



# The Write Life

## The Write Lifestyle:

Things No One  
Told Me That I  
Wish Someone  
Had

Damn the  
Distractions, Full  
Speed Ahead!

Utensil of Choice

Remember Who  
You Aren't -  
Part 2

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# The Write Life

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## About Us:

The Fairfield County Writers Group (FCWG) of Connecticut was founded in 2008. Originally created as a regional chapter of National Novel Writing Month, FCWG grew into a local community of writers who are committed to writing not just in one month of the year, but every month of the year.

This magazine is an extension of that appreciation. It provides writing prompts and inspiration to craft new ideas; articles on how to better your writing skills, overcome writer's block, survive the life of a writer; and short stories.

Visit <http://www.FCWriters.com> for other offerings from FCWG.

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# Muse Food

## Shh ... I'm Hunting Rabbits

It's not always easy to find a plot bunny. They're quick, timid, and have learned to blend into the background when spotted. But if you can catch one, it'll breed incessantly.

To better track and capture plot bunnies, you need to read. Read anything and everything you can get your hands on. The more you read, the more plots your brain will be able to contain.

Your brain acts as a plot bunny catching net. By reading a diverse array of writing styles, your brain becomes more adept at catching up new bunnies. By creating a steady habit your brain's net becomes stronger and better at holding plot bunnies.

Try reading something new, see what ideas are sparked. Everyone needs inspiration to come from somewhere. Don your gear and go a searchin'.

## One Words

Try basing a story with one of the below words:

Pragmatist  
Kerosene  
Kazoo  
Memorization  
Pulsar  
Halitosis  
Saltwater  
Chive  
Fishbowl  
Moocher

## One Liners

Try starting a story with one of the below sentences:

Congratulations!  
You passed the test.  
The cows know more than you think they know.  
Is your shirt painted on?  
Sewing stitches in a dress and sewing stitches in a person are two entirely different things!  
Stop rhyming like that; you sound like a rejected Dr. Seuss book.  
I'm going to end up living in a soggy cardboard box because of you.  
Singing in the rain can get you arrested nowadays.  
Real men wear kilts.  
Do you have any idea who it is you're talking to here?

## Photographic Inspiration



Use an image as a starting point for a new story or to help jumpstart a sluggish scene.

# Muse Food

## Feeding The Animals

You've caught your very own plot bunny. An idea for a story, or character that is your very own. It may have been born from something you read, watched, experienced, listened to, or any combination thereof. However your new bunny came to be, it is important to keep it alive. Feed it. Nurture it. Let it grow. Ask your bunny questions. Prod it. Poke it. Help it expand and become what you need it to be. A fully fleshed out story.

Keep your bunny in sight. If you neglect it, forget it, starve it from your imagination, the bunny will die. What does your story idea have so far? Is it a person? A place? A situation? How can it be expanded? How can it be added on to? Like a lab technician you will need to experiment on your new bunny. Don't worry, as a metaphorical creature it won't be animal cruelty. But, without going over your new story idea, you won't make any progress.

## One Words

Try basing a story with one of the below words:

Charioteer  
Parlay  
Splay  
Checklist  
Pontificate  
Ambiance  
Feldspar  
Mandrake  
Aphrodisiac  
Centrifuge

## One Liners

Try starting a story with one of the below sentences:

I was humming the 1812 Overture to drown out your whining.  
I guess I could attend my 10 year high school reunion.  
For the last time, you are not Elvis!  
So, you're what a writer is supposed to look like?  
Well, that's new.  
Sometimes you just have to live life loud.  
Didn't I already solve this problem for you?  
I'm what you would call technologically challenged.  
Welcome to the corner of No and Where.  
Just smile and nod.

## Photographic Inspiration



# First Class

## What It Takes To Be A Writer

What does it take to be a writer? Obviously it takes the physical ability of forming letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters. It takes mental power of organizing those letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters into an order that is understandable to others. Any monkey can bang letters on a keyboard. But writers form words and stories that can alter the very perception of reality. Philosophers are good with reality-warping writing. I'm more of an entertainment writer. I enjoy writing stories that have engaging characters.

