

A Mathematical State of Grace Complete Series: Book 1: Fragment + Bonus Book 2: Finale: Fusion

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A Mathematical State of Grace Book 1: Fragment *A Mathematical State of Grace Finale: Fusion* A
Mathematical State of Grace Cathy McGough

A Mathematical State of Grace

A novel by Cathy McGough

Second Kindle Edition

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This is a work of fiction. The characters in it are all fiction. Resemblance to any persons living or dead is purely coincidental. Some liberties have been taken with a few building locations and descriptions. Names, characters, places and incidents either are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

*Printed and bound in the United States of America. [Also by Cathy McGough](#) [FICTION](#) [Three Friends](#) [Interviews with Legendary Writers](#) [From Beyond](#) [Death Wish](#) [Painting with Words](#) [NON-FICTION](#) [103 Fundraising Ideas for Parent Volunteers](#) [With Schools & Teams](#) [For Mabel & Michael With Love](#) *"I think that while we were still converging, before we made contact, we were in a state of mathematical grace."* [Ian McEwan, Enduring Love](#) [A Mathematical State of Grace](#) [FINALE: FUSION](#) [Acknowledgements](#) [Reading Suggestions](#) [A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)*

.01 Sixteen-year-old Grace Greenway liked to sleep in, especially on school days. Her mother, Helen Greenway heaved the door open and marched inside. The two heads on her koala slippers led the way. The heads shhhh'd as they whispered their way across the cool hardwood floor. When Helen reached the other side of the room, she let her guard down. She removed the

perfume-filled handkerchief she had been covering her nose with. The air in the room was ripe due to last night's experiments, which by the smell of it had something to do with Sulphur. Once she arrived at the window, Helen lifted the glass wide open. She stuck her head outside, filling her lungs with pure outdoor oxygen. Refreshed, she drew back the curtains. Helen pointed herself and her slippers in the direction of the lump on the bed: her daughter, Grace. Across the room, Grace's computer made its presence known as an alarm sounded. It began flashing random numbers on the screen. It read them aloud in a voice not unlike Stephen Hawking's. Helen considered the significance of said numbers. They made little sense to her non-mathematically-oriented brain. Her koala headed slippers leaned in, feigning comprehension. Helen crossed the room, while the koala heads nodded and whispered to each other. Helen herself was clueless in matters of mathematics. She had no idea who her daughter had inherited her numeric genes from. Helen considered this genetic transference as she studied her daughter's cocooned form. "It's time to wake up, love!" Helen said. Grace moved a little and threw the covers back. Stalling she stretched and yawned without opening her eyes. "Good morning, sleepyhead," Helen said as she kissed her daughter on the forehead. "Morning, Mum," Grace answered, finally opening her eyes. "Bus will be here in fifteen! You've got to get a move on. I'll put something together for you to eat on the run." "Okay, Mum," Grace said as she unfolded herself from the covers. She sat up, only to fall back down against her pillow again. She so wanted to get back into her dream state - back to the Vincente Marino state of mind. "Come on, Grace!" Helen reiterated as she made her way toward the door, "Be downstairs in five!" Grace whispered Vincente's name out loud, quietly, softly, almost as if she imagined he might hear her. She imagined him climbing up the lattice outside the window. Tap-tap-tapping. The sound of her computer, made her wake up. She rubbed the sleep out of her eyes. She looked down at the nightgown she was wearing. She hated this thing, with its white lace and red ribbon tie-up. It was absolutely virginal. Grace ran her finger over the red tie, and it sliced into her flesh. It hurt like hell, like a paper cut would, but the ribbon was fabric. She unfastened it from her nightgown. Watched as it drifted towards the floor, followed a few seconds later by crimson drops of blood. Grace sucked her bleeding finger, but it continued to drip onto the floor. It blended in with the red ribbon, which twisted like a snake. She closed her eyes and fell back onto her pillow. She thought about Vincente Marino. She couldn't wait to see him today. Grace moved to the edge of the bed where the blood drops had been, but now they were gone. Shrugging, she picked up the red ribbon. Grace reattached it to the lace collar of her nightgown, and made her way into the bathroom. Helen bellowed another reminder from downstairs, but Grace did not acknowledge it. Instead, she closed the door behind her and with a yawn, let her white nightgown fall onto the cold tile floor. Grace leaned into the shower cubicle and turned the hot water on full force. She let the steam rise while she glanced back over her shoulder. Her nightgown in a pile on the floor, looked almost like a spirit which had come and gone. Then she stepped into the steaming hot water. Only hot, never cold. She washed her hair, her face, and the rest of her body, then let the hot water fall down over her. When she was as hot as a buttered crumpet, she turned the water off and stepped back. She turned the cold water on full blast, counted to three, and stepped into it. The jolt to her system was like a chemical reaction, an electric shock. In this moment, she felt the most alive. All of her senses were attuned. It was almost like she had been reborn. Grace contemplated the water as it travelled on its journey down the drain. She noticed the red tie had somehow fallen into the drain. Caught in the swirl, it went around and around and around. She reached in and caught the red ribbon, crumpling it up into a ball in the palm of her hand, to drain away the excess water. When she opened up her fist, it sprung to life and formed itself into a shape. Intrigued, she repeated this process: Crumple the ribbon, make a fist, open the fist. See the result again. And again. And again. It always happened. Time and time again, it cast itself into the same form: the shape of a heart. .02 Grace tossed the nightgown into the dirty laundry basket. She began to dress in her school uniform, hiking the skirt up as high as she could get away with. All the girls at school did that in order to make it shorter than it was supposed to be. When her uniform was acceptable, she returned to her room and began to blow dry and brush her long, auburn hair. She glanced over her shoulder at the computer screen: Still searching. Grace

