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The Myth of the Writing Fairy

By Joseph Devon

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Here's a fun question to ponder. What do The Stand, The Hobbit and A Christmas Carol all have in common? The answer is simple. Too simple. Horrifyingly simple.

A few years ago I decided to write a novel. I had characters all outlined and plot points galore. I had my settings down pat and a nice storyline that would illuminate the main character's journey into a self-activated person, hopefully sending a touch of inspiration my reader's way when they turned the last page of my novel. I had a large amount of notes in an even larger amount of notebooks. I was a writer. Right? Wrong. I wasn't a writer yet because I was still enchanted by the Writing Fairy.

You know what the Writing Fairy looks like. She is that magical creature that will take the dialogue running through your head and place it onto the page. She is the person that will fill in those little blanks that don't seem worth worrying about while you're in the brainstorming stage. She is the mythical beast that will take all of your imagination and creativity and turn them into a book for you. The Writing Fairy sits on your shoulder every time you pace up and down your room thinking up great new ideas for where your characters are heading and convinces you that you are on your way to being an established author. The Writing Fairy's touch is the only thing you are waiting for before you begin to actually sit down and pound out the pages of your manuscript. Yes, as soon as the Writing Fairy says that it is time, you will begin to write in earnest. I have news for you. The Writing Fairy is none other than you because you are the only person who can do these things for you. And the moment you are waiting for? I have some news concerning that, too. That moment either comes right here right now, or it never comes at all.

Am I saying that brainstorming about characters and muddling over speeches is a waste of time? I most certainly am not. What I'm saying is that you reach a certain point where your outline doesn't need to be refined any more, where it's time to put it onto the page and nail it down in a more concrete sense. The Writing Fairy will make you hesitate to do this, promising you that thinking really hard is writing. She'll tell you that you aren't ready to put anything down on the page yet, or you're not ready to go on with the next scene because everything just doesn't seem right. Don't believe her, she's deceiving you. I'd like to say that she is flat out lying, but she's not. Things aren't going to seem right when they first start to appear on the page. This is what seems so contradictory about the writing

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process. Your dreams and aspirations seem to shrink down once you actually put them into writing. Being creative seems harder and harder as more and more words get put down. Don't worry though; your dreams are big enough. Acknowledging that your finished piece is not going to live up to the sparkling gem you have inside your head is something that every artist goes through...it could be the reason why so many of us seem a little bit crazy. Pick any piece of art. Now, as great as that finished product seems to you, there is not a single book, painting, opera, movie, whatever, that came out exactly the way its creator intended it. That is a very large part of the creative process: surrendering to its limitations. And accepting this fact goes a long way towards chaining down that Writing Fairy and actually producing some work. Don't listen to her siren song. Don't think that it should feel one hundred percent right the first time. It won't. That's what the rewriting process is all about. Believe me writing is truly in the rewriting. Even Kerouac rewrote his stuff. However, in order to start the rewriting process you need a hard first draft to pick over and toy with. You need something concrete to look at and see

which scenes fit and which don't. You'll find that a lot of your brainstorming gets thrown out the window. This isn't a stifling of your creativity, is channeling your creativity into your selection process. And it doesn't matter how horrible and off the mark your first draft seems to be turning out, you'll polish all of that out later. But you need that first draft to really start things off, and it will never get finished if you continue to believe the Writing Fairy's misleading comments.

Take another look at the opening question of this article again. Any closer to an answer?

