



The Write Life

Snowflakes and Outlines:

Trial and Error

Keeping Up The
Mental Pace

Surreptitious
Snowflaking

Remember Who
You Aren't -
Part 4

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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.

We also have started up a CaféPress site. Check out some of our offerings: <http://www.CafePress.com/FCWriters>

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Muse Food

All the Strange Creatures

There are a lot of weird animals out there. Krakens, gremlins, platypi, humans. Each has their own little quirks. What may seem strange to one creature can be perfectly normal to another.

subset have racial differences? Variety is the spice of life, especially when writing a story. Get creative, see what happens if a character's race has an abhorrent distaste for pears, or something equally awkward.

What strange quirks do your characters have?

I'm a fan of having at least one character be afraid of the dark. It always makes for interesting times come an eclipse, power outage, or spontaneous bag over the head.

Does each of your characters have a different quirk? If you have different races or characters, does each

One Words

Try basing a story with one of the below words:

Chartreuse
Boundary
Asteroid
Sweden
Abnormality
Chimpanzee
Ocarina
Fossil
Conference
Caramel

One Liners

Try starting a story with one of the below sentences:

Don't you have to volunteer for martyrdom?
I dropped my shield while I was running away.
Skeleton trees grope with bony fingers.
Miracles are a specialty!
Walls can be many things, but musical is not recommended.
Fluffy-tailed and evil, the squirrels just watched.
A roof does not a home make, but a porch is serious progress.
Possible, probable, provable... what does it matter?
Trust must be earned, but some men start at a higher wage.
Heart attacks are optional.

Photographic Inspiration



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

Muse Food

I Shall Name Him . . . George

A lot can be determined by the name of a character. Certain names carry a lot of weight to them. Some names build history based on who wears them. Like Hercules, or Thor. Names like Bob are a little less interesting, but not necessarily any less intimidating. I have a few deities named Bob.

It's generally bad form to base a character's personality just from his or her name. If you have a reason to do it, if it's an integral part of the story, then by all

means. But if your barbarian warrior is named Bloodbath Kilgore of Atrocitus City, the subtlety might be a bit too much for your readers.

A rose by any other name would theoretically smell just as sweet. But if it was called Widowmaker, I doubt many people would bother to find out.

Names are powerful, use them wisely.

One Words

Try basing a story with one of the below words:

Exhaustion
Acrobat
Progress
Californication
Hotel
Saint
Basement
Storm
Nature
Vacation

One Liners

Try starting a story with one of the below sentences:

Teach a man to fish and he's out of your hair for days.

I want to hear you say it.

No one ever looks in Canada.

Dreams take time, patience, and sometimes the thoughtful application of a two by four.

What's that saying, how when you come in the door, God climbs out the window?

All he had was a construction-paper star with messy tracks of glued-on glitter.

Keep to the shadows.

Cats one can ignore, but it is hard to steal something when a dog is watching.

Each passer-by exhaled in clouds, increasing the morning fog.

In the corner, a stiletto-heeled shoe lay on its side, the ankle strap broken.

Photographic Inspiration



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

First Class

Why Outline?

Every writer since the inception of academics has at one point or another needed to create an "outline" for some reason or another. Whether it's an Illiterati (the Illuminati is just a silly cover story) conspiracy to warp our fragile little minds, or an attempt at restructuring our brains to stop bobbing about like a rejected Willy Wonka taffy construction, or something even more sinister - an outline does in fact serve a purpose within a writer's life.

When I say outline, I mean a concerted literary effort in organizing the mish-mash of ideas we put down on paper. An attempt at sorting our points, counter-points, and various witty tales into some semblance of continuity.

You can try it without continuity, but try using an outline that goes from a waterfront gang war, to a poker game on the moon, to a bear attack in Manhattan - and see if you can work out what happened when and why. Best stick to the continuity method, it'll be a kinder on the time space continuum.

Our minds may enjoy firing from one neuron to another with no concept of which neuron will pop up next, but for some reason society believes that order is better than chaos.

Because of this, it helps to learn the 1, 2, 3s and A, B, Cs of writing an outline. There are all sorts of different outlining methods, some more effective than others. But as with almost all things, you'll have to play with all of them until you can determine which works best for you.

Disregard your teachers when they claim that Outline Method X is the end all be all of outlining. It may well be for them, but just saying that Method X is *the* method, won't make it true. If only it were that easy for us all.