I also enjoy creating characters and writing plots that I personally care about and am interested in. That includes zombies, aliens, technology that does not currently exist, philosophical rants, and the occasional anthropomorphic representation of an intangible societal concept - like Death. By caring about what I write, I am willing to put a part of myself, metaphorically, in my writing. That part is then transferred, metaphorically, to the reader. If you care about what you write, you will make a good writer.

Becoming a *great* writer involves creating a depth to your writing. Have more than: Main Character goes from Point A to Point B using Line 1. That does indeed make a story, but not a very engaging one. Having multiple characters, points, lines, dead ends, loop-t-loops, and more make for engaging writing. As with all things in the Multiverse, writing an engaging story requires a balance. Too many characters can cause confusion. Too many dead ends result in a disillusioned reader wondering when the story will truly end.

Some writers instinctively know how to strike a solid balance within their stories. Others learn by trial and error. I'm one of those trial and error writers. That's why I have up to 10 different attempts at a single plot. Each attempt is unique within its own right, but each version is based off of the core plot. I just seem to enjoy writing more errors than non-errors. That's not to say that errors are a complete waste. In future stories I will know certain methods, characters, and plot points will not work well.

Every word you write is an experience. And each experience shapes and forms your abilities, whether you realize it or not. If you're willing to engage your writing, experience the bits and pieces that form up your characters and stories, than you will indeed become a

great writer. It won't be easy though. The activities and celebrations of life are never achieved easily. You must continuously write and hone your abilities.

Always be willing to try something new when it comes to writing. It may not work, but you'll never know until you try. And once you know, you'll be able to better avoid or incorporate whatever you learn into your writing. So keep writing, exploring, trying new things, learning; and above all, having fun.

An interesting fact about writers, I apparently have to continuously re-learn, is that our habits evolve over time. I've migrated from periods of nothing but poetry, to epic adventures that if fully written would challenge the length of War and Peace - unabridged. I've written sci-fi, high fantasy, regular fantasy, romance, literary fiction, non-fiction, personal essays, historical fiction, steampunk, grammarpunk, flash fiction, business articles, corporate blog entries, marketing emails, and I haven't even had my quarter-life crisis yet. To be fair, when I say I've written all those different types of writing, I mean that I've experimented in them all. I've tasted the various flavors of writing, to see which are palatable, and which aren't. But they come in waves.

Be willing to experiment. Mix your vanillas and your cherry coconut rum rainbow. Toss some sprinkles in and maybe some gummi worms for appearance. Always be willing to try something new. You never what may come of it. I've learned how to be succinct and straightforward from my business writing. I've worked on my abilities of telling a story from middle to beginning to end and other combinations thereof with fiction. And I've acknowledged the art involved in writing a personal essay and making it accessible to readers not privy to your innermost thoughts and feelings.

If you're not willing to allow for new possibilities, your writing will settle into a rut. That rut will secretly lead you around in circles, perhaps a figure eight if you're used to two specific styles of writing rather than just the one. But that rut will stagnate your writing, preventing your writing to evolve as you continue to experience new experiences and thoughts and ideas in life. So do yourself a favor, avoid the ruts, go out, explore the road less travelled by. And then write about it.

# First Class

## Things No One Told Me That I Wish Someone Had

Perhaps that title should be "Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me After Getting My Attention With a Big Stick." Way back when, I had a subscription to *Writer's Digest* and I read it religiously, from the masthead to the classifieds, so I'm sure at some point I was told these things. I didn't listen, of course. Who does, until they are ready to hear?

So, in the hopes that you are at a point where this advice will be helpful, here is my list of warnings I should have heeded. The big stick is optional, but you may want to keep it handy as you read. (Apply stick now if necessary.)

One thing that isn't said often enough is 'don't talk too much.' I know you want to hear that you have good ideas, but this doesn't work very well. Have you ever had a friend describe every moment of that great movie they saw over the weekend while you were at work? Yeah, it's that satisfying for your listener. They may make polite noises, but they're probably not going to be impressed. Worse, you may talk all the joy out of your story. Many writers write to find out what happens, and once we know we stop writing. You may not be that kind of writer, but are you willing to risk it? The magic comes when it will. Don't squander it in the wrong form. (Apply stick now.)

