

...hat? Searching for a good  
...d never searching for  
...but ultimately, two people  
...in each other. As two given  
...an date dozens of people and  
...h anything in their life, but  
...y, these two souls, two birds,  
...e' lives, will unite, into one  
...e lives will be bonded together  
...strongest, most chambered  
...One that changes how we think  
...and how we reflect on our  
...own lives, this  
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...eg with  
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E. K. SLOYER

# A NOVELIST



# A Novelist

When art becomes an obsession

E. K. Sloyer

This book is for sale at <http://leanpub.com/anovelist>

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*To my family and my readers on Wattpad*

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# The Errand

The soft ticking of a fountain pen etched across the page of young Edmund Seymour's novel. A cup of cold tea and a hunk of dried bread were cornered on his desk beside balled up paper. He hadn't completed the novel; in fact, he was far from the end. He had exactly eight hundred pages, hand written on both sides, piled under his bed. He had been writing for four years and hadn't stopped since he had picked up a pen. Edmund hadn't told anyone the storyline and he didn't want anyone to read it—especially his grandparents with whom he lived. He hardly went downstairs except for dinner and he spent so many days occupied over his work that his grandparents begged him to go outside and interact with the children of his age, but he didn't. His dreams were the only things that made complete sense to him. He never knew why he pulled away from the world, but he felt safer among the things he thought up and knew well. Edmund's mind was in his book; and the book was his life.

The boy never considered getting his story published, but that day, as he sat surrounded by his decaying food, he knew his work was something worth showing to the world. He wasn't sure how people would respond to it, but he knew he had to try. Though, Edmund wasn't the sort of young man to trust anyone with his work. He didn't like the

idea of entrusting parts of himself to a stranger so that he or she could prod and rewrite it. But he had to find someone who valued his work more than he did—and he knew that would be an impossible feat.

As he sat there, adding the tail to the end of a letter, he dropped the pen onto the desk and massaged his strained eyes. Dark sagging circles hung underneath his eyes and his face was wretchedly pale. The boy hadn't always been quiet and withdrawn. He had once spent countless evenings at operas, magic shows, and dinners with relatives and their kin. It wasn't until he was 14 did he find his deep passion for writing. He couldn't go to sleep without putting his mind on paper and he couldn't start the day off without writing at least five pages.

His grandparents believed his writing consoled him after his parents' death. They had died from scarlet fever during one of their European tours. Edmund denied that was the reason, and explained that his writing was only a way to release his imagination. His grandparents worried about him, but they soon adjusted to their grandson's isolation and actually enjoyed the house's quiet and peaceful atmosphere.

Edmund was indeed a strange young man, but he meant no harm to the world around him. He enjoyed being alone. Nevertheless, his solitary lifestyle made him an alien to others. Those who were able to meet him considered him condescending and selfish when, in fact, he had a quiet disposition. It was therefore quite against his character

when on November 25, 1901, the lad mounted his pony and ventured out to the newspaper station, where he wished to propose a request.

Kicking his black and white horse into a rolling canter, the two of them clattered down the busy London streets towards his destination. Vendors, markets, and families filled the streets, each talking about either the weather or some unsolved problem. Edmund wasn't used to smelling the stench of moving bodies and boisterous vendors, hawking the sale of their supplies above the roaring machinery of factories. Bicycles whooshed by, and dinging bells popped in his ears.

Edmund pulled his horse to a stop and slid off. Taking the reins, he looped them through a steel ring and tied them into a firm knot. Edmund looked up at the square gray building, questioning if he should enter. He turned to his pony and, as if he was procrastinating going inside, remarked stiffly, "Ever been inside a newsroom, lad? Me neither. You think I should?" He lifted the pony's long forelocks and played with them nervously. He breathed in until his throat was filled with the cold air. Edmund wasn't afraid of being rejected; he was afraid of talking to a stranger. But he knew he couldn't just turn and go home after mustering up the courage to leave the estate. In bold steps, Edmund faced the newspaper room and walked in.

