

# Chiara Talluto

September 19, 2021



# It's All In The Blogs

September 17, 2021

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## A Word from the Author

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking an interest in reading my blogs. When I created this website in 2014, I didn't know how to blog or post commentaries. The purpose of my website was to have a landing page. A place where fans and readers can find out more about my writings and where they can purchase my book.

What transpired was an outlet of communication for me in the form of a stream of consciousness, thoughts and happenings in the world, minutia, writing advice, and life questions. It has been a wonderful journey for me as writing has been my tool and my voice. I've compiled all the blog posts to date. I hope you enjoy them.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy!

Chiara Talluto

# The Breakfast Club – A Call to Action for Parents and Teachers

September 15, 2021



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*"Dear Mr. Vernon, we accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday in detention for whatever it was we did wrong. But we think you're crazy to make an essay telling you who we think we are. You see us as you want to see us – in the simplest terms, in the most convenient definitions. But what we found out is that each one of us is a brain, and an athlete, and a basket case, a princess, and a criminal. Does that answer your question?"*

*Sincerely yours, the Breakfast Club."*

I recently watched **The Breakfast Club** with my pre-teen daughters. It's a 1985 movie about five teenagers who attend a detention on a Saturday with people who they would not normally associate with and for a short period become friends.

It had been many, many years since I watched the movie. Back in 1985 when it came out, I too was in high school. There were the jocks or athletic types, the brainy/nerds, the popular kids, the rebels/social misfits, and the odd kids who didn't belong in any particular category.

In **The Breakfast Club** film, John Hughes, the writer/producer, focuses on the following **character types**:

- Allison Reynolds as "The Basketcase" – The odd child who is ignored at home. Doesn't belong in any particular group. Hides their feelings. Could be characterized as emotionally unstable. Doesn't let anyone in.
- Andrew Clark as "The Athlete" – The jock. Though he may appear strong and confident, he is mentally weak and constantly seeking to please others.
- Clair Standish as "The Princess" – The popular girl with wealthy parents. Everyone thinks she has an easy life and gets whatever she wants, but deep down inside she's like everyone else with the same teen fears and desire to be accepted.
- Brian Johnson as "The Brain" – A smart student who puts pressure on himself to do well in school. Has a lot of pressure to excel which has led to contemplating suicide at times.
- John Bender as "The Criminal" – The typical bully, the social outcast with a messed up family life and who may have been abused at home.

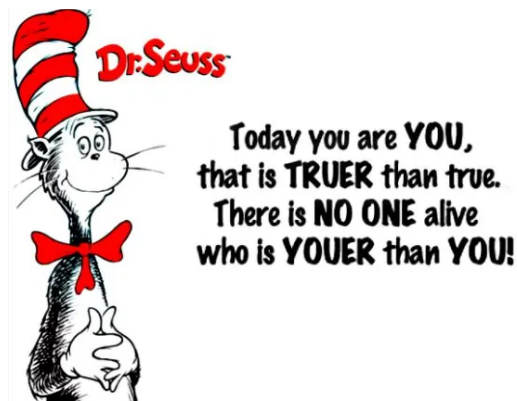
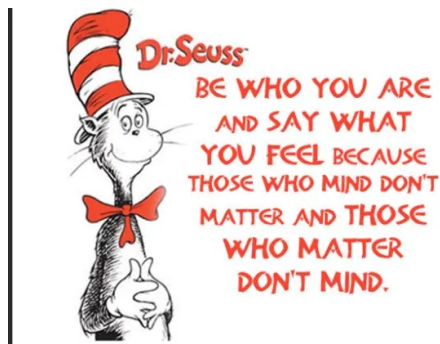
Watching the film, I empathized with these characters and their characteristics because they were familiar to me during my high school years. Looking back, it's easy to see that high school is a transitioning period in a teen's life, most kids are learning about themselves and where they belong, and most *all* adults are the true enemy. Lol!

I discovered that today's teens have similar characteristics as was in the day, over thirty years ago of **The Breakfast Club**. The only exception, everything that is experienced now is more amplified, more open, more exposed. We have smartphones and social media, and unfortunately, some news travels faster than the speed of light. However, the desires to fit in and stand out are all the same. Young people are still judging one another by their dress and social status.

This movie also deals with some heavy **themes** that are still relevant today:

- Peer Pressure
- Family Issues
- Stereotypes
- School Rankings- toughest to the weakest link

Kids, please listen up. If someone asks you to tell them who do you think you are, don't get ruffled up. Frankly, it doesn't matter what *they* think of who you are because their views are different than yours, and no matter how you'd explain it to them, they'd never see you as you see yourself. So, don't let anyone influence you or tell you who you should be. Don't get stuck living your life being someone that you're not. The most important question to ask yourself is this: *Who do you think you are?* Be true to yourself. Be YOU!



There's a lot of emphasis these days on schools teaching **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**. According to Wikipedia, CRT examines social, cultural, and legal issues primarily as they relate to race and racism in the US.

According to **Professor Crenshaw**, she says, "It is a way of seeing, attending to, accounting for, tracing and analyzing the ways that race is produced," she said, "the ways that racial inequality is facilitated, and the ways that our history has created these inequalities that now can be almost effortlessly reproduced unless we attend to the existence of these inequalities."

**CRT believes** racism is present in every aspect of life, every relationship, and every interaction and therefore has its advocates look for it everywhere.

In schools, it will mean teaching our children to think this way and always be looking for racism in every situation and interaction. In our personal relationships, it means that friends and even family members—especially our kids who have already been educated with Critical Race Theory ideas that have been incorporated in our schools—will eventually call each other out and reject one another. Because tolerating racism is also considered a form of racism that would have to be discovered and stopped.

I'll be honest; I'm not a fan of this kind of teaching for my children. I know that everyone comes from diverse backgrounds; financial circumstances, cultures, and learning abilities. I get that. I'm a first-generation American in my Italian family. When my parents came to the United States in the mid-1960s, they didn't speak a lick of English or knew how to read or write in English. My mom didn't even know how to drive, and they came here to Chicago with \$400.00 in their pocket, living in a garage for a year, while they worked, taking care of my older sister, and trying desperately to make ends meet.

It was a hard life but they continued to chip away at removing the stereotype of their culture and becoming American citizens. It took years to assimilate. They've never forgotten where they've come from, our culture and Italian traditions are very strong still, but the American dream became a reality for them.

The social dynamics of being stereotyped into something that's supposed to identify you is a big issue in high school and middle-schools alike. CRT should be removed from academics, because if we focus on our gender and social upbringing, it will limit a child's learning in all other studies, such as reading, mathematics, science, etc. Kids need encouragement and empowerment to remove judgment from their perception.

In **The Breakfast Club**, you begin to see the teens [break down their social status and judgments of each other](#). It teaches that when barriers are broken down and we see one another as individuals rather than our race, and outward appearances, cohesiveness perseveres. This is why the movie was so successful.

Check out these [4 lessons](#) of the movie that I learned. And additional life [lessons](#) worth a read.

Even though there is foul language and some sexual references, I believe this movie should be used in high school to discuss family issues affecting kids, sex and drugs, peer pressure, grades, and interaction with others.

Parents, I urge you to watch **The Breakfast Club** with your kids, and teachers, I recommend showcasing scenes relevant to today's societal teen pressures.

Click [here](#) for some great study questions to use for discussion about the movie.

### Musical Inspiration

"Don't you forget about me" by Simple Minds. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdgoNKCct7A>

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### 4 Lessons to learn from the movie "The Breakfast Club"

A limited timing of entertainment and still speaking to us about a life story, movies are such kind a thing. ... Continue reading



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### The Breakfast Club as A Lesson on Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory, according to Mulford et al. (1998:1565), refers to: >exchange theory sees social action as an ongoing interchange between rational individuals who decide what to do based on the relative costs and benefits of the alternatives with which they are confronted. The narrative in the Breakfast Club offers examples not only of exchange in dyads, ... Continue reading





# Where Were You When 9/11 Happened?

September 10, 2021



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On the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the buzz of “where were you and what were you doing when the planes hit the Twin Towers and the Pentagon?” is still relevant.

I remember that day. I was en route to work and stuck on the highway. I was listening to Eric and Kathie on 101.9 *The MIX* radio station when they broke the news. Bumper to bumper in traffic, their voices, trembling and full of shock informed me of what was happening. I heard a plane crashed into the first tower, a couple of minutes later, another plane crashed into the second tower. By the time I arrived at work, both towers fell and yet another plane crashed into the Pentagon.

Going into my office building, I dropped my belongings in my cubicle and hurried to the office of our department Vice President where the rest of my colleagues had gathered. All eyes were on her television set, just as word was coming through that another flight had crashed in Pennsylvania. It was incredible to comprehend what exactly had happened. A few of my colleagues had family in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C., and they tried contacting them. I had a friend who lived in Long Island and whom I knew traveled to Manhattan for work. My thoughts were of him and his family. By two in the afternoon, we were sent home. Nobody was working, anyway. It was clear that these four collisions had been orchestrated attacks rather than plane malfunctions.

At home, the visual reels of people throwing themselves from the Twin Towers filled my TV monitor. Manhattan was unrecognizable. All flights across the US were canceled and the skies became void. We know the rest of the story, and we shouldn't ever forget it.

Today, we remember all those that have tragically died. We also honor the heroes who put their lives on the line to save another. They are the first responders, the fireman, the police officers, the hospital doctors, nurses, EMTs, and the many civilians who helped their fellow Americans through this horrific crisis.

Our nation was attacked on *our* soil. In the aftermath of this horrible occurrence, people became nicer, and we became one, while the government and our leaders became defiant and vowed to seek revenge. Prior to 9/11, our country was changing, rapidly. I believe we became more reliant on ourselves than our true Creator, God.

Have we lost our way? With Covid-19, the pull-out of our troops from Afghanistan, and the division of our country politically, it seems the United States is imploding.

Can America come back? Will God forgive us for our transgressions? Are we able to set aside our differences and become unified? These are some heavy questions to ponder. I pray we take the time to reflect on this anniversary and where we should be headed, together.

**2 Chronicles 7: 14.** "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

# The Lady Under The Tree

September 9, 2021



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For two weeks straight at approximately 7:44 am as I drove my daughters to school, I'd see this figure sitting cross-legged under a large tree. I didn't notice at first because we're constantly running late courtesy of my preteen, and I sped down the side streets to get to school on time. It's my younger daughter who sees the most interesting things from the backseat. One time, it was a yellow cat sitting on the roof of a Ford F150, yes, she knows her automobiles thanks to her daddy, and another time she noticed an elderly gentleman drinking coffee on his front porch, and recently, she saw a teenage boy climbing out of his second-story window. *Hmm, I guess sitting in the backseat has its perks.*

Out of the blue one morning, she pointed, "Mommy, look at the lady sitting under that tree."

I glanced to my left and there she was. It was a woman and she looked like a statue. The sun was streaming through the trees and it cast a long shadow across a dewy field of grass. It was an image to behold. So serene, that a calming sensation came over me. Cross-legged with one hand resting under her chin, she could easily be asleep. I felt jealous because this figure appeared to be free of worries and without hurry to-do lists.

The next day and the next few days were the same. Every morning as we got ready to leave, I looked forward to seeing this female sitting comfortably under a tree. Our car rides to school were exciting. My girls and I would make bets on who would see her first, and we spent time guessing as to what she was doing there, and what she was thinking or praying about.

Well, it's been a week now and we haven't seen the woman under the tree. I feel anxious, jumpy, and concerned. The girls are also worried.

My younger daughter said this morning, "Maybe she found another tree to sit under?"

I scratched my head. "I don't know, honey."

My preteen responded, "Maybe it's a hologram?"

*Was it a figment of our imagination? Only time will tell. Maybe she was an angel guarding our drive to school? If that's the case, I'd like to see her every single day!*

I've often read that angels show up in different **forms**. For now, the tree stands tall, barren of a figure. I won't give up, though. Each morning, I'll imagine God's hedge of protection on my girls as they go to school. I'll even make it a point to treasure that warmth I experienced in my heart. *Yeah, that's what I'll do.* The grace of that knowledge should be enough.



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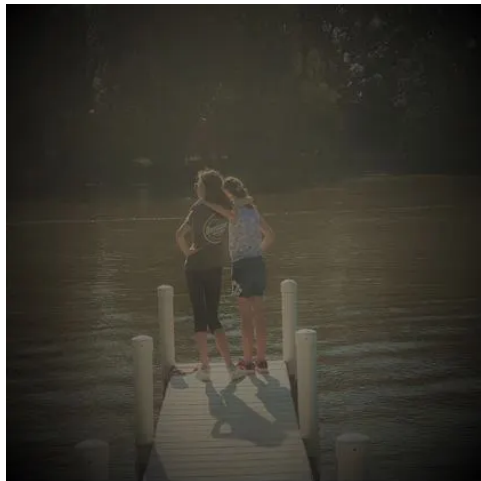
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# Commentary from a Mother's Heart

August 18, 2021



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Do you know the distance from your head to your heart is roughly 18 inches? Go ahead and try it, pull out a ruler. I'll wait.

Standing on this pier taking this picture of my children, I can't help feeling darkness descending on the morals and the values I've been teaching my kids to what they are learning out there. It's like a slow lengthening.

The world is beautiful and chaotic I've been told. On most days, I believe it. Other days, when turning on the TV, reading stuff online, I shake my head and raise my fist to the Heavens.

Sometimes the waters can be smooth like glass, and other times, waves can come, shaking one's core beliefs. Calm waters can also be deceiving where one thinks everything is fine, but underneath there lies a dangerous current that's rumbling.

There's no doubt we are living on the edge these days. Kids especially, being pushed and pressured into so many different directions. Social media is the true culprit—addictive entertainment just finger taps away.

Watching my two daughters posing and staring off into the trees and bushes, I'm silently praying that their head and heart will always be aligned and that when the sparkling boats are coming by, they will know the difference between the right boat to get into and the one in which they should turn and walk away from.

Until then, I've got my work cut out for me, but I won't stop in providing those nuggets of truth where I can.



# Protecting What Matters

July 13, 2021



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Photo courtesy of Pexels.com (pexels-pixabay-262506)

This past weekend, Italy beat England in soccer to win the [UEFA Euro 2020 Cup](#). It was an edge of your seat game that ended in a shootout. Congratulations to my home country of Italy! **Forza Azzurri**. Forza Italia!



Picture courtesy of Christian Charisius/dpa/picture alliance

I've always followed soccer but seeing this particular series inspired me to ponder on the things that matter in life, and how can one protect them?

**A soccer team consists of eleven players on each team. Each position is very important.** However, I believe the goalie has the most important role. He/she has to protect the net from getting the ball in it so that the other team doesn't score a goal.

The other members of the team, important as well, have to guard the goalie and defend their territory, while running the ball in the opposite direction and trying to score a goal for the team. Yes, there is a lot of running and defending, and this takes ALL the team's strength to succeed, whether you are playing in regulation time, or in a shootout.

Regardless, I began reflecting on my life with my husband and my children. Each day, I go to battle. Not a war-kind of battle, but I battle to fight sickness, fear, anxiety, pre-teen drama, finances, relationship issues, family issues, etc. I have to keep my girls safe, I have to support my husband, and keep the house running in order. Most days, I am the goalie, protecting my home front from the negativity that can impact my loved ones. It's not an easy job. The world tells us one thing, but our values and morals tell us something else. It's a constant struggle when temptation is everywhere.

As the "goalie" in my family, though, my job of "goaling" is different from my husband's, the biggest war is the war of my mind. While fighting for everyone else, I've fallen trap of failing myself. The negativity has seeped into my thoughts and actions, thus sending me into an oblivion space of sadness and depression at times. I know I'm not alone on this. I've often asked this question:

*How can I be there for everyone else when the net of my mind has been compromised?*

It's a heavy question, I know. But, I've taken small steps to shift the negativity to positivity. I've turned to exercise and reading the Bible. Both have allowed me to release pent-up frustrations and angst, and read beautiful words of love and wisdom from my Heavenly Father. It has given me hope in my life and muscle to stop the bad from infiltrating my family.

So, warriors, this is a call to action! Put on the **Armor of God**. [Ephesians 6:10-18](#).



Because there is a great motto, [adopted in 1972 from the United Negro College Fund \(UNFC\)](#) that has become one of the most recognizable quotes that says...

A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING  
TO WASTE...BUT A WONDERFUL  
THING TO INVEST IN

And if we don't invest in our minds, they can become sinful. [Romans 8:5-8](#) says...

**Romans 8:5-8**

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

I will close with this final scripture quote, because I know this is also true. [Philippians 4:8](#).

*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

Until next time...Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

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## How many players on a soccer team? The Answer & FAQ



There is no denying that soccer is the most attractive sport on the planet today. The proof is that there are dozens of soccer leagues around the world. You can even find a lot of games inspired by this sport, for example FIFA – a very popular soccer game. In this article, you will find the correct answer to "How many players on a soccer team?" and

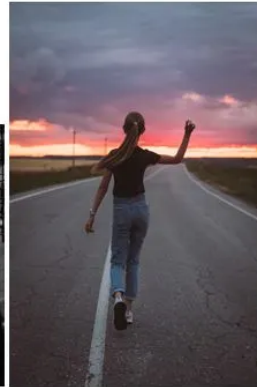
related questions. How many players on a soccer team? According to the laws of FIFA, the number of players playing on the soccer field is eleven players (excluding substitutes). A minimum number of ... Continue reading



Scott Fujita

# The Parable of a Child's Prayer Request and the Homeless Man

July 7, 2021



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Photos courtesy of Pexels.com

*Every day I'm reminded of the fragility of our humanness; and the blessed joy that can resonate when there is hope! (Inspired by the Bible scripture: [1 Corinthians 13:13](#))*

Monday early evening; the temperature hovered around 89 degrees on what was a hot, sun-filled day at the beach in Florida.

My family and I were walking to a nearby restaurant for dinner. We were hungry and couldn't deny the rumblings of our stomachs any longer.

Hand-in-hand I strolled with my younger daughter, who's almost 11, while my husband and our soon-to-be-teenage daughter, walked behind us.

Passing a Speedway gas station, she slowed down, turning to gape at a young man sitting on the curb a few feet away from the front door of the store. I glanced too. He looked to be in his mid-to-late-teens and tan. But then I peered at his clothes; torn cargo shorts, a yellowed tank-top in need of a good washing, and no shoes. There was an oversized white garbage bag positioned upright against the building. His hands were flying around, gaily, talking to anyone who would listen.

"Mom, look at the homeless guy. Who's he talking to?" My younger daughter asked, ogling him.