hoped it would find the answer overnight. She had programmed it with one goal: To find the next Fibonacci sequence. If successful, Grace Greenway's name would be recorded in the history books. Her discovery would rival The Golden Mean. Grace smiled, and set her hair into place. She remembered her nickname for Vincente Marino. She called him her Golden Mean. It was her little secret. To finish things off, she reached far back into the drawer where she hid her makeup and brush. She put on some foundation and a little bit of blush. Grace sprayed a tiny splodge of perfume onto her neck before she made her way downstairs. She hoped to zip past her mum. Hoped her mom wouldn't notice the shortened skirt or any of her other accentuations this morning. Otherwise, there would be drama. The bus driver honked at the curb, and Grace broke into a run. She grabbed her books and a piece of toast as she flew by her mum. She made her way out the door past her mother's I-Spy eyes, up the stairs and onto the bus. Helen watched her daughter climb aboard, knowing full well that her skirt was shorter than it ought to be. Helen continued to watch as her daughter ambled her way towards the back of the bus. She remembered the first time she had stood there and watched as her daughter boarded the bus. Helen had wanted to walk to the bus with her daughter. Grace was so excited and determined to be a big girl she wanted to do it on her own. Helen remembered it like it was yesterday: how her daughter was ready to cut the cord. For Helen had been unprepared for the overwhelming pain wrenching at her heart. She followed the bus on its journey with her eyes until she could no longer see it. A tear rolled down her cheek. Helen brushed it away. On the bus, Grace found her usual seat and then opened her book. She hid behind the textbook like it was a wall, a disguise. There, she could await the arrival of Vincente Marino, incognito. As the bus groaned along the road, Grace lost track of where she was for a second. She came back to reality when Vincente Marino climbed aboard. Grace sat up straight then, like a jolt of adrenalin had gone through her. She held a textbook in front of her like a shield. Inside, her heart was thumping and thumping so hard it was almost as if it had grown wings and was about to take flight. Her pulse pounded, and she had to think about taking each breath. Vincente moved from seat to seat, high-fiving and hallowing, until the bus driver told him to take a pew. After whistling a whistle so high that every dog in the neighbourhood must have heard it, Vincente slid into his seat alongside his girlfriend, Missy Malone. Grace was in love with Vincente Marino, but she only loved him from afar. She knew that he was totally out of her league, but at the same time, she had hope. She believed that love was a mathematical equation. She believed true love was predetermined. It was like any other mathematical formula: you just had to search. Seeking it out until you found the perfect Golden Mean. With all the numbers from the correct sequence in place, the universe would conspire for two people to fall in love. Grace Greenway was waiting for her Golden Mean to click into sequence. Then she and Vincente Marino would be in the perfect state of love. Grace looked up from behind the textbook. Vincente's voice floated toward her. She watched his blond hair shimmer as it caught the sunlight. His golden locks brushed across his shoulders. He laughed and whispered something into Missy's ear, and then he turned in the direction of the back of the bus. Grace's heart stopped when their eyes locked for a split second. Her cheeks turned crimson. She covered her face with the textbook once again, like a curtain. Grace could still see her feet, her shoes. Then athletic running shoes Vincente Marino's shoes touched hers. She lowered the book, and his cobalt eyes locked with her hazel eyes. She coughed when she finally remembered to breathe. "Hey, Grace," Vincente said. "I was wondering if you could save my life?" She nodded. "The game last night went late, and then we had to go out and celebrate, I mean, we won! You know how it is." "Yeah, I know," she whispered. "And then this morning, I realized I didn't do my math homework, and you know old Mr. Dense has it in for me. He would love to get me kicked off the team." "Yes, I know." "Grace?" She took in a deep breath when he said her name, as he continued. "If you could find it in your heart to lend me your homework, I'd be forever in your debt. You would absolutely save my life." She reached into her bag without hesitation. "I'll have it back to you before class." Then he did the motion of crossing his heart and hoping to die. He beamed a smile in her direction. "Thanks babe," he said, blowing a kiss her way as he stuffed her book into his backpack. Vincente returned to his seat, where Missy Malone was keeping an eye on their interaction. Grace and Missy's eyes locked for a second over Vincente's shoulder. The two of

