

A Hope for the Future

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Why I want to teach more than anything else in the world.

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Once upon a time, there was a girl who didn't know what she wanted to do. She was told to do well in school, get good grades, and to pick out a good college. She was told to have an engaging career; something she could love, enjoy, and give back to the community with; something her family would approve of. Something that was admirable and desirable. She was told these things because she would be the first in her family to go to college at all. She had to be impressive. But what would she be? She thought of many things.

First, she wanted to be a paleontologist. She loved dinosaurs and wanted to be around them as much as possible. She knew almost every type of dinosaur there was, and she could name them on the fly. But then, she changed her mind.

She loved animals. Should she be a veterinarian? That was kind of like a doctor, and doctors are pretty important. But as time went on, she realized that she liked biology, but wasn't very good at memorizing the terms. Once again, she changed her mind.

She loved to write. So she would be a freelance writer! She would write young adult fiction, and be just as famous and successful as J.K. Rowling. Her books would become movies with actors that were so good looking, it would be painful! But then she realized the chances of that really happening were slim. Although she loved to write, she changed her mind again.

Only this time, she didn't know what to change it to. She was confused and angry. What should she become?

But then, she sat and thought about that question. Particularly the word "what". The way it was used in that question implied that she was a *thing*. A thing to be molded into the poster child of a great career. She didn't like that at all. She wasn't a thing, she was a person who loved other people, who loved being with other people, who loved helping other people! The word "should" bothered her as well. That word implied that she had to do something "proper" and "acceptable" that paid well. That word also implied that she was a thing. A thing that made no choices itself, but did what others said it *should* do, not what it *wanted* to do. She was not a thing.

So she realized that she should not be asking "What should I become?" she should be asking "Who will I become?" That is a far better question to her. That question is better because it implies exactly what she believes; that there is no set path in one's life, and that the time, place, and people all change. And change isn't always bad. Change can be good. Asking "Who will I become?" proves that she is willing to grow as a person and see that the greatest love of all is learning to love herself.

So who will she become? Certainly not The Doctor, but she knew she wanted to become a person that she could be proud of. Someone the children of the future could look up to as a role model. Someone that those kids could trust; someone those kids could rely on. She wanted to be that someone who believed in those future kids even when they wouldn't believe in themselves. She wanted to watch them learn, grow, and help them along the way. And then one day, it finally hit her. She wanted to become a teacher.

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Not just any teacher, but a high school teacher. When she told her peers this, they looked at her like she was crazy. They knew that she must be!

“Everyone knows that our school system is a piece of crap,” They told her.

“Do you really want to deal with annoying, hormonal teenagers?” They asked her.

“High school kids are really immature. You’d be better off teaching elementary,” They casually remarked.

This made her blood boil. They just didn’t understand!

“High school kids need more attention, acceptance, and time than any other age group!” she cried, brimming with passion, “Don’t you people understand how important of a time this is in their lives? They need an adult they can trust that won’t judge them! They need an adult who can teach them no matter how bad the system is! Sometimes they really just need a friend,” She tried to explain.

After a while, she gave up arguing with Them, and kept her dreams to herself. But she did think about their question: “Why do you want to teach at all?” So she sat and she thought. It was a fair question, unlike most of the questions they had posed. Why did she want to teach?

She wanted to teach for the sake of learning, and for the sake of friendship. She wanted to teach for the sake of the human legacy, and for the sake of the children of the future. She firmly believes that the children *are* the future, and they should be given the chance to lead the way. They may be afraid, and that is why she would be there. So they would learn course curriculum, but also learn to swallow their fear.

She knows the mark of a good teacher is when they produce an almost fearless student. A student who is not afraid of chasing their dreams all through the day, even after the sun has set. A student who doesn’t take “no” for an answer. A student who has faith in themselves, and has learned, if nothing from the class, how to connect with others.

But right now, that girl *is* a student. And secretly, she is afraid. But she stands a little bit taller knowing that her teachers have and will support her. She wants to do the same for future kids. She will be *that* teacher- the one the student never forgets; the one the student looks back at and smiles.

That is what she really, truly wants. She wants to share knowledge, and change lives. What she really wants reminds her of a story she was once told:

There once was an old writer who lived by the sea. He lived a peaceful life, and wrote his stories happily. His inspiration came from the ocean. In the early morning, he would stroll along the beach and think about what to write next. He believed he had seen everything.

But one morning, he saw something different. Another person was out just as early as he. The old writer was curious, so he walked over and saw it was a young man. He was doing something most peculiar. The young man was picking up starfish that had washed up onto the beach, and was throwing them back into the ocean.

“Young man, what are you doing?” the old writer asked.

“Putting the starfish back into the ocean,” the young man replied.

“Why on earth are you doing that?” the old writer questioned, utterly confused.

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“Well, if I don’t, who will? If I just leave them here, they’ll die.” The young man replied matter-of-factly.

“Foolish boy!” the old writer scoffed, “Do you have any idea how many hundreds of thousands of starfish wash up on hundreds of different beaches all over the world every single day and then die? There are far too many to save, and you are only one person. How could you possibly make a difference?”

The young man said nothing. He only bent down, pick up another starfish, and flicked it back into the water. The two watched as it flew through the air, and as the starfish hit the water with a soft splash, the young man looked at the old writer and said,

“I made a difference for that one.”

That story she was told so long ago impacted her decision very much. She looked at her future students as the starfish washed up on the beach, and she saw herself as the young man that had taken the time to save the starfish. Then, the more she thought about it, the more she realized that when she throws a starfish back into the great ocean that is life, every single starfish, no matter how big or small it may be, would create an impact on life. When a starfish is thrown into the water, it creates a ripple effect. In other words, when it was tossed into the water, the first few ripples it created were small. But as time progressed, the ripples got bigger. Maybe that starfish won’t reach far enough to influence the entire ocean, but the influence of that starfish would always be there. Maybe for a long while, maybe for a little while, but it would be there. Every one of the starfish had an impact.

That impact was caused by *her*. She could be someone’s inspiration. Their friend, their ally, the one that will always be there. Suddenly, she is overcome by a feeling of dread, followed by more “What if” scenarios than she can count. She inhaled deeply, and tried to calm herself. She knows what a huge responsibility being a teacher is. She also knows that it would take more time, passion, and effort than many are willing to put forth.

Some people would tell her she was wasting her time. They have asked her before if teaching is really worth it if she only impacts one student.

She pondered that question. Was it worth it? Then she remembered the story of the young man and the starfish. She smiled to herself. Even if she only made an impact one kid her entire career! When she had grown old and grey, she would look back and smile with pride because she made a difference for that one.

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