Nope, you have your work cut out for you. And to make it even more disappointing, a particular method that works for you in high school may no longer be as perfect in college, or even in the post-graduate world. That's why it's nice to have at least a basic concept of the various outlining methods.

When one method gets stale, try out another until you find something that keeps your ideas flowing.

Play nice with teachers while you have them, and suffer their inevitable obsession with one method of outlining over another. It's nothing personal against the other methods, it's more that teachers are required by Illiterati law to declare one method over the others.

But keep that under your proverbial hat, it's supposed to be a secret.

Speaking of secrets, I have stumbled upon an interesting secret about outlines in general. As with all things in life, moderation is key. Regardless of the method or style of outlining, it's best not to put every minute detail and measurement of the universe down on paper.

Just as it's advised not to leave the outline as: Beginning, Middle, and End. A happy medium between the two extremes is what's called for in a writer's outline. Enough details to keep your writing moving, without having an outline that's so packed it becomes a book merely without any sentence structure.

I've created multiple outlines for stories before, each with different key plot points. I don't necessarily use them all at the same time. Mainly because having a magical world overlaid with nanite-induced zombies, battling vampiric aliens from the moon, while on a Victorian-era ship would just be way too confusing to keep up with.

As interesting it would be though, I think a bit of separation between possible story lines is good. Not only for you but for your characters. Unless you're a fan of crossover stories. Then by all means, combine every story arc your muse can come up with.

So the next time you ask, "Why outline?" I reply with "Why not?" A crude, simple answer, but effective enough to get you writing. And if it's not effective enough to get you writing, then I'll just unless the monkey-bats on you until words start flowing. When all else fails, release the monkey-bats.

First Class

Trial & Error

There are times where a careful, steady hand and lots of preparation are required in order to accomplish a goal. More often than not, though, it'll be a matter of making it up as you go along in order to succeed.

That's where the tried and tested method of trial and error comes in. Every one is unique in their literary abilities, which means that every one of us has a slightly different method in organizing our writing and our ideas.

An outline may not work for some, whereas it'll be a godsend for others. Creating a character profile before, during, or after writing your story can help a lot of writers in keeping all the facts straight, while others prefer to just fly by the seat of their pants and hope for the best.

I'm a happy medium. After fiddling with all sorts of options and methods and tricks, I've found my own preferred ways of doing things. But it took a lot of errors to get there.

And I'm sure that over time, I'll have to continue testing out methods, as one becomes stale or just isn't viable for whatever I happen to be working on at the moment.

Writing is a constant battle with yourself to find out just the right combination of words and concepts. The execution is a little different every time, and because of that your preparation and organizing methods will have to adapt accordingly.

I've never enjoyed outlines, as I feel they take all the mystery out of a story. Probably because I detail the plot down to an almost microscopic level. That is a bad thing, at least for me. If there's no mystery or adventure left to a story, I don't care enough to continue writing it. I've lost many a good characters to too much over planning.

Best to take it slow and easy the first few times round. Ease your way into the outlining process. Try mind mapping, snowflaking, tiers, tying bits of string to

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each plot point and hope that nothing falls off.

There's a method out there for everyone. It's just a matter of finding yours.

Teachers sometimes forget this fact. There is no one holy grail of outlines. It would be nice if there were. It would make our work a lot easier. But nope, our work is cut out for us. Like a puzzle, we need to play around with all the pieces, hoping that eventually they'll all fit in somewhere.

Never mind those few pesky extra pieces that didn't fit anywhere. Those can be saved for another day, or another story.

Another fact worth mentioning is that the post-academic world seems to delight in outlines. I understand they're a necessary evil at times, so it's best to at least have an acquaintance with the more standard outlining methods. That way you'll be better able to handle detailing a project for your boss, or outlining an article for your contacts in the media world.

I've lost count of how many outlines I've created over the years. From article concepts to short story plots, to novels, to poem structures, to song lyrics.

Every piece of writing has a structure to it eventually. Forming that structure before you start writing can help speed things along, and remind you of the direction you want the piece of writing to move in.

It's disturbingly easy to lose the focus of a piece of writing if you don't have it written down in front of you. Even if it's a statement of: Story X is about...

That statement will help frame the rest of what you write. Without that frame you'll get all sorts of unnecessary tangents that just bog down the story, maim your characters, and have your readers wandering off to see what's on TV instead.