them were not rivals. Missy knew that Grace wasn't a threat, but she could see that the poor idiot was smitten with her Vincente. Everyone knew that she followed him around like a stray puppy. Grace put the textbook barrier back up and smiled to herself. In fact, she wore the biggest and most stupid grin possible. She was so excited she would be speaking with Vincente again. Even the thought of Fibonacci could not distract her. Then she realized that the bus had stopped, and all of the passengers were clambering into the aisle. She too made her, burrowing herself in until she was standing directly behind Vincente. He let Missy out in front of him. The scent of Vincente's cologne wafted in her direction. Grace breathed it in, breathed him in. Once he stepped out into the sunlight, the rays kissed the blood gold ring on his finger, and for a moment, blinded her. She bumped into him, but he didn't seem to mind. He laughed and beamed a toothy smile in her direction. Grace forgot to breathe. Missy Malone hooted, put her arm through Vincente's, and led him away. Grace arrived at her locker. She took a deep breath and then threw her backpack inside. She looked over her morning schedule: Aboriginal Indigenous Studies, Math, Art, then Lunch, followed by more Art, English, Spare. She could go to see the game. The bell rang. She slammed her locker shut. She ran along the corridor and took her seat alongside the windows. Her teacher Miss Smart took attendance, and then introduced a special guest to the class. The guest speaker was a woman from The Stolen Generation. She told the class about how she was taken. Then adopted into a white family. How she was not allowed to practice or follow the traditions of The Gadigal people. Grace felt sorry for her. After all, no child should be abandoned, let alone stolen. No child should be excluded from her own history. It was preposterous. Grace could not understand why the woman's parents had allowed it to happen. Grace imagined the situation unfolding at her house. Strangers showing up. Demanding to take her away. Grace's parents would have hired every lawyer in town and stopped things before they even started. She thought about asking the woman this question. Another classmate beat her to it. The woman remembered how the white man had brought weapons with him, including guns. Her parents knew that blood would be spilled if they resisted, so they did not. She said there was no point in fighting, because taking the children away had been sanctioned by law. "It didn't only happen in Australia," the woman explained to the class. "It happened to Aboriginal Canadians and to Native Americans, to Indigenous New Zealanders, and to many other peoples in different places all over the world. Each instance was different, but these terrible things changed our families forever." Although Grace felt empathetic, she believed the woman should forget the past and move forward. She believed that life was like a mathematical formula. You had to keep searching and moving always. Reconfiguring. Making progress. Grace made her way to Math class, where Vincente passed her homework across just in time to hand it in. Mr. Dense was the kind of teacher who did everything by the book. He appeared to be pleased when Vincente Marino was the first person in line to hand his homework in. Fibonacci was being reviewed in class today. As sixteen-year-old Grace Greenway was a recognized child prodigy, her teacher dismissed her early. Grace passed the free time studying at the library. She went to her other classes, lunch, English. Then back to the library for her free period until game time. After reading and choosing an armful of textbooks to borrow, she made her way onto the field. to view the cricket match. Just then, Vincente Marino, stepped up to bat. The high school crowd erupted into tumultuous applause. Grace, distracted by Vincente's white cricket uniform as it reflected the late afternoon sunlight, lost control of her bundle of books. She cradled the volumes and juggled them as you do in the hope of a successful recovery. Yet her sheer determination to remain upright cradling the complete works of mathematical role models: Sophie Germain, Hypatia, Lise Meitner and Mary Somerville was not meant to be. As the books hit the ground, she too was bowled over in more ways than one. .03

When Grace came to everything was fuzzy and cloudy. She was dizzy, and she felt like throwing up. Her head hurt something awful. It was like her brain was trying to find a way out of her head. "Everyone stand back!" someone shouted, "Grace? Grace! Are you okay? Speak to me, Grace! Can you hear me?" When she opened up her eyes and looked skyward, an angel was calling her name. Grace wondered if she was dead. Could she have died and moved on to another dimension? Refusing to believe it to be true, she squeezed her eyes closed and opened them again. A boy was floating above her with a halo as big as the sun. "I'm so, so sorry Grace," he said, taking one of