Pick your early readers with care. It may be that the one thing beginning writers crave most, besides an unfailing understanding of verb tense, is validation. Most people want to be told that they do not suck, that they are not wasting their time. Who better to reassure you than those who love you best, those who place your happiness above even football, cheesecake, and/or celebrity gossip?

Just about anyone would be better, actually. Your family wants what is best for you, and writing is a chancy thing. You may be gently discouraged. You may be encouraged to apply to dentistry school. Someone may ask what ever happened to that nice girlfriend who was going to be a doctor. You may--gasp!--get edited.

I showed my SF manuscript to a friend once. In the snip, a female Marine argued with a male doctor about the battle-readiness of a companion. My friend read it aloud--in public!--as if it were a dialogue from a torrid and awful romance. A dialogue from that moment right before the supposed hero "conquers" the heroine with his "punishing kisses." (Why no, I didn't kill my friend. He died of unforeseen complications resulting from a waffle cone injury--actually, my lawyer says I shouldn't talk about it.)

If you want to share your work, find a group of writers with at least a few who are near your level. They 1) have a better chance of knowing what they are talking about, and 2) will, one hopes, not be trying to keep you safely tucked in your cocoon. If you can't find them in person, many online groups exist.

Which brings us to the next warning. (Stick?) Don't ask for a critique until you are ready. At my first writers' conference, we sent thirty pages ahead of time, to be reviewed by one of the guest authors and a group of fellow attendees. Every single person at that table said good things about my work. The guest author said I had a "good

start" though it was hard to see where I was going with so few pages. On my manuscript he wrote "very good!" and underlined it three times. But what was my immediate takeaway?

Not the good, I'll tell you that. One attendee wrote, "You are a good writer. I know you are writing a genre piece, but I would still like more to distinguish our hero, boss, heroine, etc from everyone ever written. You are doing the formula well ... but with your ability I think you could give us a lot more. More that would make this story stand out from the crowd on an editor's desk!"

Genre piece? FORMULA? I had no conception of genre; I simply wrote what I'd enjoy reading. I didn't know I was a genre reader, and I didn't know literary writers would sneer even in their encouragement. I was incensed. I was hurt. I didn't write again for a year.

If you want critique, be prepared to handle it. I was not. I would argue that many beginners are not.

On the subject of beginners...let your masterwork wait until you've at least completed your apprenticeship.

Do you know any beginning writers? How many of them are deep in an epic tale with hundreds of characters, or halfway through a manuscript they have been working on for years and keep re-writing? I am not sneering at this epic work. I still hope to turn mine into something readable; there's a good story under the dross. The problem comes in when we can't move on. Yes, it's years of your life in there. Yes, everything you know is in those pages. *All that is also in your head.* Let that manuscript lie. Sometime, years down the road, when you've learned a few more things, if you like you can go back and fix it. Or you can leave it in your desk, under your bed, in a box in the garage, in a dusty corner of your hard-drive. Right now you've learned all you can from it. Finish it and move on. Or if you can't finish it, still move on.

A friend years ago was working on an epic fantasy story. I teased her that it would have to be published in nineteen volumes, and marketing would offer a free bookshelf with the third one. She was over 180,000 words in and not even halfway through the plot, as I recall, with plans to get Raymond E. Feist and a few other writers' permissions to let their characters have cameos in the final judgment scene. She had brilliant ideas for more manageable (and far more readable) stories, but when they hit she would write a couple pages to "get it down" and then go back to her epic.

She ran out of time to write, and nothing but a few poems was ever finished. I call that tragedy, not only for my friend, but for everyone who never had a chance to read her work. She was an excellent storyteller, but you'll just have to take my word for it.

Write. Don't let anyone stop you, least of all yourself. Write more, write everything, keep going, don't stop. Write.

