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A Tenacious Tiger in the World: Saving all that Remains (a novel)

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A Tenacious Tiger in the World:

Saving All That Remains (a novel)

By
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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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All that is included here is the third chapter. If you would like to read the entirety of the novel, visit erikafitzpatrick.com. There, you can find links to buy the book and enjoy the whole adventure.

Abstract

The nature of my project is creative; I wrote a paranormal fantasy novel, centered on a girl and the wild world of tigers, that contributes to the large pool of book options available to those who seek to entertain themselves by reading. As an endangered species, tigers are powerful, curious creatures that demand extensive research to be fully understood, but they also need raised awareness so that they might be saved from extinction. The plot of the book includes focuses on a girl who transforms into a tiger and moves to live among the wild tigers of India. It expresses themes of fear, acceptance, authority, and love among a diverse cast of characters. My book is available in paperback, indie published under my own imprint publishing company, Fire Feather Press. This required me to format and design the cover and interior of my novel in an enticing, yet professional way in order to compete with the many other novels out there. With the writing of my book, I planned to entertain my readers with a fantasy adventure tale by bringing them face-to-face with tigers in the wild world, while also serving to raise awareness in order to help tigers prosper once more.

Blurb

I stood in front of the mirror and cautiously opened my jaws.

Then I screamed.

It was too terrifying not to. I mean how many people looked at themselves in the mirror and saw two-inch-long fangs protruding from their gums?

I gingerly reached up and touched it. It was so strong, so intact ... so real.

College was blessedly normal for Jade—that was until she attended one life-altering party. With outbursts of yellow cat-like eyes, white and protruding fangs, feral and frightening snarls, orange and black striped fur... life is no longer as normal as Jade would have hoped.

Burdened with the power to transform into a ferocious tiger, she must venture to the wild jungles of India in an attempt to rediscover and reclaim some kind of normalcy. Little did she expect to encounter an oppressed but thriving society of wild jungle cats. Captivated by beauty and loyalty and the undertow of pain that pervades her jungle home, Jade finds herself thrust into a desperate situation and position of power with the survival of the tigers resting on her striped shoulders.

Can she master her fears, overcome her losses, and claw out the courage to bring supremacy and salvation to her newly established family?

(Excerpt from the novel, *Saving All That Remains*)

JUNGLE

In my apartment, I was lying on the floor. I had skipped my last class of the day because of the crisis I was dealing with. It was a good thing, too, because I sprouted whiskers and a tail on my drive home. I now needed a new pair of pants.

As I had stumbled through the door, trying to be quick and sneaky so no one would spot my tail, the electricity at my heart seemed to explode within me, and I felt it all rush through my body like a shiver of sudden cold. Every part of my body transformed into a tiger's, and the next few seconds later, I was a full-grown, fully fledged wild cat standing on four legs with clawed paws in my shabby living room. My long tail was flicking back and forth with my agitation and fear, and my ears twitched at little sounds from every direction at once, and my eyes beheld the now usual dull mixture of color and detail in dark spaces. My whiskered nose flared as powerful scents reached it: cat urine, oak, clean laundry, roses, alcohol, and sour food. I felt all the new muscle that was a part of being a tiger, and my breathing was low and heavy in my large lungs. I inhaled deeply through my mouth. For once, I felt truly powerful and strong and totally in control. I wasn't so afraid anymore, and I was curious about my strengths in this new body despite the fact that I was a tiger.

I rolled my shoulders and extended my claws as I stretched, my back end high and my front end low to the floor. Then I sat on my hind legs like a dog and stared around, catching my reflection in the glass of the window. My bright yellow eyes shone back at me, wide and strange. My heart skipped a beat as I caught the full reflection of my large, orange-and-black striped body covered in fur. I could make out my tail flicking back and forth across the floor as I inspected myself. It was the scariest, strangest, freakiest thing I have ever experienced. I lifted my arm, and a leg and paw lifted in the tiger across from me. I prowled over to the window and watched as the tiger's breathing sped up as the large, striped cat moved close to me. I stood so that our noses were an inch away. I could sense the glass with my whiskers, even though my breath was fogging the reflection—my reflection. I caught sight of my tabby cat perched on the armrest of my couch, her yellow eyes wide with outright fear and confusion. She most likely saw me as some foreign, monster-sized rival cat that had taken over her living room and appeared to have consumed her owner.

Her fear was warranted.

That's when I began to worry. I couldn't stay like this forever, could I? I didn't want to turn permanently into a tiger. I couldn't feel the electricity anymore, so I wondered if it had gone and if I was stuck like this. I pulled at all my nerve endings in my body, pulled internally from the heart, trying to reel the currents back in. And, slowly, I felt the tingling sensation from earlier as the electricity retracted away from the rest of my body and back securely behind some sort of switch at my heart. I felt myself shrink and desensitize as I became human once more, only I was naked,

as my clothes had split under the immense mass of the tiger. I was still lying with my back to the floor and staring at the ceiling, thinking through the miracle that had just occurred.

I didn't know how much I could control this transformation thing. Would I suddenly burst into a jungle cat whenever my emotions got out of control? I needed space and some time to try to figure it out.

My phone vibrated beneath me, and I jumped in fright. I pulled it out of the back pocket of my pants on floor and stared at the screen. Sara inquired about my weekend. I sighed. It would be nice to act like nothing had changed, but turning into an animal uncontrollably wasn't a trivial matter. I was going to need this weekend and several more to test everything out. I had to control it, or I wouldn't be able to live a normal life.

I set my phone on the ground. I didn't know what to tell her. I could never tell her about this.

Ever.

I sat up and grabbed my phone. I sent her a message telling her I had too much homework this weekend coupled with one hell of a cold. She responded with a sad face and a get well soon. Maybe she could make plans with Jack now. I knew she didn't want me to feel like a third wheel. She had always been good about keeping her best friend close.

Unable to focus, especially on anything as mundane as homework, I went to bed early that night.

When I woke up in the morning, I panicked about school. I couldn't go back yet. What if I burst into a tiger in the middle of photoshop? What if Shianne provoked me again—not that she would after I'd growled at her with my fangs—but if I turned into a complete tiger this time, I'd be screwed. I couldn't go back until I discovered how to control it. That thought terrified me.

As much as I wanted to stay in bed, I threw the covers off and packed a bag for the day with a change of clothes, just in case. The nearest, somewhat secluded wooded area was about an hour away, which I realized was a blessing to the Portland area. I was hoping there would be a perfect spot to learn control and not be the object of some hunter's trophy case.

I ended up somewhere in the Mount Hood wilderness at an empty parking lot at the head of a hiking trail. I had never been much of a hiker, but now I could turn into a tiger, so everything was new that day.

I left my bag in my car and stood at the trailhead, bouncing on the balls of my feet. The path ahead was framed in frosted green and littered with dead leaves shrouded in white. I clutched my leather jacket tighter around me, bracing against a freezing gust of wind. I still didn't know what to expect—and I was frightened. What if there was a bear?

I shook my head, took a deep breath, and ran down the trail without looking back.

About a hundred yards in, I veered off the path and barreled head first into the wild brush. Cold, wet ferns soaked my legs and prickly fir trees scraped against

my face. The city girl inside me was screaming to stop, turn around, and wrap up in a blanket forever, but something else within me said to keep going.

