Writer’s Block

My mind is full of ideas, a million of them all rushing to be put down on paper at once. Each story as important as the other, some true, some nothing more than a figment of my imagination. I find a table cascaded in sun, so warm and well lit, that I know it is perfect for my needs. I pull off my oversized black knit sweater, it’s full of holes, and oddly shaped as though the maker wasn’t quite aware of what they were doing. I wear it every day, despite it’s odd shape, but rarely venture out of the house with it on.

I pull up my tall wheeled desk chair, it’s black and missing an arm from a not so long ago accident. I’d dropped my pen in a moment of furiously fast writing and leaned over to grab it toppling over the arm of the chair when it gave way. It’s a hand-me down chair, but one I am grateful for because the back is straight and tall and perfect for my needs. I take the time to adjust the height of my chair, wondering who last sat in it. But upon finding the seat just right to the height of my table, I discover my knees are at just the wrong angle and they ache terribly.

I have a displaced fat pad in my left knee. A result of one leg being ever so slightly longer than the other, and my hip and back pulling in such a way that the one set of muscles is stronger than the other, and swoosh! Or not, because it was a terrible pain when it occurred. I still can’t run from the accident, and kneeling is something I do with much tender care lest I should land poorly on the bum knee. But I can walk again, and for that I am grateful.

I try to push all these strange rushing thoughts away so I can focus on the reason I sat down here in the first place. I close my eyes and take a deep breath, then find myself sputtering and hacking. Someone, on my block is having wash day and I can smell their laundry soap. It’s not a particularly nice smell, but then I find any “out of the box” smell of laundry soap suffocating, and it often sets off a coughing fit or gives me an instant headache. I check to see if the window is open, and quickly turn the fan on to help disperse the stench.

I resume my place at the table, lift my shirt over my nose and take another deep inhale. I hold my breath, and exhale slowly. I’m grateful that the deodorant I put on this morning is doing it’s job, due to allergies there are very few I can use without a reaction, and so far only one has stood the test of my morning walks.

“HUSH!” I internally tell myself. “Now is not the time to discuss body smells, laundry scents,

or..—“ I cut myself off, suddenly distracted by the buzzing of a blowie in the window. It’s large fuzzy black body intent to get out of the screened window. It’s wings beating furiously, the buzzing sound enough to drive anyone crazy.

I sigh and wonder why Fang couldn’t have eaten flies, after all that’s the whole reason I acquired him in the first place. What’s the purpose in a venus fly trap if they don’t consume the prey they are intended to deal with? I shouldn’t complain, really, as he did bless us with a glorious flower, and lived to tell about it. That is, until I moved him outside because I was tired of the kids feeding him rice and taco offerings. I shake my head to hone in on the buzzing sound, “Ahh yes I see him now!” I whisper to no one in particular.

Albert sits on the table smiling at me, and I throw him a wink, “Back in a sec!” I tell him a little louder, causing the family dog to open one eye and stare at me as though my words have completely upended his napping hour. I’d have pity on him, but at his age every hour is napping hour, and he generally snores so loud we’ve been known to have to shout across the room at each other to be heard. Still, I don’t want him to move or he might cause the blowie to take flight.

“Bacon?” I offer, “In the kitchen!” He snorts, seeing right through my prank. Clearly his old years have made him wiser. There was a time we wondered why we never named him bacon, for it was the one magical word that would halt his running full tilt down the sheep paddock intent to do the job of herding and bring him homeward again. I wait, one eye on the dog one on the fly, until the dog closes his eyes again.

I stand, slowly, which isn’t too hard considering the missing arm on my chair, and tip-toe over to the window where I spot the blowie trapped behind the privacy curtains I hung up tired of the neighbour’s dogs spying on my every sneeze or move and giving me their opinion in irritated yaps or loud howls.

I lean in, slowly, trapping the blowie in a small corner of the window. I grit my teeth, because I have nothing to squash the crazy fly with and will have to resort to using my hand atop the curtain. Ew! The task done I grab a wipe from the nearby box, usually reserved for when the birds are out, and wipe my hand before returning to the table.

I check my word count: 0. I glance at the time: 30 minutes have flown by. I flop back down in my chair, drag a hand through my hair and twist it atop my head in a messy bun, apparently all the rage for a while, but something I've done for years because I got fed up with a pony tail.

