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# Honing My Edge

Kaleb Cusack

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# Honing My Edge

Kaleb Cusack

*When I was about four years old, I started to talk. But even then it was a mumble with a lisp (quite the combination). So I went to a speech therapist every Wednesday at nine o'clock in the morning. My most vivid memory from the clinic was the day my therapist wanted me to tell a story about going to the beach. I thought about it, but then I told her I had never been. She then asked if I've seen a picture of a beach. I said yes. She told me to tell her what a beach looked like. I gave her a brief description of sand, ocean, seashells, and pretty women lying in their underwear. She wanted to know how I could describe it but not tell a story about being there. I told her that it would be a lie, and that's when she gave me a strange expression and then gave up on the exercise. My lack of imagination had reared its ugly head. I wouldn't learn of imagination's value until I was much older.*

*Growing from a typical blue collar family, my younger years were devoid of the arts. I spent the first eight years of my life helping my dad milk cows and learning the basic studies of reading, writing, and arithmetic. I was homeschooled, so every assignment was graded by my father. He did his very best to teach the process of writing my thoughts, but he was biased towards clear-cut efficiency. My first essays were bland, logical, and dull. They were only recollections of my past experiences. My technique received its well needed change when at nine years old I had finished my first "real" book, *The Hobbit*. J.R.R.*



*Tolkien had introduced me to the idea that a story could be made up and still have the ability to feel real.*



*From there I began building my imagination.*

*Reading soon became my favorite pastime. I used reading as an escape*



*and also as a writing tool. Harry Potter was my favorite book to read when I was*

*eleven, and I stayed a devoted fan right up to the end. It wasn't until I went to public school that I*

*started*



*to expand into the world of literature. I learned from Lemony Snickett that*

*books*

*are capable of being funny and dark. Steinbeck taught me that that you have*

*to create characters that the audience will be attached to; from there you can add misery to the character's*

*life that will also hurt the reader. From Vonnegut, I learned that a story can be interesting even if*

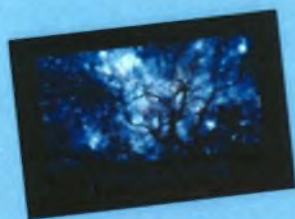
*you don't follow a straight time line (and that you shouldn't drink Ice Nine). Books were*



*perfect for me to gain a foundation of my imagination, because I could just write any idea on a piece of*

*paper. If I decided that I liked it, I would continue it. If it lacked any roots, I would let it dissolve and*

*never think of it ever again.*



*I used books to shape my own writing, but my imagination really took off*

*once I discovered the power of movies. They are simple to watch, but can contain*

*amazing stories and messages. Movies contain the story-telling aspects of books,*

*but also add in the visual aspect of the camera. I have a friend who aspires to make movies one day. He*



*was the one who really introduced me to movies. Of course I had seen movies before, but my eyes were blind to what was really going on, the work that went on behind the cameras and what had to be put into them to make them so powerful.*

*I helped my friend with a couple of movies, starting from scratch. We would spend a few hours just brainstorming on what to even write about; then we would develop the story. After we finished preparing the script, the filming would begin. Every scene had to be carefully planned out, or we would later discover that we forgot a shot while editing and would scramble to either reshot or adjust the story. But after all the work, it was the finished product that really shocked me. It was like we were gods. We had started with nothing and finished with a beautiful product.*

*I had finally found my imagination. After thirteen years, I was finally able to mold a fresh idea into a real thing. Even if I never followed a career in the arts, I found out the true value of the imagination: It's the ability to create, invent, and dream. Humanity's progress would have stopped at standing upright if it wasn't for the ability to wonder why something did or didn't work. It's creating that allows us to build great skyscrapers and automobiles. It's inventing that allows us to combat diseases, and talk person to person from thousands of miles away. It's dreaming that allows us to touch the stars.*