I kept running until my lungs couldn't handle it anymore. I bent over gasping. All around me was silence. No scurrying animals or people or cars or even Oregon rain. Nothing to provoke me or set the transformative reactions off.

I stood there, finally breathing normally. It had to be around 1 o'clock, but nothing had happened. Were the random tiger transformations done? Now that I'd completely transformed? Should I just turn back and go home like the rational part of me wanted to?

I had come this far.

I felt within me, toward the switch and regulator I managed to store the currents behind last time. Something there possessed energy. I could feel it—but it wasn't trying to escape like it had before. Perhaps I could control it. Exhaling deeply, I unbuttoned my jacket and set it on a damp rock nearby. A second later I regretted it, remembering the possibly, irreversible damage water can cause to leather garments. I picked it up and hung it gently on a tree branch. That was something I refused to lose—it was one of the most expensive things I owned and one of the only things I had ever received from my mother.

I closed my eyes and mentally—recklessly—linked the circuit.

The tingling currents wormed through my veins very slowly, enough that I could track the hot, electrifying feeling as it traveled down my arms, abdomen, and legs. I fell onto all fours and opened my eyes, the world a selectively dull, distorted, but detailed jumble around me. Wherever sunlight shone through the tangle of

branches overhead, the world seemed exponentially brighter and more finely detailed than my human eyes could have ever perceived.

Suddenly, a bird chirped above me. My ear twitched, and I looked up at it in surprise. It was still February and very cold for birds. I took a step toward the tree it perched in, but froze when I heard a twig snap. It was quiet for a few more seconds, but then there were rustling leaves and more cracks and snaps. Something was coming toward me.

I bolted, stumbling over brush as I awkwardly tried to control my four limbs that weren't helped by the dangling remains of my thermal shirt and denim jeans. After I had retreated to a safer distance, I crouched low and waited for whatever was out in the woods today.

A bearded man dressed in wooded camouflage emerged, binoculars hanging from his neck. He glanced around him and pulled out a notebook, staring up at the lonesome bird.

I relaxed slightly when he didn't notice my trail of ripped, torn, broken, and disturbed wildlife I'd left in my wake. I waited until he disappeared and walked back over to where I'd left my jacket. Afraid of who would show up next, I retracted the currents like the first time until I stood shivering in the middle of the wilderness with just my leather jacket.

I traipsed back to the trail and darted into my car once I knew the coast was clear. I cranked the heat and pulled on my extra pair of clothes, wondering how I was going to test out being a tiger with bird watchers and hikers and other crazy people that didn't quit the outdoors when it was frozen outside.

I felt some relief that I apparently had some kind of control over my transformation, but now I was curious and determined. My failure at running on four legs bothered me. The muscle and mass I had as a tiger was empowering, but floundering through the forest was embarrassing, even if no one was watching.

I drove home, hoping not to be ambushed by humans again the next time I tried.

For three weekends straight, I drove out to the woods and attempted to figure out the body of the tiger. I eventually mastered the art of using my four legs as an entity, and I discovered that it was impossible to escape people. They were everywhere, doing everything—mountain bikers, joggers, wildlife enthusiasts, surveyors, loggers, hikers, campers—and I barely made it undetected most of the time.

Luckily, I knew for sure now that I could control it. Two and a half weeks of sitting in class without any outbursts had proved that. But I was still curious. The tiger within me wasn't going away, and maybe it was time to start thinking about that vacation again.

Spring break was approaching quickly.

My mother's travel pin kept haunting me, reminding me of all the experience I lacked outside of the greater Portland area. Now was my time to take a break from my busy human life and escape my city home. Maybe I could work out this tiger kink in my life if I took time to really deal with it. To let the craziness of the phenomenon

sink in and give myself time to explore it and grow comfortable with it in a way that wouldn't land me in a zoo. Or a nut house.

Lying in bed, I considered where I would go. But because of what had occurred, I figured I wouldn't be going to Jamaica or Hawaii or somewhere tropical and heavily populated with tourists. To explore the possibilities and new abilities of the tiger, I would need to go somewhere where they were native, like India or Bangladesh. The only problem was I still had a fear of the wild jungle and completely wild animals.

I sat up and closed my eyes. I was slightly dizzy from lying on my back for so long, and I was nervous about booking my trip. Wearily, I pulled out my laptop, turning it on and listening to the hum and buzz as it started up. I waited anxiously as the welcome screen stared at me, and then my cat leapt up on my keyboard and mewed at me in search of attention. I suddenly realized that my cat looked kind of like a miniature tiger, only the wrong colors. She had deeper orange-colored stripes rather than black. Sighing, I opened up the internet and began searching for the largest population of tigers in Southeast Asia. There was a large population of Bengal tigers in central and north India. Resigned, I looked up cities and a half an hour later, I had purchased air tickets to Nagpur, India. I had clenched my teeth and closed one eye in nervous fear and cautiously clicked the button that said checkout to order the plane tickets. Then I had to buy a train ticket to Mansar, India, which would take me nearer to the jungles that I was heading toward.

The date of my departure was set for one week away. It was fortunate that I'd obtained my passport in my senior year of high school when my mother had

planned to take me on an international trip. I'd had to cancel a week before because the last chance for the SAT had come up, and I had missed the first two. Truth be told, it would have been weird to go with her anyway. We hadn't been that close through my high school years.

I called a lunch meeting with Sara to tell her I was finally taking my vacation. I couldn't tell her the truth about my transformation, but I couldn't avoid telling her where I was going. Luckily, her last few weekends with Jack had gone exceedingly well, and it was all she could think, speak, and focus on—which seemed frivolous and perplexing and wildly foreign to me. However, the strangeness of me traveling to India didn't raise a warning flag on her radar.

"I just hope you have fun. It seems like it's been awhile since you've enjoyed yourself," she said. "Jack and I haven't discovered what not having fun is like yet."

I smiled at her, thankful for the distraction in her life, and we said good-bye for a while. I went home to pack. I didn't pack a lot: two changes of clothes and my money for the trip. I would be spending most of my time as a tiger, so I wouldn't need a lot of clothes. I had to get ahold of Sara again to ask her if she would look after my cat. She said of course.

The week passed quickly, and in no time at all, I was in the airport, tapping my only bag—which was small enough to be a carry on—nervously and anxiously. I was terrified, but still excited. So far the plane was on time, but a part of me—the biggest part—was hoping for a delay, yet the other part of me wanted to get the travel and move into the jungle over with.

My conflicted self won the reward that both of me wanted. The plane was only five minutes late. My stomach twisting, I clutched my bag and boarded the plane. My seat was on the wing, the loudest area of the plane. Maybe that would help me to not think about what was coming.

The plane was rather large to transport us over the country, and the seats were mostly full. An Indian family sat up towards the front, and two other white American men sat behind me. I avoided everyone's gaze and stared out the window. We had a layover in New York that would last two hours to refuel and pick up a few more passengers. I would never leave the plane. As we took off, I avoided looking down, resting my head against the window, wishing for sleep to help me forget about what was coming and ease my restless state.

At our layover, a few people left and others boarded. A short, but muscular, man ended up in the seat beside me. He rearranged his position for a moment or two, trying to find the most comfortable spot. I watched him from the corner of my eye. Something seemed off about him. He wore a tight, short sleeve active shirt and a well-worn, orange bandana around his neck. A safari hat was propped on the floor between his large-muscled calves. I didn't know if it was my intuition or my animalistic sixth sense that detected his strangeness, but I avoided eye contact and rested my head against the cool glass, waiting for takeoff once again.

