

I failed my second semester of college.

During my early school years, I was the Hermione Granger of my class: I studied and loved it. I was the first to finish an exam and ace it. Except unlike Hermione's aptitude for spells, I wrote. Reading Highlights magazines inspired me to write and I wrote in a Lisa Frank journal until pages were scribbled and worn. A plaque for excellence in reading and writing hung in my room. Before entering Junior High, I had received the Presidential Award for Academics and was accepted into the Honors Program. Throughout high school, I devoted myself to three bands and two choruses while maintaining high grades.

I was accepted with a full-ride scholarship to a private university in New Jersey. I was ecstatic; however, I was seventeen. My father was not comfortable with the idea of his young daughter being far from home so soon. Instead, we compromised: one year in community college first.

Although excited to embark on a new educational journey, I was disappointed that I wouldn't be heading to that private university. I loathed this compromise. To make matters worse, in my second semester, I lost my life-long best friend, Patrick. From there, I spiraled down a rabbit hole of depression. I stopped writing—because what I once drew strength and pleasure from was empty to me now. I even stopped reading. I abandoned my studies and my friends. The result was three F's and a D.

Hermione was the character I looked up to most and she feared failure, did all she could to prevent it...and yet here I was. I had plummeted myself into failure. I let Hermione down. Receiving four F's and a D was not something Hermione would let herself do. So, I decided it was not going to be my reality, either. She motivated me to become a better version of myself.

I began to write again.

I began to let writing heal me. I escaped reality by putting pen to paper. I write to create and to learn about myself. I write because there's a story that needs to be told, that will never be written if I don't write it, that will help those who are at the bottom of the that dark rabbit hole. I write because I need to.

Soon, those F's were all A's.

I graduated a Bachelor of the Arts in English with a 3.0 GPA. After all that had happened, I never thought I would be awarded membership to Sigma Tau Delta: The International Honor Society of English—yet, there I was on stage at graduation with black and red ropes around my neck. Without the hardship, I wouldn't have known what I was capable of or that writing is my coping mechanism.

The Master of Fine Arts Program at Kingston University will allow me to fulfill that need. While attending, I intend to write about this failure, among other experiences, in a way that will benefit

the audience I am aiming for: young adults. I will finish my first YA fiction novel at Kingston and look forward to working with my fellow students on their work, as well.

Hermione continues to inspire me daily.

And through this program, I can create my own Hermione: one who experiences hardship, loss, failure, and emerges a stronger person with a multitude of fuel for creativity.