Take the five minutes to create a frame for what you're writing. You and your readers will appreciate it later.

By Charles J. Muir

Writers Sphere

Please Do Not Panic--A Discussion of Outlines

Don't be scared--I know your fear. For years, when I read a recommendation to outline a story, I ran away screaming. I saw those awful things I had to do with my reports in school, with the sections and the letters and the numbers and the never-rightness...

Relax. Those outlines are not the ones I mean. A story outline is, quite simply, a plan. It's how you mean to get from start to finish, having (one hopes) some fun along the way. Outlines exist in as many different forms as writers do, and are as difficult to classify. Fortunately, finding what works for you may be as easy as picking a method that feels good and quitting when you get lazy when your intuition says so.

Here, presented in general order of least up-front work to most, are some popular forms of outlining.

The "Outline? We don't need no stinking outline!" method: This is not an outlining method at all. The No Stinking Outline way is just to dive into your story, throwing in plot twists whenever things slow down, and worrying about making it all make sense later. There is an unspeakable glee in writing madly forward. Also known as the "my first draft is my outline" method.

Pros: You get to jump in and write, and isn't that what we're all here for? Spontaneity, sparkle, and wild writing await! This method is great when you have a character jumping on your head and pulling at your ears but you don't know her story at all.

Cons: This leads to a lot of after-story work, if you make it to the end at all. Like running with the bulls, you may end up atop a swaying pole as enraged beasts stampede below, or worse, becoming one with the pavement. And even if you do make it into the ring, you still face your story, grown huge and terrifying with hot stinky breath. I like this method, myself, but then, I like doing battle with my story.

My revisions are vicious, often involving two weeks of vacation, lots of red pens, caffeinated beverages, and scene checklists, and also a lot of gore. Every page bleeds ink, scenes are slain with abandon, and for every two scenes written, I'm likely to find a third I need to write. Manuscripts I wrote this way often have a word count jump of thirty thousand words in the revision process.

The Headlight Method: This one is pretty simple. You know where you are, and where you want to be--and you plan only as far ahead as your headlights can show you. Bit by bit you'll plan the whole story. This one, rather obviously, works best if you know your ending already. Sometimes I do.

Pros: You still get to jump quickly in, and whenever writing is a chore, you can stop to plan a bit. It's not a mad charge, but much of the spontaneity remains.

Cons: If you don't keep your destination clearly in mind, the

possibility of getting lost grows exponentially. If you know your last scene, it's safe to guess you're rather attached to ending the story that way. Take your eyes off that goal for long, and you won't make it at all. Also, it may be very frustrating not knowing what to foreshadow, or when and how that gun you just planted will be used. Or having to go back when you're done and plant that gun.

Baubles on a String: So you don't know your whole story, but you know some. You have random scenes, Moments of Awesome, and you want to put them in a story. Plan those scenes. Write them on notecards as Holly Lisle recommends, or on fridge magnets if you like, but get them down and then figure out how they connect.

Pros: This method pretty much guarantees you will "only write the good parts." No mundane flossing-of-the-teeth scenes for you! In this method you know what you want to write, and the only other things you'll put in there are the transitions.

Cons: If you don't know enough Moments of Awesome, or don't know how they connect, this one can be very difficult. The work may resonate for you, but not have quite enough story to win over a reader. Random scenes of Awesome can be great, but most readers will be expecting a coherent tale.

The Pitch It Method: Sit down and write out your plan as if you were telling a friend about that great movie you saw last week. "And then the FMC kicks the MMC in the shin and takes the necklace from him, and--oh, back when she was telling him about the ring, she dropped..." Just like that.

Pros: This will actually end with a pretty coherent story-plan, or it will let you know that you don't have one after all.

Cons: You actually have to know the story. Writing doesn't always (for me, ever) work that way!

Snowflake, or Know-it-all, Method: I have to be honest. I can't do this one. If I know enough about a story to snowflake it, I no longer have any interest in writing it. But for some, this method is The Only One.