I tugged at her hand. "I don't know, honey. Now stop, it's not polite to stare."

Letting go, she paused and sighed, "I'm sorry."

"... Hey, what are you doing?" Her older sibling scowled, almost trampling all over her on the sidewalk. My husband shrugged, and they went around us. I nudged her. "What is it, kiddo?"

"Mommy, does he live there? What if he needs a job?"

I nodded, stealing another look at him. "I don't know if he lives at the gas station. A job would be good." *And a shower. And a home. And a good meal.* "Why don't you pray for him? Pray that he finds a job."

She smiled, took my hand again, and we resumed our walk. "Okay, I'll do that, Mommy."

\*\*\*

The next morning, we had an early boat tour reservation to see dolphins in the bay. We hadn't done a dolphin tour in a couple of years, and I always remembered it to be a fun time. Plus, my older child had researched that the best time to see dolphins is in the [morning](#). *We'll have to see if she's right about that.*



On the way to the pier, we stopped at one of our favorite breakfast restaurants. We were grateful for the quick seating by the host, as the small diner was packed for a Tuesday morning. After ordering, we were conversing about nothing in particular when my youngest suddenly grabbed my hand. "Mommy, Mommy? It's him?"

I shook my head trying to understand. "Who? Who are you talking about?"

She tilted her head toward a worker across from us stacking clean plates from smallest to biggest behind the cook. "Him, Mommy! The boy at the gas station!"

My mouth dropped. It was the young man we saw the day before!

"Yeah, it's him," my husband concurred.

She said to me, "I prayed like you said to do, Momma. I prayed really, really hard that he'd find a job, and he did! See? He's here."

Tears began to pool in my eyes and I had to look away. *She had prayed for a stranger.* How incredible? Maybe he was hanging out at the gas station for the afternoon, or maybe, I hated to even think this, he was on drugs and talking to himself? So many negative other thoughts started to fill my mind and I willed them away. *Was this a coincidence? Nah, he must just work here anyway.*

Until...

Our food had come and we dove in, starved for eggs, bacon, and thick toast oozing with melted butter. After a bit, the host came up to us. "Hiya, folks, finding everything to your liking?"

My husband nodded, looking around. "Hmm, hmm, really good. Thank you! Busy morning, eh?"

The gentleman, sunburned with long creases lining his face grinned. "Yep, it's been busy, but I'm not complaining. We've suffered enough during this terrible pandemic. Thank God, we're doing—"

"Excuse me, Rod, where should I put these?" The gas station man approached the host holding coffee mug saucers. Rod pointed to a shelf across from the toast station. "Right there, son." The young man nodded and walked away.

The host turned back to us. "... It's good to be busy, so busy that I had to hire another employee." He pointed over his shoulder. "I found that fella there hanging around the gas station yesterday and asked him if he wanted a job. He said yes, so here he is. Doing alright too."

My daughter and I made eye contact; her sweet little face couldn't hold the gigantic smile she wore. *Thank you, God, for listening to my child's prayers! You are truly an awesome God!*

My husband and the host chitchatted some more before he was off seating other patrons. The rest of the day didn't disappoint, either. We saw seven dolphins and even a baby dolphin. God blessed us with a calm sea and beautiful creatures. He also blessed a young man with a wonderful opportunity.

*We should never underestimate the power of prayer.*

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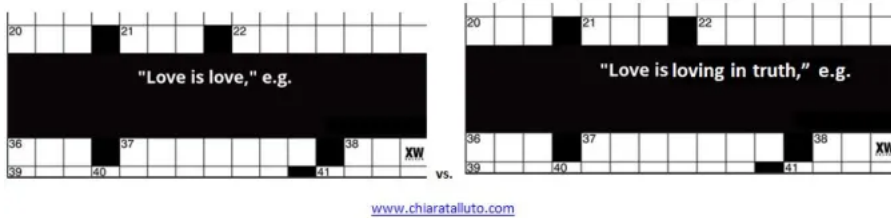
[Mark 9: 29](#)

[Mathew 7:7-12](#)

[Best Time for Dolphin Watching in Florida 2021 – When to See – Rove.me](#)

# Love is Love versus Love is Loving in Truth

June 25, 2021



*Love is love, but love is better when you love in truth.*

I've made some observations lately on **Love is Love**. It's made me think about things in a new perspective and I'd like to share those insights because it's all I've seen on social media, T-shirts, mugs, mouse pads, temporary Facebook profiles, etc.

Love is...



But...

**What**  
is *Love?*

[Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) defines Love as:

**Noun**

- A profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person.

- A feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend.
- Sexual passion or desire.

In my humble opinion, love is **baggage**.



You know why? Because humans love in different ways...and sometimes to get *our* way. Just look at the dictionary's description: *passionate affection, personal attachment, sexual passion*, etc. These are biased reactions.

- "If you loved me, than you would (fill in the blank)..."
- "Please, please...do it for me." You show them your puppy eyes. "I love you..."
- "Do you know how much I love you?"
- "Do you know the sacrifices I've had to make because of you?"

And the list can go on, can't it?

- We love the addicts because we think we can change them,
- We love abusers because we're afraid and believe what they're doing is really okay,
- We love to please people because we want to fit in even if don't agree,
- We love things more than people,
- We love our phones more than people,
- We love our pets more than our family members,
- We love food,
- We love the wrong things because we were never taught about *real* love,
- Some don't even know love because of their culture/religion,
- Some have never experienced love and what it feels like, and live their life in an apathetic state.

The word "Love" is overused. Love has been overrated. The use of love has lost its luster. Love should be... Loving one another in truth because love is *loving in truth*.



Loving in "truth" to:

- Love our best friend to tell her/him that what they are doing is wrong,
- Love our spouse to tell him/her that they are hurting themselves, you, or others,
- Love ourselves and accepting who we are because that is how God made you,
- Love each other regardless of the color of one's skin, gender, or political affiliation.

**1 Corinthians 13:1-13** puts it all in perspective for me. It is one of the most famous scriptures in the Bible for wedding ceremonies, but in reality, this is our greatest gift to one another.

I've attempted to break it down using my mortal mind, that is, how I'm interpreting this scripture passage. (I invite you to meditate on this on your own.)

<sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

*(You can be the most successful person, but if it's all fake and you don't mean what you say, you're really dead inside.)*

<sup>2</sup> And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

*(You can be the best scientist, doctor, police officer and know how to solve problems and crimes, and come up with remedies for diseases, but go about your life without passion, care, or regard for humanity, then you're just going through the motions.)*

<sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

*(These are the church-goers, religious types, and elites who only show up for presence and posterity, and not worship. Then when Monday comes around, they're back to sinning.)*

<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

*(A true Jesus follower will be persecuted and mocked all their life because they refuse to confirm to worldly things. They are not jealous and pompous, and will rejoice in another's blessings, and put others first.)*

<sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

*(A believer of the Lord will be humble. Will not boast upon themselves, and is not easily angered. He/she will always believe in the goodness of others.)*

<sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

*(A believer cannot rejoice in the evils of the world, even if they've become isolated or ostracized from society, they are willing to make that sacrifice, and not deter from living righteously in the eyes of the Lord. They are also hopeful that bad circumstances can change for the better, giving all the glory to God.)*

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

*(All these things of this world will pass. Love can change a heart. Love endures forever.)*

<sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part. <sup>10</sup> But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

*(We can plan all things on our own, but God's plans are better and sometimes He will put us in situations to bear our cross and lean on Him for help.)*

<sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

*(Reading the Bible is a growing process. What you learned when you were a child can change when you become an adult. At some point, we have to grow up and take responsibility for our learning. And one of the main learnings that has remained constant in understanding God, is that He loves us. We need to believe that with all our heart. We learn about ourselves by loving others.)*

<sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

*(It's a simple act of faith and hope to learn to love one another. We must love in the truth of loving others.)*

*When you love in the most purest and truest form you know how and you love in truth, love always wins.*

What do you think?

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# When Life Throws You Curves...Christ is Our Hope Magazine Article

May 29, 2021

## YOUR FAITH



### When Life Throws You Curves, You Learn to Swerve

I once read the poem, "Footprints in the Sand." It's about a man walking the beach with the Lord.

Did we ever imagine that in 2021, we'd be living through a pandemic, new President and administration, rising inflation, sky-rocking housing prices, a virus, a vaccine, Critical Race Theory, "now hiring" job posts, and plenty of other worldly happenings?

I can't say I was blind-sided, but as humans we tend to stay in our comfort zones while the world turns on its axis. But through anything in life, one must be prepared to swerve when life throws you curves. So, it was no coincidence that I set out on a journey before 2020, so that I could be readied for what God had in store for me. And, I was fortunate enough to share this in an article through [Christ is Our Hope Magazine](#). I thank Carlos Briceno, editor of the magazine for giving me this platform to share God's workings and His inspiring Word in my life.

Click [here](#) and stay awhile. You just might be encouraged too.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.



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[When Life Throws You Curves, You Learn to Swerve | Diocese of Joliet \(christisourhope.org\)](#)

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# The Real “Footprints in the Sand”

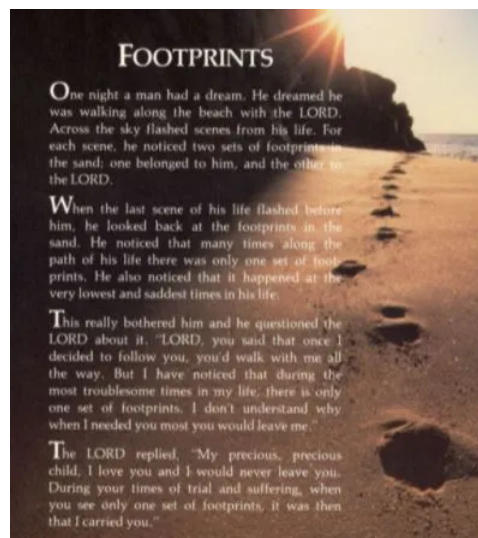
May 25, 2021



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

One of my favorite poems ever written is “Footprints” or “Footprints in the Sand”. A popular [allegorical religious poem](#) written by Mary Stevenson. Though, the [authorship](#) on who wrote this poem has been in dispute for many years.

The poem is about a person walking the beach with the Lord, and seeing two sets of footprints until later on, he or she only sees one set. It’s the realization that during that time where there was one set of footprints, Jesus had carried that individual through their trials and pains. There are many [versions](#) of the poem too, but I like the one below the best.



Recently, my family and I were in Florida. We are beach people and love the sun, sand, and saltwater. Every morning before my family awoke to another day of frolicking and fun, I took the time to walk the sandy beach to pray and talk to God. In the lullaby of the lapping water against the sand and the sound of seagulls flying above the ocean, I found peace and solace in listening to God’s voice as He spoke to me.



0:00 / 0:08



As I concentrated on my footing in the fine grains and beautiful seashells adorning the fluffy-white powder, I too, realized something. FOOTPRINTS. EVERYWHERE. All shapes and sizes, and depths and curves. I couldn't help but think of the many humans gracing this beach every day. How many carried burdens, how many carried pains, how many carried joys, and how many WE'RE CARRIED?

What you see on the outside of a person isn't always what's plaguing them on the inside. Behind the sunglasses and hats, are real emotions, real hurt, and I'd like to believe there is real authentic joy and happiness.

Help and hope can come in different forms. The things of this world are not always positive and encouraging, just turn on the news and you will understand. It is why in the sounds of Mother Nature and God's whispers, I'm encouraged that there is good in the world, there are good people, and above all, we too can make a difference. Even if it's a small difference. And, if help is what you need, all you have to do is ask and pray to our Heavenly Father who says..."it was then that I carried you".

God can take away your sufferings. Just ask. It may come in a lover's touch, a hug from a friend, or a smile from a stranger. Be encouraged today and every day. Get your head out of the news and into the Bible. Believe in the goodness and the goodness will come back to you.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be well.

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[The Footprints Prayer - Footprints in the Sand Poem \(praywithme.com\)](#)

# Celebrating – Happy Mother’s Day!

May 6, 2021



This weekend is Mother’s Day. A Hallmark celebration of moms, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters. If you’re asking me, I’d say every day should be Mother’s Day! Lol.

Before I became a mom, I had no idea what would be involved and the worries I’d experience. Yes, there have been many joys and ARE many joys I share with my two daughters, but the saying is true when kids are younger, the troubles are smaller. The older the children, the more complex things become. Having a preteen and another right behind, it’s no wonder I color my hair every seven weeks.

But, I digress. Mother’s Day is a reminder on how lucky I’ve been to have had a mom who sacrificed a lot to give my sisters and I, clothes on our back, and food on our table. Both of my parents worked 2-3 jobs at various points of my upbringing. They may not have been there all the time, or knew how to deal with puberty and life questions, but I never went without.

My mother was not perfect in raising three daughters, either. In hindsight, her decisions on things weren’t the greatest, but she did what she knew how. I’m far from perfect myself. I make more mistakes than corrections; and still, I’m beyond thankful that God picked me to be a mom too.

One of my favorite mothers, besides my mom, is Mary the earthly mother of Jesus. She’s one of the bravest women I have ever read about. It amazes me that out of all the females that God could have selected, he chose Mary, a peasant girl to be Jesus’s mom.

It is said in the Bible that God found favor in Mary.

[Luke 1:28](#) And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

[Luke 1:30](#) And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

And what does Mary say when she learns that through the Holy Spirit, she will become pregnant and then bear a son. The Son of Man—God’s only begotten son!

[Luke 1:38](#) And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Even though, she might have been frightened and confused, Mary still trusted and believed. Now, if that isn’t faith, I don’t know what is.

Being a mom is a hard job. There is no punch clock—it’s a 24-hour responsibility. You have to multi-task, be quick-witted, and ready for anything, all the time.

But, the fruits of the labor, my labor, always supersede the curve balls that come my way.

On this Mother’s Day, thank your mom for bringing you into this world. I know I will. If God hadn’t chosen her, you wouldn’t be here.

Until next time...



HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

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New King James Bible

# Don't Miss These Book Marketing Tips for Authors

April 13, 2021

Today, I'd like to share a post for all authors desiring to share their work to the world. This includes those writers who are new, experienced, and hobbyists.

Brian Feinblum has over 30 years of book marketing experience, and having helped thousands of authors, one earns an appearance on the YouTube channel of The Toronto Business Journal!

Kick back and get 60 minutes of book marketing advice and strategies, book publicity tips, and insider insights into book publishing from someone who has helped several mega best-selling, celebrity authors –and many first-time, self-published, unknown authors.

Wait no further, click [here](#) for the informative interview.

For more info on Brian, his blogs, or how to get in touch with him, click [here](#) to go to the BookMarketingBuzzBlog page.

# That's a Wrap – A Conversation about Books, Covid, Themes, and Church

March 25, 2021



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

I had the great pleasure of being interviewed by Mr. Douglas Coleman from **The Douglas Coleman Show**, a syndicated talk and radio show that features guests from the entertainment industry, including musicians, actors, film, and authors. To learn more, go to [www.douglascolemanshow.com](http://www.douglascolemanshow.com). Here is the [interview](#).

Enjoy!

\*\* Image by [Marta Cuesta](#) from [Pixabay](#)

# Celebrating St. Joseph

March 19, 2021



Today is St. Joseph's Day. Italians celebrate feast of [St. Joseph](#) in honor of our fathers. But, we also celebrate Joseph, the earthly father and legal guardian of his son, Jesus.

Just who was Joseph, husband to the Virgin Mary?

There are no records of Joseph ever speaking in the Bible. He's is never quoted as saying anything. Now, not to say Joseph was not important, it was just that his exact words weren't recorded. Why you ask? I'll get to that in a minute.

I did some research. Joseph is mentioned briefly in the Gospels of Mathew, Luke, and very, very little in John. [Joseph](#) was said to be a righteous man and obedient to God. Just think when he found out Mary was pregnant, not by him, or any other man, he was instructed in a dream by God to not to be afraid to take Mary as his spouse. Then, after the birth of Jesus, in another dream, instructed by God to leave for Egypt, and then years later, in another dream, to return from Egypt.

We also know in the Bible that Joseph was a carpenter. It is why we also know that he passed his carpentry trade to his son, Jesus, who was also a carpenter.

But, let's go back to question as to why nothing more is recorded on Joseph. Well, having read the Bible in its entirety, I learned that the [Old Testament](#) spoke of the coming Messiah and that our Lord is mentioned in many of those books. And then, reading through all the books of the New Testament, which is about Jesus, I'm going to conclude that Joseph even though raised his son, he was one of many supporting figures to the fulfillment of Jesus Christ's ministry. How cool is that. It's like being in one of the best movies ever! One that is seen and heard by millions and millions of people around the globe. The best part is that it's a true movie and that now we serve a Risen Lord as a result of his mother and father's upbringing, his disciples, and all those who bravely and courageously took his teachings across the world.

So, as I ponder upon St. Joseph's Day, I'm encouraged that my life, my role in this world doesn't have to be grand, but be someone who humbly continues to carry the torch of Jesus's light to everyone I'm in contact with.

It's all our story. What part to do you want to play?

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

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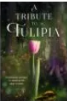


# Read An Ebook Week (March 7th – March 13th) Via Smashwords

March 8, 2021



Hello everyone,

I'm participating in the Smashwords **Read An Ebook Week**. All four of my eBooks have been discounted at **50%** or **FREE** based on the original pricing.

	<p><b>She Made It Matter</b> by Chiara Talluto Price: <del>\$4.99</del> \$2.49 USD (50% off until March 13!) Words: 76,330 Language: English Published: October 26, 2020. Categories: Fiction » Inspirational, Fiction » Women's fiction » General</p> <p>One woman's fight to regain sobriety, find salvation, and earn forgiveness after years of guilt from being abandoned by her mother and then losing her brother to cancer, a struggle to vanquish the demons of her past and make her life right again.</p>
	<p><b>A Tribute to Tulipia</b> by Chiara Talluto Price: <del>\$0.99</del> USD (Free until March 13!) Words: 4,270 Language: English Published: September 10, 2018. Categories: Fiction » Children's books » Fairy tales &amp; fables, Fiction » Christian » Short stories</p> <p>Be the model that propels our kids to be strong, courageous, kind, and never back down on their morals and beliefs. We have one chance in life. Let's all be Tulips in the wild brush.</p>
	<p><b>Petrella, the Gillian Princess</b> by Chiara Talluto Price: <del>\$2.99</del> \$1.49 USD (50% off until March 13!) Words: 9,240 Language: English Published: November 7, 2016. Categories: Fiction » Fairy tales, Fiction » Children's books » Fairy Tales &amp; Folklore / Anthologies</p> <p>The year is 2041 A.D. Yemell is a new world where kingdoms and governments rule humans. A new ocean-bound species has evolved: the Gillians. One courageous Gillian princess flees the sea, risking her life to follow her heart.</p>
	<p><b>Love's Perfect Surrender</b> by Chiara Talluto Price: <del>\$4.99</del> \$2.49 USD (50% off until March 13!) Words: 101,000 Language: English Published: November 3, 2014. Categories: Fiction » Christian » Romance, Nonfiction » Relationships &amp; Family » Children with special needs</p> <p>Thirty-eight year old ANTOINETTE LIBERO'S life is at a crossroad. Her plans for a family are shattered. Unable to bear children, her husband, VITO, plagued by disappointments, wants out, and is ready to ask for a divorce when she miraculously becomes pregnant. With renewed hope, Antoniette is determined to mend her faulty marriage to her husband. Will Vito be able to remain in the marriage?</p>

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# Where's Your Somewhere Over The Rainbow?