her hands into his. A crowd had gathered around, pushing, shoving and shouting. Creating general teenaged mayhem. Grace could see them bending over her - some with their laughing faces upside down. In her head, was a constant humming. If it weren't for one familiar face, that of the young man, she would have felt or frightened. She tried to be brave and to stand up. Her legs would not cooperate. They jiggled and wobbled like overcooked spaghetti. In her ears, the sound of the ocean was prevalent. She sat back down again and rested her head against the young man's chest. He did not seem to mind. .04 The boy's face moved closer to Grace's, so that the sun's rays dispelled the shape of his halo. She could feel his sweet, cinnamon-y breath upon her neck. Grace knew what he wanted. She turned her bare neck toward him. Giving him permission to bite her. To taste her. "Someone call Triple Zero!" the boy shouted as he lifted Grace and held her body. Grace felt bad. She had meant to go on a weight loss program. She wasn't exactly light as a feather. She leaned her head into his chest in anticipation of hearing his heartbeat. All she could hear was the roaring of the ocean. Grace looked up at his handsome face. He looked so worried. Together, they moved amongst the murmurs and whispers of the crowd. Into a quiet place. Finally up some stairs and through a swinging door. Then Grace Greenway was set down upon a soft cot in a room that smelled like antiseptic and gym socks. She pushed her face back into him, trying to repossess his cinnamon-y-ness. "This is the nurses' station. Wait here. I'll go and get help." "Don't leave me," she said. "Please don't leave me." "She's not breathing!" someone shouted in time to remind her to. Soon, Grace felt like herself again. She only wished that the waves would stop crashing upon the shores of her mind. "Can you hear me?" a woman asked. Grace nodded. "I'm Nurse Hands." "Nurse, 5. Hands, 5 - Amazing!" Grace exclaimed. "She's delirious!" Nurse Hands said. She felt Grace's pulse and her forehead, and then she looked up at Vincente and shook her head. "No, she's thinking about math class. Mr. Dense let her go early. We were doing Fibonacci," Vincente explained. "Do you know her name?" "Yes, she's Grace. Grace Greenway." Grace scrunched Vincente's shirt into the palm of her hand. "I really need to get back to the game." "Grace," Nurse Hands said, "we are waiting for the ambulance. Vincente needs to get back to the game. Please let go of his shirt." Grace screamed, "Don't leave me!" Vincente knelt back down beside her and looked into her eyes. He stayed. She sighed. And then everything faded to black. .05 At the hospital, the nurse stopped at Grace's bedside and checked her vital statistics. She was stable for now. The nurse pulled the covers back over Grace's arms. She retrieved the tray of unused water glasses, stopping momentarily to glance at the young man in the cricket uniform, He was sound asleep in the chair under the window. Vincente hadn't left Grace's side since her unconscious arrival. As she exited, she looked at her watch and calculated that there were six more hours left on her shift. She loved her job, but this was going to be a really long day. Back in Grace's room, the patient began to stir and move about. She soon discovered that she was fettered to the bed by an array of noisy machines. She was in a hospital room. Why was she here? How had she gotten here? She closed her eyes and tried to focus. She tried to remember, but no memories came. Anxious to break free from the beep-beep-beeping and drip-drip-dripping, Grace attempted to sit up. When she couldn't fulfil this simple desire, she flung herself back onto the pillow. She had an intense desire to bolt. Why am I here? Grace thought. And why has everyone abandoned me? Grace noticed a boy who was sound asleep in the chair beside her bed. She wasn't alone after all, and she hugged herself as best as she could with the machines fastened to her body. She felt happier now, knowing that someone was there. That someone cared. Although she couldn't see his face, she watched as his blond hair moved in and out with each breath. He was sleeping soundly. Grace continued to stare at him, and in particular at the white uniform he was wearing. She wondered if he worked at the hospital. It seemed odd for a staff member to fall asleep by a patient's side. Grace felt strange when she looked at the boy's folded arms and his freefalling head of blond hair. Moments passed, and she continued staring. Then, almost like he had felt her eyes on him, the boy awoke with a start. He whipped his hair back, revealing the face of an angel. Grace covered her mouth with her hand. He was stunning. The boy stood up and moved toward her. Grace couldn't breathe. As he moved closer, his dark blue eyes made her heart beat faster and faster. She thought she was going to faint. And then he spoke. "You're awake, Gracie! Thank god! I was so worried. We've been so

worried." "Yes," she said, not knowing what else to say. He definitely wasn't a staff member. He meant something more to her, she could feel it in her heart, and she knew it deep in her mind. But who on earth was he? She extended her hand to him, expecting him to take it. He didn't. Instead, he moved back a step. She somewhat reluctantly rescinded her hand. The boy kept staring at Grace, like he was waiting for something. After the I wanna hold your hand miscue, he protected himself. He shoved his hands deep in his pockets. After a few seconds, he pulled them out again. Grace felt hot and cold, simultaneously. "Are you okay?" he asked. "Do you hurt anywhere?" Grace waited and thought before replying. She wanted her answer to be succinct, but not sharp. How she felt didn't matter! What she wanted to know was, why she was here? What she wanted to know was, who was he? "My head hurts the most. It's like everything hurts at the same time, if that makes sense. And you?" He beamed a smile revealing glaringly perfect white teeth. Grace thought his teeth should come with a warning: SUNGLASSES REQUIRED. He ran his fingers through his hair, and their eyes connected. Grace felt an energy from him that hit her straight in the chest first, and then seemed to bounce off the walls. If she weren't already lying down, it would have knocked her off her feet. She was in love. Of this she was certain. But he was acting strange. As if he didn't know what to say or what to do. It was like he wanted to reach out, but didn't know how. "I'm okay, thanks," he said. He looked like Winnie the Pooh with his hand caught in the Honeypot. Grace fell backwards onto the pillow once again, never breaking eye contact with the boy. She wanted to ask him questions, lots of questions, but where to start? Should she blurt them out? He looked so uncomfortable. Why? She adjusted her position on the bed. Now kind of leaning in toward him, with her head resting on one arm - as much resting as you can do when you are connected to machines - and beckoned him closer. He paused and looked at his shoes. Then he shuffled forwards. She knew he wasn't going to offer any information, she sensed it, felt it, but she had to know. Time was wasting. "What happened to me?" she finally blurted out. The boy stepped back a bit, began to say something, and then stopped. He opened his mouth, and then closed it again, like a fish. Grace tried to help with more blunt questions. "What am I doing in this hospital? How did I get here?" He remained silent, running his fingers through his hair. Grace continued, undeterred, "And who are you?" .06 The boy looked distressed at question number one and worried about two and three. Question number four caused the most astonishing reaction. Everyone knew who Vincente Marino was, and Grace Greenway especially knew. He saw her making puppy eyes at him. Sometimes, when she thought he wasn't looking, she followed him around school. She even did it sometimes when he was with his girlfriend, Missy Malone. So, was she kidding him? Vincente was pretty sure she was messing with his head. He stepped toward her and gazed into her hazel eyes, looking all the way into her soul. He needed to know what she was up to. To see if she was playing a game or a trick on him, but Grace didn't blink or give anything away. Grace had no idea who he was. When the boy gazed into her eyes, Grace wondered if she had the wrong end of the stick. Maybe he didn't know who he was, either? After all, he was blond. "I'm Vincente," he said, all the while looking into Grace's face for a sign of recognition. When it didn't come, he repeated his name again. In fact, he almost sang it, "Vincente Marino." Goosebumps made their way up Grace's arms and she shivered. She didn't recognize his name, but something deep inside of her stirred. Perhaps it was the tone of his voice. She repeated his name aloud. Nothing tweaked any memories. The goosebumps began to fade. She tried spelling his name, rolling each letter on her tongue like she was feeling her way in the dark: "V-I-N-C-E-N-T." "I spell mine with an 'e' at the end," Vincente said. He explained how he was named after one of Christopher Columbus's navigators. His parents originally wanted to name him Christopher. When his mum told his aunt, not knowing that she was also pregnant, his aunt stole the name. His parents chose another name for him, Vicente, after Vicente Pinzon. When they saw him, they changed their minds and called him Vincente instead. "That's interesting," she said. "But really, who are you to me?" "You're not kidding?" Vincente asked. "You really don't remember me?" "I'm not sure. I sense something about you, but...I don't even remember my own name." "It's Grace. You are Grace." "But a while ago, you called me Gracie." "Yeah, I did." "Why? If my name is Grace...why did you call me Gracie? I don't like it." "Whoa, okay then, I won't call you Gracie ever again." He backed away, dragging his fingers through his blond locks again.