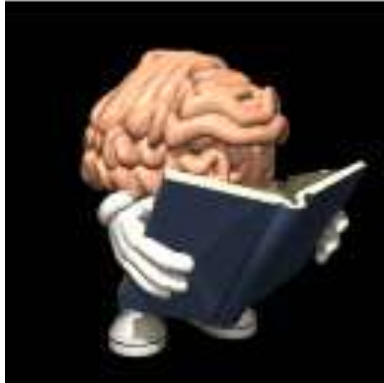
So if you're one who wants to know going into a novel just what you'll be coming out with, if "measure twice, cut once" is your mantra in all things, or if you just want to know what the heck snow has to do with anything, I commend you to the website (<http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/art/snowflake.php>), which can explain it much better than I can. I won't list pros and cons for this one, as I've never actually tried it.

And there we are. Five methods, running the gamut of planning intensity, for you to choose from. Mix and match is totally acceptable as well! So take your pick, put in your time, and then--write your story!

Writers Sphere

Keeping Up The Mental Pace

Outlines have their time and place in a writer's tackle-box. Next to the character lures, and the rusty dangling participles that are used when no one's looking.



I'm a fan of the mind mapping style of outlining. Start with an over-all topic, word, or idea. Then, think of any linking words, topics, or ideas and write them, spaced out a bit from your central idea.

Connect the new ideas to the central. Now repeat the procedure, for as long as your feel.

It can get pretty messy and crowded, but then again, that's why it's called a mind map after all.

Everybody's mind "thinks" its thoughts in the style of an ADHD person. Moving a mile a minute, jumping from one thing to another with little to no warning. It can't be helped.

That's part of why the first draft of most writing is the crap draft. It jump, skips, overlooks, ignores, and all-around jumbles what you want it to say. Outlines help get all that jumble down on paper. Then you can play puzzle-master and form it all into some sense of usable order.

It's not easy to keep up with your own mind. Whether it's writing by hand, which explains why most people's handwriting is scribbled hieroglyphics. Or whether you're using a computer, which accounts for all the misspelled words that not even the spell check function can decipher.

In some ways, forcing your brain to slow down so that your hands can keep up can be a good thing. Your brain still fidgets about while you're spelling out anti-disestablishmentarianism, and in between one syllable and the next your brain will have figured out what

There are times that I use an actual nib pen and ink-well to write out ideas. It's such an agonizingly slow process as I have to continuously re-dip the nib in ink, that my brain will have all sorts of stuff for me to write down. I rarely run dry of inspiration that way. Rather, I tend to run out of patience first.

It does give me an appreciation for pre-typewriter / computer writers though. It also has made me brush up on my penmanship. It's all well and good to use a pen and paper, but it's quite another to be able to read it afterwards.

I can scribble words just as fast as I can type, but I won't be able to read them after the ink dries.

If you really need to slow your brain down, short of trying to break the space-time continuum, start writing in calligraphy. There's an art that requires slow, methodical patience. Those requirements are the main reason why my calligraphy skills are rustier than the Titanic.

I do have some cheapie calligraphy markers though, for when I'm feeling adventurous, or feel like working on a Victorian-esque story.

I know of a few writers that have shifted their computer keyboards from the standard QWERTY layout, to the Dvorak layout. That would, with practice, speed up your typing skills, allowing you to better keep up with your brain.

There's all sorts of options for writing whatever your brain comes up with, ensuring nothing slips through the cracks. It's just a matter of diligence, persistence, and endurance.

An idea can strike your brain at any time, and usually waits for the most inopportune moments to pop up. It takes time to get it all down, especially if you're multitasking. And if your muse has managed to find your stash of coffee, you could be up all night writing down ideas and story plots.

By Charles J. Muir

Write Life

Surreptitious Snowflaking

There are times where your brain is smarter than you are. Don't let it get to you, it's a good thing. Sometimes your brain works faster than your internal monologue. Mine sure does.