March 7, 2021



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

One of my favorite childhood movies was [The Wizard of Oz](#). It premiered in 1939.

The Wizard of Oz is about a girl from Kansas named Dorothy Gale, who gets taken by a tornado to Oz, a magical land, and is trying to get back home. On the long journey to the Emerald City to find a “Wizard” who can help her return, Dorothy and her dog, Toto, meet three very [interesting characters](#). A Scarecrow who wishes he had brains; a Tin Man who longs for a heart; and a Lion seeking courage. They face many trials along their route, The Yellow Brick Road, but they overcome them because of the Scarecrow’s good sense, the Tin Man’s kindness, and the bravery of the Lion.

The moral of The Wizard of Oz is to find your own way in life, but be prepared for challenges and obstacles along the way. It touches upon the importance of finding good and supportive friends because if you get in the wrong group, there are evil people that can get in your way.

While researching The Wizard of Oz movie, I was shocked to learn that behind the scenes, the producers of the MGM company were especially cruel to Judy Garland during the making of the movie and that she suffered grueling filming schedules, was forced to diet, given amphetamines, and [according to biographer Gerald Clarke](#), was molested by MGM studio boss Louis B. Mayer.

The other day I found the movie, [Judy](#), on Amazon Prime, starring Renée Zellweger who played Judy Garland.

The [film](#) is a dramatic story about the later years of the American singer and actress, specifically in 1969, as she arrived in London for a run of sell-out concerts at the “[Talk of the Town](#)” theater. The movie unfolds over a six week period in 1968 and 1969 about Judy’s final performances. It shows flashbacks to her early years on the set of Oz, revealing some of the abuse she endured, and then flashes forward to her London life, and how she continued to be dependent on the substances that she’d been taking for a better portion of her life.

What I learned about this beloved entertainer was eye-opening. Famous as she was in her career, she struggled with addiction, had several failed marriages, enormous debt, and so much instability in her life. All that culminating into a downward spiral based on insecurities and addictions amidst the beautiful love, support, and adoration of her fans.

The movie left me with such sadness on how addiction took over this talented and broken person and how the dependencies ultimately destroyed her. It also showed Ms. Garland’s vulnerability for fame and accolades.

It’s no different today. We are constantly searching for the next “high”. Whether it’s gaming, drinking, extreme sports, etc. We expect our internet to work at lightning speed, and fast food to be, well, made and boxed really, really fast.

It makes me wonder what can we do to change these cultural and societal expectations? Can we ever slow down? Stop the pressures? Smell the roses along the way? I don’t have the answers to that. Do you?

My latest Inspirational fiction, [She Made It Matter](#), follows a mother of two who is plagued by traumatic childhood circumstances, and she also, falls into addiction. It’s a redemptive story on the importance of believing in your self-worth, forgiving your past, and starting anew.

I only wished Judy Garland could have used the brains, heart, and courage to fight her addictions and make peace with her past.

I watched the video of Ms. Garland singing “[Over the Rainbow](#)”. And then I read the [lyrics](#)—words almost foreshadowing a young girl’s cry for happiness.

Someday I'll wish upon a star  
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me  
Where troubles melt like lemon drops  
Away above the chimney tops  
That's where you'll find me  
When all the clouds are a hopeless jumble  
And the raindrops tumble to the ground  
Heaven opens a magic lane  
When all the clouds darken up the skyway  
There's a rainbow highway to be found  
Leading from your window pane  
To a place beyond the sun  
Just a step behind the rain  
Somewhere over the rainbow way up high  
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby  
Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue  
And the dreams that you dare to dream  
Really do come true  
Someday I'll wish upon a star  
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me  
Behind me where troubles melt like lemon drops  
Away above the chimney tops  
That's where you'll find me  
Somewhere over the rainbow  
Bluebirds fly...  
Birds fly over the rainbow  
Why then, oh why can't I?  
Solo saxophone  
Someday I'll wish upon a star  
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me  
Where troubles melt like lemon drops  
Away above the chimney tops  
That's where you'll find me  
Somewhere over the rainbow  
Bluebirds fly...  
Birds fly over the rainbow  
Why then, oh why can't I?  
If happy little bluebirds fly  
Beyond the rainbow  
Why, oh why can't I?

Well, you're over the rainbow now, Ms. Judy Garland. I hope and pray you've found your rest.

If you or someone you know is suffering from [alcohol and drug addiction](#), please contact [AA](#), and GET HELP!!!!

YOU ARE WORTHY. YOU ARE HERE FOR A PURPOSE. YOU MEAN SOMETHING TO THOSE AROUND YOU. YOU ARE MEANT FOR MORE. YOU ARE LOVED.

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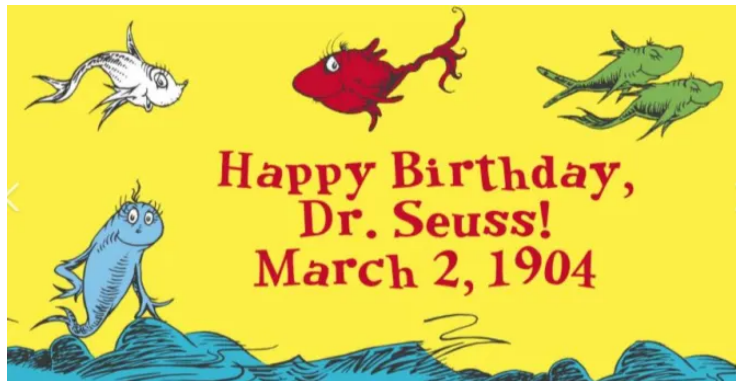
[Alcoholics Anonymous \(aa.org\)](#)

[Alcohol Addiction Hotline | Call Our 24hrs AA Helpline](#)

[Contact Us \(alcoholicsanonymous.com\)](#)

# Has Celebrating Dr. Seuss's Birthday Become Controversial?

March 2, 2021



"Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened."

"Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You."

"A person's a person, no matter how small."

"From there to here, from here to there, funny things are everywhere!"

"Step with care and great tact, and remember that Life's a Great Balancing Act."

"I like nonsense; it wakes up the brain cells."

"Maybe Christmas, the Grinch thought, doesn't come from a store."

"I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant's faithful one-hundred percent!"

"Why fit in when you were born to stand out?"

Today is Dr. Seuss's birthday. His books played a huge part in my life in helping me become a better reader. Dr. Seuss books have been part of the [National Association for Read Across America Program](#) for over two decades.

I read these books to my younger sister and to my two daughters who just adored and devoured his stories. His books are poetic, funny, tongue-twisting, and downright silly.

These days, his books are now being considered racist because in this one [article](#), "researchers concluded that only 2 percent of all the characters in Dr. Seuss books are characters of color. What's more, that the majority of the depictions of these characters were aligned with harmful racial stereotypes and tropes."... Instead we need to become, "more culturally responsive and racially conscious."

I get this. But really? What do children ages 2-7 know about race and color? Unless we make it a big deal about differences of skin color, it will always be the focus. I have to believe we are brighter than the color our skin. Integrity sees no color. Respect sees no color. Talent sees no color. Goodness sees no color.

The Bible even tells us we are made in God's image and that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Let's focus on that instead!

[Psalm 139:13-16](#) <sup>13</sup>For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup>I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. <sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. <sup>16</sup>Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Unfortunately, we are living in #cancelculture where if it doesn't agree with one group, we outright remove it. This [Virginia school](#) district is no longer emphasizing Dr. Seuss books during #ReadAcrossAmerica. Look at what's happened with #AuntJemima syrup and #MrPotatoHead, and countless other products.

How do writers become better writers if they are not reading different books? We can't change history, but we can definitely learn from it.

"Only you can control your future."

One writer had a good point from this [article](#), "The point was, here's what this book does well," Saxena says. "Maybe they weren't everybody's favorite books, but they were good examples of ... the craft of writing."

"Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple."

For as long as I've known, today is #DrSeuess birthday and today is #ReadAcrossAmerica.

Happy birthday, Dr. Seuss!!

References:

[Is Dr. Seuss Racist? Is Dr. Seuss Canceled? Racist Undertones, Explained \(distractify.com\)](#)

[Dr. Seuss books: This Virginia school district says it isn't banning his books. On the annual Read Across America Day, it's just no longer emphasizing them – CNN](#)

[Six Dr. Seuss books won't be published anymore due to racist imagery \(msn.com\)](#)

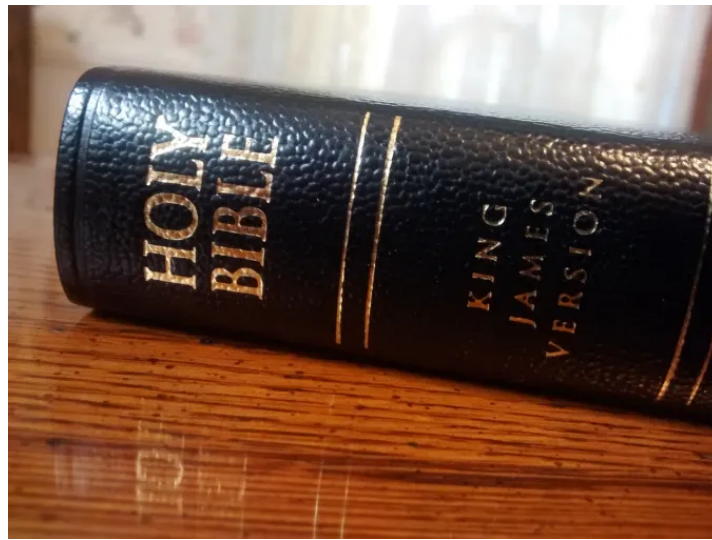
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[Dr. Seuss Books Deemed Racist in New Study | PEOPLE.com](#)

[Why is 'is Dr Seuss racist' trending? \(the-sun.com\)](#)

# The Most Important Book Review Given

February 11, 2021



I've never done a review of this magnitude, but I feel that it warrants the deserved praise and experience of having read it. If there was such thing as a 10-star for a book, I'd give it and then some.

I just finished reading the NKJ Bible in [chronological order of events](#). I started in Jan of 2019 and finished Feb of 2021. I have to tell you it was not an easy read. I enjoy inspirational/Christian fiction because that's what I write. I've dabbled in historical fiction; I like some crime/government conspiracy fiction as well. What this incredible book of over 900 pages offered me, no other book ever can. There was mystery, elements of miracles/mysticism, inspiration, gore and death and tragedy which I can't always stomach, but there was something else. The Bible offered the remarkable accounts of God's purpose for our existence, his detailed construction of our humanity, his undeniable love for each and every one of us. HIS jealous rage for when we move away from HIM. HIS fatherly wrath for when we disobey. HIS continuous call for us to return to HIM, and all the heroic messengers/prophets/apostles who helped spread the WORD all over the world.

There were bravery and stupidity among the kings and rulers. The fighting for territory and power. There was graphic mass genocide and destruction of nations as well. But then there was hope in God's begotten son Jesus! The parables, the stories, the miracles, and then a senseless death of man who was crucified for telling the TRUTH. Until a miracle...How one man overcame the world through HIS death and resurrection.

There are so many emotions that I experienced. But none more amazing than reading the book of Revelation where everything is coming to pass and being revealed right before our eyes. There are still so many things I can't understand, but one thing for sure is our salvation is in Jesus Christ. We need to get right this moment.

This incredible book has been translated in over [700 languages while some portions have been translated in over 3000 languages](#).

[With almost 4 billion copies sold](#), I highly recommend this book. It is life-changing and heart-changing. You will want to read it again and again.

References:

[Bible translations - Wikipedia](#)

[How Many Copies of the Bible Have Been Sold? \(reference.com\)](#)

[Chronological Bible Reading Plan for 2021 - Daily Bible in a Year \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)

[The Bible Project - Bing video](#)

# The Writer's Burnout Effect

January 20, 2021



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

The worst thing that can happen to a writer is becoming “blocked” in their writings. If you do a search on “overcoming writer’s block” on the internet, you’ll find almost **five million** results.

What about writer’s burnout? I did a search and found over **thirty-nine million** results. That’s extraordinary. In my author circles, being blocked seems to supersede burnout. It looks like I may be wrong according to the web or maybe nobody wants to talk about “burnout” because that would mean you’ve failed or are a quitter.

Thinking of the difference between blocked and burnout has led me to do additional **research**.

- Writer’s Block Versus Writer’s Burnout. Burnout is something that happens when someone is stressed and overworked for too long.
- Writer’s burnout lasts longer than your typical writer’s block and is a lot harder to overcome.
- Writer’s block is looking at a page, unable or unsure how to put what is in your head on the page.

I bring this subject up only because I needed to find the distinction between “blocked” and “burnout”. I’ve written about writer’s block, see:

[I’m in Limbo](#)

[Writer Depression](#)

[The Non-Intentional Detour](#)

This however is different. I’m coming off my 4<sup>th</sup> book release, “[She Made It Matter](#)”. I did blogs, podcasts, interviews, and then the holidays hit, and now here we are almost at the end of January, and I’m utterly exhausted. I’m at a loss and desire to reinvent myself with other writing projects, and I’m struggling in finding other means of promoting my book.

My home life has been a bit chaotic too; my kids are doing both eLearning and hybrid (in-person learning), and there has been many stressors affecting my creativity. So, I thought I had writer’s block, as I’ve been having difficulty writing anything. But now, I realize it might be burnout.

“Burnout can be defined as a loss of enthusiasm, energy, idealism, perspective, and purpose; it has been described as trying to run a marathon at full speed.”— **Kathleen Kendall-Tackett Ph.D.**

So, I made a list of my issues plaguing my creative juices:

1. Lack of time to devote to my craft,
2. Too many outside stressors requiring my attention,

3. Wanting everything to be perfect in shorter amount of time,
4. Not having enough patience. Wanting things done right away,
5. Accepting too many other projects and not focusing on my own writings.

I found that that the biggest factors were **#1 and #5**.

I was having trouble saying “no” and accepting things when my plate was overflowing, and therefore wasn’t doing what I really wanted to do, and even take care of myself. Too many distractions and noise was crowding my life.

One of my favorite quotes is this:

“I **went to the woods** because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” — **Henry David Thoreau**

I’m feeling I need to go into the woods right now and do a little **living deliberately**. I often tell people that my two biggest addictions are reading and writing. I explain it this way...

“I have two addictions: reading and writing. I feel restless and empty when I can’t read fiction, write my deepest thoughts in my journal, or even write down story ideas. Writing calms me, centers me, and provides a healthy outlet for my communication with imaginary friends.”

So, what can I do to re-energize myself?

1. Take care of my mental and physical being first and foremost with food, drink, and exercise.
2. Take the time to read books and write at leisure instead of on a time schedule.

I also need to give myself grace to slow down and not always be doing things to please others. And maybe, just maybe, I can get into writing again.

I ran across something interesting: “[give my busy mind a vacation](#).”

That sounds really good right now. **A mind vacation**. I think that’s what I need. Hmm...no need to reflect on it further.

Have you felt burnout in writing? What did you do? I’d love to hear your best practices.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

## Resources

[How to Overcome Writer’s Burnout \(thewritepractice.com\)](#)

[4 Effective Ways to Beat Writer’s Burnout | Positive Writer](#)

[Burnout for Writers | Psychology Today](#)

[Burnout Quotes \(102 quotes\) \(goodreads.com\)](#)

[Writer’s Burnout: Causes, Conditions, and Cures | Two Drops of Ink: A Literary Blog](#)

[Writer’s Burnout—it’s really real - BennettInk.com](#)

[18 Tips to Overcome Writer’s Burnout | WTD \(writetodone.com\)](#)



# Resetting the Restart

December 29, 2020



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My word for the 2020 year was **RESTART**. Like a computer reboot, restart doesn't change things on your computer, rather it restarts again from its [original state](#).

Each time throughout the year that I had a setback of sorts, I'd whisper to myself to **RESTART** right from where I was. It's like the saying that I thought was Biblical... "Come as you are," when referring folks to go to church. What I found was it's not because that phrase is not directly mentioned anywhere in the [Bible](#).

Regardless, I like to believe that for anyone wanting to go to church but are afraid, to try it anyway and show up. The church is supposed to be a haven, right? The first place where one can find refuge and feel no judgment or pressure to be anybody else except themselves, and to get the help needed to [change](#). *Change* is the keyword.

I recently heard this line from Christian artist, Mathew West. A song titled: "Truth Be Told". It goes like this... "There's a sign on the door that says 'come as you', but I doubt it, cause if we lived like that was true, every Sunday morning pew would be crowded." That solidified my thoughts. With most churches closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where does one go to be their true selves and get assistance to change? Hmm, that's a heavy question for another post. Until then, watch the [video](#).

So, being human and staying in my comfort zone, I continued to ponder the definition of **RESTART**.

Dictionary.com had this to say about...

[Restart:](#)

## **verb** (ri: 'sta:t)

to start again

## **noun** ('ri: ,sta:t)

1. the act or an instance of starting again – *the restart of the lap*
2. (as modifier) *a restart device*

That's when the light bulb went off in my head. I realized I don't just want to start again from where I'm at—the original state. Rather, I want to restart with the intention of a different outcome. And so, I decided my new word for 2021 is going to be **RESET**.

Dictionary.com had this to say about...

[Reset:](#)

## **verb (used with object), re-set, re-set-ting.**

To **set** again: *to reset an alarm clock; to reset a broken bone.*

To set, adjust, or fix in a new or different way: *to reset priorities; to reset prices.*

SEE MORE

## **verb (used without object), re-set, re-set-ting.**

To become set again: *The alarm bell resets automatically.*

## **noun**

An act or instance of setting again.

