



## HOW I FELL IN LOVE

I never knew I would fall in love. I heard people talk about it, but I was never one of the people to stand in near love. In fact, my fear of closeness with love prevented me from ever witnessing the power of love's effect.

Instead, I was a child of hate. I grew up in a house where arguing was a morning ritual, a house where domestic violence was the only quality us kids thought belonged to family. I never searched for love; I always searched for an escape. High and low, I looked.

Usually the result was the same nothingness from the day before. For instance, one particular day I took refuge in the basement.

“Where are you going?” My brother yelled at me as I went down to the basement.

The thing is there's nothing in our basement except books and dirty clothes. I wasn't looking for either. I was continuing my search for an escape. But time passed, rather slowly, and the fact that no one came to look for me actually bothered me. So I decided to open one of those many books that were long ago forgotten. I was only nine at the time; therefore, when I picked up Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, I did so only because I felt invisible. I paired the novel with a dictionary and made as much sense of it as I could.

By the age of fourteen I had read the book several times, five years worth of time. And by the age of fifteen I had several authors, several lines of novels, several characters that were embedded in my long term memory as if their lives were my own. In fact, to this day I proclaim that Battle Royal from *Invisible Man* is the single best chapter ever written in American literature. And to this day I admire Ralph Ellison for this intimate chapter that gave me an escape. I admire him for making me fall in love with literature.