Fictionally Yours

“If I had a euro for every time I felt more affection for a fictional character than a real human being I would have enough money to pay for the therapy I clearly need”. This meme I recently saw on Facebook struck a chord when I first read it, and I immediately shared it with my sister, a fellow bookworm. Upon further consideration, however, it seemed disturbingly true. Not only of characters in books, but films and television programs as well. I would take an evening with the Harry Potter series over an audience with Daniel Radcliffe any day, though perhaps that is not the best example.

I don’t expect to find anyone who agrees with me on this point, but I would fall for a knight from *The Game of Thrones* more readily than any person I have ever met in the real world. Perhaps this is because most characters - or heroes, at least - are written to the author’s idea of perfection, which almost always seems to coincide with mine. Tall, dark and handsome go hand in hand with sparkling wit, a razor-sharp mind and courtesy, not to mention the ability to wield a two-handed broadsword, use magic or ride dragons, characteristics that are sadly lacking in many of my friends.

Don’t get me wrong, I love my friends but the idea of dating someone who is not literally a legend seems strange to me. I realised some time ago that I clearly had a problem, and tried to wean myself off books a little. I promptly became addicted to the series ‘*Smallville’*, which follows Superman through his teenage years. I watched all ten seasons in two months, the first of which was the June of my Junior Certificate. After that, I decided that reading was probably better for my brain.

I am not exactly a textbook “nerd”. I play hockey and enjoy kayaking, and maintain a natural tan for eight months of the year, even in Ireland. I do as much school work as is required of me, and no more. My mother is not my best friend, and I have never played a role-playing game.

There is no denying, however, that I have suffered emotional trauma at the hands of a paperback. I cried when my grandmother died, but then it was over, done, chapter closed. I cry every time I re-read the death of certain characters in my favourite books.

The benefits of reading are numerous: it builds concentration, self-esteem, self-discipline, knowledge and reasoning skills to name just a few. I have held a library card for almost fifteen years and attribute my grades to this, because anyone will tell you that my results don’t come from studying.

Reading is an excellent way to improve your mind. I don’t mean reading your updates on Facebook or the latest blog about R-Pattz and K-Stew, but actually sitting down and engaging your brain. I use the term ‘sit down’ loosely, I read as I walk to school every morning. I tend to arrive earlier when the book is reaching a climax than when I’m struggling to get into it. I also own a series of books set in a desert that have kept me warm many times when ice formed inside my bedroom windows.

A bibliophile is someone who likes to read, admire or collect books. A bibliomaniac is obsessed with books to the point where it is unhealthy. I am simply a borderline bibliomaniac, or bookworm. It has not yet been damaging to my health, though someone once threw a seven hundred page hardback at me and bruised my foot. I hold on with grim determination, however, to the ideal - *And they all lived happily ever after.*