

WRITING: A CHOICE OR A COMMAND

Writing is a place, a place full of words and ideas. Come with me into a room full of these words and ideas as they swirl in search of release. There are no doors in this room, only a window which must be opened to relieve the mounting pressure as the room fills. Words form into thoughts and ideas that cover the otherwise blank walls. There is something to say, something that must be told, instructive, descriptive, or simply entertaining. Outside of the window is a pen and paper, and the only way out is to write. I open the window and once again am free of these thoughts exploding in silence.

Over and over again I am dropped into this room with no doors, whether I am enjoying a beautiful sunrise or am just trying to go to sleep. I am in bed. The lights are out. The bedroom is dark. Words circle around, darting in and out, shaping ideas I don't want to have. I just want to sleep. Stories form that I can't keep inside of me. The resolution is always the same, to reach out that window for the pen and paper and to write. What seems like a choice becomes a necessity. Fear of forgetting prevails, so waiting until later is never an option. Not writing a pressing thought is like a photographer without his or her camera encountering what could be the picture of a lifetime, lost forever. It gnaws. It agitates. I become obsessed and possessed. It is the cruel trick and at the same time the blessing of creativity.

One may think there are no new ideas, no stories that have not been told. Perhaps they have been told, paraphrased a thousand times in hundreds of different ways, but not with these words, not just like this. I have stories to tell that have not been told in the way I can tell them.

I sometimes wonder how all of this started. When did writing become part of who I am? Why am I held as a willing prisoner of my own mind? Writing has become more than a choice. It is an obligation to myself, never a question of should I or should I not. It does not make me feel special that I must write, only that I am driven to do it. That is just the way it is, a command in the spirit of the creative process that will not let me rest until I put pen to paper. Not writing becomes an emotional migraine of missed opportunity.

Over a landscape of fears and tears I have known great sadness and have been blessed with great joy. From notes taken over a lifetime I have stories to tell whether in a few words or hundreds of pages. The hope is that someone will be moved in some way by what I have to say.

While the goal of being published may be the grand prize, a less conspicuous reward for writing may be as simple as a thank you for a thoughtfully written letter to a friend. It all matters. It all counts. From recording a passing thought to tapping resources deep in the soul, writing nourishes the joy of creativity. In order to realize the satisfaction of this reward the genie must be let out of the bottle. I write not only to experience this fulfillment. I write because I am commanded to do so. Anything less would diminish success.

To say that it is my destiny to become a writer comes cloaked in snob appeal, resulting in harsher failure should I not do so. I will continue to write to the best of my ability, forever turning on a light in the still of the night to record a word or an idea that can't wait until morning. There will always be a room with no doors, and I will know how to open the window.

It's time to let the genie out of the bottle.