

## Erised

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Not too long ago, my family consisted of a mother and a father. But in the span of what felt like no time and forever together, I no longer had a mother. When school started, she felt sick. By the time Halloween came, she had leukemia. By Thanksgiving, she was bald. By Christmas she was home. By New Year's, things were feeling more like they had. And by Valentine's Day, she was walking into a hospital for what would be the last time. She had leukemia, but that wasn't what killed her. Somehow, even when the big bad cancer was beat, it was a simple infection in a compromised immune system that did her in.

I lived at the hospital for over a week, sleeping in the waiting room when I got the chance, never quite getting any real rest. One day, I almost fainted walking back to the waiting room from my mother's bed in the ICU. At that point, the family convinced dad and me to go home and get some rest. We did that, and the next morning I grabbed a few things to occupy my time and maybe let me forget for a few minutes. One of those was the most worn book in my home: a ten-year-old, soft cover copy of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, with a long torn and missing cover and the spine split in half by the innumerable openings it's had to bend for. What better way to leave the harsh world of hospitals

and diseases than by drifting into the most influential and formative stories of my childhood?

So we returned to the contradictorily sterile yet germ-infested hospital we had left mom in. At some point, I sat down and started reading about an abused orphan with a prophesy for what might have been the hundredth time. And it worked. I forgot where I was for a little while. And then, like it always has to, reality came back in the same way as a train running into you.

The family had a meeting. We had pretty much known there was no coming back from where she was; for all intents and purposes she was brain-dead. We decided to stop fighting what we all knew was the inevitable. I almost didn't go in; I had already said goodbye, and barely even thought of her as alive anymore. But anyone who has let go of a loved one this way will tell you: They always seem to hold on just long enough (and I mean just) for everyone to say goodbye. And I finally did go in there. That was all it took.

Later that night, I sat alone in my room unpacking the bag from that morning. I opened the book to where I left off what seemed like weeks ago, but really only hours. And I began to read again. This time, it didn't work. I couldn't escape reality this time. But something else happened.

Harry found his way into a disused classroom, occupied by an ornate gold mirror. And in that mirror he saw the thing he wanted more than anything in the world. His whole family was there, whole and happy.

And even though Professor Dumbledore said he saw socks, hindsight says that he saw the very same thing as Harry. And I found myself connected to this world in a way I never could have been before that night. We would all see the same thing, Harry, and Dumbledore, and Jo Rowling... and I.