

Dear JoAnn,

Thank you for spending some time sharing your story with me in our consultation. I believe that it has the potential to inspire young people to follow their hearts, wherever that may take them. Your story teaches its audience about the importance of taking risks in order to attain the things we want most in life, and will leave readers grappling with the question of “what if?”.

As we discussed in our consultation, your story will share the details of how you and your husband met. We will open with the background of the situation, setting a scene where you were a young girl in the summertime with a teenage crush on a boy who didn’t know you existed. The fall comes, and you make a bet with a friend in Algebra Two class, where you either ask the boy to the homecoming dance, or you have to go to the dance with that friend. Powderpuff night comes and you end up asking your crush to the dance where he replies with “okay”. Ever since that moment, the two of you have been together, sharing a lifetime of memories.

The reflective nature of the piece will entice readers to reminisce on their first experiences with young love, as well as reflect on the wild adventure that is life. It will teach young readers that love is still out there, in fact, it is right on the other side of courage.

I would be honored to be trusted with this delicate story, as I know how much it will mean to you, your family, and its audience of all ages. I am a writer of many years, specializing in creative nonfiction works. I love to work with real-life stories, where I must find how small moments make up the larger perspective of the world. I have four years of experience copyediting and developmentally edited Aaron Ponce’s manuscript with the working title “Chorus of Another Earth” last spring. I have included a link to my website which includes several samples of my work. [Mackenziessimms.com](http://Mackenziessimms.com)

I have written up a tentative timeline for the project to adhere to your schedule and mine, see below:

**11/27- In person meeting to review the first draft of the piece.** This will be a chance for you to see the initial story and to note any changes you would like to make to the piece.

**12/3- Additional read through and title workshoping.** You and I will read the piece one final time, noting anything else that you would like to be changed before the story is submitted for publication. We will also discuss a title for the piece that will both suit the story and draw in engagement from readers.

**12/8- Final piece is submitted.**

My rate is \$30 per hour and I will need 12 hours to adequately complete your piece to perfection. I can draw up a contract as soon as tomorrow, if you have any additional questions feel free to email me back at this address. Once again, thank you for taking the time to meet with me and I look forward to working with you on this project!

Best,  
Mackenzie Simms

## High Stakes

The summer of 1988, the trees were lush and green, our sixteen year old selves spending all the time we could with good friends, soaking up the last few drops of sweet August air. My best friend Christine was dating Brian Clark, and I was what kids today would call “talking” to Brian Groulx. Christine and I spent most of our time that summer with her boyfriend’s friend group. We would all spend our days driving to Port Huron to lounge on the beach or go to one of our houses to lay by the pool. In the evenings we would watch movies all together, popping countless bags of popcorn in the microwave and letting gooey m&m’s melt in the bowl. None of us had jobs, or any sense of time for that matter, we were just young and enjoying life. Before the school year started, I felt a crush growing on a boy in the group, one that *wasn’t* Brian. My new crush, Mike, didn’t even know I existed, honest to God. He was focused on two things: football and his lawn care company.

August quickly shifted to September and yet, things stayed the same. Mike still had no idea I existed. I began the first few weeks of my junior year of high school, going to all my classes, spending more time than I should socializing, and remaining busy with after school activities. Things were good, they were consistent. All of this changed one Tuesday afternoon in Mr. Johnson’s algebra two class when I was sat next to Matt Princinski. He was in the friend group of boys that we hung out with all summer, so we got to know each other quite well in a few short months. He knew I was quiet and shy, and I knew he was the exact opposite. In our algebra two class on that Tuesday afternoon, he bet that I wouldn’t have the courage to ask Mike to the homecoming dance that was taking place the next Saturday night. To make things more interesting, he said that if I *didn’t* ask Mike to the dance, I would have to go with him. With what

I knew about Matt, I knew that I did not want to go anywhere with him, and with what Matt knew about me, I would never have the courage to ask Mike.