*An act or instance of setting, adjusting, or fixing something in a new or different way: A reset of relations between the two countries may be impossible. Company executives recognized the need for a reset in their business.* Something that is set again.

Back to the phrase: "Come as you are". I also recognized for myself that I don't want to be a "come as you are" person; instead, I want to be a "come as you hope to become" individual. It's a personal affirmation to transform oneself however you choose to do so. I'd rather reset than restart because sometimes things can't go back to their original state. If we think of it in computer terms, here is something else I found that puts it all **together**:

"...**Restart**/reboot vs **reset**, **reset** is different from reboot/**restart**. Reboot/**restart** doesn't change things on your computer, while **reset** will change things in your computer. **Resetting** means erasing and restoring..."

If I learned anything from 2020, is that I want to grow at every given setback or challenge that comes swerving in my life. Cheers to a healthy and prosperous 2021, and your personal **RESET** journey.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

Latest Novel: "**She Made It Matter**".

Author, *Wife, Busy Mom, A Woman After God's Heart*

[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

[amazon.com/author/chiaratalluto](https://amazon.com/author/chiaratalluto)

<http://www.facebook.com/ChiaraTallutoAuthor>

Twitter: @ChiaraTalluto

## **References:**

[Reboot vs Reset: What's the Difference? \(lifewire.com\)](#)

[Is 'come as you are' biblical? \(compellingtruth.org\)](#)

[Does the Bible say "come as you are"? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[22 Important Bible Verses About Come As You Are \(biblereasons.com\)](#)

[Matthew West - Truth Be Told \(Official Music Video\) - YouTube](#)

[Restart | Definition of Restart at Dictionary.com](#)

[Reset | Definition of Reset at Dictionary.com](#)

[Reboot vs Reset vs Restart: Difference of Reboot, Restart, Reset \(minitool.com\)](#)

# The Drink or the Pen?

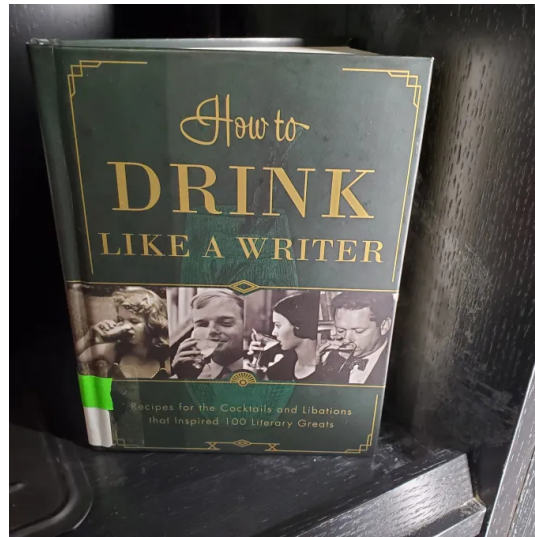
December 3, 2020



Are you a writer because you drink? Or, are you a drinker because you write? Do these two sentences say the same thing, or are they different? Hmm... Now that is the question.



I found this [book](#) at my local library and perused the contents. It is very interesting and has great drink recipes from famous authors, poets, and playwrights on what they drank while perfecting their profession. Check it out...



I consider myself a decent cook, but I can't bake for nothing. My chocolate chip cookies come out like communion wafers, my muffins come out like ballooned portabella mushrooms, and any boxed cake I try to bake, turns out like runny glue, if of course there is such a thing as runny glue.

But, experimenting with alcohol recipes, well, now were talking. No, I'm not an alcoholic, but being Italian, I grew up drinking wine during meal time. And, I often helped my dad and uncle make homemade wine every October. It was hard work pressing the grapes into juice in our "spotless" garage. Spotless you ask? Of course! You can't make wine in a dirty and cluttered garage. We had to wash the cement floor with soap and water prior to setting up our tools and machine to squeeze the grapes. There's no fooling around in our house when it came to winemaking.

Our family wine-making days are over, my father is too old. I do miss the good ol' days that's for sure. But now, there are so many different ways of making wine. I've included a few links below if you're curious.

[How to Make Homemade Wine: 13 Steps \(with Pictures\) – wikiHow](#)

[Winemaking – Wikipedia](#)

[Homemade Italian Wine – How to make wine at home from grapes without yeast and sugar – Bing video](#)

[Homemade Italian Wine – YouTube](#)

As I've gotten older, my tastes have matured. I still love wine for dinner, but I also enjoy whiskeys and bourbons.

**All bourbon is whiskey, but not all whiskey is bourbon.**

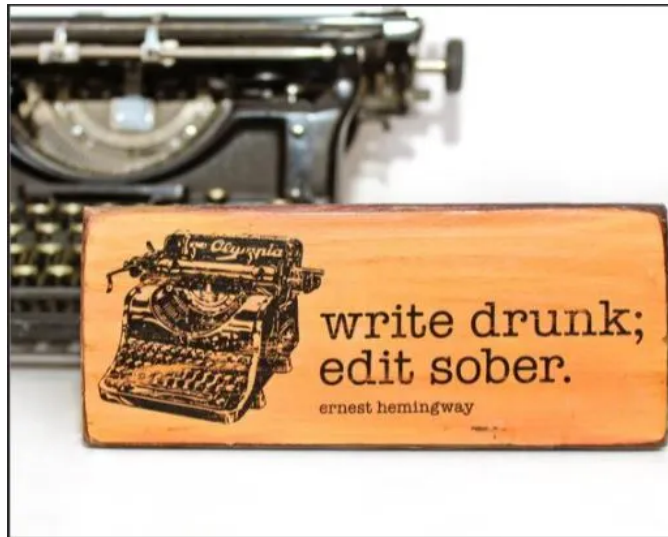
So, what's the difference between the two? Find out for yourself:

[Bourbon vs. Whiskey: What's the Difference? | Taste of Home](#)

[What's the Difference Between Bourbon and Whiskey? | Southern Living](#)

[The difference between rye, bourbon, and scotch – Bing video](#)

Is there a correlation between libations and writing? In my humble opinion, no. It seems that writers have been associated with drinking alcohol for centuries. In fact, Ernest Hemingway said it best...



I don't need alcohol to write. In fact, I prefer water. There are days or nights while editing that I might have a cocktail to help ease the tension of correcting my writing. I've only been in a euphoric zone of writing on a few occasions, and that's hard to do. What is "euphoric zone"? It's my made up term for when you have those crazy, haunting ideas swelling your brain, and then you're trying to write those thoughts down as fast as you can without losing it. It's a glorious feeling when it has happened; I'm so immersed into what I'm writing that I can't stop. Its' heart beating and exhilarating—that's Euphoric Zone.

My advice to you for when ideas hit so strong, is to park your butt in a seat and write, type, or dictate. Otherwise, the ideas will disappear.

As for making drinks, I've seem to have perfected the "*Art of Making Limoncello*". At least that's what my family and friends tell me. It's an Italian liquor made from lemon zest; a drink served before or after a meal to aid in digestion. I've been making it for years and even documented the process. Click below for my *three-part Limoncello-making series*.

[Part 1: A Writer's Adventure to Making Homemade Limoncello](#)

[Part 2: The Mid-Process Peek. A Writer's Adventure to Making Homemade Limoncello](#)

[Part 3: Reaping What You Sow. A Writer's Adventure to Making Homemade Limoncello](#)

Here are a few other links to making Limoncello:

[What Is Limoncello and How Is It Made? | MyRecipes](#)

[What Is Limoncello & How To Drink Italian Limoncello \(bespokeunit.com\)](#)

So, I may not have the gift of baking, but I can surely make you a drink.

Until next time friends, cheers! Be responsible.

# The Burden Basket

November 20, 2020



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

By day, this natural-colored twill basket is just an empty basket against a linen closet door. In the evening, it evolves into my daughters' laundry basket, holding the day's dirty clothing and becoming a transport carrier to the "dirty-clothes" bin in the laundry room downstairs.



At night, the simple round basket with two handles turns into my burden and prayer basket. Situated between my girls' bedrooms, I wander to their rooms, check on them, and then kneel. Placing my hands along the door frame in front of the linen closet and looking down into the basket, I pour my heart aches, pray for my kids and husband, project my worries, and give thanks into the basket. Envisioning that the bin is Jesus, encouraging me to release the frustrations of the day and the uncertainties of tomorrow.



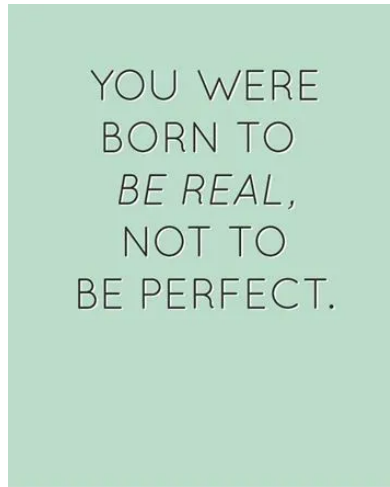
I don't have a *war room* I have a *burden basket*.

We are living in chaotic times. But this basket gives me security to know that I can release all my thoughts at Jesus' feet each and every night; for he alone gives me peace, for he alone knows my heart, for he alone gives me comfort.

*Jesus take away my burdens in the basket.*

# The Art of Being Real

November 1, 2020



[www.chiarataluo.com](http://www.chiarataluo.com)

Donald J. Trump wrote “[The Art of the Deal](#),” I’m a writer whose penned tall tales while trying to stay real and true to my writing.

We can agree that this 2020 year has been interesting. For those of us publishing books whether it’s been via traditional publishers, or like me, indie publishing, things have certainly been more challenging.

Reading is up. Statistics will tell us. See **References** below.

I’ve been reading a lot more too while preparing my latest release, “[She Made It Matter](#)”. An Inspirational/Christian drama about one woman’s fight to regain sobriety, find salvation, and earn forgiveness after years of guilt from being abandoned by her mother and then losing her brother to cancer, a struggle to vanquish the demons of her past and make her life right again.

And, since I’ve had the time, I’ve also been experimenting with a lot more tools and resources to get exposure for my book. Will it help? I don’t know. Time will tell.

Any published author will also tell you that promotion and marketing are the most challenging of responsibilities when it comes to publishing. I’m normally a shy person, but I’ve had to dig *really* deep to find my courage and push myself beyond the limits to “seize the moment”.

Here are a few takeaways and things I did on my social media platforms that may help a fellow author or two:

1. For five weeks leading up to the release of my book, “[She Made It Matter](#),” I documented and shared what I call, “Visual Storyboarding”. When I write a story, I visualize the scenes in my mind and then transpose it into words. Using my book jacket verbiage, I utilized [Pixabay.com](#) and [Pexels.com](#) to create the images for the verbiage. Every week, I’d create a picture collage with the verbiage and post it on all my social media platforms. See final results [here](#).
2. Then, taking all the photos, I created the “She Made It Matter” book trailer. I used [Movie Maker](#), It’s free and I downloaded it onto my PC (I use Windows 10). I also tapped into [pixabay.com/music](#) to add to the video and voila! See it [here](#).
3. I created a [YouTube](#) channel a few years ago, but never really utilized it to its potential. Now, I am using it to upload my videos.
4. I put together a [Storytime video](#) in which I read the first chapter of “She Made It Matter” aloud.
5. I created graphics to be used in my videos using [Canva.com](#).
6. For my email fans/friends/family, I’ve sent out weekly communication using [Mailchimp.com](#).

I’ve talked to myself and to my computer camera more than I’ve wanted to. Lol! But, I believe the best conversations are with yourself, anyway.

So, I’ve put myself out there. I’ve tripped up and stumbled on those videos, but I’ve still kept them true to its form because I’m not a “Hollywood” star, or a renowned bestselling author. “... *I’m just a ‘nobody’ who uses storytelling to encourage others to find their purpose and save their souls.*”



The reality is, like my characters who are flawed, and because I write realistic drama with an inspirational/Christian flare, I too, am flawed and broken. I want my readers to know that I'm a real person. And, writing is not glamorous work. For me, it's dutiful, inspiring, life changing, and adventurous.

I often tell people that I have two addictions: reading and writing. I feel restless and empty when I can't read fiction, write my deepest thoughts in my journal, or even write down story ideas. Writing calms me, centers me, and provides a healthy outlet for my communication with imaginary friends.

I am the communication tool to share and showcase my characters. If they influence readers to be better versions of themselves, then why not? If my writing directs someone to open up their Bible, then so be it. If my writing only touches the few, then I've done my job. I write for an audience of ONE, my savior, Jesus Christ. He gave me the gift of storytelling, and I am obliged to honor that.

So, if anything I've learned during Coronavirus and quarantine is that I can take chance. I can **RESTART** just where I am. **EVERY. SINGLE. TIME.**

So, fellow writes/authors/readers don't be afraid to be **REAL**. The world is full of fakes and falsities already.

If only everyone WOULD BE real.

Music inspiration for this post: [Mandisa, "What if we were real"](#).

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

#### References:

If you are interested in buying the book, click [here](#). Available wherever books are sold.

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<https://pixabay.com/music/>

[She Made It Matter book trailer](#)


<https://www.canva.com/>



<https://youtube.com/watch?v=5Ued4wsE868>

## She Made It Matter – Women’s Fiction

Don't turn back. Begin anew. \*\*\*Out November 2nd, 2020\*\*\* Musical Inspiration:  
These are the songs that inspired me to write this book. Part I: "Home" by Daughtry "It's  
Your Life" by Francesca Battistelli Part II: "Lifeline" by Mandisa Part III: "The Sun is Rising"  
by Britt Nicole "Coming Up to Breathe" by ... Continue reading

 Chiara Talluto

# The Company That We Keep

June 3, 2020



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*When a strawberry speaks, be sure to listen.*

Most of my life I've been told to choose my friends wisely, don't get in with the wrong crowd, keep my friends close but my enemies closer, etc.

As a parent with two elementary-aged daughters, I find myself saying those exact things to my children. The vulnerability and desire to "fit-in" and "stand out" with peers weigh heavy on both of my pre-teens' minds. They just want to have friends and be known.

Too many times though, that nativity can get someone in trouble if the obsession "to be someone known" overpowers their rationality. *And then what do we have?* Peer-pressure to perform or do something that can have negative consequences.

As of late, no matter how many times I've tried to explain to my girls on choosing their friends carefully, they still don't understand. Until... a trip to the grocery store changed all that, and one type of fruit to tell it like it is.

Most fruits are packaged today, berries, raspberries, grapes, etc. One of our favorites is strawberries. My daughters love them dipped in Nutella, cut up small pieces and sprinkled over pancakes or waffles, and even on ice cream with whip cream.

It took inspecting packages of strawberries as a teaching moment opportunity for my kids. There they were, neatly stacked packages and packages of strawberries. First, I perused the rows and then eye-balled them from the back row, working my way to the front row, picking up the boxes peering closely and turning them over. My girls looked over my shoulder in impatience and curiosity (they don't like grocery shopping because I take too long), wondering why I was scrutinizing each package. Finding the right words, it hit me.

Picking up one particular package, I said, "Let's say this package of strawberries are representative of your friends."

My older child rolled her eyes. "Really, Mom, another story?" *Yep! It's gonna be a good one, baby. I can feel it.*

"Yes, now listen. Everything is going great with your friends, and everyone is getting along until something changes that dynamic of your group. Maybe someone gets jealous of your friend, maybe one friend doesn't like your other friend, and then the fighting starts, who knows right, and there are so many variables that can break up friendships. Or maybe someone from another group suddenly joins your group and that leads to the spoilage of your current relationships."

My younger daughter's jaw dropped. *No comments, good. I'll continue.*

"One rotten and moldy strawberry in a package can ruin the rest of the strawberries, and so can one person ruin relationships. Always be careful in the company of whom you associate with. You understand?"

My eldest nodded, but then asked, "I have friends of different cultures is that bad?"

I knew what she meant. We live in a diverse community and choosing wisely didn't mean only picking a certain set of friends or sticking with one racial group. It was more than that.

I held up a package. "No. Not at all. Look closely, honey. Each strawberry in this package is different. Different shapes, different sizes, and different colors. Some are darker and some are lighter. That is all fine. You want a good mix, but not have any moldy ones because then they'll all get mushy really fast. The same applies to friends. Having different friends helps you to grow as a person, but when they want you to do things you aren't comfortable doing or pressure you to go against your beliefs, morals, and values, then that can make things go rotten and terrible. You get me now?"

One smiled. One smirked.

"Now, let's pick a good package of strawberries."

And that's how I explained to my children how to pick decent friends.

THE END

# The New World Order

March 18, 2020

## NEW WORLD ORDER

Last week I was in “limbo”. This week I’m in the “hole”. It’s amazing how things have been changing so rapidly amidst this plague called Coronavirus or Covid – 19. What started in Wuhan, China, back in January has gone around the world affecting and impacting thousands and thousands of people.

So many terms and expressions have been associated with this incredible, infectious, and sometimes fatal virus. I’ve recently read that this virus is said to spread at such an alarming rate, it is an “[exponential expansion](#)” virus. If one person is carrying the virus, he/she can infect three people, and then those three people infect nine people and it keeps growing and growing. Just read up on “[patient 31](#)” from South Korea, and how she spread the virus to so many people.

One doesn’t need to hear/read/see anymore depressing information every day. Just a few days ago, my kids were in school, now they are home for the next two weeks. All European travel has been banned and no one can come into the US. Today, Canada closed its borders. Restaurants and bars have closed up too. Only pick up or delivery. Casinos closed. Museums, libraries, Disney parks and all sports events are suspended. People even fighting over toilet paper and hand sanitizers.

What’s happened?

Media, [CDC](#), and [WHO](#) all have been telling us to quarantine, self-isolate, [social distancing](#), be home-based. This is no joke. Life has truly *turned on a dime*. In some states like California, especially, San Francisco, six counties have been in [shelter-in-place](#) order.

What can one do?

Pray?

Help out the elderly?

It seems so surreal. One week ago, I posted this on Twitter...

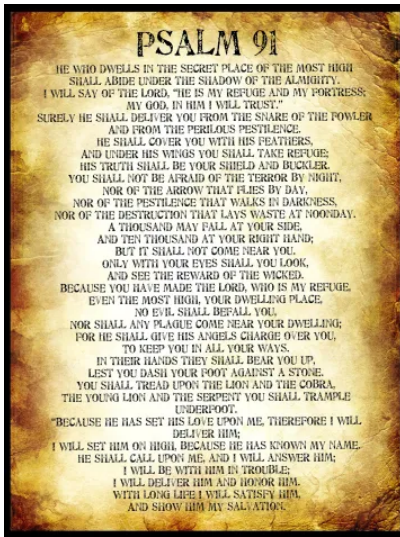


I’ve read enough books and watched enough movies to think that this is something created to stop what??? I don’t know.

