

July 24-26 (I'm a slow writer), 2020 and final draft September 19th, 2022 (I'm a really slow writer)

“You always have to save for the future.” That is what Kate, my soon-to-be ex-wife, told me repeatedly when we discussed discussed notions about how to become a full-time novelist—a more recent manifestation of my desire to live the life of a storyteller. Kate and I had two different notions about the importance of saving for the future: hers involved saving financially to be able to cover all of the possible health problems that may arise while also living a comfortable retirement, while I say “what is the importance of a saving for an unpredictable future by subjecting yourself to years of career misery?” One notion that I had posed to Kate was the desire to cut back to a part-time job (funny, since now I have no job), so that I could have more time to develop a writing career. That obviously created a tension between the two of us that had me considering she should start packing boxes—we used to live together. I valued the relationship I had with Kate during our day-to-day lives together, so when she made further comments, I listened. She said, “if that is what you want to do (become a writer), that is something that you plan for.” I had wanted to be a professional storyteller for most of my life, but the “plans” that I made to achieve this led to professional failure; this blog post, written long before it posted to my website, is a another step I’ve taken to save for the future.

To write about my future, I have to first write about my past. Of course, as a child, I had dreamed of being many things when I grew up; Some of the dream jobs I envisioned carry the title astronaut, oceanographer, filmmaker, baseball player, “Renaissance artist,” and musician. I remember taking a book about the technical workings of the space shuttle (probably the Challenger) on a trip to Southern California with my parents as a child, visiting Sea World, and

commenting that I was going to be the first astronaut to take a whale into space (I swear I was overheard by one of the creators of *Star Trek IV*). However, my first trip to Universal Studios solidified my dreams for the future; as a filmmaker, I could pursue all of my interests by making them into movies.

So, for the greater part of my childhood and early adult life, I planned on being a filmmaker. I created a list of all the movies that I wanted to watch based on their critical and popular acclaim, and spent a large portion of my time in front of the TV watching video cassettes. I spent time in the theater watching *the real thing*—I even knocked off maybe one fifth of all of the movies on my list. I based most of my college prep in high school on studying film production in college. After college would come my career as a film maker; I wanted to do it all: write, direct, act, produce, sound, edit. If you can't tell, I'm a bit of a dreamer, challenged by landing a practical job—it's a good thing that with NASA's latest rocket launch tests there have been failures that didn't involve the loss of life.

In the middle of high school I moved with my parents to Farmington, MO, and the lifestyle that I started to lead based on my impressions of most of the media that I consumed, especially in regards to alcohol, sex, marijuana, and authority began to interfere with my plans (or were they a part of it all along?). I define my college years as a decade-long learning experience. Many sequels have been written about that. They asked me to leave the small liberal arts university with a great film program that I attended in the Northeast. I dropped out of the film school I attended next in California but came away with one important take-a-way: to dedicate my time to a film project, it had to be a project that I felt passion for, and the best way to ensure that: write it yourself. This dominated my thoughts during the completion of my

Bachelor's degree in Media Communications (the quickest degree I could achieve taking into account all of my transfer credits).

Life passed and one thing remained consistent: my desire to tell a story. A couple completed screenplays left me thinking, what next? I had no notion of how to sell them and had lost connection with many of my former film students and friends. Of course, I knew the basics of how to make them into films myself, but the idea of trying to hustle (a short lived job as a business to business salesman opened my eyes) to try to raise the capital needed to make a quality film a reality sickened me. Therefore, the next step forward to realize my desire to tell a story could be seen as a step backward: prose—the novel.

I completed my first novel over, roughly, a year and a half, writing after work and on weekends when my relationship with Kate had begun to blossom. I became obsessed. I gave up on exercise and making my own meals (putting on 40 pounds in the process), just so that I would have more time to write. I think of the novel as autobiographical fiction. I had it professionally critiqued and edited, as I struggled to find good beta readers. Kate read it years after I initially gave it to her. The novel contained many of my own experiences, and I didn't want my usual go-to's, my aunt and mother, to read it until it had been perfected. I paid for the editor. I queried it to agents and publishers. Months of rejection, lead to dejection, which lead to an extended absence from writing. I know that some writers submit hundreds of queries before being picked up, but I don't handle rejection well. Not trying comforted me.

