

When I was in fourth grade, my elementary school was shut down. I lost all my friends and I had to make new ones at a completely different school. All just for one year before I moved up to middle school. My English teacher had us write a fictional story of our choosing for an assignment and it was the first time doing homework excited me. I spent hours after school working on it and turned it in with a big smile on my face. When I received the story back, my teacher told me that she loved it. She encouraged me to work on it and make it even better. Then she told me that I should keep writing and asked if she could read anything I wrote in the future.

That was the beginning of my goal to become a writer. I spent many nights filling up notebooks and many classes writing rather than listening to the lecture. However my father is a lighting designer for film and theatre. The other half of my life was working in those environments. It was there that I learned to be a stage electrician and learned everything there was to know of entertainment lighting. I was lucky and able to form connections with other writers working in all different industries of creative writing. Every night, before I went to sleep, I would write and try to write one page in whichever notebook I was filling up at the time.

I was able to combine these two aspects of my life to continue to hone my craft. I wrote several screenplays that were produced by the communications department at the University of Evansville. I even designed the lighting for all of these productions. When I wasn't giving my work to classes for producing, I would write and direct pieces alongside my friends. Eventually, I realized that I didn't want to divide my attention between these two halves and decided to transfer in the hopes of pursuing creative writing at UIC. I had known all along which of the two was my true passion, but lighting was a comfortable job for me.

When I was younger, I thought I wanted to write so I could tell cool and exciting stories. In a way, I still feel that way, but the me today views it with more nuance. I enjoy creating art because I believe it has astronomical importance in our culture. It is through art that we challenge the status quo and experience other cultures. Writing just turned out to be easier than painting when I first started. I didn't really have a concrete reason why other than: my child brain would rather use the writing skills I already had than try and learn completely new ones.

Throughout my time as an electrician, I worked in extremely high stress and quick moving environments. Load ins began at 6 AM on the dot. When the show ended at 10 PM, we struck until it was done (usually seeing the sunrise of the next morning on our way back to our hotel). It is a very grueling line of work, but it gave me experience leading teams of union stagehands and required quick thinking when something *inevitably* went wrong.

Because of the high stress working environment, I love the environment of being a writer. Deadlines are easy to hit when they are more than a few hours ahead of you. Writing at a desk is relaxing and enjoyable compared to a busy venue where a combination of ten companies are trying to set up their equipment all at once. Working on the road also allowed me to meet incredible people that I pull from all the time to write characters. You never meet someone half as interesting as a roadie enjoying their smoke break. And I have heard hundreds of peoples' life stories over a cigarette.

