



Movie City

**DEL SOL PRESS**

Testing the Limits of Literary Reality

- **Home**
- **About Us**
- **DSP Books**
- **Authors and Poets**
- **Contact and Subs**

We asked K.C. Aegis, whose novel **BINDING PROGRAM** placed third in the 2016 Del Sol Press First Novel Prize competition to share his first experience of writing. The 2017 Del Sol Press First Novel Prize closes May 15th. Learn more and submit your manuscript here: <http://www.delsolpress.org/DSP-NovelCompetition.htm>



Night Writer

by K. C. Aegis



When I was in the ninth grade, my English teacher gave me a failing grade. She handed it to me at the beginning of class--a story I had written--with a big red F scribbled on the front. Beneath this, she had written a single word: Plagiarism.

I must have stared at this the entire class, not understanding what it meant. I had written the story--a Halloween tale about a young boy trying to reconnect with his deceased mother--all by myself. Even then, I loved to write. But the accusation made me question my work. Had I stolen it without realizing? Had I heard the story before and subconsciously claimed it as my own?

When the bell rang, I stayed behind while the other students filed out. It was lunchtime, so no one came back in, and I was left alone with the teacher. She remained near the front of class, shuffling through some paperwork.

Without looking up, she said, "Do you need something, K.C.?"

"Yeah I, um... I didn't plagiarize my story."

She looked up then, looking at me and through me. "Yes you *did*," she said.

"But I didn't copy anything. I wrote it myself." I was shaking now. "What story do you think I copied?"

"Well, I don't know the exact story you copied, but there's no way you could have written it."

In a whisper, I asked, "Why couldn't I have written it?"

"It's too well written." She said this with such strong conviction that at first, I almost believed her.

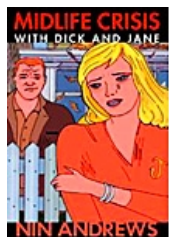
It was then I realized this wasn't really about me. It was about her. My writing didn't match her preconceived notion of who I was--a dumb jock on the wrestling and football team--and as far as she was concerned, not a writer. The idea made me furious.

I challenged her to prove it wasn't mine--told her she was wrong. Maybe it was my heightened emotions, or the fact that she couldn't prove it, but she didn't argue further. She sighed and snatched the story from my hand, scratched out her previous comments, and wrote an A beside the crossed out F. She tossed the story back at me, but I could tell from her reproachful glare that she still didn't believe that I had deserved it.

I left the classroom, wiping tears from my eyes, and vowed to never let anyone tell me I wasn't good enough. A funny thing to come out of this was that her accusation sparked a strange confidence. She thought my writing was too good for a kid my age. Which meant of course, that it was good.

But it wasn't great--I wasn't so delusional as to believe that. I spent the next several years improving my writing and ironing out bad habits. I found lots of support along the way. Fellow writers and websites like CritiqueCircle became huge assets in fine tuning my work. And slowly, very slowly, I began to believe that I truly could be a writer.

I wish I could have dedicated all of my free time pursuing this goal, but life doesn't always let you choose. I married my high school sweetheart in 2002 when we were both struggling through college (we actually have pictures of us reading textbooks on our honeymoon). Fast forward a few years: I became a teacher and father of three wonderful children, but my aspirations to become a writer were malnourished and dying. There were always stories inside my head, aching to be told, but I always said I didn't have the time. And with the full time teaching job and two part time jobs coaching football and serving tables, it was difficult to convince myself I was wrong.



The Midlife Crisis of Dick and Jane
by Nin Andrews

POPPY **Poppy by Austin Hummell**



"Taut with the voice of many close-held wisdoms, Austin Hummell's POPPY is laced with a brilliant restraint and an odd humility. He traps the feral, injured thing and tames it just enough to examine the damage, then sets it back again, free. Hummell is a master of extremity, and of beauty too."

-- Lucie Brock-Broido



All I Can Truly Deliver by Matt Vadnais

"There is the world and then there is the world. In his 'Cover Stories,' Vadnais uncovers the paradox of 'realistic' fiction. One need not go out and bring 'em back alive when one has the more inventive terrain of the library."

- Michael Martone



But in 2010, shortly after my youngest was born, I was going through some old memorabilia and came across that story I had written back in ninth grade. And I remembered how I had felt when that teacher had assumed I couldn't have written it. The spark returned.

I cleared some space in the garage and set up an office with a desk I'd found at a yard sale. There wasn't any time during the day, so I wrote in the middle of the night. Crickets were my companions, my cheerleaders, encouraging me to keep going.

I finished my first novel, a 140-thousand-word beast, a couple years later. It was overly long and messy, but I had finished it. I was proud of what I'd accomplished, but even then, I knew it wasn't the story that would bring me publication, just a trial run. However, it had given me hope that I could do it. So, I kept writing.

A year later, while writing Binding Program, I received my first publication. "Remember the Sunflowers" appeared in the May, 2015, issue of Encounters magazine.

After attending my very first writer's conference and learning about all the great ways to get a publisher's notice, I began entering online contests--as many as I could find. After each contest, I would take what I learned and revise. I kept getting close, but not quite winning.

Then in April of this year, I entered Del Sol Press' First Novel Competition and was pleasantly surprised when I placed third and the contest judge offered representation.

When I think of how far I've come, I know it wouldn't have been possible without the support of my loving wife, who has always believed in me. Much of what I write is for her. But just as crucial as the support from loved ones, the doubt of my critics also played a part. And for this, I will always be thankful for my ninth grade teacher.

She helped me see that in building strength, the people who try to hold you down can be just as important as the ones who hold you up.

Find out more about K.C. Aegis by visiting www.kcaegis.weebly.com or following him on Twitter at @kcAegis.

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [DSP Books](#) | [Contact and Subs](#)

Del Sol Press
2020 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Ste 443
Washington, DC 20006