"May I help you?" asked the man behind the counter. He lowered his head so that he could peer over his rounded spectacles.

“Yes,” Edmund replied, removing his hat, “I am here to ask if you can publish my story.”

The man stared at him for some time before his cheeks turned red and he erupted into a loud laugh. He slapped the counter and wiggled a finger at Edmund. “You’re a funny lad. Why don’t you play the hoax on someone else, all right? I’m working. I don’t have time for games.” The man flicked Edmund away and his eyes fell back onto the stack of papers he was organizing.

Having half the mind to obey, Edmund walked backwards, smiling uneasily. His hand felt the cold door behind him and he pressed his weight against it, ready to spill out onto the road and escape his embarrassment. But at the thought of going home and regretting that he didn’t have the man at least look at his work, Edmund rushed forward and threw himself against the counter. He stared at the man with stern eyes. “Listen, sir, you haven’t seen my work. Can’t I at least show you the beginning of what I’ve written? Please?”

“I said, ‘off with you!’ Can’t you tell a busy man when you see one?”

Edmund reached into his satchel and took out a small stack of papers. He slammed them onto the table, getting the man’s attention. The two of them stared at one another, each wondering who would say the first word.

“I’ll read it. But if it’s horrid, I’m sending you out the door and I’ll make sure you never come back,” the man bargained, taking the manuscript and reading the first few

lines. His eyes sped across the words in impatience, but as he went further down the page, his eyes slowed, as if they wanted to saturate themselves in what had been written. “This is good, really good,” the man mumbled half-aloud as he finished the paper. He took his spectacles off and faced the boy. “Where did you learn to write like that?”

“I taught myself. Am I in?”

The man chuckled and ruffled Edmund’s hair. Having a change of personality, he surprised the boy with his next words. “I tell you what, son. I’ll put the first installment of your story in our paper as well as *The Chronicle* and *The London Times*. I’ll even do you a favor and advertise it in my window.” Indeed, the old man had been harsh with him, but he was a kind soul and had only been doing his business. “If your story is as well written as this persuasive little start here, I think I can publish your work. How old are you?”

“Seventeen. I’m turning eighteen in March.”

The man shook his head in disbelief. “You’re a talented lad.”

“Thank you, sir. I appreciate everything you’re doing for me. If there’s any way I can repay you—”

“Nonsense. The best way to pay me back is to write a good story.” Seeing the dumbfounded look on the boy’s face, he tapped his chin and smiled a jolly smile. “These gray hairs don’t mean I’m crazy. I know talent when I see it. Just continue writing, that’s all I’m asking.”

Edmund’s cheek pulled into a smile and he nodded his head

confidently. “I will, sir, I can promise you that.” The boy tipped his hat and left the building, stunned at his good fortune. He unhitched his horse and climbed aboard with a slight smile tugging at his lips. He would mention his errand to no one—he didn’t want his grandparents knowing his secret business just yet.

He arrived at his home and hung up his scarf and hat. Seeing his grandfather swaying in front of the lounge room shelves in search of a book, Edmund slipped off his shoes and tip-toed upstairs to his room. Once inside, he threw his shoes aside and sat down to take out a piece of paper and fill his fountain pen. He pressed the pen onto the paper and once he saw the ink bleed into its surface, he began writing.

# The Request

The grandmother, while speaking to her favorite plant one morning, spotted Edmund perched on the couch beside the window overlooking their estate. His feet hung off the end of the velveteen sofa and his hands were drooped over the back. The grandmother exhaled hard out of her nose and marched over to the boy. Scaring him off the sofa, the grandmother yelled, “Don’t sit that way, young man! It’s not proper and it’s not good for the furniture. Now, clean up and prepare for breakfast! The Crawford family is arriving and I don’t want you looking like an orphan! Go on, clean up!” the grandmother clapped her hands and flew out of Edmund’s view.

“Yes, ma’am.” Edmund pushed himself off the floor and headed for his room. On his way to the stairs, he heard a knock at the door. It was the postman. Feeling it was for him, Edmund dashed over and flung the door open.

