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What I Learned at the Kitchen Table

“A-P-P-L-E-S-A-U-C-E...Applesauce!” I eagerly exclaim to my parents at the dinner table. My tan, scrawny arms are between my legs, my sticky hands reaching forward so my hungry dog could lick the food residue off my tiny fingers. I was ignoring my father’s rule about not petting the dog during dinner, but I could not sit still. I wanted to go play in the heat of the summer night outside, I only had a few hours left until the streetlights came on and I had to return indoors. In order to leave the table, I needed to either clear my plate of food, or successfully finish one of my parent’s quizzes. I was an extremely picky eater and almost never got the ‘clean plate award,’ so quizzes were typically my fate. Tonight was spelling, and even at the young age of 5 I was already spelling words above my grade level.

Along with spelling, I was also a pretty strong reader. Growing up, most of the books we owned were those found at Saturday morning garage sales or handed down from older cousins. Though they were torn up and old, with stains on some pages, they all had a new story between their two covers. My older brother and I would cuddle up on the old, blue, raggedy couch next to my mom. I would lay my head on her stomach and she would begin reading. She knew my favorites, *The Berenstain Bears*. I was fascinated by every adventure those bears went through. I learned my lessons about talking to strangers, eating junk food, and counting my

blessings from them. Once I started school, my reading progressed. Once a week my elementary school class would visit the massive school library. We would plop down in an imperfect circle, Indian-style on the colorful carpet and gaze up at Ms. Roe, our librarian. She would sit in her wooden rocking chair and stare through her oval glasses and read us a story. She would set the book with its vibrant pictures on her knees so we could see the images, requiring her to read upside down. Ms. Roe encouraged us to read as many books as possible. *Matilda* by Roald Dahl was one I read over and over. I was fascinated that Matilda could control objects with her mind. Adults were constantly telling me I looked like the actress from the movie. I would spend my days imagining I had her powers, that I was secretly her.

As I advanced through school, I kept my interest for reading. When I had time, I read books that interested me. Last summer, I was visiting a friend in Texas and while we were at her country club, we saw George W. Bush golfing. Seeing him in person, and in such a relaxed atmosphere really made me take an interest in him. I purchased and read George W. Bush's *Decision Points*. You can learn a lot from a person who ran an entire country for 8 crazy years. Sophomore year, a friend recommended to me Stephen Chbosky's *Perks of Being a Wallflower*. I loved it. It was the perfect book to read at that moment in my life. The book is based around a boy in high school, Charlie, who's a "wallflower." It was eye-opening for me and made me realize not everyone was having the exciting high school experience I was, that some people were hating every minute of it. It was one of those intriguing books that really made you connect with the character. When Charlie was happy, so was I. But if there was a sad chapter, it felt like one of my best friends was upset.

Most books I read are ones that are given to me by people who really know me, and know what I need at that time or what I enjoy reading. I'm not subscribed to any magazine or read any book about celebrities' known for nothing but their backsides; I also hate vampires. No offense to the Kardashians, but I would rather not read a book written "by them" about their 72 day marriage or any parts of their pathetic lives. I dislike the Twilight series of books. I grew up with Harry Potter, and I feel like there are a lot more life lessons learned from Dumbledore than there are from Edward and Bella's sad excuse for a relationship. I definitely enjoy books with more context and that make you feel more intelligent after finishing them.

While we are young, we have stories told to us, and we read about different characters. As we grow older, we learn to write our own stories and use our own imagination. Suddenly, we become the authors. I cannot brag about my writing, for I know it needs much improvement. But I do practice my writing daily. In 140 characters, I can write about whatever I want and post it for the entire social universe to see. When I can't sleep, sometimes I write stories in the notes on my phone. My fault as a writer is that I will start writing a fantastic story, but as a few days go by, my ocean full of ideas has turned into a small puddle. I love writing informal pieces; it is ridiculously hard for me to write formally. I hate not being able to add my opinion, to pretend like I am speaking to the reader. I hope further my writing, and maybe even be paid for it. Though it would only be a hobby on the side, I think I would definitely enjoy it.

The kitchen table is abandoned these days. Covered with mail, keys and other unimportant papers, my parents rarely use it. All of my parent's children are away at

college, and the once hectic house is now quiet. During my visits home, my graying dog still lingers around me in hopes of getting a bite of spare food. We sit in front of the television now, using TV tables instead of our kitchen table. I no longer have to be quizzed before getting up, and I am allowed to be out later than when the streetlights come on. Though these doors have been closed, there are still millions of stories awaiting me in books I have yet to open. Worlds I have not yet visited, characters I have not yet encountered. There are still millions of ideas for stories in my head, and new thoughts happen every day. Every time I encounter an odd situation, or a couple in love, or hear of something tragic. These are all invitations for a new story to be written.

Works Cited

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