Now, we have to be alone so that we “[flatten the curve](#)”. But, we are social creatures and what will happen when we become *too isolated*. It’s like a long, long winter when the cold doesn’t break. We’ve been blanketed with this monstrous virus. Can we get out of it? Can we rebound?

I have to believe that we can. I have to trust my creator, Jesus, that we can overcome. We are a wicked and sinful species. We need to repent!

My hope is [Psalm 91](#) and [2 Timothy 1:7](#). Every day, I am reading and rereading these Bible scriptures.



I have nothing left but my faith. I have to be strong for my daughters and my husband.

*Be not in a reactive mode, but a responsive mode.*

Until next time...

Be well. Be Safe. Be happy.

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## How Patient 31 Spread the Coronavirus in South Korea

Here is the story of how patient 31 spread the coronavirus that has nearly sealed off Daegu from the rest of the country because of its spread: Patient 31 first checked into the Saerongan Chinese Medicine Hospital on Feb. 7, complaining of headaches after being involved in a car accident the day before. According to ... Continue reading

 ROK Drop

16

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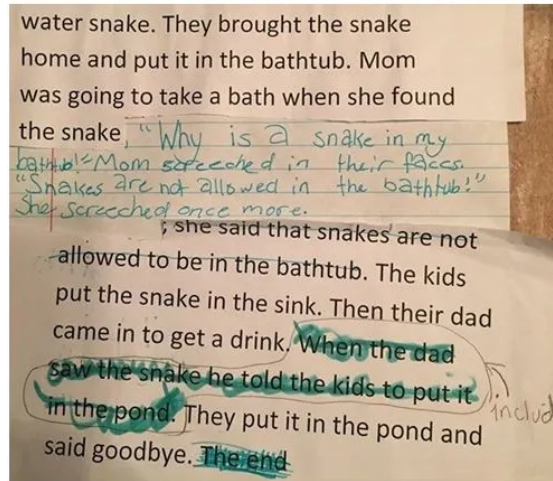
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It looks like nothing was found at this location. Maybe try visiting **Chiara Talluto** directly?

 Chiara Talluto

# The Love of Dialogue – My Favorite Lines

May 1, 2019



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

Through my years of story writing, I've become more and more comfortable with crafting dialogue. Some will say that...**The number-one purpose of dialogue is to heighten the emotional stakes and increase the conflict and tension.** I can agree with that statement, but I also believe it helps the reader imagine what the characters look like as they express their emotions.

Let's define **Dialogue**:

*noun*

- conversation between two or more persons.
- the conversation between characters in a novel, drama, etc.
- an exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, especially a political or religious issue, with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement.

I have many favorite dialogue lines in all three of my tales. Too many to count or list here. I will tell you though, that while writing them, I tried to make sure to capture the theatrical moments of the character's actions. And, the many times as I had to edit and re-edit the dialogues, I too experienced the same emotions I set out to convey.



If I had to pick just "one" dialogue quote in each novel, these are what they'd be:

**Love's Perfect Surrender:**



*Pointing a finger to his face, she blurted, "I've been a damn good wife to you. You didn't want to adopt, and I obliged because I loved you. We lost a son, and then we had beautiful Isabella, and she's gone too. You and I have carried a lot of crosses during our marriage. I don't want to grow old and be by ourselves. I already had that void with my brother not being around. Everything that I have ever loved is dead. That's my truth. A piece of me is with Devon and Isabella. I wanted more children, but they never came. We are given this gift... This opportunity to provide a home for these three kids, for my brother, and all you are thinking about is yourself. You're a real ass." (Chapter 62. Page 256.)*

### **Petrella, the Gillian Princess:**

*Shaking her head, Petrella demanded. "What's happened to you? I miss the father you used to be. You are not the same, but I am still that girl—your faithful daughter." (Part I: Deceptive Renewal. Page 24.)*

### **A Tribute to Tulipia:**

*He cleared his throat, "You have all erred by treating Tulipia harshly. She was willing to sacrifice her life so that you can have yours. She is to be respected and preserved." (Page 6)*

In the end, it is not what I say which are my favorite dialogue lines, but YOU, the reader, who journeys with the characters. Drop me a note and let me know what **your favorite dialogue parts** were for each book. I would love to hear your responses.

Until next time...

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# Writing – A Marriage between You and the Screen

April 16, 2019



YOU HAVE DONE THE  
WORK. THE WORDS  
WILL COME HOT AND  
CLEAR. NOW GET  
THE HELL OUT OF  
YOUR OWN WAY.  
**AND WRITE**

jeanette leblanc | peaceandlovefree.com

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*It takes many drafts to make one beautiful, messy masterpiece.*

Writing and authoring novels is like dating to get married. It's a big commitment. A casual affair won't work for the writer. Sure, some of you have tried writing, but dabbling in it is not the same as being dedicated and writing for a living.

Terrible drafts unlike awful dates can be massaged and salvaged. Think of all the copies stuffed in some drawer never to be looked at again. It's doubt that is the killer. Or, maybe you are just a poor writer. It's okay if this endeavor is not your thing, or what you expected it to be.

Expected? A simple word that holds a lot of weight, so much that a paper towel couldn't absorb this amount of liquid.

Let's define expectation...

## Expectation:

*noun*

The act or the state of **expecting**: *to wait in expectation.*

The act or state of looking forward or anticipating.

An **expectant** mental attitude: *a high pitch of expectation.*

Something **expected**; a thing looked forward to.

Often **expectations**: a prospect of future good or profit: *to have great expectations.*

The degree of probability that something will occur: *There is little expectation that he will come.*

Most young girls dream of that perfect wedding. A handsome prince that will sweep them off their feet and together, they will live happily ever after. Ah, let me be blunt, I think today's women and men have realized those days are slim. Chivalry in both genders are depleting. We are too preoccupied and self-absorbed. Screen-time has replaced face-time. **Even the age for marriage has gone up.** The average age is now 27 years old for women, and 29 years old for men.

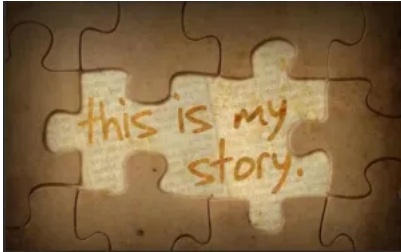
With that being said, most people after a certain age **choose not to marry.** Why? Too much work, set in their ways, they can do everything themselves, and are financially stable. Why take the plunge of marriage when in the U.S. alone, the **statistic of divorce is 40-50% for every one marriage.**

**Some folks I've spoken with have said they'd like to write a book.** Great, go for it. Wait till they realize how difficult it is. **One doesn't just sit at a computer and type away, and BOOM, you've written a book.** Yes, that's how it starts, but you have to keep writing and rewriting until there is a

**semblance of a storyline.** There are rules, such as grammar and punctuation. I'm not talking about emoji's or abbreviated words. I'm talking about real sentences with commas and periods, and structure, as in a story having a beginning, middle, and end.

The initial draft of a story can be compared to a first date, often awkward. I've also heard from some writers that their early manuscripts are some of their best works. **Best, as in original, emotional, descriptive, and carefree.** Why? Because it's the very first draft, the first impression, and why not make it your best?

But, that first (draft or date), can be improved. To do so, you have to be willing to share and be open, or else how do you know to continue on?



If a first draft is your FIRST date, what is marriage? Marriage is the countless rough copies/versions of the same story. I can confirm that statement. It took me nine years and 27 versions of "*Love's Perfect Surrender*" before the final copy of the story. It took me a year and a half and fourteen versions of "*Petrella the Gillian Princess*," and six months and seven versions of "*A Tribute to Tulipia*".

I know what you're thinking. Your drafts keep going down in numbers. True. If you practice writing long enough, you will make progress, but, *Petrella, the Gillian Princess* and *A Tribute to Tulipia* were much shorter in book length, and that makes a difference.

I'm currently working on a novel, "*Make it Right; Make it Matter*". It has taken me roughly twelve years to write it with 34 versions to date. Eh, who's counting? I keep tweaking and tweaking because I know it's not quite finished, yet. Why do all that work? Because it is my "sophomore" full-length novel, and I sincerely believe in the tale so much, I want to make sure it's done as best as it can be.

Back to marriage. In long-term relationships, people change, and if you believe in the "us" then you will understand that those changes affect the ebb and flow of a union. However, if you are open to growth, are sincere, and devoted, those changes and differences can be overcome. It takes many drafts to make one beautiful, messy masterpiece.

For the first time writer, or the writer who has been at it for years, and this is your TRUE desire, stay the course. Some days and years, the writing will be euphoric and will flow out of you like water from a garden hose. Other times, writer's block kicks in and that flowing hose, well, it will get rock sediments in there. That is marriage. Keeping the "I do" at the forefront of your relationships and continuing to pour love into each other even if there are pebbles along the way.

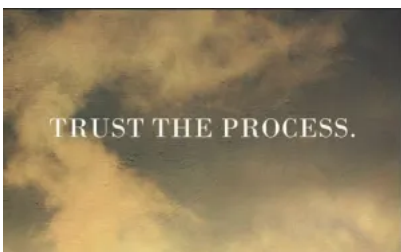
Remember to love those days, these days, and all the days because seasons of setbacks can often lead to seasons of soaring.

I'm going to leave you with something. In writing and relationships, you're going to have to:

- **Fight the elements,**
- **Give each other and writing your best shot,**
- **Learn to love all the days,**
- **And go all in when it comes to living out your passion and commitment.**

Just like marriage vows, writers need a vow too. Make a copy of this and post it on a wall in front of your work space. Let it be a reminder to commit in your writing endeavor.

*I \_\_\_\_\_ (your name) take thee pen and paper (or, keyboard and computer) to use as my imagination tools for writing each and every day. I promise to trust the process and persevere no matter what.*



Until next time...

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# The Fascination with Curious George

April 3, 2019



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

Curiosity is the very basis of education and if you tell me that curiosity killed the cat, I say only the cat died nobly.

~~Arnold Edinborough

Yesterday, I watched Curious George's "Swing into Spring" TV special with my eight-year-old daughter. We've seen the special plenty of times before, and always found it hilarious.

If you don't know about the show, here's a quick synopsis: *The Man with the Yellow Hat is sure that George has spring fever, and so he takes him to the park to experience all the wonders of spring. George is so excited about spring that he wants his dog friend Hundley, to have spring fever too, but Hundley and the Doorman are busy trying to win the Mayor's spring cleaning prize. When a broken water pipe floods the building, Hundley has to stay with George in the country, and he tries to make sure Hundley enjoys spring.*

As we giggled at George's silliness, I got to thinking about this little monkey and why I liked him so much. He's very cute, but the Curious George shows are about a mischievous monkey on sordid adventures and comical mishaps that The Man with the Yellow Hat has to rescue him from or fix the situation—all the time. If that was my monkey, boy, oh boy, he would be in trouble and put in a very long time out.

What's unusual is that a human has a monkey for a pet. Sure, people have had alligators, pigs, and dangerous snakes as pets, so what if a cartoon character is raising a monkey? At this I say, build him/her a zoo and keep those animals in their own habitats. The Man with the Yellow Hat lives in a New York City apartment of all places, and a country home near a lake called Lake Wanasinklake, but he still has living quarters meant for man, not animal.

Okay, I'm getting too literal. I must remember that we are talking about a cartoon.

Watching many of the Curious George's shows I found that the spirited monkey has many interesting and entertaining ventures. He is constantly befriending strangers, is able to communicate with people who don't speak English, talks to a dog named Hundley, who is a "dog doorman," has a cool best friend named Bill, who teaches him about fishing and ghost stories, chases a squirrel named Jumpy Squirrel, and little George is so smart that he can hang with the professors at the museum where The Man with the Yellow Hat works.

Up until ten years ago, I never watched one episode or read any of the books by H.A. Rey and Margret Rey. I had no reason to. However, thankfully that changed, and in the last decade I've binged on so many of the Curious George television shows, admiring the unfettered monkey and all his crazy escapades. I'll admit there is something beautiful in seeing the vulnerability and inquisitiveness of a character whose joy comes from discovering new things.

Yes, we all know little George got himself in lots of trouble. How about when he flooded the country home with water, or changed up the soup ingredients because he couldn't find the vegetables The Man with the Yellow Hat had written down for him, or when George went up in a rocket and becomes the world's first monkey to go into space. In those episodes and others, his pet owner always accepted George's curiosity without being harsh or mean-spirited.

And, speaking of The Man with the Yellow Hat, how many of you know his name? He has remained nameless, only recognizable by his BIG YELLOW HAT. I did some research and discovered his name was actually Ted Shackelford. I liked him too, his unruffled demeanor, and his ability to explain things in an understanding way.

Having considered all this, my interest was piqued on the authors of Curious George—a husband and wife team named H.A. Rey and Margret Rey.

It turns out the couple were German-born Jews who fled Paris, France just before Germany took over the country in 1940. With two home-made bicycles, a few belongings, and a manuscript about an inquisitive monkey, they escaped to Lisbon, Portugal where they got on a ship, and eventually crossed over to the United States.

Did you know that the monkey's original name was Fifi? The first book written by the Reys was titled: "[Cecily G. and the Nine Monkeys](#)" and it was published in France in 1939. In 1941, when the Reys went to publish their book through Houghton Mifflin on a story about a monkey...[the publisher thought "Fifi" was an odd name for a male monkey, later changing it to Curious George.](#)

Did you also know that Mr. and Mrs. Rey's first American published book was simply titled: "[Curious George](#)," a story about a man (The Man with the Yellow Hat) who traveled to Africa to capture a monkey and bring him to a zoo in New York City? PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals) would be all over this story if this happened in real life.

If this hasn't gotten you curious yet, how about this...Watching the Curious George TV shows and reading the books help children ages 4-7 increase their math and science skills? Read more about it [here](#).

Seven original Curious George titles were written by the Reys, plus the "[Cecily G. and the Nine Monkeys](#)" book. See the list [here](#). Their books have sold over 25 million copies worldwide.

In the early 1980s the books were turned into a television series so a wider audience could enjoy them. A new Curious George series debuted on September 4th 2006 on [PBS Kids](#) as part of the [PBS Kids Preschool Block](#). Although Curious George ended its original run on April 1st., 2015, the series still airs on PBS Kids through reruns.

With the exception of the "[Cecily G. and the Nine Monkeys](#)" book, I've read all seven of the tales and don't have any favorites because I truly love them all. Click [here](#) for the list of books.

However, I do have many favorite TV episodes. Check them out below:

*A Halloween Boo Fest*

*A Very Monkey Christmas*

*No Knowing Gnocchi with Chef Pisghetti*

*Auctioneer George*

*Curious George Sounds Off*

*School of Dance*

*Windmill Monkey*

*Meet the New Neighbors*

*Well done, George*

*Something New Under the Sun*

*The Perfect Carrot*

*Old McGeorgie had a Farm*

*The Magic Garden*

*Up, Up, and Away*

For a complete list of all the TV episodes, click [here](#).

I'll never grow old watching the Curious George shows. I think it is safe to say that my daughter will agree. We bond, laugh at George's pranks, and relax for family time. I think the two biggest takeaways/ lessons from Curious George are never to rush and judge, and to always forgive—important traits we need to work on in today's world.

To read more about the Mr. and Mrs. Rey, check out this treasure: "[The Journey That Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H.A. Rey](#)"

Until next time...Be curious.

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# What do tweezers and an inspired writing distraction have to do with each other?

October 17, 2018



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I'm often asked where I get ideas for my blogs. Honestly, it is the everyday, mundane occurrences. I welcome the "inspired distraction." Helps me to be creative.

Today, unbeknownst to myself, I was inspired to write this post because of an interesting incident.

I was at a stop light in the left-turn lane. It was late afternoon, and I was en-route to the grocery stores and my two daughters were with me in the backseat. I was tired, and the ticking sound of the left-turn signal was soothing and hypnotizing when suddenly, my youngest daughter asked me to clarify something. It went like this...

"Momma, what is that lady doing in the car?"

"What lady?" I didn't want to take my eyes off the road because any moment the light would turn green.

She pointed. "There, next to our car?"

In a car on the right of us, was a woman staring intently into her visor mirror.

My eyes bugged out at what I saw.

Calmly, and without inciting any emotion, I replied. "Well, it looks like she's plucking hairs from her chin."

"Eww...!" Was the unison response from the girls.

The light turned green and we inched forward. As the disgusted grumblings continued, I couldn't help but feel different. In fact, just before I drove off, I noticed that the woman had a booster chair and a baby car seat, both empty. As we turned, the woman sped past us.

I drove and found myself thinking that her beauty regimen was ingenious.

Ingenious? Yes.

Hear me out. You have the visor mirror really close to you (I mean really, what's it there for?), you don't need much time to locate and extract those yucky facial hairs, and you can do it anywhere. Even at a stoplight. Better than texting. Plus, you are safely inside a vehicle with the doors locked so no one can bother you.

You can argue and say, why do it on a busy street where people can see you do this private chore? And to this, I say, who cares!

Everyone these days is in a hurry heading somewhere and will forget what they saw...usually. Except me who thinks it was a brilliant move and my daughters who are grossed out.

I'm not suggesting that we should dress, shave, and groom ourselves in our cars. What I'm getting at is that this woman found a moment to use her time efficiently because she may have too much on her plate to think of herself and do these womanly duties. She may have a full or part-time job and juggle motherhood. Even ladies without children can relate: the climb up the career ladder is just as difficult.



So, kudos to the woman plucking her facial hairs. You look like you utilize your time efficiently.

Still, I have a few things to say...

Slow down. Take time for you. Don't cram everything in one sitting. Your children will appreciate you regardless. Your spouse may have other thoughts, but that's not my problem. Whatever you do, take the time for YOU.

And if nobody has told you lately...YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL.

Oh, one more thing...Thank you for today's writing distraction. (Wink)

# The Back Story for “A Tribute to Tulipia”

August 28, 2018

NOTE: This post has updated as of December, 2018)



*Be the model that propels our kids to be strong, courageous, kind, and never back down on their morals and beliefs. We have one chance in life. Let's all be Tulips in the wild brush.*

**#BeATulip**

It started with a picture, a picture of a tulip standing tall and confident surrounded by tangled brush and shrubbery. The greenery in the background accenting its beautiful pink petals caught my eye while on a hike with my daughters. The sun poking through the trees cast a glow of holiness about her that no camera could ever capture. She reminded me of a female, I named her Tulipia.

