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English 2010

I Am The One Who Knocks

Jesse Pinkman stole my heart the minute he dyed himself blue by falling into the port-o-potty. As he crawled out of the tipped over port-o-potty, his face held nothing but hopelessness. Jesse Pinkman was a meth addict and he supported his habit by selling the poisonous product. How could I feel bad for someone who is not only ruining his own life, but others’ as well? As he laid in his RV alone, my heart wept with him. I felt his despair and confusion of who he was becoming. He was no longer just a character, he was someone who was struggling with life. And for once, I didn’t feel so alone.

I began watching the television show “Breaking Bad” in the latter part of summer 2012. It wasn’t my typical indulgence, developing a story based on drugs, power, money, violence and deception. The vivid colors, the smoking gun storyline where every detail foreshadows, the intensely beautiful writing, and the videography entranced me. But the thing I developed the most love for was the characters. I witnessed each character’s struggle and development, felt every emotional experience deeply. They became real to me. And for the first time, my feelings in life felt verified.

“Breaking Bad” begins with Walter White, a high school chemistry teacher. He leads the same life every day, never makes any drastic decisions and, honestly, is nothing more than bland. That is, until he is diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. This would normally be something to mourn over but for Walter White it is the push to make sure he lives his life to the fullest before he dies. With a newfound hop in his step, he begins to lead a new life. But as he begins to taste the sweet taste of spontaneity, he happens across the looming problem of the future of his family. He couldn’t leave his pregnant wife and 16-year-old son with out any financial security. He comes to find out, through his DEA brother-in-law, how much excessive money lingers in the world of drugs. The high school chemistry teacher discovers one of his past students, Jesse Pinkman, is a methamphetamine cook and distributor, and a very poor one at that. Walter blackmails Jesse into helping him cook and distribute one large batch in order to make the much-needed funds. After travelling out into the middle of the desert in an RV, cooking in only his underwear and a green apron, the batch ends up being 98% pure glass, something unheard of in the meth world. Of course, within the first episode, the intoxicating world of drugs, power, and money, comes nipping at his heels. As he is stuck in a predicament of life and death, he contemplates suicide and records a video. Breathing heavily, wiping the tears from his eyes, and pushing up his large glasses with his middle finger he records:

“To all law enforcement entities, this is not at an admission of guilt. I am speaking to my family now.”  
 He covers the lens for a moment, sirens in the background. He whimpers and collects himself again.

“Skylar, you are *the* love of my life. I hope you know that. Walter Junior, you’re my big man! There are… there are going to be some things, things you will come to learn about me in the next few days. I just want you to know that no matter how it may look, I only had you in my heart…. Goodbye.”

We all grow up with friends and family who witness and support our struggles, but the truth is we can never *really* see every aspect of someone else’s life. Someone can talk through their experience, pour their soul into words but one will never be able to act like a shadow, witnessing everything in their life. Even if you could, your presence would hinder their true reactions. And how many people are truly open to showing themselves in times weakness to someone constantly? This is a reason why media is so intriguing. An audience member gets to watch someone’s every move without hindering the experience with his or her presence. One gets to experience the successful moments and the moments of pain and anguish.

As a struggler of chronic depression type two, emotions can be a very real and scary fight for me. I often feel hopelessness, regret, and extreme sadness. Many people don’t understand that depression really is a sickness. I will live with these occasionally debilitating emotions for the rest of my life. It will never go away, and it is a constant learning experience and discovery process. When I watch “Breaking Bad,” I feel as if I’m not the only one who has deeply overpowering frenzies of emotion. I’m in no means a meth cook with a code name of Heisenburg, I’ve never lost everything, I’m not a wife whose husband has cancer, a police officer or an owner of a fast food chain that sells chicken sandwiches, but I am a human being, a weak one, with very real feelings. Through “Breaking Bad” I can witness the struggle of someone else’s life and realize that I’m not alone in feeling the overwhelming power and occasional deception of the human mind and heart.

The producers of “Breaking Bad” announced this season, season five, to be the conclusion of Walter White’s compelling story. This summer aired the first eight episodes and next summer will complete the series with the last eight episodes. I’m subscribed to Dish, which dropped AMC, the channel which provides the show, in early 2012. Every episode this season I have had to scramble and plead with people to let me steal their TV for one hour every Sunday to feed my very own addiction of “Breaking Bad.” On September 2, 2012, the final episode for season five, part one, “Gliding Over it All” aired… and I didn’t have anywhere to watch it.

The clock striked seven PM, I still had nowhere to go. I knew there was a bar downtown that had its own room where you could watch the episode live, but it was my last resort. I didn’t want to go to an unfamiliar bar alone and I believe most people would agree that it may not be the best idea to do so. I watched the minutes get closer to the airtime franticly calling, texting, and Facebooking everyone I could, still nowhere to watch. I gathered up my things and made the drive to the bar… alone. I walked through the door and pulled out my ID as I approached the small brown counter with the cash register.

“Sorry, the room’s full.”

“….What?” I uttered.

NO. There is NO way. I felt my world come crashing down. I felt as my heart plunged to the bottom of my butt, my eyes started shifting. My veins were pulsing wildly. The words of disbelief seemed to write themselves on the wall and begin to spin.

“Please… you have no idea…”

“I’m sorry, but there is nothing left.”  
 “Can I stand in the back?”

I was desperate.

“No, because you have to purchase at least one item,” he said.

He looked at me with worry in his eyes.

“Hold on.”  
 He yelled to his manager who was across the room at the bar and asked him to change the channel in the lounge/pool table area.

“We’ll show it out here for you.”

I cannot describe the adrenaline that ran through my veins, I could not thank him enough as he walked me over to the bar and ordered me a Dr. Pepper. I took a seat at a table facing a TV. As time went on I found more and more people gathering at the table next to me. I bought some chips and salsa and we shared them, discussing the happenings of the episode. My heart wildly pounded the entire episode as I waited in agony to see how the writers would pull off the end of part one and the beginning of the yearlong wait for part two. The episode ended in a way no one expected, of course. The writers were always so good at that… Having the answers right underneath your nose but being completely oblivious until it’s pointed out to you.

My love for this show and its characters, especially Jesse Pinkman, has not diminished one bit. Who would have guessed that something as simple as a television show would give me so much relief in life, allowing me to escape my reality and live along someone else’s? The beauty about a television show is you can almost always count on it being there. It’s dependable. A certain time, a certain channel with characters and a story you care about. It may sound silly, but “Breaking Bad” has honestly provided me with much comfort and reassurance in my life and I cannot wait to see how these characters, my friends, come out of the tormenting story of “Breaking Bad.”