He kept on doing that. Probably a nervous habit. Grace wanted to run her fingers through his hair, too. Why was she thinking thoughts like that? She was trying to understand what she was feeling. The hot and the cold bursts. Trying to make sense of it all. To find a memory stored somewhere inside her head. Yet every time he did that, ran his fingers through his hair, it distracted her, made her knees tremble like jelly. "You really and truly, cross your heart and hope to die, don't remember me?" Vincente asked. "I think that is an odd choice of words. Considering I'm in the hospital and all." "Ah, I'm sorry. Didn't think. Please try to remember who I am, okay? You're worrying me. Maybe I ought to go out and get someone?" "You're worried? I'm frightened! If you say I ought to know you, then there must be a memory of you stored somewhere back here." She knocked on her head with a closed fist. "Why can't I find you in here?" He grabbed her hand, stopping her from hitting herself again. He pulled a chair up beside the bed and sat down. He had decided to tell her everything. To explain why she was here, how it was all because of him. How he had injured her, and then brought her to the hospital. How he sat by her side for days while she was out. Waiting. Praying. "I am the reason you are here." "You hurt me?" "Yes, I hurt you." She grimaced. "You hurt me!" "Yes, but it was an accident. I play cricket. You were at the match. Three days ago." "Three days ago?" "Yes. Three days ago, I hit a ball and it hit you in the head. You have been here ever since. I have been at your side. Waiting." "You hit me? In the head? And now I've lost my memory?" "It appears so." "And then what?" "I carried you to the nurses' station at school. An ambulance brought you here." Grace examined her body. In her shape, she could not imagine him carrying her. He was fit, wearing a uniform, yes, but to carry her? Not possible. "You carried me?" "Yes." She had the overwhelming urge to hit him and to hug him at the exact same time. But her head hurt even more. "I'm so, so sorry," he said. The hugging impulse overrode the hitting impulse. "It was an accident, so, you have nothing to be sorry for." "Thank you," he said as he bowed his head. Grace reached out to pat him like he was a good dog. A strange woman pushed her way into the room through the swinging doors like a whirlwind. She barrelled toward them. Small in stature but forceful in energy, she moved toward them. Her skin-tight blue jeans shushed and her boot heels clicked on the antiseptic hospital floors. The woman, glared at Vincente like he was a boil waiting to be lanced. He spoke in a very quiet voice. Offered to leave the two of them alone. Before they had time to reply, he picked himself up and exited. "Don't go," Grace pleaded, but it was too late. Grace watched the door for a moment, hoping he might return. He didn't. She turned her attention toward the strange woman. She wondered what kind of a hospital she was in that would allow its staff members to be dressed in jeans and boots. "And how are you, my love?" the woman asked, and then she bent over and put her lips to Grace's forehead. Grace deemed this to be a gesture of over-familiarity, and said so. "Don't do that!" she exclaimed, "Who do you think you are?" she demanded as she proceeded to wipe the germs away from the place the woman had touched her with her lips. "Whatever do you mean, who am I?" "Don't you know either?" Grace asked, offended at the woman's lack of decorum and professionalism. "Who am I?" "Is there an echo in here?" Grace asked. "Then you really, truly, don't know who I am?" Grace shrugged. The woman turned and darted out of the room. She could run pretty fast for a short lady wearing high-heeled boots. As she was going out, Vincente was coming in. She nearly knocked him over. Grace was appalled as she heard the woman shrieking like a banshee in the corridor. Grace thought the doors should be revolving, and said so. Vincente beamed a smile her way, which once again sent her heart fluttering. Grace wondered what kind of a hospital she was in. A psych ward? "Who was that crazy woman?" "That was no crazy woman. That was your mum." 0.7 "My mum? How could she possibly be?" Grace paused and stared at her hands. She couldn't stop looking at them. What was it? There was something lurking there. Something important. She had to remember it whatever it was, as she could sense it was very serious. Then it happened. She was flying through the air, going fast in the arms of an angel. She looked up, at the face above her, and the sun streamed in behind the angel, creating a natural halo. She strained her eyes to reveal its identity, but the face was blurry. She wondered if it were possible to ascertain the features of an angel. She thought an angel's features might not be distinguishable to the living. That was it! Grace decided that she must have had a near-death experience. She held something in her fist as she flew forward, and they ducked