The postman greeted him with a warm smile. “A letter for Edmund Seymour.”

Edmund thanked the postman and took the letter from him. It had an unknown address from Sussex. Closing the door behind him, Edmund eagerly opened it.

“Dear Mr. Seymour, My name is James Madison. I am a publisher in Sussex. I’ve seen your work in The London

Times and I am interested in talking with you about publishing your work as a novel.”

Edmund’s throat went dry from surprise. The letter continued,

“I do require payment in advance—,”

Edmund folded the letter quickly. Breathing heavily, he stared at the floor. The amount of money he would have to pay an editor would disgust his grandparents; they would not lend him a coin, especially since they believed writing was a frivolous pastime. It was apparent they lived wealthy lives, but Edmund was expected to pay for his personal expenses, and he knew his allowance wouldn’t cover an editor. However, he wasn’t going to let this first offer involving such a sum discourage him.

“Is the letter for me?” his grandmother hollered down from the stairs in her trembling voice.

“Grandma, can I talk to you?” Edmund’s eyes remained on the floor as he felt a cold bead of sweat dribble down the side of his face. He heard his grandmother’s slippered feet approach him.

“What’s wrong, child?”

“I need to publish my story,” Edmund blurted out, flashing his attention to his grandmother.

The grandmother rolled her eyes and groaned mournfully. “We had this discussion before, have we not? You are through with writing! As of now, you are finished.”

Edmund stepped forward and brought his hands together, pleading. “You can’t do that to me! It’s all I’ve got. I can’t stop!”

“What do you mean, ‘can’t stop’? What has this writing done to your mind? Taken control of it, that’s what!” The grandmother stomped a heel, tossed her chin into the air and ascended the stairs. Edmund hurried after her and clutched her thin elbow.

“Please, Grandmother, if it doesn’t work out, I’ll pay it all back!”

“Pay?” the woman squeaked, “who said anything about paying? If the money is for your fairy tale, then you can forget about it! Your money is going to your education, and if you know how important that is and how privileged you are, you wouldn’t be talking such nonsense!”

Edmund clasped the side of his head and let out a yell of frustration.

“Quiet, Edmund, you’ll stir the maids and they’ll all come running and imploring me all about what’s wrong with my health! Be a good boy and don’t ask me again.” The lady scurried up the steps, carrying her heavy skirt in one hand so she wouldn’t trip.

Edmund bit his lip and rushed forward. He grabbed the banister and pressed his face between the bars.

“Please, Grandmother, let me try. I want to at least have an editor look over it. If he doesn’t find it suitable, I’ll never speak of this again. I promise.”

The old lady pinched her lips and raised an eyebrow. “Is that an editor’s letter?” Her eyes motioned to the crinkled letter in Edmund’s hands.

Edmund nodded his head and looked away in shame. He was a persistent boy, but he didn’t like being dishonest.

“What did he say?”

“He said he was interested, but he wanted money. And I haven’t any—at least, not a lot. It’ll be impossible to find a publisher who will not expect something in advance. That wouldn’t be fair.”

“Naturally.” The grandmother looked away in thought. She returned her half-mast eyes to her grandson and said maliciously, “When you find an editor that won’t require money, you may write.”

Edmund swung himself onto the stairs, much to the grandmother’s surprise, and stood in front of her. “I’ll never publish my book then. There’d be none to be found!”

“Then I guess you’ll have to give up writing. Now, go wash up.” The grandmother smiled in triumph and strolled up the stairs, leaving her grandson in despair.

Plopping onto the steps, Edmund pressed his forehead against his hands and shook his head. “There must be one! I know I am supposed to publish this.” Edmund looked at the letter again, regarding it sorrowfully. His life was right there in front of him. He folded his hands in front of his mouth. His eyes fell onto the front door for no reason except

that it was there. Gazing at the symmetrical patterns and grooves in the two arched doors, he tilted his head from one side to the other, seeing if he could get a different perspective. It wasn't long before he slipped away into his own fantastic world.