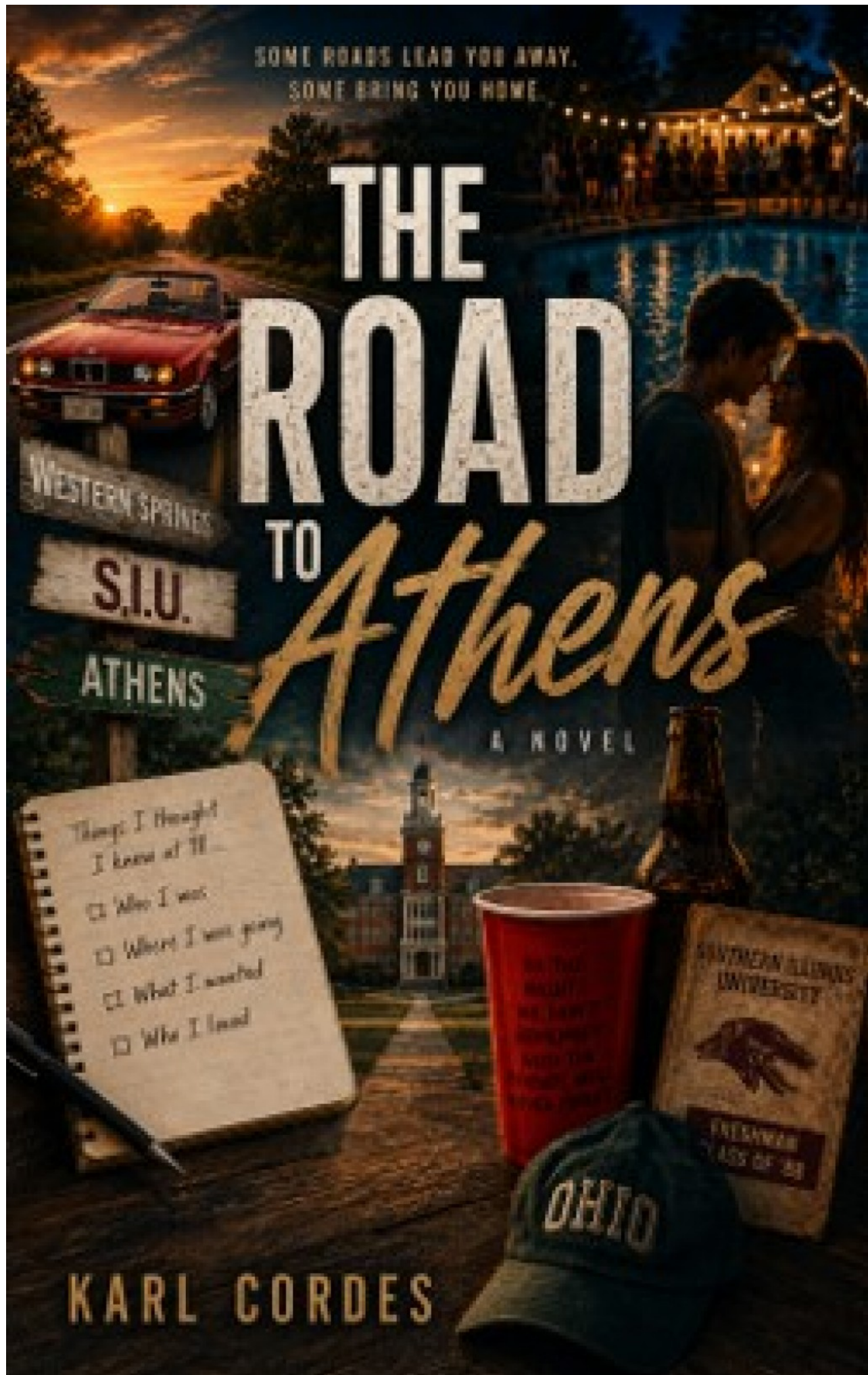


Karl Cordes' The Road to Athens Takes Readers Back to 1988 for a Dynamic Story of Friendship, First Love, and Redemption

Discover Karl Cordes' heartfelt 1980s fiction story filled with friendship, first love, college experiences, faith, and the lessons learned from life-changing decisions.



