

Learning Life At 50

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Overview of World/Description

The story of Ashley Smith takes place in Newark, New Jersey. Ashley is a retired American Gladiator who now works the nightshift at a nearby warehouse with his boss Tony Russo. Ashley's life is pretty much routine. He goes to work at the warehouse, and eats most of his meals at The Diner, a local food joint where Joseph Brown works. Ashley also goes to his therapist's, Martin Lawrence's, office. When Ashley finds out his ex-wife Jenna is in the hospital and he has to take care of the kids, Scott and Amy, his world rapidly expands. Now he has to take his kids to their high school and get them when they go see their mom in the hospital. Just as Ashley starts to overcome his differences with the children and get along, his ex wakes up from her coma and he is forced to relinquish custody of the children. He ends up at the local county courthouse when he challenges his ex for custody of the children. Here his father Rick and Hector O'Connor show up in the story. His father testifies, while Hector gets himself arrested for admitting to illegally selling steroids in court.

The story spans through many forms of media. Websites were created for the characters in the story and for the places that they went. There is a YouTube channel for Ashley and all of his video blogs. Martin has a Wordpress account for his audio blog, and also a book-publishing site where he promotes his books. Tony has a blog where he talks about his life and family. The children have Facebook accounts, and so do their friends. This created a total of five different Facebook accounts. Amy also has a Flickr account where she likes to post pictures. Ashley and Jenna both have Twitter accounts, where much of their thoughts on the custody battle were posted. Jenna also had a CaringBridge site where readers could follow along with her progress while she was in the hospital. There are also websites for The Diner, where Ashley often eats, and for an old fan site from Ashley's days as a gladiator. The county courthouse also has a website where audio transcripts of court cases can be purchased. The trial for custody of Scott and Amy can be listened to here. Finally, there is a Google Voice number that followers of the story can call to hear some of Ashley's voicemails and phone conversations.

The amount of material needed to support the story is staggering. For each account created, there was also an e-mail account that needed to be created. This meant that almost every character in the story, along with the courthouse, had to have an address. Only Hector and Rick did not end up with one. There are over twenty video blogs posted on Ashley's YouTube, each of which had to have a script. All of Martin's audio blogs had to be scripted out, recorded, and then posted. All of the Facebook profiles required profile information for each character, along with conversations between the stories characters and occasionally people following the story. Photos also needed to be gathered and made to go along with the story to provide visual representations of what was going on. A very large portion of what was created served to expand the world instead of furthering the main storyline. The book-publishing site, The Diner site, and the fan site played a very small role in the actual story but needed pages of information such as the menu, photos, and other filler material. As the world expanded, so did the amount of material necessary to fill the world to give it more depth and realism.