I pick up my beloved purple pen, glance at the check-list on my planner, tick off the tasks I've done today: sweep the driveway, weed the driveway.. Technically, those weren't weeds though, I think, as I chew the end of my pen lid.

It was actually just grass and shamrock. I made a mental note of this while outside and had seriously debated digging up some of the shamrock and potting it to send to my mother-in-law's nursing home. She use to tell me how her Uncle always sent her shamrock for St Patrick's Day, and now each time I find that our own yellow flowering shamrock has escaped the confines of its bed, I think of her and debate sending her some. I never do, because I don't think it's a wise idea. I sigh again and tick off the task.

Without giving it much thought, I slip the pen in my hair, and slide my fingers back onto the keyboard. They fall into place, of this I'm certain because I feel the well worn keys beneath my fingers. I glance down the room and stare out the front window and watch a resident of the nearby nursing home walk by. I smile as I see their companion coming up behind them, I wonder what they will talk about on their morning walk.

I spent my morning walk talking about childhood memories, good and bad. Debating the behaviours and actions of people with narcissistic personality disorder, especially those related to me. I talked about a horses need to be constantly on it's feet, the change of the tide, the emptiness of the beach, the book I read yesterday, and how hungry I was.

My loving husband walked beside me interjecting occasionally, reminding me that he really doesn't like horses [he means he's scared of them, which reminds me of my grandmother..] and informs me that he too is hungry. We joked about what we'd have for breakfast, knowing full well we'd eat the same thing we've eaten for the past ten years for breakfast.

I wonder, what will that couple outside my window talk about. I rush over to the sofa and kneel upon it, my face pressed to the privacy curtain as I watch them totter slowly by,

pushing their identical walkers, delighted to simply be out on this warm spring day. Their faces are radiant with joy, and as one starts to laugh, I yearn to run out the door and ask if they can share the joke, but I refrain, instead returning to my writing space.

My arms have a slight chill to them now, having shed my beloved sweater and opened a nearby window, my back is still clammy with the sweat from the effort of pushing a broom, taller than I was, up and down the driveway and having to pause after every push and screw the head back on it. I pull my workout shirt away from my skin to let fresh air flow against my skin, and roll my eyes at the saying upon my shirt: "Abs are great, but have you tried donuts?"

It was cheap and I was in need of a new workout shirt.. Or two, since I have an identical pair, the day I purchased it. I didn't consider that anyone would actually see the words since it was winter and I was wearing a jumper with a town I once visited in America upon it. Oh well, a smile dances across my lips as I consider what someone will think when they see the shirt. Of course, they could also presume I've eaten too many donuts, but that makes me actually laugh; due to a gluten allergy I can't tell you when I last ate a donut.

I shake my head and adjust my computer screen as I attempt to ignore the fact that my clothes are sweaty and gross and I should really go shower. I try to ignore the fact that this room looks like a fight or party went down in it, pillows askew, crocheted turtle coasters everywhere, quilts thrown on the floor.. I pause briefly, "Did the kids have a genuine party and not invite me? I mean, it *is* entirely possible, but they can't keep a secret to save their lives so it's also doubtful."

A bird flies over my head. Yes, a living, breathing, screaming bird. The pieces begin to align as the rush of wind from her wings cools my hot skin for a moment. She's hormonal and due to lay an egg any day now, but instead of getting on with the task at hand she causes drama all day long. She screams to be let out of her cage, and when she is, she flies atop the curtains and screams until you walk out of the room, then she promptly tries to chew holes in the wall.

She's currently angry that she had her nails clipped, and is flying loops through the house. There's a red faced puffing teen running behind shouting, "Archimedes get back here!"

It's a normal scene in our home, set off at least twenty times a day by any known factors: toast popping, the postman delivering letters, the pressure cooker announcing a meal is done, the phone ringing, dropping something too loudly in the sink, ignoring her.. She is only content when she is held tightly in the clutches of the boy who cares for her, and only if he strokes her constantly while humming softly.

Upon her exit from the room, I jump up and close the sliding doors locking myself, and the snoring dog, in the sunny home library. I settle back in my chair only to realise the mailman is here. I can hear his postal bike's low rumble, the pause of noise at each box, the acceleration as he zooms through the intersection. I hold my breath waiting to see if a child will dash out the door to check today's offerings. Mail is slow when you live on an island, and every letter or parcel promises word from afar.. And they are still waiting on a missing Father's Day gift.