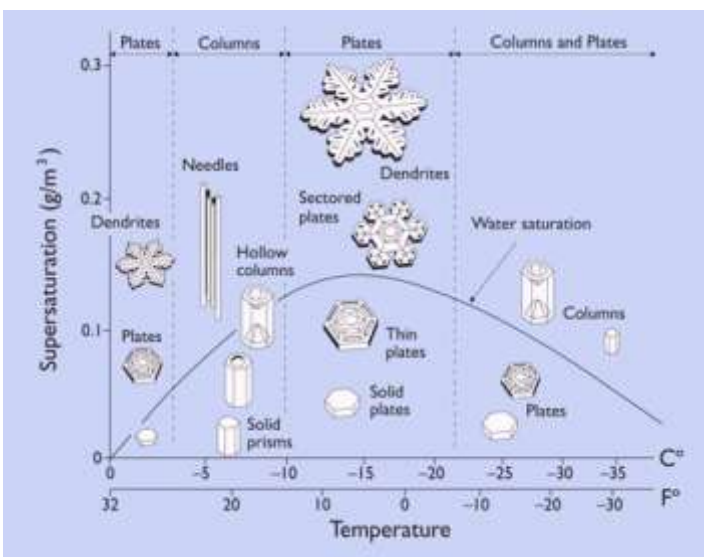
I'll think questions, like "Why does this character exist?" And before I'm even done thinking the question, answer pops up like a slide from high school science class. Most of the time the answer is actually a short clip played on the old school film projectors, but sometimes a slide is all I can get from my brain.

Without even realizing it, my brain starts formulating an outline, one flake at a time. I'll bounce questions around inside my skull and see what sticks to the sides. That's how half my story concepts are born - me asking questions to myself.

Trust me, it's better than my just arguing with myself. I never win those arguments.

This subconscious act of formulating your story can be a godsend when it comes writing. It's certainly come in handy for me. I still write out an outline, while my brain is tossing the ideas at me.

If I didn't make a vague attempt to organize it, the beginning would be after the end but interspersed with bits of the middle. Characters would be living their lives from death to birth, punctuated with random reverse growth spurts throughout the story. It would be chaos.



Sometimes chaos has its place, just not when it comes to the order of a novel. When it comes to novels, some sort of order is required, otherwise your readers will be beyond confused.

I've found my brain is wired backwards when it comes to ordering a story. I almost always figure out the climax before I learn where the beginning is. It can make for awkward outlining if you're aware of the ending without any idea what precipitated the whole tale.

That's why I sometimes write from the bottom of a page of paper, and work my way up to the top. It allows for my brain to order the story as it sees fit, and when I read it, everything more or less is in the order it should be. A somewhat convoluted way of doing things, but hey, if it works...

Just be sure that your brain understands that subconscious outlining still requires a certain formation. Just as snowflakes have a structure to them, so should your outlines. Each one is built a little bit differently. An extra few branches on one side, a bit fatter up at the top, maybe a bent tip in the back. But the overall structure still comes out similarly.

As the temperature changes, snowflakes form differently. So too will your outline be altered, depending on the style of writing you're doing. Novels require longer outlines, fatter arms, thicker flakes. A short story is just a miniature novel. Poetry is a micro-novel, or just a branch of a flake. Articles, and other short works can be other bits and pieces of a snowflake.

So go out and play with your snowflakes and outlines. Let your brain do all the heavy lifting while you write down the results. All you'll have to lift is your pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, depending on your literary preferences. That way the outlines will just come naturally and you'll be well on your way to writing the next award winning piece of writing.

By Charles J. Muir

Write Life

Blueprinting Ideas

There are blueprints to just about anything nowadays. Houses, cars, electronics, bodies, universes. Creating a blueprint involves a bit of hand-eye coordination, and a bit of brainpower. But the extra work you put into blueprinting an idea can help out a lot, later on when you're trying to conceptualize the whole story.

An outline will create the borders in which you're working in, the outermost edges of the story. The details and descriptions will become those little fiddly bits and thin lines tying everything together.

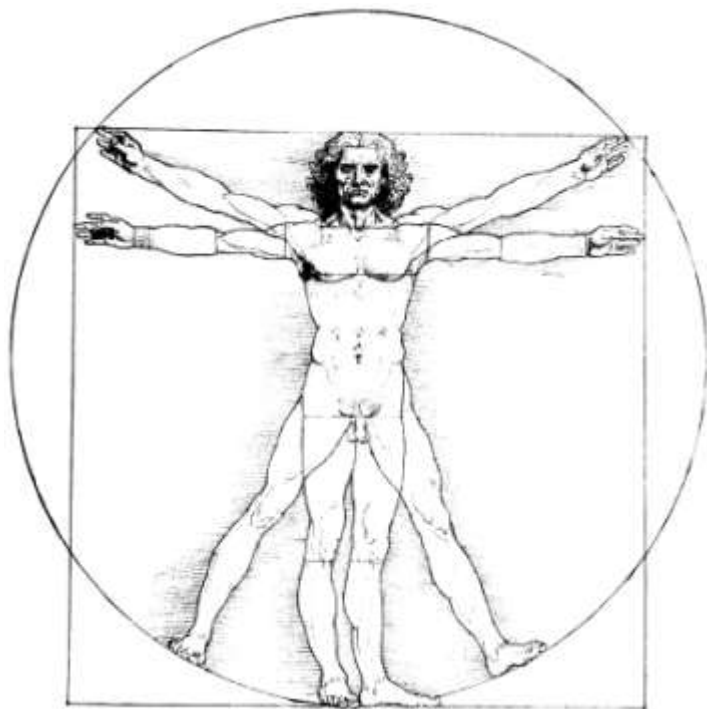
I've blueprinted maps, ships, houses, and characters, from one time or another. I've found that having a sketch of the layout of a world helps in determining distances and travel routes. Drawing the floor plan of a castle can be crucial when involved in a siege. Character descriptions are a lot easier when you have a drawing of their outfits, scars, tattoos, hair colors, etc.