On Monday night of homecoming week, all of us girls gathered on the football field to play in the junior versus senior powderpuff game. Oddly enough after the game there was a bonfire that was organized to take place behind the football field. Me and my friends, Christine, Brooke, and Becky headed to the back of the property after the game to hang out with other members of our class. All of us sat around the bonfire late into the night, laughing with friends and talking about the latest gossip. In the middle of conversation with Christine, I happened to look up to see Mike and Brian Clark getting ready to walk through the gates of the property to head home. Instantly, I remembered my bet with Matt. Knowing that I couldn't go to the dance with him, I shot out of my seat and headed to where Brian and Mike were walking away into the darkness towards Mike's old, white Ford T-Bird. I felt like I was going to vomit. My heart was pounding in my ears and it felt like my entire body was pulsing with my heartbeat. Before my body could catch up I yelled, "hey Mike!" towards two boys. They stopped in their tracks and turned in unison after I called out into the darkness. I caught up to them finally where I said, "do you have a date to the homecoming dance on Saturday?" while staring at the ground. Mike replied, "no" to which I said "would you like to go with me?" After those words escaped my mouth it felt like minutes went by before he answered. I just kept thinking in my head *he's going to say no, this is so embarrassing, oh my God I can't believe I did that*. In reality, about 30 seconds later he replied, "okay." This simple word meant that I would not be humiliated and embarrassed. I was going to the dance with my crush! I was so nervous that I don't even remember exchanging phone numbers, but we did. From that point forward, I spent more time on the landline than ever before. I was in love.

The night of the homecoming dance finally arrived. I had gone out and bought a brand new, tight, blue dress for the dance. Mike picked me up in that same rusty T-Bird and we were off to meet our friends at dinner. We went to an old restaurant downtown called Floogles, where I ordered a small salad. I was so nervous to be out as Mike's date for the very first time. It is important that I remind you that we were meeting the same boys from the summer and their dates at Floogles, meaning that, of course, the boys were going to put up some antics. While Mike got up to use the restroom at dinner, Brain Groulx thought that it would be hilarious to secretly tell the waitress that it was Mike's birthday. When he returned from the restroom, a whole group of waitresses came over with an ice cream sundae for Mike, singing him happy birthday. After the waitress ambush left, I leaned over and asked Mike, "Is it really your birthday? Don't lie." He looked at me for a moment before chuckling softly and replying, "No it isn't my birthday and why would I lie about that?" Looking back now, we both laugh at how stupid his friends always acted, and how they still continue to act. Dinner wrapped up and we all headed to our cars to meet back up at the dance.

Somewhere between that night and the rest of our lives, we really fell in love. Mike and I spent all of our free time together, from talking on the landline phone every evening, to going to see the latest new movie at the theater, we were inseparable. Our friend group went to Polianis restaurant for breadsticks every Friday night after football games, sharing lots of laughs, and Coca-Colas. In the wintertime we went to hockey games together and spent snow days off of school sledding down the big hill on Davison Road. The school year seemed to have gone by in a blur, where it all came to a halting stop in the spring. I was a junior while Mike was a senior, and inevitably as the snow started to melt, so did my dreams of spending forever with Mike. I went to Mike's graduation ceremony and cried more than I did at my own the next year because I

knew that him graduating meant that he was going to leave me behind. The best year of my life had come to an end and I was going to be sad from that point forward. Lucky for me, that was not in Mike's plan. The summer after Mike's graduation we spent every moment we could together, he even roped me into helping him at his stupid lawn care company. Some days after a long day of mowing we would take all of the cut grass from lawns over to his grandpa's house on Coldwater road where we would feed his grandpa's cows. I remember that summer in warmth. Cotton candy skies overhead as we laughed, the cow's sandpaper tongues licking our sweaty arms, searching for the last bite of grass to munch on.

In September, I accompanied Mike's mom in dropping him off at Central Michigan University. I was devastated to leave him there, but also so excited for his new chapter. New friends, new challenges, new life goals, and I would be there to hear it all. I went up to Mount Pleasant lots of weekends to visit him, we would go to football games sometimes and others we would just stay in and hang out with his roommates. After my graduation, I decided to move away from home and attend Central Michigan University to pursue a degree in elementary education. A few years down the road I was a senior in college when Mike came to visit me for the weekend. He packed an overnight bag, and not expecting him I was thrilled. Right in my college apartment Mike got down on one knee and proposed to me. I, of course, said yes.

Looking back on my twenty-eight years of marriage to Mike, it's crazy to think about what my life could have been. We built careers together, both becoming teachers at the same school district where we met. We built a house together, creating a place for us to raise our children. We built a family together, bringing two, beautiful daughters into this world. We built a life together. A crazy, chaotic, sometimes messy, life that all began with a stupid high school bet, a little bit of nausea, and a whole lot of courage.