into a tunnel. For a second, it was dark, or she had closed her eyes. Then she looked up, and the identity of her angel was revealed. In fact, it wasn't an angel at all - it was the boy standing beside her. She whispered his name over and over again. It was like music, humming. Drumming a beat inside of her head. "Are you okay?" Vincente asked. Grace smiled. He asked again, "Are you all right, Grace? Do you want me to get someone?" "I'm grateful," she said. "What for?" "Why, for you, of course. For you, my angel." Vincente looked at his feet. Proceeded to jam his fists into his pockets. He looked very worried, like he thought she had really lost it now. He thought he had witnessed her leaving him before - not in body exactly, but in spirit. She had travelled far away in her mind. You could tell when someone was 'away,' because the eyes would become glassy and dreamy. Vincente wished Grace Greenway's mum would return, so he could get the hell out of there. She was beginning to give him the creeps. Then, out of the blue, Grace blurted, "Vincente, are you my boyfriend?" "No!" he exclaimed, in a tone of voice that could not be misinterpreted. Just in case it was, he backed away even further, until his back was up against the wall. He looked absolutely, completely mortified. Grace was confused. His denial, that one word, hit her with full force in the chest. The exclamation point felt like a raven's beak puncturing her heart. She felt wounded, but her confusion was overwhelming. She watched him and waited for him to do something, say something. Anything. "Look, Grace, you have to know that I am not your boyfriend. I only brought you here because I was the one who hurt you." "So you're usually too cool to talk to me?" "Grace, you've helped me with my math homework, and you've helped me to stay on the team. I'm grateful for your help, but—" "Grateful..." She leaned back upon the pillow and closed her eyes. She wanted to disappear into the feathery pillow. He wanted to disappear from the room. They remained together, sharing the same space, although each of them felt like an island. "I'm going to go and get your mum, okay? I think you ought to be with family." He turned and left the room. Grace felt like a fool. She didn't know who he was, but somewhere in her heart she knew that she loved him. How silly of her, to have blurted it out like that. Perhaps she had loved him from afar? Perhaps he was in love with someone else, and now she had gone and embarrassed herself by telling him how she felt. She turned her face into the pillow and sobbed.

0.8 Grace wanted to run after Vincente Marino. She tugged at the machines in a vain attempt to unfasten them when the cavalry arrived. "What on earth are you doing, Grace?" Helen Greenway demanded. "You nearly ripped these off, you silly, silly girl," the nurse scolded. Vincente having returned said nothing. He shuffled his feet and dug his fists in and out of his pockets as if he were looking for loose change. "I was —" Grace began. She was unable to finish, because the nurse began to tilt and adjust the bed. Grace lost her balance and fell sideways, about to hit the floor. Would have hit the floor, if Vincente hadn't taken his fists out of his pockets and caught her. He held her in his arms once again, like in her memory. He was a gift, a gift from somewhere above, and once again, Grace's memories returned. Memories came pouring in like flashbacks. Vincente on the school bus. Vincente playing cricket on the field. Vincente smiling at her, taking his homework from her. Vincente, Vincente, Vincente. Floods of memories inundated her, and from them, Grace knew two things for certain. Number one: she loved Vincente Marino. Number two: he did not love her. She looked into his eyes. They were empty pools of light, bending towards her, wanting to save her from harm, to be a hero. But behind those dark blue eyes there was no love. No love for her. Grace was the sun, reaching out her rays, feeling for the moon: the dark side of the moon. They were on opposite sides, spinning away from each other. "Ahem," Helen cleared her throat, causing Grace and Vincente to blink them apart. "You see, Nurse, she is completely out of hand. She doesn't realize how serious her situation is. How ill she really is." Helen began to cry. Not little tears. No, a near flash flood of body wracking sobs. "It's okay, Mum," Grace said, as she reached out to take her mum's hand. "You remember me?" "Of course," Grace said, lying. She didn't know her, or have any memory of her; any more than of the nurse who was still standing with her mouth wide open. "The doctor is on the way," the nurse announced. She lifted Grace's arm and proceeded to take her pulse. "Your vital signs are excellent, but you need to rest. Perhaps it's time for your friend to go home. He needs his rest, too." She glanced at Vincente. The subtlety of her apprehension did not get by him. "Yeah, I think I should go." Vincente said. He moved a few steps away from the bed. He ran his fingers through his hair.

He walked back towards the bed, like he was waiting for Grace's approval. "Or I could stay, if you wanted me to." "Only if you want to," Grace said with a glimmer of hope in her voice. She realized he was only staying because of guilt, but she decided that she would take him any way he would consent. "Maybe just until I fall asleep?" Helen chitchatted with the nurse as if they were long-lost friends as they made their way out of the room. "She'll be out in minutes," the nurse said. "I gave her enough sedatives to ensure that she'll get a good night's sleep." Helen glanced back at the two of them, and then blew a kiss to her daughter. Grace thought it was difficult for her mum to leave her there alone with a virtual stranger. Her mum didn't complain. She wore it like a battle scar.