My fingers begin to move across the keyboard, slowly at first, then more rapidly, the noise of the clicking keys music to my ears that makes a grin spread, slowly from my lips to my eyes. The thoughts come fast and furious as I type, and the clacking gains speed as I'm caught up in the moment, the words, the feelings, the sounds.. But then, I misspell a word and autocorrect can't seem to understand what I mean. My toe begins to tap, I chew my lip.

"AutoCorrect," I sigh, "Seriously? You can't even spell *my* name correctly, why should I trust you on this?" But I give in, and I slide over to google and check my spelling. I give the computer the stink-eye, and quickly replace my e with an a.

I grab my water bottle and guzzle, realising how dry my mouth is. I smile at the water bottle, which is a radiant turquoise blue, yet those words do not seem to encompass exactly the shade that I mean. The company called it "sea glass", which is partially why I purchased that particular color. I use to walk the beach, or run it prior to the knee injury, every day, and I would always find a chunk of sea glass to bring back home. We have jars full of it, even a few sea marbles.

The very word sea glass stirs up memories and makes me long to return back to the beach. I consider suggesting we take a picnic lunch down to it, but as I stretch my legs I feel the sand stuck in my socks from this mornings walk, and chuckle.

The sound of a gentle hand on the door causes me to glance towards the doorways, the noise of shoes on hardwood indicates to me it will be the doorway further down the room the person will enter through and I look towards it. A head timidly pops in, “Not to bother you, but don’t forget we have an appointment in town this afternoon and we’ll have to leave in an hour.”

I nod, I am not angry that I have been interrupted, but the calm peacefulness is still settled over me, and I fear if I speak it will be broken. I glance down at what little I have written and the speaker of words seems to know as his head retreats out of the doorway and the white door is slid back closed again.

I can’t decide between Aunt Polly’s story or Luke’s. Between writing about the point of view of a desk, or that of a cat. I am torn as all the thoughts come tumbling back into my head again. I close my eyes to try and hone in on just one, but all I see is.. Wait, is that a hobbit? Are we going on an adventure? I’m not sure I’m Took enough for that today. I snap my eyes back open, I must have made a funny sound because the dog has stopped snoring and is glaring at me again.

He’s using the look my eldest has dubbed “sad puppy eyes” where his old brown eyes stare at you wide and wondering, then become small slits as he drifts off before popping them wide open again. I sigh, “Second breakfast then? I’ll even give you bacon.”

He jumps to his feet with far more energy than a 12 year old dog should have, and happily trots to the door to await the promised bacon. The peaceful moment has passed, the thoughts slipping through my fingers like sand at the beach, and I give in to scrounging the old boy up some bacon.

On September 7th, 2020 my daily Writer’s email suggested I write about wrier’s block. It urged the reader to write about it using all five senses, and as I sat in my writing chair a few

days later attempting to get a flurry of words on paper I couldn’t concentrate well enough to pick just one thing to write about and the idea in that email came to mind again.

Sometimes my mind is so cluttered with thoughts and emotions I find it difficult to write from the perspective of my characters or to convey the views I wanted, and so I decided to write about writer’s block.. or perhaps writer’s delay.

I once heard a writer say that they’d never in their life made bread, but today was the day because it would be easier than calming their brain enough to write. While I’ve made plenty of bread in my life, I can easily relate to the sentiment behind what they said.

There are days when writing comes easy, where you don’t notice the passage of time until a well meaning family member surfaces to ask what’s for dinner, or any other meal for that matter. Then there are days where all the stories, thoughts, emotions, and view points are a swirl in your mind, a tornado of images you can’t sort out as they spew forth like an erupting volcano. Sometimes a word-dump, writing down anything your mind thinks of, helps, and sometimes it doesn’t.

I took true delight in writing this piece, because so much of what I wrote was literally happening around me that very day. A few things I wrote did not, but had happened on previous days and thus it was so simplistic to work them in.

And if you’re wondering about the old dog in today’s story, he did indeed get his bacon.. and a bit of sausage, and roast beef, and few green beans while we were at it. Then he happily went outside and dreamt the afternoon away.

The Reluctant Author