You don't have to be good at drawing to blueprint. Even a vague approximation of what your mind's eye is showing you can help. I started blueprinting mostly to preserve my memory when I get an idea for one thing or another.

If I take the time and mental effort to put it down on paper in one form or another, it'll stick. And if it doesn't stick, I still have the piece of paper to remind me.

There's something very effective about the tactile approach though. The transference of thought into the written word brings your story to life. Once given life, your story expands from a mere blueprint into a working model as it were. Like having a square become a cube.

I've also learned that the more you create blueprints for your stories, the clearer and more detailed the blueprints become. Everything requires a bit of steady practice, and as with all things, practice makes better. As there is no such thing as perfection that ridiculous motto of "practice makes perfect" is just that, ridiculous.



Even though there's no such thing as perfection, one can still become a master, or at the least an adept at writing. I'm still in training, comparatively. It'll take a while before I become an adept, or a master.

I have gone to the point of obtaining graph paper, so I can work on drawing things to relative scale. I have an entire file on a particular piece of technology in one of my stories, dubbed the Q battery.

It's a piece of technology that doesn't play any major part in my story. It doesn't make or break the novel, as it were. And yet, by sketching the dimensions and power logistics, I've determined what sort of firearms and body armor my characters wield. That, in turn, leads to just how hard they have to fight to survive all the various obstacles I toss in their way.

It's amazing what a small piece to a story can do. An object no larger than a tennis ball, and it helps frame an entire story.

Try it out, sketch a part of your current work in progress. See how much detail you can form. Then find out if it gets the creative juices flowing. You may just find out something new about your story.

By Charles J. Muir

Literary Latte

Remember Who You Aren't - Part 4 of 4

"You there!"

I turned, looking over my shoulder. A young man, perhaps three or four years older than I, stood in the middle of the hallway. His hair was cropped close to his head, and I could tell from where I was that he was some form of nobility. His skin was creamy, and free from the blotches that plagued my skin from time to time.

He was wearing tight black leggings and tan slippers. Dark blue pantaloons ended just below his knees and were styled so you could see bright red cloth below. He wore a tunic of a much lighter blue with orange trim. The sleeves were puffed and reached halfway down his bicep. Under that was another tunic made of a brighter orange. It showed only at the collar, and the sleeves that extended past the over tunic's to his wrists. At the cuffs and collar, I could make out the white frills of a shirt, and around his waist hung a black cloth pouch.

"What are you doing?" He asked, his tone that of someone who was used to getting what he wanted.

The prince. He and his father had been talking with the king since arriving nearly an hour before. His father, I assumed, was still with the king.

"To the kitchens, my lord." I said quietly, dropping into a curtsy.

"What is your name?"

"Jesabel, my lord."

"Show me where the kitchens are then, Jesabel."

"Of course, my lord. Follow me." I waited until he drew closer before walking down the heavily carpeted hallway.

"You know, Jesabel, I was coming here for a wedding."

"Really my lord?" I asked, keeping my voice as smooth and even as possible.

"Yes. But then the woman I was to marry went and killed herself."

"We are all very sad that Princess Elizabeth is no longer with us, and we pray that she arrived safely in the hands of our Lord God."

"Do you really believe that Jesabel?"

"It is what we believe, as subjects of John, King of all the Land." I replied, and added a swift 'my Lord' to the end. Lords liked it when you acknowledged their power, and royalty was no different.

