

# Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities

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# My Wallflower

By: Taylor Hawthorne

"I got this for you. You're just like Ponyboy, at least in your heart you are. You'll understand. I know. Okay? You'll just really love this book," Michael quietly murmured to me. From this point, I knew he thought about me. I knew that he cared, and I loved him for it.

It was my birthday, about four years ago, and we were all at my apartment complex during that particular time of my life. My family who lived together, and a couple of my friends, came together for a little birthday gathering. The most important person in attendance, outside of family, was Michael. Now, let me tell you about Michael. He was my best friend, and was one of the greatest people I've ever been blessed enough to meet. His eyes were like fireflies on a crisp, cool night. His smile was a sparkling twilight sky. He was such a beautiful, graceful and eloquent human being. I don't ever believe I could truly put him into words. He was something of a wallflower, but because of one of his favorite novels, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, by Stephen Chbosky, he liked the way he was described. "You see things. You keep quiet about them, and you understand. You're a wallflower," which was Michael's favorite quote in the book. Although he was somewhat of a wallflower, he could fight. Fight for what he believed in and what he thought was right. He never put anyone down, and he always said he'd get out of that deadbeat town we grew up in. He promised me we'd go to college together. He'd wait that one year

for me, save up some money. We'd rule the world, and lead a successful life. Full of culture and education and happiness. He could make me see it. To believe in myself and him, too. Never, have I met a boy so personally influential.

It was my birthday, as I've told, and everyone had a little something to give me. May it be a card or a little trinket with the small amounts of money they scrounged just to show some love to me. Michael asked me if I minded him giving me my gift from him last. I had no issue, just more confused than anything. After the treats were dished, and people started to scuttle off into their own business, when my birthday bash seemed to have ended, that is when Michael gave me his gift. "Close your eyes. Keep em' shut! I can tell if you peek. I know you'll try, too. I think you're going to like this," Michael gushed as I sat with my hands open. Have you ever shut your eyes so tight, you swear you can see patterns and shapes, maybe even a few colors dance around in the darkness? That's what I did, and that's exactly what I saw. I felt a small, and slightly dense rectangular thing get placed into my open palms. I opened my eyes and grinned. A book, he had gotten me a book.

"I got this for you. You're just like Ponyboy, at least in your heart you are. You'll understand. I know. Okay? You'll just really love this book," he spoke in a quiet and gently stuttered speech. I understood that this was very meaningful to him then.

The novel that was given to me was *The Outsiders*, by S.E Hinton. The book had a glossy, smooth paper back cover. The pages smelt of old libraries and a coffee house. A library where you know everyone. The ones you image with old ladders to reach the most prominent books on the highest shelves. An old coffee house, the kind you can just sit in and breathe. Where time doesn't really

exist, unless you want it to. It was memories and heartbreak and jubilation smashed into a small bind of a little less than 200 pages. To me, this book was Michael himself. It was our friendship and hardship as children in a tough neighborhood. I've read this novel, this particular copy, over 50 times. I can quote parts of it exactly, thanks to my birthday and best friend.

Michael, I've learned now, gave me the book to teach both of us. To teach me to open my eyes to the world a little bit more, but to never give up hope, to teach himself to be open to help, and to teach us both to never let friendship like this go. We can never move anywhere all by yourself. You need a little help, and a little love from someone else. Michael started to learn that, and I hope I'm starting to understand.

When we least expect it, someone may come into your life and change everything completely. They may open your eyes to things you've always seen, but never knew. They can make you feel and learn things you will never forget. The inevitable truth in this is that they will always have to go away. Michael passed away due to a shooting on January 11, 2016. He was my someone of change. I could have never anticipated the gravity and deep influence he became in my life. I miss him, every day, but he taught me many things I will never let go. At the time, I may not have understood these lessons or the importance it would carry later, but, looking back, I can see how much I've changed. I see things about the world I was otherwise blind to. I'm learning to accept help and give back to others. Michael did a large part of this for me. I realized so much about not only the world, but myself as well. I thank the universe and whatever other worldly being may be out there. I thank them for Michael's time on this earth, and I

thank them for our time. I shall never forget him, or how much I've understood since that last great day. I hope, by having Michael and his lessons in my life, I'll be able to look upon the world with more open eyes, and a more open heart. That is what I got from Michael, the boy that was my wallflower, someone I loved in ways I only now realize, and my best friend.