



Cafés are for Writers

Yes, I was the person who would sit in a not-so-popular café in downtown Budapest, listen to jazz, and pretend to be the next Hemingway in the making. I tried my hardest to personify the vintage, coffeehouse author, as the wooden floorboards, smell of coffee, soft murmur reminiscent of a library, and muffled sounds of the outside world all contributed to the microcosm that I created for myself in that coffeehouse. That very microcosm, in turn, created me as well.

The winter accentuated this feeling. It felt like my shelter, sitting next to a radiator and watching the snow fall outside. A shelter where I could feel safe in facing my thoughts. I would visit this coffeehouse every day after school, where I would work on my studies and then work on myself. The quiet, almost detached environment that I favored urged me to reflect. I tried to make myself think and look like the next great author of our age, and so, donning a turtleneck to look the part, I made it a point to think philosophical thoughts. At some point, this became more habitual, and thus, I found that the café began to color the recesses of my mind.

This café that I frequented changed my way of thought. When I first started going there, I came with the belief that I would force myself to become an acclaimed writer. I came in thinking about and for myself. I am reminded of the scene in *Dead Poet's Society*, where the students stand on top of desks and look around the classroom to see it from a different perspective. The café was my desk, the outside world was the classroom, and I came to perceive and imagine the world from another point of view. My thinking changed from "I want to be a writer" to "I want to write." It changed from wanting to own a title to wanting to communicate in the way I knew best.

My then partner first encouraged me to meet her there whenever our schedules permitted, as we attended different schools. An aspiring therapist, she would interrogate me every time we met, and I would do the same. Sitting in our favorite spot, sipping on mediocre coffee, we would ask each other questions that sparked deep thought. Being my best friend, she made the atmosphere of that café very comforting, and it soon became a place where I found it comfortable to face and develop my own character.

I walked into that café with high hopes of becoming successful; however, my definition of an accomplished writer changed. I came to realize that there is no success in being a good writer if that writer cannot understand himself. Even today, I remind myself of that café whenever I can, so that I may reflect on why I want to write—and why it is a large part of me.