After we had reached a steady altitude, I sighed in relief, my breath fogging up the window pane. I hated takeoff.

"So why are you travelling to India?" came a raspy, smoker's voice from beside me.

I swiveled my gaze around and caught a flash of bright red in his retinas. My breath froze in my throat for a moment until I realized it had been from the glare of the sun through the window. And he was leaning a little bit close for my liking.

"I'm ... meeting my mother there. She's a journalist."

"Mmm hmm." He stared at me without blinking. I didn't know what he wanted.

"And why are you going to India?" I said.

He picked up his hat and twirled it in my face. "I'm going on a safari. I'm a hiker and outdoors aficionado, and I've never been to India. I'm going to grasp nature by his essence and conquer him."

I glanced at his muddy, tan hiking boots and holey khaki shorts. "Isn't nature a woman?"

He peered at me, moving closer. I backed away slightly. "You think you're smart, huh? Nature was created by the Almighty himself—therefore, nature would accordingly be male."

"What about Mother Nature?" I asked, in spite of myself.

"You either believe in the Almighty or Mother Nature. Man or woman."

This man was a nut. I didn't reply and looked away, hoping he would understand my intentions to be rid of this conversation.

He left me alone for about ten minutes, during which he managed to down an entire plastic cup of jack and coke.

"What do you call yourself?" he suddenly asked.

Call myself. That was a new one. "Jade."

"You have a name of nature—don't squander it." He paused for a few seconds, perhaps waiting for me to ask him for his name, but I wasn't going to fall for the bait. "I call myself Oleander, but you can call me Ollie."

I couldn't resist the irrational curiosity that bubbled up. "What does it mean?"

He smiled sardonically, all his teeth showing in a creepy fashion. "Poisonous flower."

I could feel my heart rate increase. Whoever this guy was, he boded ill for wherever he was going. I had no reply for this strange and dangerous man. I looked away and leaned against the cold window again.

Half an hour later, I heard him order another drink, which he once more consumed in under five minutes once it arrived. A moment after he had finished his drink, I could feel his hot, whiskey-tainted breath on my ear. "Want to know what I'm really doing in India, Jade?" he whispered.

I remained frozen, feeling my blood rush through my veins, hearing my heart pound in my ears—waiting, almost hoping, I would suddenly sprout claws or fangs.

He was leaning against me, his lips much too close to my ear. "Hunting tigers."

I jumped with a big wave of turbulence, which rocked my head against the glass. I rubbed my forehead in annoyance. My blood was still racing, and I refused to look back at him, afraid he would see me for what I was hidden within. Taking steadying breaths, I stared out the window. I hadn't really worried or truly thought

about the idea of poachers while I was in Oregon, but that could be a serious issue that I had to be prepared to face while in India.

It was all cloudy and dark outside, but we were descending onto foreign land. My stomach clenched some more as we landed down in India. This was my first time in another country.

The airport was so much smaller than what I was used to. I hurried to get away from it, to go outside and see the place where I would be living. Nagpur wasn't poorly underdeveloped. It wasn't a shabby town or village with mud huts, but it wasn't like Portland. Hindus in very colorful and traditional dress were walking about, conversing in Hindi. Meanwhile, traffic was a nightmare, worse than rush hour in L.A. This was madness.

I stayed off the streets, working my way through town, avoiding the man from the plane, who had a fancy hunting rifle slung across his back, his safari hat shadowing most of his face as he stood waiting for a cab. I clutched my bag as I searched for a bus station. Once I found it, I boarded quickly so I could get a seat by myself. I had a long ride ahead to get to Mansar. I watched scenery for as long as I could, fighting the urge to sleep. I was terrified to fall asleep and wake up robbed, kidnapped, or worse.

When I finally arrived, I disembarked and stared around. This was a busy and heavily populated city of farm houses. The lack of skyscrapers and rain reminded me how far away from home I was. This city was smaller than Nagpur, full of homes and temples, cheap little shops, and a lot less cars. But this was not my final destination. From Mansar, I caught a ride to Ghukashi, literally a village in the

middle of nowhere. It was very close to a tiger reserve and jungle. There was nothing exciting there—it was the closest thing I'd seen to a hut village. I ventured toward the edge of the village where, in the distance, I could see the jungle. With one deep sigh, I turned my back on civilization and ran like the maniac I felt.

At the edge of the trees, heart pumping while my stomach anxiously twisted, I listened to the creaks of the wild place. I wanted to turn into a tiger before I ventured through the jungle. I was terrified to enter it as a human, but I wasn't going to transform out in the open. Gulping down my fear, I darted into the jungle and hid behind a tree. Then I stripped as fast as my shaking hands would allow, stuffed my clothes in my bag, and then released the electricity. It flowed through my veins, and I slowly—and less painfully than before—grew and fell to all fours. And when, at last, my tail was twitching behind me, I shook out my fur and rolled my shoulders. Then I listened to all the sounds that were making my ears twitch and flick. There was the rustle of leaves and branches as the wind blew and creatures moved. It was hard to concentrate. All the sounds and senses and smells and things to see. I was overwhelmed. Strange to me was my lowered sense of fear now that I was a tiger. I felt safer since I had the mass, teeth, and claws, and my mind was oddly clear and thoughtful. I could focus better, yet my senses had so much more strength, taking up more of my attention than before. Then again, my brain seemed to have more room to accept all of this extra information.

This was not me. This was an out of body experience—I was Jade from Portland, living in a crummy apartment in the city, going to college to study communications. I was terrified of the wild and wild animals. Yet here I was,

transformed into a tiger and standing in a jungle in the middle of India. This was the complete opposite of me, but even so, I didn't feel the panic I thought I should be feeling. I lumbered forward, gazing around the trees and various species of big-leaved bushes and plants, feeling a sense of ease I'd forgotten existed.

Everything was wet or dripping, initially causing my ears to twitch in every direction, but it wasn't difficult to ignore. Too much was stealing the attention through my eyes, for never before had I considered how beautiful the jungle could be. I had always cringed internally at the mention of the jungle, the whole idea of it had terrified me, but now I took time to really look at it and its natural beauty. There was so much green. Even with dull colors, I could still see that almost everything was a shade of green—so much nature and life. The place seemed so pure with no human interference. It was relaxing and beautiful. The whole absence of fear made me feel so different, like I was suddenly a different person. This tiger transformation was changing everything about me.

A colorful frog pealed its strange chirp, and I jerked my head upward to glare at it. A rumble sounded through my throat at the annoyance of the amphibian. It hopped away, squeaking in fear.

I roared in triumph.

There was a crackle of leaves from the ground, and I automatically tensed. A drop of water splashed on my forehead from a leaf above, and I shook my head like a dog would do. I seemed to have a sixth sense; a part of me sensed the presence of another creature very close, something big. A little fear seeped into my emotions, but I felt more anticipation. I was ready to prove myself. A very large head appeared

around a tree trunk. Of course it wasn't human—the face was furry with white down the sides. The nose and forehead were orange, striped black. The eyes were yellow, and they looked at me curiously and wearily.

A wild tiger.

It showed no signs of aggression, so I relaxed slightly. I took one heavy step forward.

It spoke to me.

I was shocked. I hadn't considered the fact that we would talk to each other.

