

Paving My Own Road

By Ziana Camila Deen

When I first learned to draw, I thought I would become an artist. I liked drawing and would constantly get in trouble for the character sketches I drew during class. My parents and teachers insisted I focus on my class work, but didn't they understand? If I didn't draw the characters I would forget the people in my head. I was fascinated by them. My character had names, families, lives, and memories that made them unique. They would talk with other characters and develop personalities out of my control. Before I knew it, they began to have their own stories, and a new world was created.

It was then I became a writer. I would eavesdrop on my characters' conversations and would write pages on the lives they led. I experimented with writing, trying to capture the right words for the right situations.

Back then, all I wanted was to write. But near the end of fifth grade, I read a novel by an author who published her first book at the age of thirteen. I was overcome with envy and inspiration. I was jealous of the author because I wanted to accomplish something at that age. I was inspired because if she could do it, couldn't I?

At that moment, I knew I didn't want to just write. I wanted to be an author. Gone were thoughts of being an artist. I wanted people to read my stories. I wanted people to love my characters as I loved them. I wanted to share the worlds in my stories with millions of others, to inspire people the way I'd been inspired.

For the next six years, I wrote. I sweet talked my mother into buying me notebooks for I had this need to dig my pencil into paper as quickly as I could. I was convinced in order to be an actual author, I needed to perfect my characters and connect their story lines. And when I finally finished a story, it felt real. But I needed

others to believe it too. I started sharing my stories with my friends, my professors, and my family. My parents were skeptical—they didn't think being an author was worthwhile. But I had a dream, and writers know in order to get to the conclusion you need to work to the climax.

To prove to my family and friends I was serious, I founded the Creative Writing Club at my high school last spring. My friends were excited, and numerous students joined in order to share their love of writing. As the president of the club, I researched the necessities being an author required. In order to achieve my dream, I needed to create a portfolio of my writing and put my work out to the public. I encouraged my club to join writing contests with me, and opened an opportunity for them to share their writing in our school newspaper and yearbook. Having a goal in mind drove my club mates to take their work seriously in order to be showcased among our peers.

Despite the dedication I've shown, my parents still believe my dream of becoming an author is just a fantasy. But my passion has never been more tangible to me. I've submitted my writings and my stories to numerous writing organizations, challenges, and contest in hopes I have something to convince my parents with. If I can convince them I can succeed in writing, I know they will support me when I enter college in a creative writing major. To succeed with my dream, I need to gain the support of my family and my friends. It might be a long road till I obtain some sort of validation of my dream, but every road has an end.

While I understand the realities and hardships it takes to be an author, there is nothing I have wanted more.