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**Beginnings**

**By Rita Marie Keller**

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Just about everyone is familiar with this beginning: "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . ." (Genesis 1: 1-2 RSV) In a sense we're playing God when we write a story. We create the characters, plot, and setting, turning a blank page—nothingness—into a compelling story.

Not only is your first scene the first impression of a story, it is the doorway that invites your reader on a journey. First scenes are what determine whether or not your reader is going to follow your characters to the end.

Your beginning must accomplish several things:

Introduce your characters

Establish the place and time the story occurs

Introduce the conflict or point at which change begins.

Your opening sets the tone, mood, situation or problem. It actually begins in the middle of things.

Looking at the first lines of Genesis from a purely literary standpoint, the first lines introduce God as the protagonist. The time and setting (simply) is the moment of Creation, same as the point of change. Before God created the world there was nothing. For the purpose of this illustration from a literary standpoint, Nothing was what happened before the story begins. It starts in *medius res*—in the middle of things.

Let's look at a few opening lines of other stories.

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I could tell the minute I got in the door and dropped my bag, I wasn't staying. "Medley" by Toni Cade Bambara

This blind man, an old friend of my wife's, he was on his way to spend the night. "Cathedral" by Raymond Carver

She told him with a little gesture he had never seen her use before. "Gesturing" by John Updike

Something has already happened before the opening line. The first line is actually the middle of the story. Each story has its own history. The plot is affected by something that happened before the first sentence on the first page. In Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter's book, *What If?* They describe story beginnings: ". . . think of the story as a straight line with sentence one appearing somewhere beyond the start of the line—ideally near the middle. At some point, most stories or novels dip back into the past, to the beginning of the straight line and catch the reader up on the situation—how and why X has

gotten himself into such a pickle with character Y."

Take out an old story, or one you've been working on. Look at the opening scene. As yourself: Does the story have a past? Is the current conflict grounded in the history of the story? If you answer no, then you don't know your story's past well enough.

John Irving said: "Know the story—as much of the story as you can possibly know, if not the whole story—before you commit yourself to the first paragraph. Know the story—the whole story, if possible—before you fall in love with your first sentence, not to mention your first chapter."

Rita Marie Keller has written and published numerous short stories, articles, and essays. Her novel, *Living in the City* was released September 2002 by

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### **Your Greatness Begins With The Tiniest Of Waves**

**By Josh Hinds**

#### **Your Greatness Begins With The Tiniest Of Waves by Josh Hinds**

Everything begins with the smallest of gestures -- I think it's for this very reason that many of us never get around to reaching the points in our life where we'd like to be.

The timing just never seems to be right. We never have quite enough money for our undertaking or

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venture. We convince ourselves that we're not smart enough to go for our master's degree, or go to go back to college... To this I can only say one thing -- HOGWASH!

My friend, the simple fact is that if you wait for "just the right moment" before you undertake any significant venture you're likely going to be about where you are now -- still waiting. Why is that?

Because as most anyone who has gone before you will tell you, there is rarely a "right time" to set out in search of ones destination.

Sure, there are variables that can come into play. For example, if you're dream is of starting a home business, yet you rely on the day to day income that your job provides the last thing you'd want to do is to simply quit that job. However, what's stopping you from starting and working it around your existing career? Then as your business takes off you can choose (or not) to move fully into your business and phase out your old job.

What if it's not a business you want to pursue? What if it's the farthest thing from a business? No problem! The same general rules can be applied to just about any undertaking.

Your own creativity and thought's will narrow down the details. Simply taking those first awkward steps can literally set in motion a whole string of events that end up propelling you forward.

Things begin with an idea, but your action, no matter how small it may appear at first -- gives fuel to the fire and eventually determines how successful your outcome. Remember, the biggest of fires starts with the smallest of embers.

While it may be true that you have no control over your beginnings. With enough courage to undertake and learn new skills we can indeed take control of our outcomes. We have no choice as to whether we're born into poverty or wealth, but at least to some extent we can determine if we'll stay there.

This doesn't mean that it won't be one heck of a fight to leave such humble beginnings if that's what we want. However, one need only look at the countless examples of those who started from much humbler beginnings then you and I, yet achieved far greater things then life would have believed possible.

Look at such examples not in awe, but rather from a point of view that you are as capable of greatness as your fellow man or woman. Set out on your path today with the knowing that greatness is within you. The objective is for you to figure out how to best bring it out... To your success, Josh Hinds

Written by Josh Hinds of <http://www.GetMotivation.com> Sign up for my ezine at <http://www.GetMotivation.com/ezines.html> Josh is also the co-founder of <http://www.AudioMotivation.com> – which includes an abundance of self-improvement resources as well as exclusive audio interviews with leading experts in the areas of motivation and personal development.

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