The other tiger was female.

"I thought you were a human. I was ready to pounce. You smell strongly of their stench."

I gulped.

"I've been near the village recently," I replied, glad I had hidden my bag of clothes by a rock.

She eyed me shrewdly. "You're new to the forest here, aren't you?"

"Yes," I said hesitantly. I was afraid of what would happen next.

She prowled around me, inspecting me. "What are your plans?" she asked. "Just passing through or were you hoping to stay?"

"Stay? In the jungle? With you?" I hadn't planned on staying with the wild tigers, but there wasn't really a hotel or place to stay as a human. I had known this booking my trip. I had come to test and explore being a tiger. My plan had been to do it alone, but would this be a better, safer, choice?

"There's more than just me here," the other female replied. "There's a group of us that live here under one domain. You can choose to stay with us or move on, but if you choose to be one of us, then you'll have to meet the rajah."

The rajah. So there was a king of these beasts, meaning there was some sort of society. A hierarchy of some kind resided here. Did that mean these wild cats weren't really wild?

I was suddenly intensely curious about this wild society of tigers. I had come to explore being a tiger. Maybe this would be the best way to do it, with another tiger—perhaps a potential friend—to figure everything out with.

I'd already done the impossible and left home. I was in India. What did I have to lose?

"I'm interested in staying," I finally said.

She seemed pleased by my decision. "Come with me. We're mostly safe in the trees. Humans come only occasionally. That's when we drive them out." She turned around and walked through the brush, almost silent except for the thud of her padded paws on the ground and the slithering of leaves as they rubbed along her sides. I felt so strange, but powerful walking on all fours and prowling through the jungle.

"What's your name?" she called from ahead.

I had to think quickly. I didn't want to use Jade—it was so human. I was all mixed up in my thoughts and my nature. I was human. I was a tiger.

"My name is Mix," I said swiftly. "Who are you?"

"I'm Somila," she replied. "I was just about to go hunting when I caught your scent. Care to join me? We can visit the rajah afterwards."

"Um...," I replied, terrified. I was a city person, who lived off of junk food, potatoes, some random vegetables, and very well-done, finely cooked meats. I didn't hunt... at all. Nor did I eat anything raw. This was a milestone I was not sure I was really prepared for in any way.

But if I wanted to make this work, I was going to have to try it, as unappealing as it sounded. "Sure," I finally replied.

"Let's go find something vulnerable." She headed off through some bushes, her striped tail vanishing with a flick. I hurried to follow.

We had gone maybe fifty feet when I sensed something moving fast to our left. I paused as it approached. Somila didn't pause though. She turned, faced the noise, and crouched low, like my cat did when she got ready to jump.

There was a wild cat roar and something leapt through the air at the female tiger down low. My eyes followed the flight of the leaping cat, but my peripheral vision caught the female tiger pounce, and they met in mid-air, jaws open in attack form, but no claws exposed. It was playful and teasing, like when guys punched each other on the arms in greeting.

I stayed back as they crashed to the floor of the jungle, rolling around like fools. Then they righted themselves and faced me, sitting on their haunches. I sat too.

The other cat was male, and he was considerably thinner and overall much smaller than we tigers. He was also a different cat. His primary fur was golden

yellow and he had blotchy, not fully circular spots dotted over the panes of his feline body. He was a leopard.

"A newbie?" he asked. "Excellent."

I swallowed.

"This is Mix," Somila informed him. "Mix, this is Shrey."

"Welcome to our home. We've needed some new cats around here. The others were tugging on my last whiskers," Shrey continued.

I didn't know what to say.

"There's one thing you should know about our jungle," Shrey the leopard began. "The leopards live on one side of the jungle and tigers on the other. The stream divides the sides, but one—Rajah Sojóma—rules over us all in the jungle. There's not a lot of us cats, sadly, but enough."

"I've heard that we're endangered," I said matter-of-factly.

"Yeah, humans label us as 'Endangered' but they're the ones who made us so," Somila replied angrily.

"We're headed that way too," Shrey said. "Nobody respects the wild anymore."

I secretly agreed.

The familiar gnawing sensation of hunger began to eat at my sides. I gave a low rumble.

"We were just about to hunt and then go see Sojóma," Somila said to Shrey.

"We'll be back soon." She prowled off in search of food.

I looked at Shrey, still sitting on the ground. "You coming?" I asked.

"No, I ate a few days ago." He yawned. "But you better hurry if you want to keep up with her. She's stealthy and fast."

Panicking, I tore after her, lunging my four legs forward and backward, rushing against the jungle floor, flying through the bushes. I was just beginning to enjoy the rush of running when I ran head first into something still and solid. My first dazed thought was that I must've hit a tree. But a sharp growl switched my thought process.

I had run into Somila.

"What was that for?" she hissed. She looked angry and mean. Like a predator who would eat me.

I gulped. "I'm sorry. I was running to catch up and just forgot to slow down. I like running—" I cut myself off, almost saying "as a tiger." I couldn't afford to be stupid.

"You like running?" she asked, sounding skeptical and surprised.

"Yeah, don't you? It feels like flying."

She stared at me. "None of us really like running."

"They were all crazy." So what's the point of having four strong legs, if not to run?"

"To hunt and eat."

Well, maybe not completely crazy. "I have a confession to make," I said. Better to get it over with rather than humiliate myself later. "I can't hunt."

"What?" she gasped.

"I...came from a zoo. I escaped. I've never hunted." I was proud of my quick thinking.

"A...zoo?" She peered at me suspiciously.

"Yeah. They feed you meat already butchered. And I was born there, so I was never taught how to hunt." You could call the city a zoo.

"Alright. Watch me. Pay close attention and follow your instincts."

Somila then moved away, crouching low to the ground, slowly sneaking forward, her dilated pupils black and aware, her ears still, listening carefully. I analyzed her every movement, making sure to remember everything so I wouldn't look like a fool.

She crept along the river edge, sensing for any unaware animals that would work as lunch. She was deathly silent. Even when her body brushed leaves, barely a sound was heard, even to my super-sensitive ears. And those super-sensitive ears caught the snuffling of a smaller creature that smelled appealing. I froze before Somila did, crouching to the ground like her.

She dug her claws into the earth, ready to spring, and then she launched herself forward, flying through the air, claws and teeth exposed. Somila landed on a type of pig, a very big pig, very much like a wart-hog. It squealed until life was taken from him and then Somila looked up at me.

"Instincts," I said, understanding. It looked natural to hunt.

She nodded and then began tearing into the flesh of the swine.

I suddenly felt sick.

She swallowed a bite and said, "You can have some, if you want."

I was stuck in a dilemma. On one hand—or rather, paw—I was hungry, but on the other paw, my stomach felt queasy at the thought of eating a raw pig.

"It's your catch," I replied. "I'll go downstream to see if I can catch something. Save a bite for me, though, if I don't catch anything."

She nodded and I prowled off, sniffing for something that smelled even relatively appealing. I caught the scent of a fearful rodent, a venomous snake, and a large bird. The bird seemed to smell differently with each intake of air I pulled in. At first, it smelled like chicken, and then it smelled like wet, raw meat. It took me several minutes to realize that I was registering the smell with two different sides of me. My tiger instincts smelled the bird as chicken, making me long to hunt, while my human brain registered the smell as the meaty raw part of the bird, turning off any appeal the bird had as food.