By **KD Crotwell**

# Writers Sphere

## Prioritizing Priorities

Everyone has priorities. Certain tasks that just have to be done, while others can simmer on the back burner for a while. I'm one of those people who can only focus on the big front burner. Whatever is top priority for the day is my main focus. If I happen to finish it with time to spare, I'll slowly work my way over the front small burner, you know that one that's only good for really small pots or that one-egg pan. I almost never even think about the back burners, even if those pots are bubbling over.

It's quite possible that you're able to multitask your writing along with the various other requirements, obligations, wants, needs, and surprises of everyday life. It's also quite possible that you're like me and prefer to focus a majority of your thoughts and efforts on one bit of life at a time. That requires a healthy dose of prioritizing your life. Sort of like a continuous act of triage, you have to make the executive decision of what can fit into your daily allotment of conscious hours; trimming out anything that didn't make the cut.

Unless you plan on making a steady living from your writing, the actual act of writing will slip, slide, and weasel its way lower and lower on your list of priorities. That is, unless you make a conscious effort of making the time. Trim a half hour of TV out of your day to write, wake up a half an hour earlier than normal, use part of your lunch hour for a bit of literary creativity.

I use part of my daily commute on the train to write, sometimes part of my lunch hour if I feel inspired, and then an hour or so after I get home and settled in. If I have a good day I could write a good two to three hours, in between everything else. On a bad day I may manage to squeeze fifteen minutes out of my muse. Not every day will be the same. Usually, on the weekends where I have more time than usual, I write a minimal amount. There's no pressure to spend every moment on any particular act. No priorities. It's sort of a 48 hour period of extended laziness, where I may accomplish something, but there's no guarantees.

I've now made an effort to fill in my weekends with

certain goals. Clean out a particular pile of books, then do some writing. Fix that broken door hinge, then do some writing. Bake some cookies, then do some writing. You get the idea. If you feel you have too much time available to you, fill it in with small goals, projects, and micro-priorities. That'll get your body and your brain moving, and you can then slip in some writing time before that procrastinating part of you even realizes what happened.

By consciously working at getting some writing time into your daily set of priorities, you'll manage to create a habit, making the act of writing easier. Even if finding the time for that writing gets harder as priorities pile up and threaten to overwhelm you. And remember, just as with any pot on the burner, you can put in a low simmer on a back burner, temporarily. If something comes up and you just don't have the time to write on a particular day, no worries. Just put it on the back burner for a day, deal with whatever priority overrode it, and continue about your day. Tomorrow, you can take your pot of writing, set it on the main front burner, and go about writing your words.

Just don't leave your writing on the back burner indefinitely, otherwise it'll go stale or just disintegrate like over-boiled potatoes. And just as important, don't try to have your writing on the big front burner, on full heat, 24/7. That'll cause your writing to either spontaneously combust, or for your stovetop to burnout. Burnout will result in your brain shutting down, metaphorically, to give your body some rest and recuperation. Moderation is key. Consistent moderation.

Constant shifting of your priorities also allows you to gain perspective into just what activities and experiences tend to take up the majority of your waking life. What, who, where do spend most of your time? What are you doing? Is it a true priority, or is it just something that you do for the sake of doing it? Shift your priorities from time to time to see if your #1 priority is really as all-important as you seem to think it is. There just may be a lower ranked priority that should be in that position.

# Writer's Sphere

## Damn the Distractions, Full Speed Ahead!

January 2010 is gone. Done. Finito. Goals were set, beginnings made, promises spoken (or not.) Now begins the trudge.

Are you still writing?

Maybe you are. Maybe you're still going, but it's like pulling teeth from an ill-mannered goat with halitosis. Who likes his icky teeth right where they are.

Maybe you are shuffling your feet and thinking how you meant to write, really you did, but...

Stop that. It's a waste of time. The more you beat yourself up for not writing, the more you are disinclined to actually write. Neither guilt nor abuse is conducive to writing success, and consistent writing is not easy. Instead, let's look at what happened to derail you.

You made your promise, you set your task. Did you think about how you were going to accomplish it? Did you even write it down?