It had been a tough season of bullying incidents at school for both my girls, so I tried instructing my children about standing up for what's right as well as doing the right thing for others. This sudden inspiration was God's gift of another means of explanation. And so a story began to stir in my mind, one that cannot be ignored. I knew I had to write this down.

A tale that was supposed to be a little school project turned out to be so much more. This reading gem can be enjoyed by kids and grownups alike. *A Tribute to Tulipia* is a feel good story about a tulip and her family who live in an oasis surrounded by tangled vines, brush, and shrubs. Bullied and picked on, the reader journeys with the alienated family who never backed down in their fight to unify a changing forest. It is a great lesson and reminder on what it takes to be a true friend, what sacrifice means to lay down one's life in order to save another, and to always, always do the right thing no matter what.

As a writer, I never set out to write words with symbolic meaning. Sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. The more I thought about this story, the more I've realized just how important it was to share it with my kids. I hope you'll do the same.

**Don't ever be a afraid to be a Tulip!**

**#BeATulip**

For the **FREE** sample story in PDF format, click [here](#).

Ebook available via [Amazon](#) and [Smashwords](#).

Paperback below available via [Amazon](#).

**ALERT\*\*\*ALERT\*\*\***

For each **A Tribute to Tulipia** paperback purchased, I will donate a portion of the proceeds to Stand for the Silent, an anti-bullying organization that travels to schools to address the issue of bullying with an engaging, factual and emotional methodology. Their mission is to inform students and staff about bullying awareness along with the real devastation it causes. Let's keep "I AM SOMEBODY" Stand for the Silent © program alive. For more information, please check out: <https://standforthesilent.org/>.

Buy your copy NOW! Don't wait! Help stop bullying. #BeATulip. Go to [Amazon](#).



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# The Vacation Bible School Experience

August 13, 2018



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Though summer doesn't officially end until September 23<sup>rd</sup>, for our family and community, school is just a few days away.

It's been a fruitful summer. One filled with many exciting family events. I took a sabbatical from the obsessive editing and rewriting I did during the spring on my third and upcoming novel, *Make it right; Make it Matter*. I hired a couple of beta reviewers who did a phenomenal job of identifying some loopholes which I will fix when my girls go back to school.

For the last three years, my girls have attended Vacation Bible School at our church. It's one week at the end of June where kids ages 4-12 participate in various stations that teach about Jesus and scriptures from the bible using games, songs, and crafts. Every year is a different theme.

My children love going to Vacation Bible School. They know a lot of the volunteers, do a ton of activities for a few hours, and I get some "me time".

However, God had a plan for me and for a while I ignored it. Let me elaborate...

In the spring there were a number of emails that came across my inbox from our Children's Ministry Director asking for help on certain stations that are part of the Vacation Bible School curriculum. One of them was Bible Drama in which an adult volunteer works with kids from our Youth Ministry to put on skits related to each day's scripture. It requires set design, costume design, facilitating the script—speaking about each scripture as it relates to our lives, assigning roles from the scripts, and making sure my youth volunteers are present each day for the week.

I deleted a number of emails related to the pleas. I registered my kids and I was good. This year's theme was *Shipwrecked: Rescued By Jesus*. I found the website, listened to the music, and talked to my daughters about attending. They were excited. Then, one night, I couldn't sleep. I tossed and turned for hours. I felt this tug to take over Bible Drama. In the morning, I shrugged it off until I saw an email sent directly to me from the Director. It was May and she was pleading for my participation.

"Crap. I can't." I thought.

My background is instructional design and for a number of years I also did stand up training. Even so, being an author, sometimes you are asked to speak publicly about your books and experiences to reader groups. I'll be honest; public speaking often gives me anxiety. I'd rather be sitting at a desk where I can type words on a blank screen, and use the backspace key to erase something that doesn't always sound right. It's my comfort zone.

God responded with "Yes, you will."

Guilt and fear consumed me. I didn't want to disobey God or turn my back on the church, even if I was really scared to do it. I slept on it that night and I didn't toss and turn. Instead, a calm peace came over me, and when I awoke, I had a plan of how to accomplish this role. If this is what God wanted me to do, I had to take a chance.

So, I set out to work with the Director. I read through the scripts, modified and enhanced content where I could, researched scripture, communicated with my new recruits and made copies of the materials needed to make this one special week—super special. Most of all, I prayed to God to give me the wisdom to impact all the children attending the session, as well as my six "tween-aged" kids who were going to help me.

For each day, we had a scripture bible point and a story or two to help the children understand the message. This is what I learned:

**Day 1: When you're lonely...Jesus rescues!**

**Bible Story:** Jesus tells parables about lost things. ([Luke 15](#))

*Parable of the Lost Coin*

*Parable of the Lost Sheep*

*Parable of the Prodigal Son*

**Day 2: When you worry...Jesus rescues!**

**Bible Story:** Martha worries and complains. ([Luke 10:38-42](#))

**Day 3: When you struggle...Jesus rescues!**

**Bible Story:** Jesus' friends try to rescue him in the Garden of Gethsemane. ([Luke 22:39-54](#), [Mathew 26: 36-56](#))

**Day 4: When you do wrong...Jesus rescues!**

**Bible Story:** Jesus welcomes a criminal before dying and coming back to life. ([Luke 23:26](#), [24:12](#))

**Day 5: When you're powerless...Jesus rescues!**

**Bible Story:** Peter and John heal a lame man in Jesus' name. ([Acts 3:1-26](#))

It was a jammed packed week and I went home exhausted every day. Most of all, I came away filled with happy emotion, energized for God's Word, and the kids: the participants and my helpers gave me purpose. God knew as He always does that this is where I was supposed to be.

With school starting very, very, soon, and anxiety and nervousness running high in our home, God has tapped me again. To send my kids off with this powerful reminder that no matter what...**Jesus Rescues!**

*Resources:*

<https://www.group.com/category/ministry-resources/childrens-ministry/vbs/shipwrecked.do>

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Luke-Chapter-15/>

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Luke-Chapter-10/>

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Luke-Chapter-22/>

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Matthew-Chapter-26/>

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Luke-Chapter-23/>

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Luke-Chapter-24/>

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-Chapter-3/>

# The Randomness of Human Interaction

July 23, 2018



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

*Do you ever get the feeling that you're supposed to be at a certain place, but never know the reason why?*

I can honestly say I've had many of those experiences. This latest random episode has mystified me a bit. Let me share...

A few months ago, my husband and I had an opportunity for a date night. There's a local band that's been around for many years. We've seen them at outdoor festivals and venues. This time, they were playing at a pub not too far from our house and my in-laws were happy to babysit.

The bar was crowded, as it wasn't just us who knew about this band. We got a couple of drinks and slithered our way to a corner where the lights and sound control display was set up. Hugging the wall, we waited as the band came onto the stage. When the lights went dark, everyone went nuts. The flashing lights and loud drum beats made my heart nervous. Still, we were okay just in front of a short wall that separated the "standing room only" from the "reserved VIP" section.

Balancing my purse, I placed my drink on top of the ledge. A couple was seated at a table with bar stools with their backs to the erected wall.

The man looked over his shoulder and smiled, and I apologized for putting my drink behind him. He said it was okay, and we continued listening to the music. After some time, the man turned again and started chatting with my husband. Next thing I knew, the man invited us to sit with them at their table.

Two steps up and the whole bar perspective changed. Higher than the standing room only patrons, it made a world of difference as I didn't have to crane my neck to see the band.

The woman with the man introduced herself as his girlfriend. The man commented that he felt he should ask us to join them. We were grateful none-the-less, and my guy offered to buy them drinks.

Almost two and a half hours later, we were still there, enjoying this friendly couple's gracious gesture, as well as sharing in some "grown-up" conversation about kids, life, friendship, and the band. Time had flown.

It was time for us to go. After countless thank yous and a friend request acceptance on Facebook, we got up to leave. The man was thankful for the time together. He hugged my husband and me. They were genuine hugs. Warm hugs from a down to earth kind of guy and his smiley girlfriend. It had been a good night. We bid goodbye and left.

Since March, I've seen several posts on the couple. Many pictures of happy faces and affectionate words to one another. I've even "Liked" a few posts.

A few weeks ago, I came across something that said that the man had died. I was shocked. I had just seen a picture of them together a few days before. Not a lot was disclosed on the cause of death, but it still felt like it wasn't real. The man and woman had even gotten engaged recently.

Since his death and hundreds of photos posted later, I can see why there were so many pictures of him. His smile was contagious, his eyes friendly, and he was like a big bear with a happy demeanor.

My heart ached. I had only met this man and his girlfriend once and talked to them for a short time. By some strange higher intervention, something connected us together.

I can't stop thinking of him. How did God take this man away so soon? He wasn't old, maybe late 40s early 50s. How come we were chosen to sit with them that night at the bar? He lifted our spirits.

They had a service for him the other day. We didn't go. I guess I'd feel funny going as if I'm invading their space. I sent our condolences online and I did the next best thing. I prayed. I prayed for his fiancé and family.

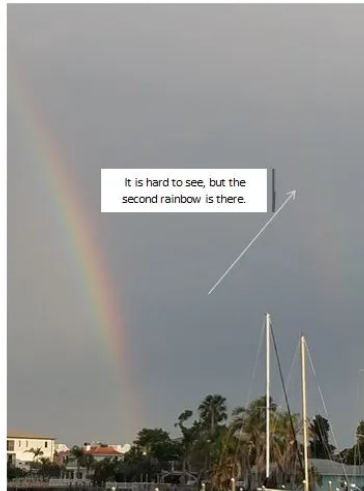
I've been around deaths of close loved ones, but not a random person. And because of this, I've been consumed with his passing. Every picture shows a joyous man who made everyone around him feel alive. I know my husband and I felt his presence.

*Was it meant to meet these people? What can I learn from all this?*

I guess the best answer is to really appreciate those random folks you meet along your road of life. You may never know someone really well, but I believe you can't forget how they made you feel.

# The Double-Rainbow Revelation

June 10, 2018



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

On a recent trip to Florida, I was walking on a marina pier with my family when we noticed something spectacular in the sky. A double-rainbow. It appeared through heavy, dark blue clouds.

What is a double-rainbow?

According to AccuWeather.com meteorologists, a double-rainbow happens when... "A ray of sunlight passes through a raindrop, reflecting off the back of the drop at varying angles."

According to Wikipedia... "Secondary rainbows are caused by a double reflection of sunlight inside the raindrops, and are centered on the sun itself"

What a sight. I couldn't move for maybe a couple of seconds, but then I hastily dug in my purse to grab my cellphone and take a picture.

Suddenly, a man riding a bike crossed my path. He called back, "You better hurry and capture that shot. Double rainbows are very rare; something to be said about its luck."

I took the picture and was about to comment to the man, but he was too far down the pier.

We stood in awe observing this miracle above us. Miracle, you say? Yes. It was. How often does one see a rainbow, let alone a double-rainbow?

We finished the remainder of our wonderful trip; but every day, I made it a point to go into my photos on my phone and stare at the *only one* picture I took.

Now that I've been back home, curiosity got the best of me on the awesomeness of the rainbow, but more specifically double-rainbows. So, I went online and found some interesting pieces of information that I'd like to share.

According to Eastern cultures, a double-rainbow is a symbol of transformation and a sign of good fortune. The material world is represented by the first arc, while the second arc is the spiritual realm. Hmm...Sounds good. I'll take it.

In the Bible, there are a few books that make references to rainbows. These places to study are found in the books of Genesis, Ezekiel, Exodus, and Revelation.

1. It was God's covenant to us that he would never destroy the Earth again after the great flood. (Genesis 9:12, 15)
2. The Lord was going before them. (Exodus 13:21)
3. The author is describing the appearance and likeness to the glory of God. (Ezekiel 1:28)
4. John sees the throne of God. (Revelation 4:1, 3) A mighty angel who is Jesus himself coming through the clouds. (Revelation 10:1)



In the last few months, my family and I have been going through some challenges and struggles. My writing has suffered too and I've been questioning my "place" in this world.

The vision of this double-rainbow has assured me to trust in God and do all things for His glory and not my own. I got to believe in the purpose of my life and the true reason for existing.

I ask you to do the same. We have one life that we are given. Live it the best that you can.

#Igotto believe, #trustinGod, #believe, #amwriting, #writing, #doublerainbows

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# To All the Words I Loved Before

April 23, 2018



*"To all the words I've used. To all the words I've had to do without. To all the words I've not used yet. You are loved."*

This blog was inspired by Willie Nelson's song: **To All the Girls I Loved Before**. Click [here](#) for the video.

Words. I love words. I fell in love with words back in middle school, reading books like *"The Hardy Boys"* and *"Nancy Drew"*. In high school, *Danielle Steele* was the queen of words, and she still is today.

I've written poetry, short stories, novellas, and novels. In all those writings, words have been with me. They offer an emotional outlet for creative expression. I can't get enough of words. But, sometimes I've been without.

For example:

*"I'm speechless."*

*"I don't know what to say."*

*"There are no words to describe this."*

*"I'm at a loss for words."*

Getting me now?

A very important step I've learned to use when I'm editing is identifying and removing meaningless and redundant words that don't necessarily move the story. Over the years, I've kept a running list of words from my previous publications: [Love's Perfect Surrender](#), and [Petrella, the Gillian Princess](#). This "word list" has helped me create more concise content especially since I'm working on my third novel, [Make it Right; Make it Matter](#).

I'd like to share that with you. Click [Redundant and Meaningless Words\\_List](#).

I am not one of those gifted writers that can pump out an imperfect, error-free draft and call it "final". I am a writer who is learning to recognize her flaws, identify and use the correct words to capture the tone, emotion, and description whether it be in a scene, a chapter, and a paragraph.

*"Anyone can write, but it takes a lot more to be a storyteller."*

# The Rock Star Publishing Perspective – Part Two

April 3, 2018



“Your Editor is a friend for life.”

It’s not easy to find a solid editor, but I was blessed with two very different and talented editors, who are my friends. It is because of them, that my writings have been published.

In this post I want to focus on publishing. For [Part 1 of the Editorial Perspective](#) and interview with editor, *Dennis DeRose*, please click [here](#).

Editing is like publishing in many ways. One of the main purposes of editing is to get the product (an author’s book) “reader ready” and the content (insides/guts) perfect and complementary to the author’s voice.

Publishing on the other hand, requires editing and finessing at a different level, that is, the outsides, or the skin level: the cover, book jacket, launch venues, media types, and getting a product, a.k.a., the book, to reach the intended audience.

So, writers listen up. Tell the most compelling story you can tell. Hire a great editor who will make your book shine, and then find an awesome publisher who can help you spread the word and create the best “birthday party” launch. Because, if you don’t have the right tools to reach your readers, no one will come to your party.

Let’s talk more about publishers. Introducing...

[The Midwest Editor Turned Publisher: Brittiany Koren.](#)

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# The Midwest Editor Turned Publisher: Brittiany Koren

April 3, 2018



*"Your Editor is your friend."*

This is a two-part series featuring great editors I've worked with in the publication of my books: [Love's Perfect Surrender](#) and [Petrella, the Gillian Princess](#). For part one, go to: [The Rock Star Editorial Perspective – a Two-Part Series](#).

Next one up...

## Part 2: The Midwest Editor Turned Publisher: Brittiany Koren

I met Brittiany through an author friend, [Helen Osterman](#). I was working on my first book, which when it was all said and done, took nine years to write, over 27 versions of the novel, and two rounds of professional editing done by Brittiany Koren.

I hated rewriting, but Brittiany was patient, and she encouraged me to experiment and develop my protagonist's voice so that it captured the character's journey and purpose.

It was through Brittiany that I was able to see my vision come to fruition for [Love's Perfect Surrender](#). Brittiany helped me with my wording, story arc, and various social media outlets to get the book out. And now, she is living her dream of having her own publishing house, I couldn't be more proud of how far she's come in this industry.

And so, without further ado, let me tell you more about Brittiany, her editing style and how she launched [Written Dreams Publishing](#).

### 1. What type of genres do you prefer to edit?

It's easier to explain which I prefer not to. Text books and graphic novels. I have many years of experience in editing nonfiction and fiction. However, my favorites are mystery, romance, historical, sci-fi, fantasy, and memoirs.

### 2. What made you want to be an editor?

So here's a funny story, I didn't plan to be an editor. I wanted to write. Being a writer was my number one dream after finding Prince Charming at age 16. However, I learned while working at [Tekno Books](#) that I had a natural knack for editing, so I went with it. I did an editor apprenticeship shortly after I started as an office assistant in 1997. With the help of my editing mentor, I spent hours studying manuscripts of different genres—both fiction and nonfiction—and learned the elements of how to help an author tell the best story. Years later, I realized what I really wanted to do was make a difference by publishing unique books, and that desire led me to become a publisher.

### 3. What kind of editor are you?

I'm the type of editor that will spend 170 hours on a manuscript (I just did this a few weeks ago) to make a novel the best it can be, in the author's voice. (An author's voice is unique to them, similar to how a person speaks, but in this case, it's an author's writing style.) I don't like to rewrite the author's style, but instead, teach the author how they can better *show* the reader their story. I'm a developmental content editor by trade; however I try to catch copy-editing mistakes as I review, as well. It's one of the unique things about my style. I try to catch all the errors, not just the big, glaring ones in the plot or character make-up.

### 4. What's your editorial style?

I'm a very hands-on editor. During the editorial process, I'll send the author first edits, second edits, and sometimes up to a third round of edits, depending on what we both agree needs to be fixed in the manuscript.

## 5. What is your editor process when you start a project?

I never read the whole book before I start editing. I read it as a reader would and edit as I go. This helps me get inside the author's head and edit the book as they would—if they were the editor. It's so important to know your author's voice as an editor. When a submission comes in, I'll have someone else read several chapters to see if it's worth pursuing. If my first reader doesn't reject the book, I'll skim a few pages looking over the author's writing style. I can tell very quickly whether or not the author has it together. If yes, and the book fits within our parameters, we'll contract.

## 6. How do you edit?

I like to edit on my laptop in a comfortable setting, usually in a comfy chair with a cat or two beside me. I prefer to edit between the hours of 7 PM and midnight. These hours are quieter and allow me to get into the author's voice the best. I use track changes in Microsoft Word. The program allows me to show the author the corrections I make. I can also add comments in the margin to ask the author questions or give examples. I have to always remember that an editor is someone who is giving someone else their opinion on their story. The writer shouldn't take my opinion personally. I'm just here to help them be the best writer they can be.