Naperville, Illinois Oct 12, 2026 (IssueWire.com) - *What if the mistake that changed your life became the experience that shaped the person you were meant to become?*

Author Karl Cordes explores this powerful question in *The Road to Athens*, a heartfelt novel set in the late 1980s that examines love, loyalty, personal growth, and the unexpected turns that redefine our path. With a backdrop of handwritten letters, pay phones, dorm room conversations, and friendships formed face-to-face, the novel captures a time when growing up meant navigating uncertainty without the digital world that defines today's generation.

Set in the fall of 1988, the novel follows Ethan Brooks, an eighteen-year-old from suburban Chicago who leaves home for his freshman year at Southern Illinois University. Confident, optimistic, and convinced he knows where his future is headed, Ethan arrives on campus expecting independence and opportunity. Instead, he encounters challenges that test his relationships, his values, and his understanding of responsibility.

Before college begins, Ethan makes a decision that alters the direction of his future. What seems like a single moment quickly creates consequences that reach far beyond that summer night, affecting the people closest to him and forcing him to confront the gap between the person he hopes to be and the one his actions have revealed.

At Southern Illinois University, Ethan experiences the excitement and uncertainty of freshman life, settling into Brown Hall, building unexpected connections, exploring campus culture, and embracing newfound independence. Away from the familiar surroundings of home, he encounters people and perspectives that challenge the world he thought he understood.

Blending humor, nostalgia, and emotional honesty, *The Road to Athens* reflects the universal experience of standing at the edge of adulthood, caught between the comfort of the past and the uncertainty of what comes next. The novel explores first love, heartbreak, forgiveness, faith, and the difficult process of accepting the consequences of our actions.

"*The Road to Athens* began with a simple question: How do the moments we wish we could change become the moments that shape us? Ethan's story is about making mistakes, facing the consequences, and discovering that growth often comes through the hardest seasons of life," said Karl in a recent interview. I hope readers see a part of their own journey in his experiences and remember that second chances are always possible."

As Ethan's experiences unfold, the road from Carbondale to Athens, Ohio becomes more than a change in location. It represents a search for maturity, redemption, and hope, a reminder that character is revealed not by avoiding difficult moments, but by how we respond when they arrive.

Cordes brings personal authenticity to the novel. A first-time novelist, he grew up in Western Springs, Illinois, graduated from Lyons Township High School in 1988, began his college experience at Southern Illinois University, and later transferred to Ohio University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in communications. His professional career includes work in radio broadcasting, radio management, and digital marketing.

Through Ethan Brooks' experiences, *The Road to Athens* offers a nostalgic reflection on the people, decisions, and moments that influence who we become. It is a reminder that while we cannot rewrite the roads behind us, we can choose how we move forward.

Perfect for readers who enjoy heartfelt coming-of-age fiction, nostalgic stories set in the 1980s, and character-driven novels about love, friendship, forgiveness, and the choices that shape a lifetime, [The Road to Athens](#) will resonate with anyone who remembers the uncertainty of leaving home and the people who helped them find their way.

For more information about the author and his book, visit the [website](#).

About the Author

Karl Cordes is a first-time novelist whose work explores friendship, faith, personal growth, and the transformative experiences of young adulthood. He grew up in Western Springs, Illinois. He started his college journey at Southern Illinois University in 1988 and transferred to Ohio University, where he graduated in 1992 with a degree in communications.

He lives in Naperville, Illinois, with his wife Michelle and their faithful companion, Samson, a five-year-old Boxer.

Media Contact

BMD Digital INC.

*****@bmddigital.com

Source : BMD Digital INC.

[See on IssueWire](#)