Do it now. Start with your biggest writing goal. Write it down, and put it somewhere you'll see it often. You need that. You need to know what you are working towards. One of mine is that I want to write someone's most favorite book. You know the one--that book you reach for when life is beating the crap out of you and you just need to escape with dear fictional friends. I want to write that book. What do you want? Write it down. (And if your goal mentions "money" or "rich" or any other connected words, I want you to go research publishing a bit. Not that getting rich off your writing is a *bad* goal. It's simply a highly unlikely one, and you need to know that going in. I would love to earn enough that I could quit my day job. That's not why I write, though, and it doesn't belong in my goals.)

As I was saying--write that goal down and then put it up. Then move on to the next step.

Writing someone's Favorite Book Ever is a fine and uplifting goal, but you'll notice it's not something I can control. I may never write a book that suits anyone but me that much. I may never know if one of my novels becomes someone's favorite book, because they may never think to tell me. So I need other goals, things to keep me on target. Because if I don't have them, the distractions will find me, and keep me, and my dreams will never be anything more than dreams.

Among some writers, the last pep talk of NaNo '09 earned derision because the author called TV, with out qualification, "your enemy." Author Peter Carey also said, "If you wish to watch

TV, you do not want to be a serious writer, which is fine." My friends argued, legitimately I believe, that TV has some value. Well-written shows may be rare, but they do exist, and learning structure from TV shows that absolutely must end at the time allotted is a good lesson in discipline and pacing. Even the rarity of good shows can be helpful; we can learn from the bad as well as the good, else most of the study of history is wasted. Mr. Carey, however, had a point as well. TV eats your time. How many evenings have you had stolen by one appliance? TV sucks you in--that's what it's supposed to do. And TV is only one of the many distractions out there.

Give your dreams some power against the distractions. Set a goal. Tweak it till it works for you. A friend, whose natural pace is methodical, sets a monthly goal of X hours spent working on her dreams, and tracks it in a spreadsheet. This helps her avoid comparing her word counts, bound to be low, to those of her friends. Others do use word counts, or days they attempted something. And they *track their success rate*. This is crucial if you are anything like me. I can open a document, stare at it for a bit, go off to read that email that just appeared, follow a link in it to TV Tropes or YouTube, come back to look at my document, go off to look at an item related to whatever I was looking at before, email a friend about related item, mosey off to pay a bill, come back and fix a sentence in my document--do you see where this is going? At the end of the night I'll feel like I worked for hours, but most of that time was not devoted to my manuscript. This is not how KD becomes a published author.

So I set goals. If I'm writing, I want at least 100 words of forward progress. One hundred words is completely do-able, no matter how I feel about my story at the moment, no matter what is going on in my life. Unless both hands are broken and I have laryngitis to boot, I can come up with one hundred words, and if none of the above injuries have occurred, odds are I'll write much more. When I'm editing I want to get through at least one scene. For me scenes are rarely more than three pages, so it's a good minimum. I can surely edit three pages. Again, once I begin, odds are I'll go on. Once I start editing, I will continue, until necessity interrupts or I notice I've stopped marking up the pages, a sure sign my editing brain has left the building. Every night I write what I accomplish on an index card, one for each project. I often post my goals and then my success (or failure) on a forum as well, so that I may be publicly accountable, but the main thing is that I am accountable to myself. They are my dreams to make happen, no one else's.

Measurable goals keep us accountable, keep us going. Are you ready to take the small steps that will lead to a giant leap for your dreams?

By KD Crotwell

# Write Life

## Utensils of Choice

When it comes to writing, I prefer using my laptop and banging out the words onto a blank document. Writing with my computer is easier for me because I can write faster and my fingers have a better chance of keeping up with my brain. Most of my music is stored on my computer as well, which can create the perfect writing mood with a few clicks of the mouse. The advantages are the portability, and it is much easier to create back-ups of your work, especially with the internet and memory sticks/ jump drives/ flash drives.

Yet I have found that computers are not always the best tool. One spring, my old desktop computer that had been in the family since Windows 2000 was new (so maybe seven years) decided to burn out, corrupt, or otherwise destroy one of the hard drives. I was still working on finishing my National Novel Writing Month novel from the previous year, and there was a good chunk, maybe a thousand or so words that had not been saved into another format, which I didn't realize for months. Luckily I have a computer genius for an uncle, and actually had a hard copy of that story floating around my room somewhere, though that still didn't return the time I spent crying over my lost work.