I tried to focus on the smell of chicken, trying to block out my human thoughts as I crouched into the bushes. As long as I didn't think about what I was doing, it shouldn't bother me. Mind over matter. At least, that was my theory.

I inched forward, trying to be stealthy as I turned off my human senses and focused on my prey, letting the tiger take over.

I pounced, my claws jutting out, ready to shred the bird into dinner. It squawked as I roared and flew through the air. Feathers filled the air as it tried to take flight. My clawed paw trapped it by the tail feathers, while it flailed around on the ground in fear. I would've pitied it if I wasn't possessed by hunger and natural instincts. I bit at its neck to silence and immobilize it, and the bird fell limp. I stood there and stared at the dead bird, relishing in my success on my first hunt. Before I

really thought about what I had just done and what I was going to do, I grabbed the bird in my mouth and padded back to where Somila was just finishing her pig. I dropped the bird at my feet and sat down in triumph.

"You killed a bird?" Somila asked in surprise.

"I killed a bird."

She eyed me, seeming to re-evaluate my abilities. "Birds are a rare delicacy around here because so few of us can manage to catch them. They're usually too fast and skittish. The leopards usually get lucky because they spend so much time in the trees."

So on my first hunt not only had I managed to actually catch something, but I succeeded in catching something most tigers couldn't. That boosted my morale.

"Would you like some?" I offered. I was still hesitant on eating it.

"Oh no, go ahead. It's your catch, and I rather out-did myself on the boar." She and I both glanced at the remains of the swine.

"Alright," I replied, and before I could change my mind, I sunk my teeth into the flesh of the bird.

I managed to choke the whole thing down in ten minutes, spitting out feathers through the whole process. Somila had left me alone to eat in peace, so I didn't feel too foolish, but I would avoid birds in the future. Feathers were an embarrassing, unnecessary ordeal when eating.

I had to follow scents back to where Somila and Shrey were lounging among some many-leaved bushes. It wasn't that difficult, but there were a lot of scents to distract from my course. The sky was orange by the time I found them.

"Find anything?" Shrey asked me.

"A bird," I said conversationally.

He stared at me in surprise for a few seconds as well, and then he composed himself. "Well, I hope it tasted good."

"As well as any bird can taste," I mumbled.

"Are you ready to meet our rajah?" Somila asked, standing up.

This was my last chance to run if I didn't want to be a part this world. But somewhere inside of me was a desire to be accepted by these cats. I felt curious and adventurous. To my surprise, I wanted to know what this new world had to offer.

"Yes, let's go see him," I said, still hesitant, although I'd made a decision. I just didn't know what that entailed.

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Reflection

Where Everything Began

Writing has been an indispensable part of my life since I could put pen to paper. I have been developing my writing skills both creatively and professionally for my entire life. My love of creative writing began with an early love of story. Spending my weekly visits to Grandma's watching the many sequenced Land Before Time movie series, I attempted to emulate those stories and their impact upon my four year old self by drawing and doodling random letter groups that were meant to resemble words. After a few months of this, my father compiled all the pages into a binder that became my first 'book.' From there, the many tales brought to life by Disney played an integral role in my development and fascination with story. In particular, The Lion King inspired some rather wild behavior from me—I would run around on all fours and roar and bite like a lion.

As I got older, my love for storytelling and story-absorbing only grew. I read a lot of fiction, but I wrote even more. Writing short stories and novels became a hobby to pass my time, as did reading. Every trip to the library while I was in elementary school ended with my arms full of at least three or four books for the week. It almost always included another adventure from The Magic Treehouse, a featured animal from the Nature's Children books, and some other book of interest that suited my fancy. Those particular books are likely responsible for my love of whimsical worlds and animals today.

As I continued to age, I became indescribably fond of fantasy series, such as J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and The Inheritance Cycle by Christopher Paolini. Their

dedication to world-building inspired me to be extensive and authentic with regard to my own writing, especially with this project when it came to the Indian jungles and tiger habitats. However, it was also the authors' infusion of magic that captured my attention and led me to incorporate a similar idea in my own work. Linda Francis Lee's *Emily and Einstein* inspired the idea of human transformation into a tiger, since one of her main characters, Sandy Portman, is transformed into a dog and must adjust to living and seeing from the perspective of an animal. As a dog, Sandy is forced to observe the world, rather than directly interact and speak in it, forced to listen and learn from a new perspective that greatly impacts his worldview and beliefs. I also tried to incorporate this idea in my novel, allowing Jade, my main character, to gain new perspectives and worldviews as she spends time in the wild jungle as a tiger.

While reading was a very important activity throughout my youth, my writing had not halted with the first dinosaur book. The stories grew more sophisticated with age and access to supplies. Soon after the dinosaur compilation, I had bound construction paper with staples to house my stories of purple colored tigers off to save their kidnapped friend or the merman who was misunderstood by all the mermaids. Greater tales of time-traveling alligators and space-traversing dinosaurs started to manifest around the age of eight. These types of tales became more complex and realistic with time and practice and education. By the time I was in sixth grade, I decided I wanted to write a 'real' book, not one of my simple construction paper concoctions. The plot included variations of all my best friends at the time with magical friendship necklaces that took them to the future. By the

time I finished writing it, I'd managed to produce at least 60 pages. It wasn't novel length, but it was more than I had ever been able to write before. And with that fuel for my fire, I entered seventh grade with the sole mission to write a complete novel.

By my 15th birthday, I had finished the 280 page book, *Wistor*. The book was of realm jumping, medieval sword fighting, castles and dragons, and a complicated love triangle between the main character, a prince, and a peasant. The passing of another two years produced the 420 page sequel, *Wimsor*. This next book took place 20 years later, where the previous prince was now a king, the main character had children, and a new war was encompassing the realm. After having written two complete novels, I truly felt that writing was a part of my identity. I suddenly felt I could identify as a writer, as an author, and the entirety of my future seemed to expand. There were so many options to pursuing a writing-related career, including becoming a teacher of English, which would leave me constantly immersed in a world of writing and story, but also with free summers to keep practicing at my passion.

It was after the completion of *Wimsor* that I began the development of *Saving All That Remains*, which was formerly titled *Mix*. The seeds for the characters and plot were planted my senior year of high school with only five chapters loosely drafted, but they were not properly nurtured until almost halfway through college. When it became the centerpiece of my collegiate honors thesis, I suddenly devoted attention to the characters and story like never before. I heard their voices again, felt the nagging within that was their tale begging to be told. This experience was similar to how English novelist and playwright, Michael Frayn, expressed how his

story and characters suggest and lead themselves, and he, as the author, doesn't have "very much choice in the matter. Ideas come, characters suggest themselves, and the nature of the story and the nature of the characters dictates how it's going to be done." His experience of having little control over what happens to the characters and story is something I have come to understand all too well, as I have seen my characters' paths lead them to stumble and plummet to their deaths, my hand only the storytelling vessel. Despite the tragedy of many scenes in my book, those situations are where the characters ultimately led me, and listening to them has not been my favorite aspect of writing, but it has been rewarding. Overall, my writing experience has not been easy, but it has been a tremendous learning opportunity.

Before diving into the trials and tribulations of the actual writing and revising process, an explanation is due as to why tigers are the centerfold of this project. In truth, I chose the tiger because these rare and majestic cats hold a special place in my heart. I have forever loved them, as evident by the purple versions I wrote about that earned their place within my childhood accomplishments. Even now, my home is filled with tiger keepsakes of every shape, size, and form.