0.9 It didn't take long for Grace to fall asleep. Vincente took the opportunity to turn on his mobile phone and ring his mum. He'd been texting her with updates about Grace's condition. He refused to leave her side until he was certain that she was out of danger. He needed to go home and take a shower, not to mention to finally change out of his cricket uniform. Soon, Grace was in a deep, deep sleep, one in which she imagined voices all around her. Whispering voices. Then the voices grew louder and louder. They filled her mind with laughter. Devilishly loud laughter followed by screaming and scratching, as if someone had been buried alive. The voices were trapped. They were screaming and scratching, screaming and scratching. Grace awoke with a start, perspiration streaming down her forehead. Her bedclothes were damp and cold. She was disoriented. Too afraid to open her eyes. She wondered if whatever it was that she heard in her dreams was in the room with her now. If she opened her eyes, she would see it, and if she saw it, she would need to get away. She listened intently. The only sounds were the tick-tick-tocking and the slip-slop-slopping of medical equipment. She opened her eyes, all the while repeating one slip, two slop, three tick, four tock, to herself. Grace was alone. She began to shiver in the cold room. She needed to change clothing. She couldn't get to where she needed to go, so she pushed the panic button. Within seconds, the nurse arrived and helped her to change into a clean gown. "Do you have to...go?" the nurse asked. This one was smaller and friendlier than other one had been, and she smiled kindly. Grace flushed scarlet as the nurse put the bedpan under her. Afterwards, Grace asked if she could move nearer to the window. The nurse pushed the bed forward, keeping the equipment intact. She pulled back the curtains, letting the daylight in. It blinded Grace with its sudden intensity. She gazed down at the wispy grasses bending with the breeze. She looked upward into the deep blue, cloudless sky. After so long in the hospital, she felt alive. "If you need anything else, let me know," the nurse said. Grace took her hand into hers and said, "Thank you." Once again she alone, but this time she looked further along the pathway. She spotted a little flower garden, and just beyond it, a tree. Beside it, she saw a piece of paper floating upwards, mocking as it went. Past the stationary flowers, almost like it was saying, *Look at me! You may have pretty petals and vibrant colour, but I can do something you cannot do. You are fettered, but I can fly. Watch me fly!* The piece of paper continued on its journey. Grace followed it as it flew high, higher, and higher still until she could no longer see it. Grace laughed. It was like watching magic. "What are you doing?" Grace's mum exclaimed when she saw her daughter in a near-standing position. Helen Greenway shooed her daughter back onto her pillow and pushed the bed back against the wall. She then tucked her daughter in the bed as if she was a small again. Grace appreciated the tucking and the pampering. She thought it might evoke a memory - a memory of this woman standing in front of her. But once again, no memories came.

1.0 "I hope you're feeling up to a visit from Dr. Christiansson," Helen said. "He'll be coming in soon to talk about your condition." "I have a condition?" Grace said. "You do, indeed Grace." Grace was worried when the doctor made his way inside. He acknowledged them, and pulled up a chair. He sat down for a moment, and then stood up. He took Grace's pulse. He felt Grace's forehead. "Hmmm. How are you feeling, Gracie?" "Please call me Grace." "Oh sorry - Grace, then. How are you feeling today?" "I'm feeling better. The headache isn't so bad now. But Doctor, I can't remember anything." "Nothing?" Grace looked embarrassed. She didn't want her mum to know she didn't remember her. She hesitated. "I have flashes of memories." "Flashes?" "Yes." "Tell me more," he said while scratching notes onto a clipboard. "Flashes, mostly about a boy. Vincente Marino," Grace said. The doctor looked at Helen with a raised eyebrow. "The boy. The one who hit her with the ball," Helen said. "Oh, yes. That's normal, since he was the last person