Sometimes, I prefer using pen and paper. There are times when staring at a blank document with the little bar thing flashing at me doesn't inspire my muse at all. Instead, I run to the internet and catch up on television shows I haven't seen in months. That's usually when I pull out a notebook and curl up somewhere comfortable and attempt to write.

The best thing that I've found about hand writing is that it is more portable than a laptop is. A notebook is very easy to use on a plane, and it doesn't have a battery that will die a few hours into a long or international flight. Also, if you use a notebook in a class the professor usually can't tell that you are not paying attention. They often think that you are taking notes – as long as you pay enough attention to not write when they aren't talking.

Another piece of writing by hand is choosing what to write with. I prefer pen, it doesn't smear as easily as pencil, and makes it so you can write on both sides of the paper without worrying if the lines are going to blur together before you can get them typed. As far as what color, I don't really care. Sometimes I like to use a different color – not just the typical black or blue, though I usually reserve my fun colors for when I'm editing. When I do write with pencil, it always has had a tendency to blur everywhere across the page, making it impossible to read.

Of course, the bad thing about writing by hand is that if you try to keep up with your brain, your handwriting can very quickly turn into chicken scratch and be unreadable, even when you are trying to type it into the computer (which can make an already annoying task even worse). I've found that it is nearly impossible to go as fast by hand as it is to type, and you may even be killing trees with hand writing. My handwriting can fit maybe 300 words on a page, if I write small and use simple words and very little dialogue. Usually by typing, I can fit twice that onto a single spaced page.

What I have found that is worse about handwriting is cramps. I know that I grip my pen or pencil very tightly when I write, and I press hard. By the time I've written less than a page, my hand is often hurting. However, that carpal tunnel can make writing in any form painful, even with a good keyboard and writing desk.

When you first start out writing, you may think that one way would be “best” for you to write – all of your writer friends type every single word that they write, they don't touch a pencil or pen to the page except for editing. Or maybe writing by computer just seems like it might be cold and institutional, not at all personal so you want to write by hand. It might take a few months, or even years before you can find the perfect way, the perfect place, and perfect tool to write with.

# Write Life

## Hiding Places

We've all got our little hiding places. Since childhood, we have our tree forts, pillow forts, snow forts, or equivalent depending on what materials we have around us. I was preferential to a large wooden toy box I could fit it and hide while reading. But as I grew older, I preferred my hiding place to be for when I wrote. I'm not one for the whole writing in public deal. Over the shoulder peepers disconcert me.

When we want to be creative, artistic, or experiment on something, we like to do it in solitude. Unless of course it requires multiple people to accomplish, but writing is usually a solitary endeavor. So in order to work on our solitary artistic experimentations, we need to have a proper hiding place. A place where you won't be distracted by TV, or people asking you questions. A place where you won't be tempted to leave after only a few minutes because it's too warm / cold / wet / dry / filled with weasels.

You, as a writer, are the only one who can write your own words. That within itself is solitary. Sure, you could be writing in the presence of other writers. But they're all writing their own words. Just as you are writing your own. Just as I am writing my own.

My hiding place, or writing place as I have come to call it is my bed. My bed at college was positioned so I could rest against the wall, and prop my legs up on my mini-fridge. At home, I have no convenient mini-fridge next to my bed for leg propping, but it is still preferential to my desk. I'm more prone to leaning, reclining, and otherwise refraining from proper posture. I can only imagine the troubles that will cause me later in life. But for now, I enjoy being able to write without anyone looking over my shoulder.

This is all on the presumption of using a laptop. Were I to have a desktop I'd have adapted to a desk, presumably anyway. A standard alternative is my trusty paper notebook. I've tried them all, from 99 cent marble notebooks, to the expensive moleskin notebooks. All have their unique quirks. The marble notebooks tend to come unraveled before I'm done with them. Wired notebooks get bent outta shape. Those glue-bound notebooks always come unglued before I've reached the last page. Moleskin note books hold together relatively well, but I like writing edge to edge like in a wired note-

book. Not to mention I'm a price-conscious notebook buyer. I get what I pay for, which is why most of my notebooks are in several pieces, duct-taped together, with rubber bands holding everything inside.

