:** Ouch. [laughing] I'm just feeling for your mom right now.

**Girl:** Mm yeah. [L you were born eleven.] I was born eleven.

**Lily:** Wow so it just came to you naturally.

**Girl:** Yeah it kinda just clicked.

**Lily:** You didn't have to think about it much.

**Girl:** No! It just came to me.

**Lily:** And what grade are you in?

**Girl:** I'm in fifth grade.

**Lily:** That's my niece, Ada. I spent an afternoon running around the yard with her and my nine year old nephew, Linden. I only get to see once every year or two. I get this magical glimpse into how their humor, play, and self awareness is constantly changing and it's such a trip. Like, now we're having this full on silly banter? But as we move in and out of sincerity and sarcasm and they let me peek into their present worlds, I wonder - what about this will they remember? What will seem important to them 25 years from now? How will the narratives of their lives

evolve and change - what actively nag at them or hurt later on? And where will they draw their strength and joy from?

[SCENE: Linden talking about cricket, makes pop sounds, playing yard]

**Linden:** [singing] pop and you pop you pop and you stop. I look at your face. [not singing] Where are your eyes? I can't find his eyes - are those your eyes? Yes they are. Where do you think this cricket's eyes are?

**Ada:** What?

**Linden:** Where do you think the cricket's eyes are?

**Ada:** They're literally right there.

**Linden:** Yeah I thought those were something else.

**Lily:** Is this a certain kind of cricket?

**Linden:** Possibly. Wait - is it - what?

**Lily:** It's recording.

**Linden:** Oh wow. Oh [makes silly sound]

**Lily:** Oh there it goes! There it goes.

**Linden:** It goes away [sung]

**Ada:** I still see it.

## Credits

**Lily:** A Therapist Walks Into a Bar is produced by me, Lily Sloane. Emily Shaw is my story editor. I composed the music except for the song Colocate by Podington Bear for Jed's diary clips and the theme to Jedediararies by Marshall York.

THANK YOU Jedediah Baker for being part of this episode! Please please go subscribe and listen to The Jedediararies. You can find it wherever you listen to podcasts.

Thank you Ada and Linden for playing with me - I love you so much and watching you grow up is one of the greatest joys, even though you're far away.

Thank you Josey Baker and Torrey Paquette for lending your voices to this story. And thank you Mat Stevens, for hanging out during Jed's interview and taking your temporary co-producer role very seriously.

**Mat:** It doesn't sound that interesting now.

**Lily:** I actually think you holding it might - if you want to hold it while - yeah...mic stuff...because there's a few things I want to make sure I ask before we're done [laughing].

**Mat:** What questions are we covering? Now that I'm a co-producer.

**Lily:** If you don't know about Mortified, go to [getmortified.com](http://getmortified.com) and see if there are performances in your city and listen to their podcast from Radiotopia and watch their series on Netflix. It's very cathartic and fun.

Subscribe to this show in your favorite podcast listening place so you don't miss anything AND -

**Linden:** Leave a review on iTunes!

**Lily:** Ok, just like that but slightly slower.

**Ada:** And kind of at the same time as me.

**Lily:** So, one two three.

**Ada + Linden:** leave a review on iTunes

**Linden:** Maybe or maybe not please don't.

**Lily:** [laughing] that's a really mixed message. Oh and can you tell people where they can find more information about the show.

**Linden:** You can find more information on the show in my sister's diary.

**Lily:** OR

**Linden:** Oh a therapist walks into a bar dot com.

**Lily:** And visit [patreon dot com slash a therapist walks into a bar](http://patreon.com/a-therapist-walks-into-a-bar) to become a patron of the show -

**Linden:** Give this lady only a penny at patreon.

**Lily:** Or more!

**Linden:** Only a penny!

**Linden:** Awkward silence!

[all three making silly noises]

**Lily:** Thanks for listening.

