

The Novel Em

1. In the novel Em has a dog.
2. Em is mentioned 485 times in the novel, the dog 77. So far, 994 people have found this fact online. The facts have been posted on a website for 3297 days--just under ten years, by which time the actual dog that the character dog was based on must have died.
3. Em is eating on 26 pages of the novel, but she is never mentioned as large.
4. Actual Em is very large. The actual dog is not large, but is fat in the novel.
5. Em exists in the novel because she is trapped in a relationship that exists in one form inside the novel but in quite a different form outside the novel.
6. Outside the novel Em has many friends. Inside the novel she has a friend named Kay.
7. Kay, Em has noticed in the novel, likes to negate almost anything anyone says. This is true of a certain kind of actual person. For this reason, only a certain kind of friendship is possible with such a person, which cannot be characterized as healthy.
8. Em does avoid Kay somewhat in the novel, but also feels sorry for her, therefore guilty, and so spends time with Kay trying to be patient, though Kay can

suck up patience like air, leaving only carbon dioxide for anyone else in the room. Em suspects that Kay has never understood this, which makes Kay more pathetic and therefore causes Em to feel even worse and the situation does not get better from here.

9. It can take Em up to 48 hours to recover from a visit with Kay. Outside the novel Em rarely gets free of people & has never considered the concept of *recovery time*.

10. Em likes to sleep a lot. In the novel, she sleeps more than she eats, and walking the dog comes third. When she walks the dog past Kay's house she tries to sneak past. She won't let the dog stop and pee on the shrub in front of Kay's house. Lots of other dogs pee there, and Kay complains, but when Em suggests that she take out the shrub Kay says no--like such a suggestion only makes the idea of pee worse.

11. Outside the novel, Em has a kidney problem and a person who could be Kay is always asking her about it.

12. How annoying--for anyone to be interrogated to this degree.

13. Also outside the novel, Em has discovered that there are certain people who it is best to go see a movie with, as their story has to stop long enough for the film's story to play out. Even after the film is over, people walking away from the theater are still a little bit in the movie and often have to let it wear off while they make their way home. Some are prone to going home to bed and dreaming further extensions of the movie--which Em has done occasionally in the past, and she enjoys, but she never does that in the novel because she never goes to see a film in the novel.

14. Only a couple of people outside the novel think they are Em in the novel. No one thinks they are Kay.

15. In the novel, Em had fucked Kay's husband a long time ago, when they were all young and attractive, but Kay never found out. Kay divorced her husband for related reasons. The ex husband would never tell Kay about his fling with Em, though Em is tempted to tell Kay, since they have an ongoing and complex friendship. Kay's ex husband got a dog right away when he left Kay, who never liked dogs.

16. Late in the novel, Kay's ex husband remarries. He is mentioned 96 times in the novel, nineteen more times than the dog. Em notes, also near the end of the novel, that his new wife is large. It is the only mention of a large woman in the book.

17. Em constantly notes the size and shape of people--from friends and family to strangers--mentally but not out loud. She has a theory that the size of one's dog correlates to one's self image in a negative capability sort of way. Em would never use the term negative capability when talking to Kay. Outside of the novel, she's not even sure what the term means, but it sounds about right and she's said so to other people.

18. The relationship Em is stuck with is happening between her and the author of the novel.

19. Em will have to die to shed the relationship, as far as the author is concerned.

20. As far as Em is concerned, the author will die first.

21. While Em is sleeping, her dog comes to look at her. Like most creatures, he wants something. He sniffs at the bed: has Em peed in her sleep? At the very end of the novel, she is having trouble sleeping and is only maybe dying.

22. The book has been in print for 736 days and sold 87,219 copies. Em is older now. But she has no trouble sleeping, never has.

23. In the novel, Em dreams of Kay's ex husband and is saddened enough by loneliness to consider dying.

24. The author has had trouble sleeping, on occasion.

25. The author lies down next to Em, who is dreaming of the novel Em, which sometimes happens. Her dream version of herself in the novel is slim and hapless in a lovable way, and she has other adventures with people who do not exist in the novel or in real life. The aging dog settles down between the author and Em on the bed to sleep. They all wait to become new facts.

Audrey Colombe lives in three places, writes fiction and nonfiction, teaches fiction writing at University of Tampa, and has previous work published in *Portland Review*, *Alaska Quarterly*, *Los Angeles Review*, and *Puerto del Sol*. There's a novel in the works.