Ever since film school in California, I struggled especially to find comfort in my life, not financially (I have the fortune of being the only child of an upper middle class family that has always provided my security), but mentally. I had struggled with depression since high school. In

California I experienced my first hospitalization as the result of delusions that had escalated within me for some time. I acquired a bipolar disorder diagnosis: the delusions a byproduct of a prolonged manic phase. I fought against obtaining medical help in the form of medication and therapy for the next ten years. That ten years involved my struggle to control the delusions while trying to achieve a successful life. I failed for 10 years apart from piecing together my B.A. The bipolar diagnosis became Undifferentiated Schizophrenia, then Schizoaffective disorder—they always changed it. Dealing with the burden of my diagnosis, I jumped from one failed opportunity to the next in relationships and work—usually with the other party finding a way to get rid of me because of my unusual behavior. I finally agreed to accept professional help when yet another chance to tell stories with film, under the guise of an M.A. in Alternative Media, denied me for the same reason.

In the years that followed, I'm now 43, I achieved a level of balance in my life. I worked my way up from jobs that I could have gotten straight out of high school, to the type of job I expected to land straight out of college (not with the same company), all while developing my story-telling craft. I even managed to develop the longest lasting, most intimate relationship of my life—a relationship now being down-sized. Some of my successes led a psychiatrist, or two, to believe the accuracy of my bipolar diagnosis, as I hadn't been deteriorating, which they say is likely with schizophrenics.

My passion to write stories returned, highlighted and in bold. Frustrated with the process of going the traditional publishing route, I did my Google research on self-publishing, which seemed to have some real positive pros over the traditional route. I realized that by choosing to self-publish, I would have to market myself (although, I also read where traditional publishing

companies don't have the resources to market all of their publications equally and the author still has to rely on self-promotion). After putting my novel aside for close to two years, Kate told me that she didn't like the ending. I really like that she's my soon-to-be ex-wife.

I thought the notion that started this post off would receive some solid support. I had worked Customer Support—it's like being a medical doctor without the extra four years of schooling. People come to you with their problems, their illnesses, and want you to make them better. I worked customer support for a popular financial app—the financial solution for the under-banked. When you're dealing with people's money, their illnesses can be especially life threatening, and I didn't want to consider the possible mortality rate after I operated. Personality tests rated me as a person who feels a large amount of empathy towards others. Not being able to cure all my patients troubled me.

Discussing my plans with Kate, didn't meet with the acceptance that I hoped for. I am willing to accept a frugal lifestyle. I view the starving artist as a romantic notion—granted, starvation had never been a necessity in my life. The biggest rift concerning my proposal was Kate's concern that this would seriously harm our ability to save for the future. Kate worked in a medical profession and had been regularly exposed to aches of the elderly resulting in high medical expenses. The thought of getting sick as she aged caused her serious anxiety. She also desired to live a comfortable retirement. Why should I plan to work the next 25 years of my life in a job that makes me miserable every day, for maybe another 15 years of comfort?

If you couldn't tell, I saw Kate as a realist, and I often felt like Apollo Creed in the ring with Ivan Drago during the conversations that followed my proposal. She had a way of saying no, without saying no, that killed my argument. I didn't want to be the dead Apollo Creed. I

wanted to be Rocky Balboa and Kate to be my Adrian. When Kate said, “if that is what you want to do (become a writer), that is something that you plan for,” I realized I had been training all along, building the muscles that were my passion for storytelling and my life’s experiences that would be the backbone of these stories.

Now it’s time for the fight. Although my Adrian is dead, and i just have Carl; the dog that Adrian left me. I’ve got to fight to save, fight to get a job, fight to improve my writing, fight to finish my work, fight to market myself, and fight to ultimately achieve success. It might take 20 rounds, but I’m willing to go the distance. Lookout Farmington.