I've tried the whole "writing in nature" style. State parks have all sorts of little hiding places for writers. I've written on benches, in the grass, even on a cliff overlooking several towns while the sun was dancing between cotton-fluff clouds. Benches tend to be very stiff and hard to stay on for me as I'm restless by nature. Grass is full of ants, which seem to love crawling over me, and I have critter issues after being bitten by one too many spiders in the darkness. As for the cliff, I tended to get too distracted by the natural beauty of nature to actually write. It was more of a place to de-stress, meditate, and otherwise relax. Great for inspiration, tricky for the actual act of writing.

But that's just me. Perhaps communing with nature is the way for you to find that perfect atmosphere for writing those words. To each their own. But you'll have to go on a bit of a quest to find your own perfect place for writing.

And that place may change over time, as mine has. Mine was more by necessity than choice as they were dependant on living quarters out of my control. But for you it may be more controllable. I still feel like my hiding place of my bed, isn't the perfect setup for me. I get a crick in my neck over time, my legs get lazy from not having to move or do anything, and it's way too easy for my brain to shut off and sleep. Perhaps in time I'll find a new hiding place to write, or just adapt better. Only time will tell.

Keep an eye out for temporary hiding places, whether it be a local café, and nearby park, or even a seat in a car (that you're not driving). Somewhere that you're comfortable in, aren't too easily distracted, and have the ability to write without excessive interruptions. It's hard to find a place that offers all of these amenities, but they do exist. I'm still hoping one day to create a converted tool shed into my ultimate writing fort of solitude. But alas that day is a long ways off. My simple little bed will have to suffice for now.

By Charles J. Muir

# Literary Latte

## Remember Who You Aren't - Part 2 of 4

It was the day before my eleventh birthday, marking the first year of my father's absence. Preparations were being made, and I was sure my father would return the next day with a tale of how he had escaped the king. He would go into hiding in our attic, and everything would be back to normal. It had to be that way.

A courier from the palace arrived about mid-day, carrying a single letter. My mother took the envelope, a look of dread forming on her face. I noticed the royal seal as she opened it, and read it twice.

Letting out a small 'oh', she fell over backwards into the arms of one of the servants. I reached forward, curious as to what the king could write that would make my mother act like that. But another servant's hand closed around the letter first, and she sent me to my room to practice more embroidery. I went glumly, wondering even more what the letter contained.

Later that day, I learned that we had been summoned to court.

I was woken early the next morning and forced into a bath of barely warm water. The servants scrubbed my skin clean and roughly dried me off. They pulled my underclothes and petticoats onto my slightly damp body, and then slid a silk shift over them. Over that, they pulled on a green dress flecked with blue embroidery. I had never seen it before, and wasn't sure when the last time dresses had been ordered for me. It had been nearly two years since my mother and I had last been summoned to court.

I didn't understand my mother's grim attitude on the half-day's journey to the king's palace. We were going to court, where there were beautiful dresses, and the food was of such quality that our cooks could only dream of making something close to it.

I was eager to get out of the carriage when we finally arrived, and jumped down, ignoring the footman who had offered a hand to help me down. Guards formed a narrow walkway leading up to a platform. The king stood at the top of the steps, looking down at us. Five chairs faced the opposite direction. My heart fluttered, thinking that I was going to get to sit with the king.

I struggled not to hurry up the path. It wouldn't be ladylike, as my mother was always reminding me. But at a ladylike pace, it seemed as if it was taking an age and a half just to reach the bottom of the steps.

I copied my mother in sinking towards the ground in a low curtsy. To my happiness, I didn't wobble. The king nodded and turned to step to the front of the fanciest of the chairs. My mother ushered me up the stairs where we curtsied for the queen and her little daughter. Elizabeth was her name, just like

her mother. Her gown was red and gold, the royal colors.

