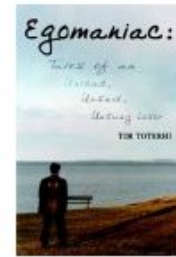


## **Egomaniac: Tales of an Unread, Unsaid, Unsung Loser**

ISBN: 1403342776

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### **PROLOGUE**

Looking back, I'm amazed at how much of my youth was spent in an apathetic, egocentric daze. Sure, I did things, but mostly I just thought about doing things--someday when everything was just so.

It never happened, of course. There was always a monkey in the wrench of life preventing me from making real that which I saw so clearly in my mind's eye. And so I waited as my introverted childhood was slowly and completely encapsulated by fruitless daydreams. I never fought the bully. I never even raised my voice.

Adolescence was easier I guess, but only because I knew the game. As a bumbling wealth of impotence romance, I never once acted on the yearnings in my heart. I practiced lines I never tried, wrote songs I never sang, and gazed endlessly into mirrors that could do nothing more than serve a bitter slice of truth. I missed the prom. I missed the point. And I missed the boat on a number of friendships that, like so many things, are now gone forever.

My early twenties stabilized into a debilitating routine of work and despair. Can there be a sadder sight than a poet trapped in a business suit? Proudly, I never quit, but I never succeeded either. The artist within had just enough gumption to squash my business career, but not nearly the nerve to walk the road less traveled. And so I navigated both paths poorly, frustrating my superiors, crushing my spirit, and etching myself into a worthless wreck of an unread, unsaid, unsung loser.

### **UNREAD**

It started as a good idea. A quiet, imaginative, introspective fellow, I set out to be a famous author. I assumed in my teenage naivete that I simply had to pen the words and upon completion, the public would gobble them up voraciously. I knew nothing of lawyers and agents and those ridiculous publishing houses that seemingly refuse to engage in the business of discovering new talent. I felt like a hungry black man in the '60s going from diner to diner only to be slapped in the face by an endless barrage of "Whites Only" signs.

I defiantly wrote the book anyway and giggled, as it slowly became somewhat of a cult favorite among web readers. Ah, the e-novel, what a lovely kick in the balls to the pompous pros. I told you so, you rat-bastards. I told you so a thousand times.

Despite this small, silent success I still longed for the cleansing comfort of the printed page and so I downshifted almost exclusively to short fiction. A quick sale, a quick fix, a quick month into the habit and I was hooked. Like a junkie, I spewed out a tirade of tumultuous tales, the sole purpose of which was escape. I hated myself; so it made sense that I craft a multitude of exotic personas to take my place. I tried them all, diligently slipping into the consciousness of my characters. But it never worked. When the tale was told, I remained. Reality is a hard devil to shake.

It wasn't a complete loss though. My stories provided an effective distraction. They kept me sane, sober, and searching for that one elusive road out of Loserville.

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