

The soloist essay

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



In the novel "The Soloist," Steve Lopez's life is changed dramatically by his encounters with Nathaniel Ayers. In the beginning of the book, he is obsessed with work - the first line of the book describes him "hustling back to the office with a deadline looming." (p. 1) This is when he encounters Ayers. Over the course of the book, Ayers teaches Lopez how to appreciate life for what it is, and to enjoy himself. At first, Lopez sought only to chronicle the entertaining life of Ayers, hoping to shed some light on the homeless community. "Violin Man. It's got potential. Who knows where it will go?" (p. 2)

At first, Lopez merely attempts to understand and document Ayers for his book. When he visits Juilliard, it "has no agenda other than to know this one part of his life a little better." Lopez begins to realize that he was only really using Ayers for his story.

Lopez started to understand more about the realities of homelessness and dependency, something he fears - "I want to be my own man, to be under nobody's care." After Lopez foists the Symphony lessons on Ayers, only to have it backfire, he remembers "what a fool [he] was to think that he could handle a job like that in his condition." He questions himself - "is he really any better off than he was the day I met him?" - and realizes he has been trying too hard to change Ayers for the sake of his story.

In the end, Lopez decided to stop changing his friend and accept him for the brilliant, beautiful artist he was, becoming an inspiration for Lopez himself in the process. However, this blossoms into a friendship that teaches Lopez as much as it teaches Ayers. Lopez realizes "we connect in part because there is nothing false about him, and I come away from every encounter more

attuned to my own feelings than I would be after.” Lopez doubts his own sincerity at times, and Ayers teaches him to be honest and look inside himself. As Lopez says in his novel, “ It’s not a stretch to say that the man I hoped to save has done as much for me as I have for him.”