

MY WORD WORLD

“Let us go forth the teller of tales, and seize whatever prey the heart long for, and have no fear.” ~ William Butler Yeats

My world is inhabited by voices. Voices that arrive at unwelcome times, like 3 am, the loneliest hour on the planet. These voices converse, cajole, argue, enchant, inspire, intrigue, disturb. Sometimes the voices are ghosts of memory speaking truths I had not known. Other times they offer insight into understanding the outside world. When a voice blossoms, I delight in possibility. Sometimes the voices evolve into images, then build to scenes. Mind movies. The voices are unborn souls seeking a fully-fleshed life on the page. I, the writer, have the power to bring them to life.

To keep him or her alive, I must nurture our relationship. This means listening closely. This means showing up, even when I'd rather be elsewhere. The task is arduous, sometimes taking years, with no guarantees the voice won't fade into the background.

My world is a magnet attracting ideas that swirl into stories. *What if? Why? What happened next?* Somedays I wrestle with words until my heart aches. Some days, I sit hours at my desk trying to spin chaos into order. Some days I'm left with a mess I don't know how to clean up. And yet, some days, the jumble of words magically line up, like a string of pearls for me to polish.

I am not alone in my world. My next-door neighbor, Ms. Muse, is lovely, generous, and wise. She travels for a living, though, so her visits are unpredictable. More frequently, my annoying other neighbor pops by to visit—Ms. Inner Critic. Oh, how crafty she is with her passive aggression as she peeks over my shoulder. *Huh, you think someone wants to read that? Just saying.* She always overstays her welcome. Across the street live the wordsmiths of yesteryear, whose creations have outlived their mortal souls. These beloved companions guide me when I'm stuck, comfort when I'm lonely. Reading their stories enlarges my world. When I venture outside, I am fortunate to meet kindred spirits who understand where I come from. They, too, share the culture of imagination. “How is life over in your neck-of-the woods?” they ask. We vent, share, support, critique, and cheer. “Never give up!” we shout to each other across the distance.

My world spins on an axis of despair and delight. Occasionally, the practice of pushing words along and trying to form meaning brings moments of intense flow. When this happens, the outside world and its woes disappear. Ms. Inner critic is silenced. Ms. Muse whispers. I feel light and whole and hopeful. The voices, images, and words merge into a path of discovery. I no longer feel lost.