you saw before you lost consciousness." He hesitated, scribbled something down. then You do remember your, mum, correct?" Grace had hoped and prayed that he wasn't going to ask her this. Should she continue to lie, to keep her mum happy? She knew that she had to tell her doctor the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth for him to be able to help her. She shook her head. Helen began to sob. The doctor patted Helen's hand, and then he focused his attention on the patient. "Grace, you have suffered what we call a Traumatic Brain Injury. What do you think that means?" "I don't know." "Well, let me try to explain it to you then," the doctor said. "You were hit with a cricket ball." He hesitated, and then looked over at Helen. She was sobbing so much that her chest was shuddering. It was evident she was attempting to take control of her emotions. Grace wanted him to get to the point. "The initial impact from ball hitting you, the sheer force of it, was enough to cause the injury. There are complications. Serious complications." First a condition. Now complications. What else was going on here? Was her life in danger? "Yes, complications in the form of blood clots or aneurysms near the brain. The pressure from the aneurysms could be causing your memory loss. We hope this will only be a temporary condition." "Temporary?" "Yes. If we go in and remove them, we hope all your memories will return. But the operation is very dangerous." "You mean I could die?" Helen's sobbing became louder. "To put it bluntly, yes. You could die if we operate, Grace. But here's the thing: You could also die if we don't operate." "Huh?" "The clots are growing, causing you pain and memory loss. They are dangerous. More may form, though we don't know when. Unfortunately, they won't go away, unless they burst, break up, and get into your bloodstream." "So, how do I get rid of them?" Grace asked, trying not to cry. "We give you blood thinners. Eventually we operate. Today. Or tomorrow. As soon as you give consent. We'll take our best shot to get rid of them all. We have the experts here at your disposal. Surgery is your best chance for survival and complete recovery." "And if I say no?" "You are sixteen, so your mum can sign the papers for you. We really think that you ought to make the decision, and be on board with it. It'll be better all around. That's why I'm telling you the truth, straight up." "Do I really have a choice?" "If you say no, the clots will still break apart when they are ready to do so. The result could be fatal, and without warning." "Why can't we wait and operate later? If we need to." "We can. It's up to you. You can wait. You will more than likely grow stronger every day, get healthier. But we would be taking a chance. If you relapse, get weaker, your chances of a full recovery may also diminish." "So the sooner the better then?" "Grace, you are taking this very calmly," Helen said, still sobbing. "My strong little girl. So brave." She hugged her. "I don't want to die. I'm only sixteen." "We'll do everything in our power to get you through this," the doctor said. "How will we know when things become more urgent?" Grace asked. "When the clots burst, you move onto our critical list. We will get you into the operating room immediately. It will become a life or death situation at that point." Grace was fighting back tears. She wanted to live. She didn't want to die, not like this. She needed time, but time wasn't on her side. She wanted to be alone. She wanted time to herself. Time to reflect. Time to think. "I have given you much to think about, Grace. It's a lot for an adult to deal with, let alone a teenager. Talk to your family and your friends. You will need their support and love. Oh, and one more thing. Your condition, the clots, may have been this way for some time. Perhaps dormant for months, even years. They may have been affecting you emotionally. Making you feel tired, giving you headaches. Until that boy hit you with the ball, we didn't know about it. Now that we know, we have to consider that accident to be a lucky catalyst for helping you to get well again." Grace hadn't thought of it that way. She nodded. "You understand - taking action, is imperative?" "You've made it perfectly clear, Doc." "Good girl," he said. "Talk to your mum. She loves you very much. Then get some rest. Think on it. I'll be back tomorrow to answer any questions you may have." Grace nodded. Helen moved closer to her daughter. "And you, Helen, get yourself some rest. Grace will need your strength. When did you sleep last?" "I'm not sleeping very well these days," Helen admitted. "I'll get one of the nurses to give you something to help you sleep. You have to rest and eat and take care of yourself, not just for your own sake, but for the sake of Grace." "Yes, I understand. Thank you, Dr. Christiansson," Helen said. He turned and left. Grace's mum stood by the bed, lost in her own thoughts. "Mum, I'd like to be alone for a little while, to be able to think." "But you're not alone. You don't have to make this decision all by yourself." "I

know, Mum, and thank you." Helen kissed her daughter on the forehead and left the room. Finally, alone, Grace's tears overflowed. She hugged herself tightly. Let herself sob it out. 1.1
The night air was freezing cold. Whipping around her. Slicing through her nightgown, which billowed behind her like a veil. Grace hid her face in Vincente's chest. They continued to fly upward. Higher and higher. Into the darkness. Leaving everything behind. Grace shivered. Vincente pulled her in close. His arms folded around her. He held her. She felt safe.

COMPLETE SERIES UPDATED & RE-RELEASED IN JULY 2017

Grace Greenway believes every problem can be solved like a mathematical equation. When she loses her memory, all coping mechanisms are null and void.

When Grace is thrown together with her hot secret crush Vincente Marino mayhem ensues.

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If you like characters who grow into their power then you'll love Grace Greenway's Full Review For Finale: Fusion
M.

5.0 out of 5 stars A Mind-Opening Read

December 4, 2015 - Published on Amazon.com

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With thundering ocean waves crashing over her, 16 year old newlywed Grace Greenway desperately clings to the rescuing arms of her husband, Vincente Marino, as the fantasy world she has been living in attempts to swallow her. Greenway has no awareness of the urgency swirling in the background of her real life at the hands of skilled surgeons who are desperately trying to save her life.

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Author Cathy McGough follows Grace Greenway's medical and emotional progress on a journey that follows two paths: one which puts Greenway and Marino in a fog of marital bliss, and one which puts young Grace on a tightrope between life and death where Marino hardly gives her a second thought. In The Mathematical State of Grace Finale: Fusion, McGough exposes the bare nerves of emotion that connect these diverse universes as Grace (and those around her) try to make sense of the surreal.

Marino was just trying to be of some help in Grace's recovery and to ease his own sense of guilt for landing her in the hospital after hitting her with a cricket ball. But then something began to change when she kissed him. How did she know about the Aboriginal man? The painting? He tried to convince himself she was not his type, yet he felt compelled to be with her. He barely knew her outside of the math tutoring she provided him, so when the doctor reveals him to be the father of Grace's

unborn child, a melding of realities begins to take place.

McGough challenges the senses in this romance that transcends time and space. Grace is in the center of understanding that everything in life is connected. We merely need to open our eyes to the patterns and circular nature of the universe to see this for ourselves. A mind-opening read for those who perceive there is something greater that binds us all.

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