

Imagination: A Memoir

Ever since I was a kid, my vivid imagination would draw me into fantasy worlds beyond reality. Where others saw a pen, I saw a sword. While others wore t-shirts and jeans, I donned cloaks and decorative necklaces. I would cast imaginary spells on my friends with intricate hand gestures and garbled, nonsensical words. My mindset changed constantly; one moment, I was Madie, and the next, I played a fictional character of my own design. Every day after elementary school ended, I wandered about the schoolyard with my friends, Logan and Michael, in addition to their siblings. As our parents talked, parked next to each other in their cars, we set off on the adventure of roleplay. Imagination plays such a key role in my life and I do not know who I would be if it didn't exist. Even to this day, I lose myself so deeply in daydreams I forget about everything else. I typically find it impossible to focus when I'd rather be off in a fictional world. For these very reasons, I decided to pursue creative writing. Not only that, but I've also decided to chronicle my journey down the creative writing path. Of course, with every story comes a beginning.

I started to understand the concept of my imagination at a very young age. Though not yet articulate in world-building or character design, I had four imaginary friends: Purple Fang, Red Eye, Wolf Girl, and Vampire Girl. These characters served as my intangible guides, but from time to time, I pretended I *was* them. At the same time, I had two extra characters, Killer and Shadow, for roleplay purposes only. My siblings had imaginary friends too, but they were different from mine. Not in the obvious sense of how they looked or acted; it was a quality that even now, I can't quite explain. All I knew was that a creative seed had been planted in my brain at birth and it was now beginning to grow. I believe it was first grade when I slowly began to

recognize my potential. By this time, I met some of my childhood friends: Katie, Aurora, Michael, and Logan, who was a year older than I was. I must say though, my memory does become a bit fuzzy during this time. It's been so long now, everything feels like a dream. During recess, my friends and I would walk beyond the entertaining playground equipment and basketball court. Our destination was a small, concrete square in the middle of the nearby field. I called it "The Base" and the title stuck. My good friends Aurora and Michael would join me daily in fictional adventures for only an afternoon. Regardless of the short time frame, imagination made the experience a blast. Recess offered so many chances to roleplay, but after school was our time to shine. Sadly, Aurora rode the bus; she couldn't partake in our fun. Nevertheless, my good friends Logan and Michael, as well as their siblings, were typically available. Logan, Michael, and I were the "golden trio." Nothing could separate us. Shadow was my favorite of the six characters I'd created, so I chose her to roleplay as during all of our after-school sessions. My friends and I played our imaginary game together without a care in the world. No matter the weather and no matter what anyone else thought, we enjoyed ourselves. Of course, we were too young to understand the complexities of story building. Despite my childish ways, I had a vision. All throughout the school year, I would pretend to be my characters as my friends and I "traveled across distant lands" and "battled monsters." All throughout my early childhood, we kept this practice up and dedicated time to the art of roleplay. With the flow of time, the creative seed in my brain grew more.

As I entered junior high, my imaginative capabilities evolved. Still continuing roleplay with my friends, I began to explore the realm of story writing. In seventh grade, I wrote my first fairy tale. I loved my character Shadow and because I played as her so much, I wanted to

showcase her in my work. I decided to write about her past and how a simple encounter with a girl from the realm of light transformed her from a villain into a hero. Though vague in real detail, my fairy tale turned out to be a vast improvement upon my childhood imagination. Unfortunately for me, my fairy tale was tragically lost to time; I have no existing copy of it anymore. By this point in time, recess did not exist; we were older now and had to conform more to school life. I was restricted to less roleplay during the day and could no longer play with Aurora unless I went to her house or she came to mine. Despite this setback, we continued our after-school adventures. I visited Aurora on many occasions just to play with her. Sadly, these fun times would not last much longer. Logan was set to graduate that year, but there was worse yet. My world flipped upside down when I heard the news: Michael and his family were moving away.

When I started eighth grade, I was alone. Luckily I still had Aurora, but I'd also lost two of my best friends to different schools; not to mention Logan was starting at Ottawa High School. I couldn't believe it— high school— four years away from college! On a more positive note, my writing skills really started to take shape. During that confusing time, Aurora and Logan each began writing books. Inspired by my two friends, I attempted to write my own; my first book was titled The Elementals. This early creation spawned six new heroes for my arsenal in addition to several new villains. Within that same period of time, I experimented with world-building for the first time. Throughout the course of eighth grade, I also initiated the beginning of my latest project: a new character with a new story. By the time I finished eighth grade, I duplicated said project and started designing two new characters. Again, my memory is fuzzy here; I may not have designed them at the exact same time. One thing was clear to me; my

passion for writing, as well as the greatest stage of my imaginative development, had officially begun. The creative seed inside my mind started to blossom into flowers.