## 7. What style guide do you use?

I was given the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) by my editing mentor, and that was what we used at *Tekno Books*. I continue to use it as a standard for *Written Dreams'* books.

## 8. What's your turnaround time?

Each book has its own time frame. Because I work in so many different genres, some books take me 20 hours to edit, some much longer. It all depends on how much love the manuscript needs.

## 9. What's your pet peeve?

If a writer pushes the [Suspension of Disbelief \(SOD\)](#), it's frustrating for the reader. It's rare for me to have more than five comments in a book that are related to suspension of disbelief. Writers need to take these comments seriously. If they don't, it's a way for them to lose readers unfortunately. As a writer, you need to know your characters, know what they are willing to do/not do, and know your facts of the story. If you know all that, you shouldn't have any [SOD](#) issues. 😊

## 10. What are your strengths to editing?

I put 110% into any book I work on. I build a relationship with the author and try to understand the importance and reason why they wrote their book. When I know that for sure, I can help them tell the best story they can.

## 11. What are your weaknesses when it comes to editing?

I want to help everyone, and I know I can't. It's really hard to turn down a writer that isn't ready to publish.

## 12. What have you learned is the most crucial aspect in an author/editor relationship?

You must be willing to compromise whether you are an author or the editor.

## 13. What has been the best experience and why?

One of my most favorite experiences has been working with you, Chiara. You appreciated the edits. I saw your writing grow from the things I tried to show and teach you. That's the best result for me anytime I'm editing a book. If I can help give that author a new perspective on their writing, or show them some new tricks, that's gold.

## 14. What has been the worst experience and why?

I don't think I'm at liberty to say. 😊

## 15. How long did you do editing solely in your editorial service business?

I worked as a freelance editor from 1999-2016. I sold my first anthology to *DAW Books* in 1999, titled [Single White Vampire Seeks Same](#), and that was one of my first endeavors as an editor.

In 2015, I was the editor for an anthology called: [Women of Today – Life, Love, and Family. The Journeys and Stories of Six Strong Women](#) . (The *Love's Perfect Surrender* story is included in the anthology.)

And, most recently, [Katharine Nohr's Tri-Angles Series](#).

#### 16. When not editing, what do you like to do in your personal time?

I'm a TV junkie. I love watching movies of all genres, and binge-watching TV series. There's a method to my madness. I mostly do this to see what's current to the market. Popular themed TV/movies usually go hand in hand in popularity with books.

Here's a secret. I also play [Pokémon Go](#). (Gasp! I know.) The game helps me to relax, get active, and be outside, exploring the parks and downtown area where I live. I do these things together with my family. That way, they don't think I'm constantly working. 😊

#### 17. You edited [Love's Perfect Surrender](#) by Chiara Talluto, tell us about that experience. What did you learn and what would you have changed/amended?

With every book, I learn something. [Love's Perfect Surrender](#) gave me a gift in that it came to me at a time when I needed a "relationship" book. I learned so much about myself and my relationship with my husband by working on that book. Understanding the reasons why you wrote it, Chiara, helped me, too. It will always have a very special place in my heart. It made me realize that you can't take others for granted. You never know how long they'll be in your life.

The only thing I would've done differently is meet with you in person during the editorial process. I think, when possible, it's nice to be able to chat about some of the manuscript issues in person, verses through email or on the phone. Editing is such a personal experience. Each book can help me as an editor grow in a different way. Knowing the author, having a relationship with that author helps an editor to really understand who they are, their voice, and why they are trying to share their book with the world.

#### 18. What made you transition from editing to publishing books?

I spent 13 years working for the largest book packager in the world, Marty Greenberg of [Tekno Books](#). At the time, we worked with best-selling NYT authors, agents, and every major publisher. It was a dream job to have in the industry. I personally worked on over 2,000 books while there and learned everything from acquisitions, contracts, scheduling, content editing, proofing, cover design, writing a great back cover copy, and so much more. It was there that I learned how to be a developmental content editor.

I met [Virginia McCullough](#) while still working at [Tekno Books](#), and she and I worked on several projects together. We had a good working relationship. After I left Tekno, I stayed in touch with Virginia. She and three other authors, [C.C. Harrison](#), [Terry Odell](#), and [Dorothy McFalls](#) provided the push I needed. They believed in me wholeheartedly at a time when I was terrified to break out on my own. They, along with mystery writer, [Ed Gorman](#), who gave me his blessing, told me I'd do well to be in business. And so, in 2011, I started my own company, [Written Dreams](#), first working with indie authors editing their books.

I won't lie. It was very tough. For the first three years, my family and I ate so many pancakes because it was all I could afford. Being a freelance editor doesn't come with benefits, or a handbook on how to run a business. In 2015, another life event happened for me. We lost 11 people in my family, including my father. It was a tragic year. Later that year, I met [Katharine M. Nohr](#), and she was a true blessing in my life when I needed it. It was because of her series, [the Tri-Angles Series](#), that I made the leap to become a print publisher.

In 2016, I made the choice not to take on any more freelance editing jobs and focus on becoming a publisher. Traditional publishers had turned down [Katharine M. Nohr's](#) series because it was a "niche" series. I took one look at it, and although I understood where those publishers were coming from, I believed that this author and her series would be a success. My gut feeling has paid off.

I've realized the importance of authors needing a publisher (distribution and marketing purposes) and created our imprint, [Written Dreams Publishing](#) so we could publish unique titles. I still do the content and developmental edits on every book that [Written Dreams](#) publishes.

#### 19. What has your experience been now that you have a publishing house?

There is so much to learn. Technology is constantly changing. It's not just books anymore. Its digital books, audio books, different types of ebooks, blogs, posting on social media. Marketing a book is not a sole effort anymore. The author, publisher, wholesalers, book stores, and the publisher's marketing team needs to be involved for book sales to be successful. Every day I learn something new. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be doing what I love. It is a constant challenge for me.

To date, we've published 22 titles with 20 books scheduled to be published in 2018. Last year marked 20 years in the publishing industry for me, and I couldn't be happier. I'm living my dream every day.

#### 20. How does an author contact you for editing/publishing?

*Written Dreams Publishing* is a small press publisher located in Green Bay, Wisconsin. We publish fiction and nonfiction titles. We also have a [virtual book store](#) through our website too.

Authors can contact me through the *Written Dreams* website's [Contact Us](#) page.

Currently, we are taking submissions for Autumn/Winter 2019. If an author would like an opinion on whether or not their book is ready for submission, they can email me and request a review of their work. It doesn't cost them anything. I will review up to 5 pages and give them an opinion on whether or not I think their book is publishable. If it isn't, I'll give them a few tips on what they need to do to make it better.

# The East Coast Editor: Dennis DeRose

March 12, 2018



*"Your Editor is your friend."*

This is a two-part series showcasing editors. Please read [The Rock Star Editorial Perspective – a Two-Part Series](#).

## Part 1: The East Coast Editor: Dennis DeRose

I met Dennis through a [LinkedIn](#) group back in 2011.

We struck up a conversation about an editorial gig and talked several times thereafter. We became fast friends, sharing and swapping writing experiences and tips the last few years.

Fast forward to the Fall of 2015. I was finalizing a fairy tale that was inspired by my daughters called [Petrella, the Gillian Princess](#), a story about a courageous young princess who defies rank and authority to follow her heart. It interweaves themes similar to *The Little Mermaid*, *Cinderella*, *Tangled*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Noah's Ark*.

I was working at the time with an illustrator for the book, and I asked Dennis to edit the story. All through the Spring and Summer of 2016 we worked together streamlining and finessing the story of *Petrella* until I launched it in November of 2016.

I'm excited to have produced a second book, but I'm happier for the partnership with Dennis, making it a success.

Without further ado, let me share a little about my friend and confidant, Dennis DeRose.

- 1. What type of genres do you prefer to edit?** Chiara, I enjoy editing mostly fiction, although I have edited some nonfiction only when it interests me. I have edited adventure stories, romances (don't tell the guys!), fantasy, philosophical fiction, Christian fiction, short stories, poetry, children's books (like *Petrella, the Gillian Princess*), YA novels, mysteries and others.
- 2. What made you want to be an editor?** I never *wanted* to be an editor. It just happened. About 10 years ago, I decided I wanted to help writers by reviewing their books but I didn't want to purchase them. I contacted a wonderful lady, Deborah Gaynor, from Kentucky. She had a reviewing service, [Readers Favorite](#) that she had started a few years earlier. She accepted me as a reviewer and I began reading an adventure novel. I edited the next book he wrote and it won a gold medal for best fiction in the category. When I sent my review to Deborah, she realized it was well written. Apparently, most of the reviews she received needed tweaking. She asked me to do that for her and I accepted the challenge. I tweaked 1000 reviews for her and she agreed to put me on her website as her editor. The first thing I edited was a children's story about a horse. I wanted to edit the story for free but the author insisted on paying me. I accepted five dollars as payment and that is how this adventure began.
- 3. What have you learned is the most crucial aspect in an author/editor relationship?** In order for a book to become the best it can be, there has to be close communication between a writer and his editor. They have to be willing to form a writing team, holding back nothing from each other, and both having the same goal in creating a written masterpiece.
- 4. When not editing, what do you like to do?** When I am not editing (like now), I am busy promoting myself, creating an all-purpose website, reading and reviewing books, talking to other writers and keeping in touch with my writers/friends. I am retired now so I have a lot of free time. I believe volunteering in your community is a wonderful way to give back so I volunteer at our local library bookstore two days a week. I also love spending time with family and friends, especially camping and traveling. Why not see the world and make a few friends along the way.
- 5. What kind of editor are you?** A good one, I hope. That's a good question, Chiara. It is hard for me to define myself as one type of editor. Am I a line editor, a developmental editor? Perhaps I am a little bit of both. All I know is that I try to do the best I can to make a book shine.
- 6. What is your editor process before you start a project?** As soon as a writer contacts me we set up a time for a lengthy phone conversation because we need to get to know each other, to see if we are a 'good fit'. Next, the writer sends me a sample of his writing for me to edit and if the writer likes what I have done, we go from there.
- 7. What has been the best experience and why?** It is difficult for me to pinpoint a best experience because I learn from each one and hopefully make a new friend/client. It is much easier to recall bad experiences because there have been few over the last nine years.



8. **What has been the worst experience and why?** I have had two worst experiences and it's tough to decide which one takes the cake... I don't believe in contracts. I am old-school, so I believe each party should *DO THE RIGHT THING*. One client still owes me quite a bit of money after almost eight years. Another berated me for doing a lousy job after his book won a gold medal for best fiction in his genre (if you can figure that one out you're better than me.).
9. **What are your strengths when it comes to editing?** I am a nitpicker so I believe every word counts. I won't let you down, my word is my bond. I only charge for editing but I do a lot of other stuff for free.
10. **What are your weaknesses when it comes to editing?** I have issues with spacing but I will let a client know that upfront.
11. **What's your experience?** I never really counted how many manuscripts I have edited but I'm sure it has to be close to 60 in the last nine years. I prefer fiction and have edited: short stories, poetry, historical fiction, romances, adventure, mystery, general, fantasy, philosophical, YA, children's and others. Nonfiction is something I tend to shy away from unless it's something I can relate to or find very interesting. I've edited a dream diary, an autobiography, a piece on a political ideology and an addiction manual. I also co-authored a book entitled *Jumpstarting Your Inner Novelist*, a manual geared toward helping writers over their hurdles.
12. **What's your editorial style?** Chiara, I don't use or believe in style manuals because I believe they can and will thwart creativity.
13. **How do you edit?** Carefully, one word at a time is my first thought. After a client and I agree with our plan of action, I ask him or her to send me a very detailed chapter-by-chapter synopsis because I certainly wouldn't want to change the writer's voice or take the action in the wrong direction. Then I start at page one and go from there. If I hit a brick wall I will make a call and we will iron it out together before I continue. I edit in agreed upon segments so that I can be working on the next segment while the writer reviews the prior one. I would prefer to go over the prior segment with the writer verbally if he or she is amenable; it sure helps to eliminate almost all the errors.
14. **What do you charge? Is it per page/per word, or by the hour?** I charge by the hour, not the word. Why should you pay by the word if you worked really hard to make your book read well before you sent it to your editor? You deserve to be rewarded for your effort by saving a good chunk of your own money. But I do expect to get paid after each segment. I don't want to be paid up-front.
15. **What services do you provide?** I will edit your book but I only charge for the interior. I *DO NOT CHARGE* for the time we spend on the phone, cover consults, editing your back cover blurb or your **About You** segment.
16. **What's your turnaround time?** I don't like deadlines however I can work with one if I feel it's reasonable. Anything rushed can never be done well. I truly believe... *The slow turtle wins the race!*
17. **You edited, *Petrella, the Gillian Princess*, by Chiara Talluto, tell us about that experience. What did you learn and what would you have changed/amended?** Editing Petrella made me realize how important it was to stick with my editing method because I know it works and Chiara confirmed that time and time again. By going over Petrella together we were able to fine tune the manuscript, the illustrations and the covers. And we became great friends. Chiara and I still help each other and stay in contact; you cannot put a price on that relationship. Thank you, Petrella, aka Chiara!
18. **How does an author contact you for editing service?** Feel free to email me at [DDEROSE@HVC.RR.COM](mailto:DDEROSE@HVC.RR.COM) or call me at 845-239-4513 and let's chat for a bit. My time is your time. I am here to help you. <http://www.authorsden.com/visit/author.asp?id=150139>. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dennis-de-rose-15262917>. Check out his blog page at <https://moneysaver104158167.wordpress.com/my-writers-have-something-to-say/>.

For a listing of books edited by Dennis, click [Dennis\\_DeRose\\_Books\\_Edited](#).

# The Rock Star Editorial Perspective – A Two-Part Series

March 12, 2018



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

## “Your Editor is Your Friend.”

When I pick up a book that I’m going to read, I immediately flip to the end and peruse the **Acknowledgments** section.

*Why?*

An author can get personal about their journey to writing the book, as well as thank all those that helped make the project come to fruition.

Agents, publishing houses, and beta-readers are always thanked, as well as editors.

Any agent or publishing house will suggest that their book(s) be professionally edited if they are to consider publishing. It’s one of the most important steps in refining a manuscript and finalizing a story.

Having beta readers is just as important, but editors are your “clean up and make beautiful crew”. They will mold your story, help it flow, let it shine and be error-free. Who wants to read a book that is riddled with misspellings and grammar flaws?

If an author thanks their editor, which they should, sometimes, he/she may add commentary on how grateful they are to have had an editor help them perfect their craft.

Find a good editor, and you will have a friend for life. The author/editor relationship is so crucial to the success of the story. You both need to have each other’s back, and you both need to be honest about how the story will come out. Editors, from time to time will disagree with an author. That’s okay too, if the relationship is a healthy one, both parties can agree to disagree.

I’ve published two books: *Love’s Perfect Surrender* and *Petrella, the Gillian Princess*. Currently, I’m working on a third novel, *Make it Right; Make it Matter*. I’ve been blessed working with two very different editors whose approach to editing was just as diverse. In both cases, their unique style and work ethic was what I needed to make my stories bloom.

And with that, I believe editors deserve some limelight. I’m happy to feature the editors I’ve worked with in **The Rock Star Editorial Perspective – A Two-Part Series**.

Enjoy this read and remember to utilize the best editor that matches your desired storyline. Good luck.

First one up...

The East Coast Editor: [Dennis DeRose](#)

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# Do Pets go to Heaven?

February 19, 2018



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

On Monday evening, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 it rained. It was a sideways kind of rain, one that saturates the ground in what can be described as a “good soaking”.

*Why is this significant?* Well, normally it doesn't rain in January in the Midwest—we are in the midst of the winter season. Falling rain like that in the form of snow can accumulate into several inches in less than two hours.

This rain was different in many ways. The day started out cloudy and then the sun peaked out around two in the afternoon, only to bring back the rolling dark clouds and fog at dusk when it began to rain all through the night.

It matched my mood and broken heart. You see, my twelve-year-old Black Capped Conure, named Daisy, suddenly passed away. A Conure is small to medium-sized parrot. They belong to several genera within a long-tailed group of the New World parrot subfamily *Arinae*.

*I know what you're thinking? A bird? You are writing about the death of a bird. Seriously?*

Yeah. I am. I'm a writer and this is how I cope with traumatic losses, joyous celebrations, and everything in between. To you, it may be a little bird, but to me and my family, Daisy was part of our home. She gave us love, laughter, joy, frustration, and loud screeches and whistles—music to our ears.

I've had pet birds since I was eight years old. Technically, Daisy was my sixth bird. Most of my birds were parakeets with a life-span of 5-10 years. Daisy was a bigger investment not because she costed more, but because it involved more of a life-care investment. Most Conures have a life expectancy of 20-25 years, and require more handling attention. When I bought her I remember praying about the commitment of caring for her. I was in it for the long haul.

Unfortunately, she lived just a week past her twelfth-year purchase date of January 16<sup>th</sup> 2006. I feel cheated of our time together.

My daughters who are nine and seven are suffering the most. Their whole lives they've known Daisy. This is their first pet death and emotionally, it is cutting pretty deeply inside of them.

Daisy had changed over the weekend of January 20th. She slipped down the cage bars, and then all of a sudden I noticed that she wasn't eating or drinking anymore but stood on her perch all puffy and breathing heavy. Even when I held her, she was breathing very heavy.

*How did this happen? Did I miss the signs?*

Well, there were signs now that I think about it. Since December, we were visited by a male cardinal on some days and on other days, a female cardinal on a tree across our backyard. Always between 7:30-8:00 a.m. when I was preparing breakfast for my daughters before they went to school.

Call me superstitious, but I have always been in awe of cardinals. They are beautiful and regal, and I've read stories on how people were visited by cardinals after their loved ones have passed. Or, maybe they are messengers from God who bring good or bad news. I even wrote about my recent experience of the cardinals that had been visiting us just weeks before in a previous blog. Click [here to read the blog](#). I've also included some useful sites on cardinals under *References*.

When the male or female cardinal would come, I would stare and wonder what it could be telling me. And, now I know. They were getting ready to take Daisy home.

*Really? Yes. I am that sure because my intuition tells me so, plus when my last two birds, Kiwi and Piwi had died, I was visited by Pigeons and Doves right before they passed on, and during our burial of the birds.*

Both the male and female cardinals showed up on Saturday and Sunday morning, and then on Monday, a half-hour before Daisy died.

I also think my precious bird was sick for some time too. At least for a month she hadn't been moving around as much like she used to. December was crazy busy for us that I probably didn't even notice the subtle changes as I should have. Daisy cuddled with me more when I held her every night. She also had been making these choking sounds, or even trying to talk. I couldn't tell. She could have been doing that for a while, I don't know.

