

November 15, 2019

Dear Nicholas Sparks,

I will never forget the day I picked up your book *See Me*. I was unable to put the book down, and it spoke to me in such a way that afterwards I found myself yearning to read more of your books, and started collecting them. I'm glad I did, because shortly after I started reading your works, I discovered *The Last Song*. Like many teenagers, I found myself feeling out of place. And for a long time I felt unimportant to myself, my family and my few friends. And this book really changed my perspective.

I was a mere freshman when I read *The Last Song*, and I broke down more times than I can remember because I could relate to Ronnie's character. My parents may not have split up like hers, but I felt just as out of place as her, and tried covering it up by rebelling and becoming someone I wasn't. I shifted the anger I felt at myself and instead started hurting those around me. Watching her character, though, and seeing how she grew from hating everyone to forgiving her father and mother made me see myself through new eyes. I saw that I needed to change. I wanted to change.

The change was difficult. And it brought a new wave of pain, just as change always does. I struggled with changing my perspective to see how my family cared about me. I struggled with confidence and telling myself that I didn't deserve the pain that I brought down on myself. That's where I started believing that I was being selfish. I thought I was being selfish for caring about my self-esteem and how I treated myself and others. I retreated more then, and became this introverted girl that never wanted to push herself to be something.

It took a long time to notice that where I was then was a much worse place than where I had previously been. I never wanted to speak anymore. And I stopped finding an outlet to channel my anger altogether. And it wasn't until last year, when I was fifteen, I saw just how dangerous of a place I was in. That's when I picked up *The Last Song* again.

This time, I looked at it through new eyes. I saw more through Ronnie's anger, and more into her pain. And, unlike my first time reading it, I made sticky notes and reread certain parts that really spoke to me through the new perspective. I then started spending more time reflecting on myself and taking notes on things I needed and wanted to change.

I know that I had to see the change I needed to make myself, but looking at it through a new perspective (*The Last Song*) helped me find that missing piece of the puzzle. I saw the change I needed to make, and knew that I wasn't being selfish in my decision to start building up my self-esteem. Improving myself would not only make me happier, but those around me and those that cared about me happier. For me, that's a big part of what helps me make decisions.

I'm still on that road to improvement. It can be a real struggle at times, just as it is for everyone. But I know I'm in a better and much happier place than I was three years ago. And while my parents and friends tell me that I have to take credit for taking control and turning my life around, I honestly don't know if I could have done it without the inspiration of Ronnie's character.

I believe we all need a certain push to see the troubles we face within ourselves, and the forgiving nature, friendship & family building and self recognition nature of *The Last Song* was just the push I needed to take notice of my troubles. It was the hardest challenge I have faced thus far. I know I'll face harder challenges, but I think I've built myself up to create a strong ethic of how to pull myself through.

I'm stronger than I was before, and a lot of it is thanks to your words of inspiration in what is now one of my favorite books. Now, I have the strength to know that I'm not perfect and never will be. I've moved past that challenge, and am ready for the next one, no matter the difficulty. Perhaps I'll have to find another perspective through that challenge, and go through pain to find that perspective.

It was through your book and your words that I was able to find my new perspective; so for that, I owe you so many thanks. And now because of that I search for concepts I can relate to and inspirational meanings in any book I read. I open myself to all those perspectives, and write down a summarized lesson that the book gave me. And for that, I again have to thank you. I learned a lot from your book and I hope to learn more, and continue growing as I go along.

Sincerely,

*Amoriah Burnhill*