

## Young and Impressionable

The decision to write a novel is not one to be made lightly. There is an immense amount of dedication and hard work to put in. Arming myself with pencil in hand, I attacked the page.

Ralphie is a good dog. Ralphie likes to go on adventures. Ralphie is a golden retriever. Today, Ralphie found a squirrel. How he found the squirrel is a story. So I'll tell you. Ralphie saw the bushes moving. Ralphie ran into the bushes and out popped the squirrel. The End.

I may have been willing to put in the hard work, but that was before I realized that dinner was ready and mom made mac 'n' cheese. Plus, I had used everything good from Ralphie. Ralphie and I were both eight, but in his defense, the years weren't as kind to him. Eventually, I moved on and discovered soccer. It's siren call took me away from ever finishing Ralphie's friendship with the squirrel.

Freshman year of high school, I met with the business end of a tree trunk while snowboarding and couldn't play soccer for the spring season. Lost and unsure of what I could do, I did something crazy and actually began reading for my English class. The teacher had assigned *Fahrenheit 451* and like most of the kids in class I was just going to track down the cliff notes originally. The irony of voluntarily depriving myself of a book was not lost on me after actually reading it.

Reinvigorated to set right the literary world, with all the idealism of a high school freshman, I set sail on my newest venture.

Gasping for air, Patrick felt a deep burning in his lungs as they filled with the smog surrounding him. He lacked the biomasks that the Guardians chasing him had.

Breathing in too much of the smog would surely cause him to become a berserk fiend like the rest of the city. Turning the corner and finding a brief break from his pursuers, Patrick did what he could to remain calm.

The Guardians would sit by and watch from the outer rims of the city as they let the people run wild. They watched as the people would attack one another, driven mad by the smog. They were mindless. Patrick knew he only had another few minutes to reach the outer wall before the smog would take hold.

As the weeks went by the story grew and grew and with each new iteration came an even more complex enemy for Patrick to face. The Guardians took shape and good triumphed over evil, or rather, that would have happened had the doctor not giving me the go ahead to play soccer again. The journey was once again stopped by desires greater than my drive. Despite allowing myself to indulge my more physical desires, I did what I could to keep the intellectual challenge there. When I was assigned a book, I made sure to read the first few chapters and if I was interested, I kept going. If not, well, cliff notes were invented for a reason.

When college came around, the opportunities to get under the covers with a girl trumped the desire to get past the front cover of a book. The English major in my math class, with her shoulder-length brunette hair, a smile and eyes that I couldn't get out of my head. Turns out, I wasn't quite cut out to be a player. Shaving off the new beard I had attempted to sport, I tried everything I could to talk to her. Sitting next to her, feigning ignorance when it came to homework, and wearing the best cologne the grocery store had to offer, but nothing worked.

One day before class she was reading *The Odyssey*, a book I had taken the time to trek through.

“No one of the Achaians labored as much as Odysseus labored and achieved, and for him the end was grief for him, and for me a sorrow that is never forgotten for his sake, how he is gone so long, and we knew nothing of whether he is alive or dead”. She looked up at me, brimming with pride over remembering a quote.

“Odysseus never had to sit through this class at eight in the morning.” There was the smile.

Joe Curell

From then on she pushed me to read anything I had time for and even get back to writing. She thought the idea to write a novel was a great idea.

Rebecca sat with her back to the sun, watching the road for any sign of him. She knew that there was little that could be done to change the past but she hoped desperately that John would reconsider. It was only two weeks ago that they sat there enjoying their new found passion. The promise of a new life together seemed so real. She had to tell him the truth before they could start anew.

The challenge of the novel was offset by the fact that I was enjoying my own relationship. Whatever I would write, she would read, then tear to pieces, it was the first time in a long time that I enjoyed writing. However, once I finished with my business degree, I moved four states away for work. She went to graduate school and we tried to make it work. Neither of us had time to travel. The absence became too much. I stopped sending her the new pieces of the novel, and I could no longer stand to look at it. I engulfed myself in work.

I thought about making contact, just to see how she was doing. No matter what I tried, I just couldn't go through with it. After four years of working for the same company, I had little to look forward to. I couldn't advance any farther, the father and son President and Vice President held the power and unless I wanted to marry into the family there wasn't much of an option to move up. I took a few weeks off.

I never took the time to unpack everything, just the essentials. On the vacation, I decided to try and fill up the bare walls and invest in what I needed for a real home. After numerous failed attempts, the bookcase finally came together and I stocked it with the books I used to know and love. I held *The Odyssey* in my hands for quite awhile, the feeling of it was enough to remind me of everything I had lost.

Joe Curell

I put the book in the shelf, the last of my collection, and also apparently an overload on the weight. Crumbling to the ground, I set about trying to track down every piece. Underneath the top shelf I dusted of *The Odyssey* and out of it fell handwritten pages.

I was young and impressionable and decided to write a novel. The only thing that keeps the dream alive is knowing that at the end of the day, I have a place I call home.

Reaching for the phone, I dialed a number I couldn't stomach to call before, throwing everything onto the tiny raft of hope I still had. I extended my vacation indefinitely and finally went home.