

Creative writing on bitter is the pill

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



Mondays aren't usually known for their sunny weather and bright blue skies, but there they are. I also wasn't known for wide smiles on my way to school, but there it was, too. A grin played across my face from the backseat of my mom's convertible as I watched the neighborhood houses slide by with their freshly manicured green lawns and pops of colorful flowers. Somehow, what had looked like a suburban dungeon the day before didn't look so bad this morning. With the top down and the breeze in my face, I didn't even mind the soft rock my mom always insisted on me to play in the car on our way to school.

"What's going on?" My mom commented as she glanced into the rearview mirror. "Wait, don't tell me. You've finally got a girlfriend!"

"Mom! No."

Her eyes questioned me in the mirror. "Is it Sarah? She's such a nice girl."

"No, Mom, stop!" I slunk down into the seat to get out of the mirror's range.

"It's just a good day, that's all."

Luckily, at that moment, we hit a patch of slow traffic and that pulled my mom's attention away so I could enjoy my good mood in peace. After a bit of stop and go, we finally pulled up to the school gate and I jumped out, slamming the car door shut. A quick good-bye to mom and I turned to face the day.

Kids swarmed the entrance, laughing and joking in their few minutes of freedom. As I pushed my way into the classroom, I felt everyone's eyes were on me. For once, I felt like looking back and smiling. It was a good day.

I had just finished my best essay ever the night before. I was reminded to show it to Jimmy, my best friend, who was an ace at composition.

A tingle of excitement accompanied my mental anticipation of what he'd to say. I slid into the desk and pulled the pages out of my pack.

“ What's that?” It was Sarah. She didn't look too bad this morning, either. Suddenly, I didn't want to talk about it. “ Nothing,” I said as I folded the papers in half and hid them under my hands.

“ Where were you last night? We missed you at the game.” She smiled. I could feel my face smiling back, an involuntary flush rising in my cheeks.

“ I was just . . . busy.” Come on, it's nothing to be ashamed of. Tell her. I said to myself. “ Writing. I was busy writing my essay.”

“ Oh, yeah. That essay's due today, right?” she said. “ Thanks for reminding me, I gotta put something together in study hall.” I glanced down at my essay and quickly pushed away the memory of the hours at my desk, weighing every word. When I looked up, Sarah was still there smiling at me, my face smiled back at her, and she looked beautiful. “ Well, I hope you can make the next game,” she said over her shoulder as she took a desk in the back of the room. “ I'll save you a seat.” “ Okay. Thanks,” I said.

Seconds later, I let out the breath I had been holding as Jimmy rushed in. I grabbed the desk next to mine. “ What did she want?” he asked, glancing back at Sarah who was now in a noisy discussion with a couple of her girlfriends. For the second time that morning, I had no desire to discuss it. I was just too engrossed to show my essay to Jimmy and see how he would react to it.

“ Nothing. Just something about the game.”

“ Oh.” He glanced at the papers in my hand. “ Is that your essay? Want me to take a look?”

Eagerly, I slid the papers over. I was more than ready to hear the good feedback from my best buddy in town, Jimmy. He took them and smoothed out the crease with a flourish. His brow furrowed as he scanned the lines. I took in his concentration and leaned toward him, as if by doing so I could see what had him concerned. Jimmy looked up and laughed. I was surprised. I thought he found something that had entertained him a bit.

“ Don’t worry, just giving it my best read.” I nodded and sat back, letting Jimmy have his space. Time moved at a crawl as the class filled with chattering students. Talk of the game and next weekend’s parties rang shrilly in my ears as I waited for Jimmy’s final verdict.

“ It’s not bad,” he said, holding it out to me. “ But it’s got a way to go if you’re going for breath-taking.” He smiled to take the sting off, but his words bit through to the pit of my stomach anyway. “ I’d be glad to help.”

“ No, thanks,” I said quickly to him. Thanks for nothing, I thought as I snatched my essay away. My disappointment flashed to a red-hot anger. I had worked so hard on it. Had a way to go, didn’t I? For me, it is my best essay – and he is my best friend. I was really surprised to learn that he had responded those ways; considering that, I worked hard to polish and finish it. I really became dismayed. My day turned from good to not-so good today. I picked up my pack and moved several desks away, feeling the hurt down to my toes. Jimmy looked surprised at my sudden move. I saw him shrug and turn toward the teacher. I never again glanced at him during the whole session. The bell rang. We moved out to our next class. “ Have it your way,” were the last words Jimmy said to me that school year.

For the remainder of the school year, the time I had spent with Jimmy

became time spent with Sarah. I still thought of my best friend Jimmy a little less each day. I went to games with Sarah. I tried to fit in with her glittering friends and mimic their nonchalant approach to school. Sarah disdained school. Yet, every time that we said good-bye to each other, it was torture for us. Nonetheless, I found my mind wandering while we were together. Writing began to grate on me as I was working harder than ever. By the time I finally got the courage up to give her our first kiss, it was clear I was not getting kissed back. The shine was gone and I looked forward to college with a franker relief. Mom was more disappointed than I was when Sarah broke up with me the night before I left. That's how the fact of relations turn out to be, sometimes.

I jumped into the world of publishing with both feet. I was lucky enough to land as an agent who pulled the strings for a book deal. Thus, there it all started.

Several years later, I was sitting at a table at a book conference, signing copies of my latest work. The conference was going well. A reading of an excerpt had been received positively and the pile of books on my table was shrinking at a heart-warming and wallet-filling rate. I was still new enough to the game for conferences to have fun. I just often thought of looking forward to meeting those who liked my writing enough to spend their hard-earned cash on my books. As I finished signing a book for a woman who reminded me strongly of my mom, I glanced up at my next fan. I saw a well-dressed guy about my age in a sharp navy-blue suit. He stepped forward. I looked at his face once more. A sharp pang of guilt accompanied my recognition – it was Jimmy, my former best friend.

“ Jimmy. Thank you so much for coming out to see me.” I felt my throat tighten with tension, having been reminded when he critiqued my essay way back then.

“ I saw you were coming on the Internet. Couldn’t let the chance to see you again slip by.” He grabbed the top of a book off the pile next to me, flipped it open, and slid it in front of me to sign.

“ So what are you doing these days?” I asked. My pen poised above the blank page, waiting for his answer.

“ I’m in finance. Working here in town.” That was Jimmy, great with words and numbers.

“ Must be lucrative.” “ It’s a living,” he said. He took a deep breath. “ Listen, I want to congratulate you. I read your last one and you’ve obviously reached breath-taking all on your own.”

“ No. It wasn’t on my own.” It was amazingly clear to me, clearer than it had ever been. That day at school had been the start. “ Maybe I wasn’t ready to face it then. But eventually I did and put in the work. Thanks to you,” I said with a delightful tone.

I saw the same shrug I had seen so many years before, but inside a well-tailored suit rather than a t-shirt. And instead of it stinging, it lifted me up. “ Like I said. Glad to help. I’m proud of you,” he said.

I couldn’t meet his eyes. Instead, I trapped the book pages open with my hand and gulped down the lump in my throat. It tasted bitter, but sweet.

“ So, can I make this out to my best friend, Jimmy?”

“ Sure. As long as you’re sure,” I nodded and signed the book. We exchanged e-mails and shook hands. I knew where I would send my next

manuscript once it was ready for outside eyes. Friends like that were too precious to waste and I had already let ten years get by me with Jimmy.