There were unoccupied chairs at either end, and a guard pointed me to the one next to the princess. I sat obediently and look out in front of me. A crowd swelled in the square courtyard, spilling out onto the grounds of the castle beyond it.

In the center and surrounded by at least a meter of empty space on all sides was another platform. An odd, wooden frame stood in the middle. Rising to the height of the knee of the man standing next to it was a wall inside the frame. The middle had a half-moon shape cut out along the top edge. Sunlight reflected off of a metal plate that hung from the top of the frame.

A roar went through the crowd and a hooded man was dragged out onto the other platform. His arms were tied behind him, and were held by two more guards. My enthusiasm for being in court was quickly fading.

Another man climbed onto our platform and bowed to the king and queen before turning to face the crowd. I was suddenly terrified. The king, I knew, was fond of public executions. Why had he summoned us to one, I wondered as the herald pulled a roll of paper out of his sleeve. He cleared his throat and began to read.

"On this eleventh day of April, in the year of our Lord God 1151, by the order of John, King of All the Land, this man, a certain Lord James of Westmire is to be executed for treason. His wife and daughter will be stripped of their titles and their property."

The crowd roared again with delight as a slow drumbeat began to sound. They fell silent as the man, my father, was forced to his knees in front of the wooden structure. His head was shoved into the half-moon that had been cut out. The guard who had been standing there the entire time pulled his sword out of its sheath and, with great show, cut the rope tied to the top of the tower. There was a flash of the metal plate, and my father's body fell to one side.

Immediately after, my mother and I were hurried off of the platform and ushered inside the castle. We were left in a small room for the rest of the day. Later, someone came to separate us and give us food. They forced me out of my gowns and into a cotton nightgown. It was much rougher than the bleached linen or silk that I was used to sleeping in. The sheets on the narrow bed were equally as rough.

I remember crying myself to sleep that night, thinking that nothing could be worse than my father being dead and scratchy bed sheets. Now I know that my troubles were only just beginning.

By Lauren Welch



## Upcoming Events:

February has many things in store for us, among them, our online write-ins on Wednesdays, from 7 PM - 9 PM EST. Join via our chat room at the following URL: <http://www.FCWriters.com/Chat>.

We also have a local event, scheduled for Saturday, February 6th. We'll be at the Borders in Wilton (14 Danbury Road Wilton, CT 06897 - Their Phone #: (203) 834-0600), from 2 PM - 5 PM; working on whatever piece of writing you're interested in working on. Be prepared for productivity though. We're there to write and encourage writing, not spend three hours chatting - that's for after.

## Next Month:

Next month's issue focuses on the topic of **Capturing Plot Bunnies**. We'll also have new writing prompts, articles, and the continuation of Lauren's short story: Remember Who You Aren't.

## How To Subscribe:

To subscribe, register on our website at: <http://www.FCWriters.com> to receive future issues, and read through our back issues, all available in .PDF format.

## Brought To You By:

The FCWG is managed, maintained, and run by **Charles Muir** of New Canaan, CT. As Literary Director, he oversees the day to day operations of the writing group, produces this magazine, and schedules local events throughout the year.

The back-end, behind the scenes work is done by our Technical Director, **Calvin Williams** of Brooklyn, NY. Calvin single-handedly ensures that the website and all its components run as smoothly as possible.

Staff Writer **Lauren Welch** is currently a college student in Indiana. When she isn't slaving over class work, Lauren enjoys tormenting her muse to try and get something written.

Staff Writer **KD Crotwell** has held some twenty jobs so far, most having nothing to do with writing. This has given her great motivation to complete some nine novels in draft. In the Great Game of Publishing, she has achieved the status of "Agent Passed for Market Reasons." She is actively working towards "Agent Fainted With Joy."

## Contact Us

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## Expense Sheet

Below is a summary of our monthly financials for not only producing this magazine, but running the online writing group throughout the course of the year.

Our expenses include webhosting fees, magazine submissions, local event materials, and general group maintenance.

Annual Donations to Date: **\$240**

Annual Expenses to Date: **\$230**

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Total Annual Funds to Date: **\$10**