

Chapter One

“This Thing Called Writing”

- From THE BIG WRITE: A Journey of Words eBook

About this thing called writing. It's a million different animals. It's smooth like an African panther, rough like a wild elephant. Perhaps some think you only need walk the shelves of your local book shop to find the veterans of the trade.

I beg to differ with those who think the best authors sit on the high shelves. For clearly many of our best authors are sitting in quiet living rooms unread, unnamed, unsung. It has become far too much about celebrity and far too little about the raw talent.

Some past writers were clearly a polished product of their time. Some were held in grand disdain in their living days, and now stand in the shadow of kings. The public can be a fickle lot so best count your chapters one by one.

Critics come and critics go and some are worth their fresh dried ink. Others make you wonder what would make such an expert of the written word spend their entire career pontificating over other authors' work rather than creating their own. I can gladly tell how a bestseller sits with me. Intriguing read or “falls flat” but that far and wide is only my copious opinion. No matter how many books read, awards anointed it appears a reactionary act of painted vanity. We live in a dangerous time when the right given word from the appropriate media fixation exalts or vetoes an earnest piece of work.

Be it fine art or seasoned passion of the pen this is a disturbing state. Leaving some writers not wanting much to throw themselves into the frenzied fray. To either become the flagrant flavor of the month or to quietly descend upon a glazed sea of back shelves.

Later to suffer a silent death on the 99 cent table. In my early days of working the word I received fat piles of rejection letters. Some mimeographed, others hand noted. I deserved them one and all. My writing was young, undisciplined, lacking in substance. I won't banter around the cliché that it made me strong. It hurt like hell and sent me running for the trash bin (later I would save the scarlet “R” letters as a badge of dubious honor).

I didn't know how bad the stuff was or likely I wouldn't have sent it out in the first place. Today some twenty odd years later I've found my voice. Polished my craft. Still the letters of well meaning editors recite the same chant. As though my query was as raw and rough as those early scribbles. So one clearly cannot set their writer's watch by such outward barometers.

It's clear to me I'm penning the strongest work of my writing life. Not to say I can't do better (or even worse) but everything that's gone before has come to full circle. The past, the getting up and falling down have woven their way into the work. I consider it part perseverance and part gift from God. Still whether I am well read by more than my inner circle is alas not all about the talent, not all about the timing. It's also about that marketing machine. That fine Irish lad Frank McCourt was flabbergasted when his little Irish tale went Hollywood. He quickly became the man of the hour. For every Frank McCourt there are a thousand fine writers standing in the wings. Waiting their turn. As writers perhaps we don't all need the big accolades and shiny awards. Most of us just want a chance to be heard and read. To have the words out there. No matter their fate.