"I don't care what you're told to believe. What do you believe?"

"It is not my place to express my beliefs, my lord." I opened the door to the kitchens. "This is the kitchens, my lord. I do not recommend entering, for they are very dirty places and I wouldn't want to be responsible for getting your clothing ruined."

"I have others." He paused, studying me. "Jesabel, you walk like a noble, and your speech is in a similar pattern. But why are you dressed as a servant?"

I turned, staring at him. No one had spoken to me as much since the last time the princess had decided that she did indeed like me. Normal people didn't speak to servants. If I was caught talking with him, instead of making myself useful, I would certainly be punished. Besides that, I hadn't even told the other servants what happened. They already knew, after all.

"My parents were of noble birth. When my father was executed ten years ago, my mother and I were given positions as servants in the king's household. 'Tis better than living in the villages, my lord." I swallowed, worried that I had just given a bad impression of how the king ruled. "If my lord will excuse me, I must get back to work."

He nodded, and I hurried away, disappearing into the bustle of the kitchen. That night when I lay in my bed in the servants quarters, I thought of the prince. After he had gotten talking, he hadn't seemed quite so arrogant. He had wanted to hear my opinions, which were never stated in the king's household. If you didn't think what he thought, you often vanished and never were seen again.

Had my father not been killed, I would have grown up to marry a man like him. I perhaps would have turned out like the princess – expecting everything to go the way I wanted. Still, I was of noble birth, and the prince was no longer promised to the princess.

"Remember who you aren't." My mother's words came back to me. I wasn't a noble, nor was I part of the royal family. I couldn't think of the prince as anyone but another figure of royalty to serve. It wouldn't do to be caught day-dreaming an impossible dream. We lived two separate lives, and always would.

I wasn't nobility, and hadn't been for nearly half my life. We had been stripped of our titles and land when I was young, too young to learn common court practices. I didn't know anything that the princess had taken as second nature by the time she was twelve.

Nor was I a peasant. I didn't spend all day struggling to survive. Shelter had been provided for me by the grace of the king. He was even generous enough to grant me a small purse each year, that I kept well hidden. I knew that there wouldn't be a use for it, but still I kept the money hidden.

It wasn't even dawn the next morning when I was summoned to be before the king. I struggled into my nicest gown and pulled my hair into a plait before stumbling, still half asleep to his study. My eyelids felt heavy, and I yawned every step of the way.

The prince, dressed similarly to the way he had been the night before was there. Next to him stood an older man, who I could only assume to be the other king. King John sat behind his desk where he regarded me critically.

"You were once of noble blood, Jesabel of Westmire." The king began.

"The same blood still runs through your veins, even though your father has tainted its name. Yet Prince Edward of Vonisbra has seen in you a spark of that nobility that no one before has mentioned. In light of the recent events, and past, you shall marry him in my daughters stead for the part of your blood that is not noble is indeed royal."

I found myself staring at the king, and then quickly dropped my gaze back to my slippers. Royal? I couldn't have been of any form of royal birth. My parents were both of noble birth. Adultery was forbidden by the church, and my mother had tried to raise me to fear God's wrath.

"The ceremony shall take place in one hour. Go to the dress-makers, she should have the gowns prepared."

As I walked her quarters, I thought again of my parents words. Remember who you aren't. The entire time I had been the princess' servant, I used the phrase to remind myself that I was truly of noble birth, not just a servant. It kept me from giving in, kept me hopeful that one day I would return to my position. But had the phrase been my mother's way of telling me that I was suited for more things than nobility?

I would never know, for the moment the ceremony was over, the king had me leave the country as quickly as possible. He did not want his subjects to know that he had an illegitimate daughter who had married the foreign prince his legal daughter was supposed to marry. It wouldn't look good. Three months later, I received word that my mother had died, and the king was ill. Deathly ill. His son had been summoned for a coronation.

The king hadn't even told the priest of the church who I really was.

By Lauren Welch



Upcoming Events:

April 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 have a local event, on Saturday, April 10th. 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.

If a different location would be better, please [email](#) me and I'll work it into our schedule

Next Month:

Next month's issue focuses on the topic of **Writing the Crap Draft**. We'll also have new writing prompts, articles, and a new short story series by one of our illustrious writers.

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."

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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: **\$375**

Annual Expenses to Date: **\$330**

Total Annual Funds to Date: **\$45**