I have more bad news about the Writing Fairy. Simply sitting down in front of your keyboard and starting your novel cannot vanquish her forever. She'll be back. She always comes back. Here and there she offers a much-needed break and a much-needed step back from your work to rethink things. More often than not, though, she'll pop up as you write more and more detailed character sketches, or get sucked into researching something for hours and hours and days and days. She is very good at convincing you that more outside work is needed and that you don't need to sit down at your keyboard quite yet. She must be stopped. When you really hit a roadblock, you'll know. If you just need to sort some things out that does not qualify a three-week break from your manuscript. That's the Writing Fairy singing her sweet song. You need to do more than just sit down and start in order to silence the Writing Fairy. You need a schedule. "But how can you turn your writing on and off like that? How can you force yourself to write if you aren't feeling it?" I imagine that some of this is flowing through your head right now. The answer is that you can. It's that easy. I'm not saying that you're going to sit down and write Nobel Prize winning page after Nobel Prize winning page. But you must keep writing. Keep fleshing out your story and your scenes. Keep plowing through with your writing when you say your going to even though it doesn't seem to be very good. You're not going to submit it as it is anyway. The ending of my novel changed about three hundred times in the course of writing it. What's more, I never would have reached the ending if I had continued to go over and over my first twenty pages wanting them to be perfect. It's really silly when you think about it. You don't have an entire book yet, how can you make sure the opening is perfect if you don't know where it's supposed to lead the reader? You don't really know your characters yet, how can you expect them to be just right? Believe me, it is better to write it horribly wrong and then fix it than to never write it in the first place. Keep plugging away, keep going, keep heading towards that ending that doesn't seem to fit and that you don't really even like. Carve a few hours out of each day and just type away at the keyboard. You can always make a scene longer. You can always take out some dialogue. You can always change a character or a point

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of view. You can really do anything you want to, which is why it's easy to get bogged down in the beginning. Keep in mind that while you can always change it, you have to write it first.

Now, do you want to know the Writing Fairy's major–super–bonus–end–all–be–all secret? Here it is. Keep it quiet. Put it in the bag somewhere next to the cat or under your hat if you prefer. Here is my secret. You are a writer. Right now. With only what you have in your head as it is. You don't need anything else. You are a writer. You just need to keep writing. Don't let the Writing Fairy tell you that you aren't. That you need something more, that you're pretending to be something you're not. Hemmingway wasn't Hemmingway when he started. He was just a guy names Ernest who sat down at his typewriter. Believe me. You are a writer. You are a writer. You are a writer. And no, you don't have to repeat that while clicking your heels three times. You don't have to do anything but write. And that's the Writing Fairy's horrible little secret. I stumbled upon the moment I stopped waiting for her to show me a sign that the time was right to actually start typing and just went ahead and did it. Now is the right time; now or never.

So let's go back to the question at the beginning of this article. Any ideas on what those three books have in common? They're all in English? Okay, I'll add Les Miserables to the list. They're all from the

last few centuries? Okay, let's throw The Iliad on there. Give up? What those books have in common, what every book you read has in common, is that it was written. Simple isn't it? I told you it was. That is the only difference between what is in your head and any book you have ever picked up. All the books you see every day were actually written. Someone sat down and wrote them out. That it. That's the secret. That's what the Writing Fairy is hiding from you. You're ready to write your book. You just have to sit down and do it. I said that the secret was simple...I also called it horrifyingly so at the beginning of this article. Why is it horrifying? Because, as I've mentioned, the Writing Fairy is you. She makes it seem like she's someone else. Someone or something you're waiting for before you begin. But that someone or something doesn't exist. The only thing that exists is the fears she creates inside of your head. And that means that the person telling you to wait is you. The person holding you back is you. The person hesitating to write is you. And the only person who can make you ignore all of this and just start writing...you guessed it...is you. So come on, stop reading this, open up a new document, start clicking away at those keys, don't be afraid, just trust me on this one...you're a writer.

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The 10 Myths of Successful Selling

By John Mitchell

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Myth #1 You should close early and often

Myth #2 Sell features to get a higher price

Myth #3 There's no methodology to selling – it's pure art

Myth #4 Objections are a sign of customer interest

Myth #5 Open questions are better than closed questions

Myth #6 You can't teach a person to sell

Myth #7 You have to understand the difference between wants and needs

Myth #8 Great products sell themselves

Myth #9 Making a benefit statement is the best way to open a sales call

Myth #10 All customers make up their minds in the first 4 minutes

Want to know more? Read the full Myths each month at our website www.inclusic.com – just go to articles & news!

John Mitchell is President and CEO of Inclusic, a company providing sales and marketing outsourcing in the UK and USA. He was a top performer in IBM sales for 5 consecutive years; Chief Marketing Officer of a Fortune 500 company; and CEO of a NASDAQ listed consulting company. John has written for the London Economist and has been guest lecturer at NYU, London Business School and Swiss Banking School.



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