While my initial love of tigers sprung from somewhere unknown--most likely from the stuffed tiger my uncle brought me when he returned from a deployment to Germany-- tigers have become a symbol of tenacity, courage, and beauty in my life. It is these qualities that I believe I have attempted to communicate and infuse in the characters of my novel, not only because I see them, but because the world could benefit from seeing tigers in this new perspective and as a symbol

for good things in life. Already, parts of the world share these positive views of tigers. In many Asian cultures, especially in China, the tiger is revered as a symbol of courage and power. In Chinese cultures, the tiger is one of the 12 zodiac signs, and represents masculinity and the supreme ruler over all beasts, as evident by the four stripes on their forehead, similar to a Chinese symbol that means “king.”

Throughout Asia, tigers were wards against evil spirits, bringers of rain, protectors, forms of gods, and many other ancient characters and symbols of power and the spiritual realm in folklore (Guynup). Whatever tigers represent to the rest of the world today, they are symbols of strength and beauty for me, and hopefully, will become so for others.

Not only do I have a reverence for these creatures, but they are also in danger of going extinct. One of my favorite films, *Two Brothers*, is entertaining, but also illuminates the many dangers that tigers encounter throughout their lives: illegal traders, poachers, habitat loss, and conflict with humans in general (“Species: Tigers”). However, it is not only humans that threaten the tigers. Adventurous cubs find trouble with environmental factors and other predators, which attributes to the difficult mortality rate tiger cubs face (Meyer, “Tigers Birth and Care”). Tigers cannot save themselves when it is mostly the human population responsible for their decline. While I may not be able to do the hands-on field work in the name of saving these wild cats, I believe I have utilized my creative writing skills to weave a tale of fantasy and adventure while simultaneously demonstrating the threats and advocating for the tigers’ desperate need of assistance from the creatures who have the power to make change. My choice of genre allows the book to have the potential

to reach out to a greater, broader audience that may not have realized, before reading my novel, the grave danger tigers--and other endangered species--are in.

Understanding Tigers

The decision to write about tigers was not a simple one. By making that choice, it required an abundant amount of research and executive decision making when it came to writing from a tiger's point of view. Although Jade transformed into a tiger, coming from a human and familiar background, her morph into a biological tiger became very complicated. As I have not experienced such a phenomenon, writing in first person about her experience was not going to be successful on any level without any kind of background knowledge. This is where researching became essential.

I have never completed as much research for one project as I have done for this book. The first bout of research was on the functioning of tiger's eyes. It took time to find the kind of information I needed, sifting through sites and articles about the gemstone rather than the functioning of the actual eye of a tiger. However, an organizational website solely devoted to tigers had the information I needed. Their research allowed me to understand how the rods, cones, and pupils collaborated to allow tigers to efficiently hunt at night. Their eyes are designed to contain many more rods than humans, which pick up sensitive light shifts on a greater scale than many other animals (Meyer, "Tiger Senses"). Without this information, writing from a tiger's point of view would have been inauthentic. This is true of many of the tiger's senses, including whisker functions, hearing, and sense of smell. By having

access to and understanding of this information, as the writer, I have the ability to weave a more believable and immersive story, allowing the reader to see and smell and hear as a tiger, just as Jade learns to do.

Research did not stop with tiger senses. The same informational organization provided detailed information about how tigers hunt, court, mate, give birth, raise cubs, turn into man eaters, and even more (Meyer). Throughout the novel, I did my best to incorporate these natural instincts and aspects into the wild tigers. However, since this was also a fantasy novel, I had artistic license to ignore, transform, or alter how these behaviors manifested in the tigers of my book. Although I still wanted them to be fairly true to life, I also needed to establish the community they lived in. Tigers, by nature, are loners. They roam their territories, living alone until they need to mate (Meyer "Tigers Social Structure"). I did purposefully break this instinctual lifestyle, but I also made reference to this choice in the text by having a character explain the reason for the unnatural living situation to Jade. By doing this, the reader would know that I was not unaware of how tigers normally live in the wild. Understanding tigers allows me to know how and when to break the rules. I can apply them to achieve authenticity, but also consciously break them for specific purposes.

Besides understanding the various functions and behaviors of tigers, I also conducted research on the geography, biodiversity, and climate as well as weather in the regions of India that my book took place. India as a setting for my novel was carefully chosen after consideration of the subspecies of tiger I wished to write about and their various regions of habitation. It was important to be authentic and

realistic as much as I could be, especially when it came to critical elements, such as setting and species. Tigers in the wild range widely across Eastern Asia, from India to China and Southern Russia to Indonesia. Their habitats are scattered throughout these countries, and different subspecies of tiger live in different areas. Several subspecies, which include the Caspian, Javan, Bali tigers (Meyer “Tiger Subspecies”), are already extinct, and I wanted to make sure that the subspecies of tiger in my novel was not too little in number to support the plot, but also not in a region that would be too hard to write about for an inviting and rich setting. Thus, Bengal tigers and their habitat--India, Nepal, and Bangladesh--I chose to focus on and incorporate into my novel. India became the central setting due to its larger land mass and greater tiger population concentration.

With India as my setting backdrop, I needed to know the various seasons of India and how they differed from the one region I have lived in my entire life: the Pacific Northwest. I discovered that middle India monsoon seasons occurred between July and September, avoiding the hottest of the summer months (“India Weather”). Several searches and Indian websites were sources to access the various flora and fauna in the jungles of India so that creatures in my book would reflect the reality of the Indian jungle scapes (“India Wildlife”; “Animals in India”). My research deepened when I began examining the more specific types of birds and reptiles and amphibians that reside in India. Several books played integral roles in finding and utilizing this information, including Les Beletsky’s *Birds of the World*, Bryan Richard’s *Birds of the World*, and Dr. Glenn Shea’s *Home Reference Library: Reptiles and Amphibians*. The bird books offered different varieties of information. Richard’s

book was more accessible when finding information, as well as more visually appealing, with many of the bird entries accompanied by full color photographs that helped me visualize the bird in order to describe it more accurately within my novel. This was also the case with Shea's reptile book.

The research was fairly ongoing as I continued to write the book, having to fact check, double check, and even look up new information after I had completed over half of the book. However, this all contributed to a greater enriching and immersive reading experience for those that pick up *Saving All That Remains*.

Writing Process

The first few chapters of *Saving All That Remains* were written while I was finishing high school. However, once college began and all the transitions common with going to college arose, the project went into a warming drawer--not even a back burner. I still planned to finish it, but the exact when was an idea floating in abstraction. It wasn't until I had to start thinking of thesis projects that the book found a place back on top of the stove.

I started writing the novel again at the end of my 2nd year in college, preparing to write my thesis proposal in the fall. I managed to produce several chapters between June and October of 2015. I then had to begin the search for an advisor willing to take on the large scope that my project was. Luckily, I had already worked with and established a writing relationship with a writing professor. She agreed, once I had assuaged all her concerns of feasibility and dedication to creating a complete, comprehensive, and well-written product.

And so began the weekly meetings to thoroughly explore each chapter as I revised and drafted them.