Growing older came with more drastic changes; due to this revelation, my transition into high school proved difficult at times. In-person roleplay simply wasn't an option anymore and what was worse, we were all much busier. After I received my first phone, I gained the ability to roleplay through text messages. Aurora and I continued strongly in this way for quite some time. In a stunning revelation, I realized how much easier it became to express our fictional selves in-game. In a sense, text message roleplaying became a "modern convenience" for us. As for Logan and I, we initiated a new form of text roleplay through "seasons" and "episodes" soon afterward. Each day we played was an "episode" and depending on when he thought we were ready, Logan would announce the "season finale" and prepare to start a new "season." Not only that, but we also played with different characters. One of my brand-new characters made her debut after the events of an unknown transformation. Her name was Adrienne and she was based on myself. She became my new favorite roleplay character almost immediately. I began to work on writing her past in detail around that same year. Yet with hectic schedules and differing classes, finding the time to commit to my writing and roleplaying was hard. Regardless, I set my imagination to work more on my stories than I did roleplaying for a while. Unless someone was available, there was just no possibility of continuation.

Over the course of my first two years of high school, I continued to develop new characters and worlds; all the while, Aurora, Logan, and I progressed with our little games. Soon, things began to go off the rails. Michael and his younger brother Andrew played with us for a while before eventually dropping out completely because "our style" had become something that

Michael wasn't fond of. It was never bad; he just enjoyed a different roleplaying path than we did. Although I cannot say it was too surprising, it was strangely painful when Michael finally left. One part of the "golden trio" was gone. Things finally took a turn for the worse during my sophomore year. One night, Logan texted me and announced that he too was moving away. He wouldn't graduate from Ottawa High School, but rather somewhere else entirely. At this point, I had no idea what would become of us; two of my best friends were gone and we might not have ever been able to roleplay again. As devastated as I was, I thrust myself back into my own writing projects and continued roleplaying with Aurora. I was determined not to lose hold of my imagination. I don't think I could have lost my imagination even if I tried, but I feared the idea. The "golden trio" was now, in essence, destroyed. Two of my childhood best friends were drifting away. Thank goodness I still had Aurora; I do not know what I would do without her.

By the time I reached senior year, I had several books in the works. Knowing my novels still required editing and rewriting, I focused primarily on that. I also set myself the task of fully developing the characters and worlds I'd already established. It was hard not being able to play my childhood games anymore, but I found time to continue. When I couldn't roleplay, I simply turned back to my books. I remembered the innocence of my imaginary friends and allowed my newer characters such as Adrienne and Mirror to materialize into my imaginary friends. On a side note, Mirror was an alien shapeshifter who disguised herself as a human. She became a living weapon under the care and supervision of three scientists. With my characters by my side, I flourished. The creative seed in my mind was now a concept to guide me. Over the course of time, I matured in my writing and thought process. At long last, I realized that writing was my greatest passion. My imagination was my favorite part about myself and the writing and

roleplaying that stemmed from it only solidified the path I wanted to take. Once I'd graduated from high school, I learned so much about myself and I didn't plan on stopping there.

Now in college, I work harder than ever to improve and refine my craft. Whether it's academic writing, professional writing, or creative writing, I promise myself I will always learn how to be better. There's still so much I do not know and that's okay. I've come to understand that learning is a lifelong process; something new happens every day. There's much I still have to do before I consider publishing, but I don't fear being lost anymore. It's been over a year since I've roleplayed with Logan, but I don't let it bother me quite so much these days. A similar thing could be said for Aurora; I haven't played a continuous game with her in quite some time. Even though I miss my dear friends, I know I will be okay. I can take my mind away from the memories for a while when I work on my own projects. I'm not going to stop writing; I love it too much. Sure, I get writer's block and lose my inspiration sometimes, but I get it right back. Sometimes all I write is a poem or a random thought and that's okay too; it's better than nothing. I falter but never fall. Imagination is my life and I wouldn't give it up for anything.