

College Essay

Mattie Fitzpatrick

I marvel at the blue frames in my hands; How did they ever fit my face? I had dug them out from my dresser, cleaning, reorganizing, looking for whatever space books could fit into. I smile fondly at them and then I remember the harshness in my mom's voice: "Let's see if she's just being lazy or if there's actually something wrong with her eyes."

When I was eight, my eyes would skip over words on the page. I could hear the frustration in my mom's voice but there was nothing I could do about it. I couldn't see what she was talking about. The feeling of my feet wobbling on this tightrope of words inspired the clenching in my chest before I fell, falling against the stray words my eyes missed. I ended up in the purple dinosaur room of the eye doctor, straining my eyes to see an air balloon at the bottom of the abyss.

The new normal of these blue frames was something that I had to get used to, but being able to absorb entire stories made it worth it. Eventually I forgave the words for disappearing. My eyes paid their debt for stealing words from me and the stories became whole for the first time in my life. Those glasses were the beginning to a story that hasn't ended. My most faithful companion arrived in the form of thin mystery books, where the main character took hold of my hand. She looked like she could be my twin –red hair, freckles– but her mind was something extraordinary. Cam Jansen had a photographic memory; all I had was a pair of frames. But I'd learn. Her weapon may have been her mind, but mine became my eyes and fingers, flipping the pages.

Since then, I've met more people than I can count. Liesel Meminger holds her book up like a trophy. Chanel Miller takes a deep breath. Achilles plays the lyre slowly, savoring it.

These days, the rope is woven with the words from my life. I don't need glasses anymore, but I still have my first pair and the pair after that. I look at them and marvel at how my face could have been that small while my mind was expanding like the universe. One word, one story at a time. Words are the reason I got glasses and words made me want to keep the glasses.

Those small blue frames live in my dresser now and, although I haven't worn those glasses in eight years, their influence is as prevalent as ever. I see that influence every day when I look in the mirror, one part words, and two parts imagery. The words I missed when I was eight have filled in the holes inside me; the words that I'd skipped over and forgotten were the ones that complete me. Words are the reason I kept my glasses as long as I did and now those words – the words I repeated and read in the light next to my bed at midnight, the words I've cried over, the words I've ranted and raved to my family about – those words became a part of me.

The rope has always been a part of me; it just needed something to solidify itself. The glasses started that. The books finished it.

The rope is stronger now, full of colors, words, and memories from my life. Cam Jansen and many others wave at me when I close my eyes and smile. Those little blue glasses still live in one of my drawers and, even though they're missing an arm now, they're still one of my favorite things.