I was so eager, so excited to hear that I was heading in the right direction, arrogant of my ability and naive to what was expected of me in order to produce my best work. So when I heard some variation of the words “you should rewrite this whole first chapter from scratch,” my stomach dropped. Rewrite the whole first chapter? This was the chapter I had been working on editing here and there for the last few years while I still was writing the remainder of the novel . . . the chapter that established my main character and the major life changing event of transforming into a Bengal tiger that she undergoes . . . the chapter I had agonized over perfecting since high school.

But it wasn't perfect. Jade sounded too immature and unlikeable with her sassy remarks, her parents and their influences in her life were not well established, her best friend's--Sara--plotline was ill-defined and non-essential in the way it was integrated, and Jade's college major was interesting but did not fit well with her attitude and personality as it developed in the later chapters. It was my child-draft--the chapter I had inadvertently let “pour out and then let it romp all over the place” (Lamott 22), as was clear with the childish characters that been produced. There were more minor issues, but by having them splayed out before me on the operating table of revision, I was able to understand the importance each of these elements had in setting up the entire premise of the main character and plot. They were small decisions that made huge impacts, and they needed to be reworked.

I had only ever re-written an entire story once before. I had begun the process reluctantly, but the result, after three or four drafts, had proved to be substantially more successful and cohesive. It had gone from disjointed and confusing to powerful and emotionally moving. But rewriting the entire first chapter of my novel was something I was terrified of doing simply due to the fact that it was a piece of my soul. It was the foundation of the book, and the beginning of this entire story, crafted from a special place within me. Throwing out the first chapter felt like an insult to my passion and ability.

Despite the fear and sadness, I persevered and managed to reconceptualize and completely rework all of chapter one. It was not accomplished without great frustration and resistance, but it was achieved nonetheless.

Starting the first chapter over forced me to let go of something that was considered old writing. I had been clinging to a chunk of writing that reflected its age and my inexperience. It was a draft of “terrible first efforts” (Lamott 25). If it had remained as it was in the beginning, it would have been disjointed in style and displayed a lower level of writing proficiency compared to the later chapters, which were written more recently, after having completed two or more years of college, which had taught the importance of craft, collaboration, and revision. However, changing the first chapter did not mean that the majority of large revisions was over. Chapter two and three and even four had to be revised to connect and incorporate the changes that had been applied to the first chapter. It would have been foolish to think my major revising was contained to only one chapter—each chapter is only a piece of a whole and it must fit with every other piece in a cohesive

manner that will contribute and impact the complete final product. I realized that meant multiple drafts of each chapter, which would lead to many drafts of my book as a whole entity. Suddenly, I was able to understand that when professional writers revise and rewrite multiple drafts, they are revising their writing in multiple ways. It doesn't necessarily mean they are completely starting over each section. Each revision they make to their draft, big or small, leads to a new draft because it contains new content. Consequently, the "second draft [would] require more organic changes than the tenth draft" (Cramer 105). This is what has come to manifest--I have revised many more chapters than I anticipated; however, the more I learned each week, the easier it was to implement that learning in the chapters I was currently writing. Each session for each chapter we worked through ended with fewer and fewer notes of changes. My confidence grew, my writing improved, the story become more sophisticated, my characters more complex but consistent, my plot more exciting and cohesive--the gaps filled. Jade transformed not only biologically, but additionally in her mentality. She started as very immature, but she developed through her circumstances and with my ability to write about her from a more mature and experienced standpoint. This helped every one of my characters, but Jade transformed the most, as did I.

Besides the complete overhaul of chapter one--and the subsequent changes to the following chapters--there were times where plot holes arose and needed patching. In a publication class, I had learned to hardly ever go with the first idea that comes to mind--or even the second. By ignoring the first two or three ideas that present themselves, I have a greater likelihood to think of creative and more original

ideas to sufficiently fill in plot holes. The first two or three ideas are generally readily available because they have been done before--they are common and easily accessible because of their lack of originality for example..... However, creativity is maximized when I force myself to think and consider other, less easily accessible ideas that are more likely going to contribute to a better storyline and book. As I practiced this method, I found the results to be rewarding and exciting.

Weekly meetings did not solely exist with my advisor. For over a year, I was able to meet with my advisor as well as additionally meet with a colleague at the university Writing Center. The ability to have meetings with people dedicated to writing is a special situation, and I wish all writers could be a part of such a wonderful experience. I have grown more through these meetings than by taking all of the numerous writing classes over the course of my life. And so, once a week we worked through the writing process: combing over the chapters, discovering inconsistencies, noting areas where prose was more appropriate than dialogue and vice versa, and misplaced or omitted commas and grammar necessities. I learned a great deal from these meetings, understanding the point of view from one of my peers in relation to the book rather than a seasoned, scholarly perspective on the inner workings of my writing. Truth be told, the moments when I caught the missing commas rather than my colleague were moments of sincere encouragement--mostly because, as my colleague explained to me, there were many times "in the editing process I found myself so caught up in the story--or willing a character to stay alive when I knew they would probably die--that I completely forgot about paying attention the more fundamental and technical details like adding commas or using

the right tense, stuff that, to be perfectly honest, just got in the way of finding out what happened next in the story” (personal statement). When I managed to make my colleague forget their job and get lost in the story, I knew I had accomplished the enrapturing writing I’d been striving for. I left those particular meetings filled with a new fire to write more. Those experiences taught me the importance of sharing my work for the purpose of achieving maximum success. I could not, cannot, be successful on my own. At least not yet. I couldn’t be more grateful for their attention to detail and genuine interest in my book.

Outside of the weekly sessions, the development of the plot drastically changed from the original plan that had existed in my mind and upon loosely crumpled napkins and notepads. However, the plot plan had remained fairly stable since its conception at the end of high school. As I revised and spoke with others, shared my work, and actually spent time writing--allowing the words to spill from my mind onto the paper without resistance or formal structure--the plot seemed to transform on its own, just as my characters did. The romantic thread that arose was originally not meant to be included at all. I had, actually, been very much set on not having romance in the novel at any point. However, the characters drove the plot, and I became merely the storyteller, not the story weaver. Even the entire end of the book was a completely drastic change from the original plan I had comprised. Jade was never going to have children--the idea had never even crossed my mind. It was not until I had spent time discussing my book and my plans with some of my close friends that the idea was born. Instances such as these have taught me to be more open minded when it comes to writing, and I have come to appreciate what

feedback and revision can accomplish as long as my mind remains open and considerate.

Publication Process

Once the story had been composed, it was time to set aside my creative hat and adopt a business one. I was familiar with the indie-publishing process from previous attempts in my middle and high school years, as well as the Writing for Publication class I'd had the privilege to take during my second year in college. There was a process I needed to follow in order for the book to turn out just as I wanted it to.

The first order of business was to send my manuscript to an editor. Throughout the writing process, the content had been carefully revised and edited. However, the book needed a final cleanup, including misspellings, commas, and typographical errors. I knew the key to professionalism was a clean, clear, and error-free manuscript. Therefore, I turned to another trusted and well-practiced Writing Center colleague for the sake of copy-editing. After she accepted the job, we began to interact weekly over email and google docs as she worked through each chapter. When questions arose as to stylistic choices versus error in my comma and spelling decisions, I was quick to respond and collaborate. Thus, teamwork was essential to the final editing process as well. The collaboration I had not expected, but, overall, I feel that it led to a cleaner, comprehensive, and finished book.

