

I was fortunate to grow up surrounded by amazing storytellers. From my Bostonian grandpa blessed with the “gift of gab” to the riverboat captains of the Midwest, the art of creating beauty from the commonplace was something I experienced every day. When my fourth grade teacher asked us to put our weekly spelling words in a story and I discovered that I had absorbed the ability to make others smile with a narrative, I decided I was going to be a writer.

With the support of my parents and some encouraging teachers, I filled notebooks and hard drives from middle school through my pursuance of a bachelor’s degree in English. In the final semesters before my graduation in 2018, I took two independent studies with professor and poet Dr. Elizabeth Mason, wherein I started writing a novel and several short stories, including “Clay.”

“Clay” sprung from the amusing realization that every time the grocery store radio played the 80s songs that I had listened to during a sophomore year ceramics class, I could briefly recall the scent of clay as if it were actually around me. The basic idea of a character with psychogenic mutism came quickly to me, but as I let the plot unfold, the difficult emotions it pulled from me alarmed me too much for me to write an impactful ending. I was frustrated with the attempt when I sent it to my professor to read, but she was enthusiastic when we met to discuss it. She said she was intrigued by the tone – a little darker than my usual work – and she encouraged me to let myself explore the emotions again in order to give it the ending it deserved. Finishing the story the right way, I felt a degree of the healing that my character experienced.

The best present I received Christmas of 2019 was the news that “Clay” had been accepted for publication by *The Notre Dame Review*. Since then, my work has been accepted by four other publications, including “Number Seven,” which was printed in the 2020 “synchronous” issue of *pacificREVIEW*. Currently, I am editing a third draft of my first book and working on the first draft of its sequel. I hope I’ll be able to continue sharing my work with you.