Meanwhile, as she spent her time reading and editing, I began to work on cover design. This was a process I was very much excited about, partially because I

knew that traditional publishing would have left me unable to have any say when it came to cover design, but by indie-publishing, I was able to have full control. In the publication class, we had been warned to be careful when considering our options for cover design. Our professor suggested hiring a professional who could obtain images and manipulate them appropriately for a book that did not appear amateur. I understood his warning: by publishing the book myself, I ran the risk of producing a cover that did not match the genre, look professional, or have a chance to compete in the very aggressive fiction market. Despite the cliché suggestion to not take books at their face value and appearance, often a book's cover is the key to attracting a potential reader. The cover image and design is what initially grabs a reader's attention. After that, I was well aware that the book blurb on the back was the next element that would play an essential role in convincing a customer to buy and read my book.

Due to the fact that I am familiar with Photoshop (determination and stubbornness collaboration--my own control), I decided to embrace designing the book cover on my own. I purchased two stock images from a stock photo site and spent several hours merging the tiger face with the human one. I wanted the faces to be half and half to imply the transformative nature of the main character and plot. I pushed this concept further by having part of the tiger fur and whiskers appear to seep through and take over some of the skin and facial features of the girl, suggesting that the tiger is taking over her body, as it does in the novel. From there, I played around with font style and color for the title of the book. I decided on yellow so that it would pop and accentuate the eyes of the tiger. My name remained a more

subtle color as to not take away from the image and title. The first chosen font was very elegant and non-dominant. Several close, trusted friends and colleagues weighed in on the font choices. Eventually, the elegance was scrapped for a more crisp and bold font that would grab the reader's attention, just as the cover photo was also intended to do.

Once the cover was completed, I turned my attention to the book blurb. In the publication class two years prior, I had drafted a version for this book for workshopping. Comments from my classmates and professor were absorbed, noted, and changes were made based on the feedback. I also decided to look at how other professionally published authors had written and presented their back of book descriptions. I noticed a common theme of almost over-the-top language, main enticing plot elements, and cliff hangers so as to not give away the climax. They were short, but effective, many of them including a very small snippet from the book itself. I particularly took a liking to the inclusion of some small excerpt from the story. The tricky part was deciding which part of the book to include. I considered pulling from the middle of the book, but decided that would either be too confusing out of context or otherwise give too much away. Therefore, I chose from a scene near the beginning where her transformations were just starting. Not only did it play into the cover image, but it was intriguing on its own.

The rest of the synopsis was crafted to sound over-the-top exciting, interesting, and intriguing. The final blurb held true to the lessons I had learned in Writing for Publication. Thus, I felt confident it would be able to successfully entice potential readers.

Preparing everything for publication did not stop with the cover and back of book description. There was also the interior. This required me to make executive decisions regarding the final size of the book, the gutter and outside margin sizes, the font size and styles, justification, and organization of various elements: copyright page, title page, table of contents, story, and acknowledgements.

Important decisions had to be made since the larger the text, the greater number of pages required, and the more costly it would be to print, which would raise the overall price I would have to charge my readers. Thus, I had to find the happy medium between too small of font size and too many pages. Most of the decisions were driven by aesthetics. However, the final size of the novel was determined by measuring standard book sizes used by successful best-sellers. A common size I found on my bookshelf was 5.25 x 8 inches, so that is what I decided to imitate.

Once the copy-editing, cover, interior, and synopsis were all designed, formatted, and complete, I began the final compilation through an on-demand printing company, Createspace. This company had been talked about thoroughly in the publication class, and I had worked with it previously at the start of my professional writing career. In finalizing the publication process, I made the hefty decision to buy my own ISBN number so that I could publish the book under my own imprint publishing name. This allowed me to publish the book under Fire Feather Press rather have my book appear to be “self-published,” which can sometimes turn prestige-concerned readers away.

After ordering several proof copies to check that everything printed the way I desired, I was able to hit approve and watch *Saving All That Remains* go live to

the public. Since its publication, I have been left with all of my own advertising. This is one of the many tribulations of indie-publishing. However, it has not been completely impossible. I have set up a Facebook author page where I promote the book and myself. I have family, friends, and colleagues that spread the word both through social media and word of mouth. I ordered 500 business cards that I keep on my person, as well as distribute throughout the community with the title, cover photo, and places to buy the book clearly detailed on the card. Additionally, I designed and implemented a website that describes both my biography and books, including links to the Amazon and Barnes and Noble pages where readers can immediately purchase my books. Advertising is ongoing, but I have already seen success in my sales, which is incredibly encouraging and heartwarming. I have fed over \$250 into the creation of this book, but I have already made that money back--and then some. Every copy sold is like a dry piece of wood added to my creative fires, and I cannot wait to begin my next projects.

What's Next

Already, I have begun work on my next set of books. I am planning to write a new fantasy series based in a realm of all different types of elven people and sprites. While the plots of each book are not completely concrete, they are beginning to take shape as each character, region, and creature becomes a part of the world building process. Needless to say, I am extremely excited to begin writing and crafting once again.

As I work through this next project (and the many projects to come), I want to keep in mind all the important lessons I have learned through the writing and revising of *Saving All That Remains*. I will most likely not have the opportunity to work so closely with colleagues and mentors as I did with *Saving All That Remains*, but I will take away the importance of sharing my work with others while in the crafting process. I know I have other trusted and writerly friends I can rely on for moments of writer's block and weak plot points. Furthermore, I hope to continue to improve and grow in my writing, as all skills naturally do with practice. This will most likely allow for stronger characters, plot lines, and overall more successful books in the future.

While writing is my passion, I plan to pursue a Master of Arts in Teaching with the desire to instruct students in English literature and composition. Whether I end up in a high school or community college, I want to instill in students confidence and positivity when it comes to writing, even if writing is not their favorite subject. Since writing is my passion, perhaps my own love and positive feelings toward it will rub off onto my students, and they can understand the value and importance of writing, whether creative, casual, or professional. Overall, I hope that seeing my own prolific writing projects and possible success will inspire other creative writers to face their potential fears and take the risk of sharing their work and perhaps finally going public. Sometimes it takes an influential role model and source of support to break out of a safe comfort zone that may be holding them back. I wish to help these students achieve their dreams, just as I have had the opportunity to do so. That is my ultimate goal.

This writing experience has changed my life forever. Not only did I learn the importance of research, but also how rare and important the incredible opportunity to work with professors, colleagues, and friends really was. I learned the invaluable nature of rewriting and revision, the priceless nature of character development, and the usefulness of thinking unconventionally for the sake of plot development. Designing each aspect of the book for publication showed me the difficulty in the business side of writing, but allowed me to also revel in the freedom and control I had because of my choice to indie-publish. And I am so thrilled to apply my knowledge both to my future projects, as well as my future students I shall encounter in my teaching career so that I and others can continue to strive for our dreams and achieve our ultimate goals.

As Jade has done, I will always keep looking forward, not allowing instances of rejection and defeat to douse my inner fire. This process was my own jungle of enlightenment that has taught me to accept criticism and channel it into creative thinking and problem solving, rather than shut down. And while I may not be able to call myself the King of the Jungle, in a multitude of ways, I am Jade. Our souls have been fused through the power of language and story, and it is our innate power and determination that keeps the passionate fires burning--our source of success. In all that I pursue, I hope to remain strong, determined, and courageous--a symbol to my readers and students--a tenacious tiger in the world.

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