Birds by nature can mask illnesses really well especially in the wild. It's part of their DNA. I wish I had known what was wrong earlier. I should have paid a lot more attention. Maybe, just maybe...

*Ah, I can go on and on. I hate myself for being careless.*

I called her Vet first thing on Monday morning. He was booked. Then, he suggested I drive to another Vet clinic the next day. I explained to him that I didn't think Daisy was in any condition to be driven anywhere. It was then that he was able to change some of his appointments and come out to the house in the afternoon.

At 2:15, the doctor arrived. At first, while looking Daisy over through the cage, he heard the sounds she was making and said that they were actual sneezes. He also said she looked very weak by the way that she was breathing, deducing she might have an upper respiratory infection. He wanted to prescribe medicine but doubted any medicine could help her at this stage.

*Upon hearing all this, a nauseating wave swept through my body. My heart began to descend in a slow kind of jolt—like an old elevator stopping from floor to floor.*

The doctor then gingerly took her out of the cage and held her to observe her closely and see whether there were any tumors on her body. Daisy squirmed in his hand like she always did for our yearly checkups the last twelve years. He then placed her in a small plastic Tupperware to weigh her. We chatted for about thirty seconds or so, on what we could do to help her/save her. All the while we heard ruffling around in the small Tupperware, and then nothing. Opening the lid, we discovered Daisy's lifeless body. Hurriedly, the doctor scooped her up and tried opening her beak, and rubbing her body, but she was already gone.

I watched with my mouth open trying to process what just happened. *Daisy died??*

The surprised doctor laid her upon a sheet of paper towel on the kitchen table in front of me. Our vet had come over at 2:15 p.m. and Daisy was dead from an apparent cardiac arrest at 2:25 p.m.

Shock, grief, and a whole lot of tears consumed me as I gazed at my beautiful pet. My mind was in a twister. My kids were coming home from school in less than twenty minutes; how was I going to be strong and tell them that their beloved little bird passed away? Daisy had been alive six hours earlier when they had left for school and now...

When the girls returned home, they learned about their pet. I can't even describe in words their shock and pain.

Through puddles of tears we buried our little friend in the front yard of our house. Daisy loved the mornings the best and so it was appropriate to have her rest where the sun shines on our lawn each and every day. We prayed, grateful she was not suffering anymore, even though we were saddened of losing her physical presence in our house.

That night when it was raining, I pictured God crying with us. Baptizing Daisy in the earth with His love. I prayed no animal would come and dig her up and eat her. Then, in the morning, there was an inch of snow on the ground and the temperature was in the teens. I felt relief. God had protected my little bird. The soil was hardened and it created a protective shell around Daisy's body.

And then during breakfast time with my daughters, we saw the most glorious thing before our eyes. Perched on the tree in our backyard, came two cardinals. One male and one female. They jumped from branch to branch. It reminded us of Daisy and now she had come with a male friend. They flew away high in the sky. A spiritual sign she was okay. And, a hopeful promise that she would watch over us from time to time.

So, all this experience of losing a dear pet got me wondering if pets have souls and whether or not they go to Heaven when they die. I've been doing some research and found several sites that talk about:

- How God views animals as a whole,
- How God views humans versus animals,
- Whether or not animals will be in Heaven,
- Whether or not animals will be here when Jesus comes back,





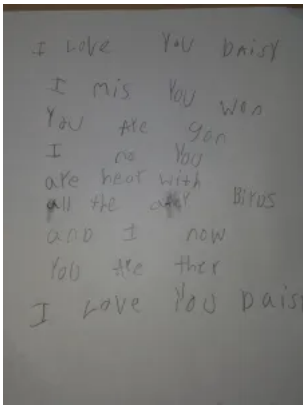
- Do animals and/or pets have souls,
- Does the Bible say if pets go to Heaven?

There is a ton of Bible scripture that for the most part address these questions/concerns and more. After reading through these sites and my own Bible, I've come to some conclusions. Know that these are my conclusions and in no way am I in position to push them onto you, the reader. I am still curious and will be asking my Pastor about them. In the *References*, you will find those sites too. So, grab a Bible (NKJ) and check it out yourself.

Alas, here are my takeaways:

1. God cares for all creatures, animals included (*Psalms*). They are part of his creative process. He even says that the animals were "good" in *Genesis*.
2. God especially cares for us, the humans because we are made in the image of Him and therefore have souls. He also says in *Genesis* that humans are to rule over the animals.
3. I believe that there will be animals in Heaven. In *Revelation*, Jesus is to come back on a horse. Even in *Isaiah* it talks about the wolf and lamb eating together.
4. I also believe animals can have souls. In *Genesis*, it talks about animals "having the breath of life". Translation, souls.
5. Has my pet Daisy, and all my other pet birds been resurrected to Heaven? This I am uncertain of that at this time.

It's been almost a month since Daisy's passing. Our house has been so quiet. I don't have opened pumpkin shells and seeds to pick up from the floor and dirty water to change daily. I miss my Daisy who was always ready to jump in my hand to cuddle and let me give her kisses.



I hope the love and care I gave her all these years was enough. One thing that Daisy taught me was to forgive. *Forgive*. It's a word that I've been learning a lot about lately. It's ironic because I am in the midst of editing my third novel, where the protagonist has been suffering from alcohol addiction and journeys into her past to learn how to forgive those that hurt her. Read more about my novel, "*Make it Right; Make it Matter*" [here](#).

And, as for me, for some years now, I've been dealing with certain disappointments in my life that I won't go into, but I too am trying to learn how to forgive. I can take Daisy's passing as a sign to do that and move on.

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# Olympics and Being a Semi-Finalist

February 14, 2018



So, we are several days into the Winter Olympics that are being held in PyeongChang, South Korea. Our family watched the opening ceremonies where they showcased all the athletes from all the participating countries in the world. My daughters were so excited to see all the men and women who were going to be competing.

My younger daughter had a great question. She asked, “Hey Momma, are all the sports people gonna win a gold medal?”

I replied, “No. Not all will win the gold medal. You see, they have to compete with each other in different categories, such as figure skating, curling, snow boarding, etc. The best athlete for that sport will win.”

She then turned to me and said. “Why do they look so happy to be there if they aren’t all going to win the gold medal?”

And to this, I said. “Because this is a once in a lifetime experience. Not all athletes get to go to the Olympics. And, even if they don’t win. At least they got to experience something so incredible.”

My child pondered this for a moment and then nodded in agreement.

I realize the importance of explaining to my children that competition is healthy and to be the best, one has to put in the effort. Just like a chef who prepares an elegant meal, a seamstress who designs and fits a perfect gown on a bride, a carpenter who prides himself on building a solid home, and writer who labors each and every day to create the perfect prose.

It is why I write. To bring a character and their story to life.

And so, I wanted to share some great news. I am one of the 19 semi-finalists for the “Soon to be Famous Illinois Author Project” for my book, [Love’s Perfect Surrender](#). I was nominated by [Schaumburg Township District Library](#). It is an honor to be nominated. Winners will be announced in mid-March. Regardless of if I win or not, I am grateful for the experience and be in a group of wonderfully, talented writers. Here’s the link: <http://soontobefamous.info/2018/02/12/announcing-2018-semi-finalists/>.

In the end, it’s not our destination that makes us who we are, but rather it’s the journey and the people we meet and interact along the way.

# The Not So Lonely Tree Branch

January 19, 2018



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

This morning I woke up with a song in my head that I've been hearing on [KLOVE radio](#). It's called, "Gracefully Broken" by Matt Redman. You can see the video [here](#).

The words "gracefully broken" blared in my head that I couldn't even hear the rush of the water from faucet as I washed my face.

I love this song. It is so powerful. It is a complete and utter giving of all that I can be and need to be.

You see, there are days that I can get up out of bed and bull right through the day, and then there are days, in which my heart feels heavy, my mind is a tornado of thoughts and worries, and my body just feels burdened with responsibility and expectations from others to do this, plan that, and handle it all.

And so, there it was, the song playing in my mind as I made breakfast for my girls and got their lunches ready for school. *Why this song of all days? Why today?*

And then I looked outside and there he was. Our feathered visitor, the Northern Cardinal. Perched on leafless branch staring at me through our deck sliding door.

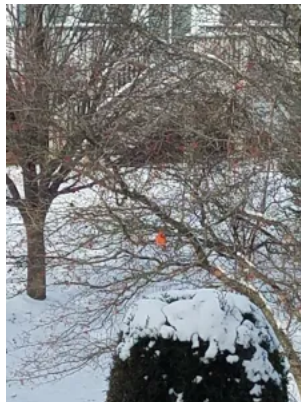
A great comfort came over me. This little guy has been visiting us weekly for the last two months. Like an angel telling me, it's okay, give in, surrender, and all will work out fine.

My joyless cup was slowly filling. I reached for my cellphone to take a picture of the bird. I've done it twice on two separate occasions last month, but both those photos have come out blurry.

Picture A:



Picture B:



Getting the right focus, my older daughters called out to me. "Mom, stop. Don't take a picture the cardinal. Just remember him."

*Him?*

*Who?*

*God, Jesus, a little spirit watching over me, my girls, my husband, and all my family.*

So, I put the phone down and watched our friend, memorizing all of his beautiful details. From his bright red plumage, to his black-masked face, and regal stance, I was in awe. *God's precious life.*



And then in blink of an eye, he was gone. But, his image still remained.

We are in the thick of winter here in the Midwest, and the branches are bare as I sit and type on my laptop. They move gracefully in the wind like a choreographed ensemble of dancers. Though the tree is naked, inside it is baring fruit and getting ready for Spring. One day soon, new leaves will emerge. Until then, that tree branch will not be empty. For God will send me an angel of comfort for those days that I am not strong enough.

*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Marvelous are Your works,  
And that my soul knows very well.*

Psalm 139:14

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# Somewhere in Your Silent Night

December 24, 2017



[www.chiarataluto.com](http://www.chiarataluto.com)

UPDATED: 12/8/19.

Every so often I peruse through blog posts I've written over the years. When I reread them, sometimes I'll look for grammatical errors that I didn't catch (I can't help myself, I'm a writer), other times, I sit back and enjoy the crafted posts recalling my thought process for writing a particular post at the time. I guess it keeps me grounded to my passion. Blogging is my communication means of looking for the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Well, here we are again...December. Christmas is just around the corner. Recently, I heard "Somewhere in Your Silent Night" by Casting Crowns on the radio. I love this song. Listen [here](#). It brought me back to two years ago when I wrote this post below.

It was a good Christmas for me and my family that year. But all around me, I had noticed people were sad, rushed, weary, and alone. I had written this for those who needed to read and be reminded that God was there for them, and to turn to Him in all their times of need. No family is perfect, no holiday gathering will go perfectly, and when it's all over, we will go about our days just the same. *Unless...*

This 2019 year has been particularly challenging for me and my family. We've had to overcome a few medical obstacles; some are still hanging around, while others have materialized without warning. It has been troubling and burdensome at times, and I know what we have been going through pales in comparison to what others might be experiencing. *We aren't the only ones.* The Bible tells us there will be troubles in this world. It is true.

I'm reminded that God's only son, Jesus, came to this world to teach us to love. Many years later He suffered and died for our sins. No human being I know could go through what He did. But, He did it for me, my family, and for you.

The song, *Somewhere in Your Silent Night* is that gentle tug or nudge letting me know to holdfast and stay the course, things will be okay. With trust in God, I can hope for the possibility that it will.

May your coming nights this season be not so silent.

It's Christmas Eve.

Salvation Army bells are ringing. Stores are still crowded with last-minute shoppers. Ovens are working overtime with baking goods. Families are reuniting again. And, most churches will be filled to capacity at midnight mass.

As a child, I loved this time of year because of the gifts. *Who didn't.* The excitement, the anticipation of opening toys sent from Santa. Yes, we went to mass, sometimes at midnight, other times on Christmas morning. But, the whole mass-thing was just a formality. I never paid attention to the true meaning of this season.

Now that I am older, I realize more and more that the story of our Lord and Savior's birth and what He came to do here on Earth supersedes any material gifts because **He was our gift.**

But I know for others, Christmas time evokes painful memories and experiences. Rather than a celebration, this day will be another silent night. Many are suffering. Many have lost their way. Many have lost loved ones. And, many have never had a relationship with God's only Son.

To those who feel they are invisible, and to those with trials and burdens, I pray that on this day, your heart will be light and your burdens will be a little less. Your purpose in this life is not for nothing. You are loved, you are treasured, and you matter.

This post was inspired by this song...*"Somewhere in Your Silent Night"* by Casting Crowns. Take a listen [here](#).

Blessings to you. Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# Baring It All; To Reflect In

November 21, 2017



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

Have you ever heard the expressions?

Just bare it all,

Let it go,

Let loose,

Surrender,

Let it be.

I'm sure there are countless other phrases/expressions, but you get the point.

One of beauties of fall in the Midwest are the changing colors of the trees; this until all the leaves fall off and you are left with bare trunks and naked branches.



I often wonder how trees feel being so exposed to the natural elements of wind, rain, and snow.

Do they shiver?

Do they shake?

Do they grip the cold soil digging deeper into the earth?

For after a long winter and things slowly begin to thaw, we know and the trees know that new buds of life will come in and soon those bare and naked trees will once more be clothed.

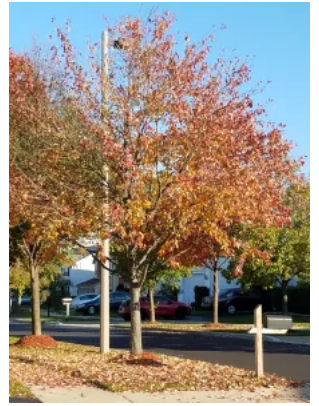
I try to imagine if a tree had thoughts, what would they ponder on during those exposed months of winter? This of course, got me thinking about the upcoming holiday season.

I'll admit it, I don't like or appreciate this season as I once did when I was a child. It's a rush of craziness from Thanksgiving to Christmas. All the planning, preparation and shopping wears on me—my emotions and tiredness are exposed and I feel bare, I feel raw, and I feel old.

And then I look at the trees who will patiently endure what might be a turbulent season of cold and snow. The key word here is *patiently*.

Regardless of the temperatures swirling around them, they will stand firm and rooted in the importance of taking care of themselves so that when spring comes, they can yield strong foliage.

I guess this is a lesson for me to not get myself winded by every leaf of imperfection during this splendid celebratory season, but rather keep my mind and heart rooted in my faith—and the real reason for the season, for this is a time to bare it all in order to reflect in.



# A Food Storyline – Stirring the Pot of Creative Writing

November 15, 2017



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

**Author Note:** I'm a firm believer that "writing" inspiration happens all the time. As writers, we should be open to those blessings and seize the creative bursts when they happen. Inspired by a recent event in which I had made Chili, here is "my creative burst" of energy.

It was a cold and dreary day in Foodville, USA. The whole farm town had come out to a "Chili" management meeting inside the Federal building at the intersection of Thirsty Street and Hungry Drive.

It was a big night for the town and the stakes were high. Standing room only, all the local organic vegetables were present. There were the Green Peppers, the Black and Kidney Beans cousins, Ms. Baby Carrot and her children, Mrs. Yellow Potatoes, the Onion twins, the Garlic triplets, along with the Ground Beef family. The temperature outside may have been 32 degrees, but inside the conference chamber, there they stood simmering in tomato sauce at a blazing 95 degrees.



Just outside the meeting room doors, were Mr. Javier Jalapeño and his girlfriend, Ms. Cathy Carrot Stick. The committee was going to vote on whether or not to let Javier Jalapeño be part of their Chili recipe.

"Move out of my way, baby. I've got to talk some sense into them. I'm diving in there." Javier flexed his muscles.

"It's too dangerous, please don't go." Cathy pleaded with him.

The chili pepper continued to stretch from side to side. Small in stature, he had a reputation of bringing in a hotter taste to any dish. In recent years, he heard that the Chili was losing its flavor. Turmeric couldn't cut it anymore, and tough and rough Ground Peppercorn had lost all his corns.

Javier was pleased to have friends like Cayenne Pepper and Sriracha Sauce present in the conference room fighting for him, but the others, Onion powder, and "Hot" Chili mix, well, they were resisting. There was a conspiracy against him.

They didn't want change the current Chili recipe, they didn't want to add any new flavor, and they certainly didn't appreciate what a little green chili pepper had to offer. But, Javier had to do something. He was putting it all out there, seeds and stem. He had no choice but to try to convince the farm, the spices, the meats, and the tomato sauce that he was there to enhance the Chili, not replace anyone. Together, they could be stronger, tastier, and more flavorful. And by golly, he was going to do it.

Back at the doors, Cathy Carrot Stick shivered in fear. She knew the drill. It had happened to her. For a long time, she was the best thing since diced tomatoes, but then the Baby Carrot family moved in and she was ousted out of the Chili recipe. As much as she loved Javier, she was old-school and liked how things had been with the "Original" Chili recipe, though; Ms. Carrot Stick wouldn't ever tell him that.

Torn between love and the mainstream mentality of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," Cathy chose her side. It was her heart throb of two years, sexy Mr. Jalapeño himself. With his emerald-green eyes and smooth complexion, their relationship was burning hot, and she vowed to never go back to bland relationships.

"It will be okay. I won't be long, I promise." Javier explained.

"Be careful, they're crazy. They don't want to change. They'll eat you alive, if you go in there," the orange tanned beauty begged.

Mr. Jalapeño pulled his love interest close and planted his lips hard on Cathy. When he stepped back, a veil of smoke arose from her cheeks.

"Babe, no need to worry. I've got this. New things are coming and I'm no longer afraid because I'm packing heat. Lots of heat."



And with that, Javier Jalapeño sprung into the meeting.

#toomuchtimeonmyhands, #sillylittlestory, #Chiliinspired, #Jalapenomakeseverythinggreat, #amwriting, #exercisingmywritingskills, #Afoodstoryline, #writing

# Everything I Needed to Learn About Authors; I Learned at Author Events

October 18, 2017



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

Is it me, or are authors only consumed with themselves?

*Whoa...you say. That's a loaded question coming from an author yourself.*

Yes, it is.

You see, I've been to many libraries and bookstore sponsored author events where I've observed authors in action.

They are sitting behind a lovely display of books waiting for the readers to approach them, or, standing alone outside a circle of writers who are discussing plot points or point of views.

The ones behind the tables really deserve the "Trophy of Anti-Social" but still have the "buy my books attitudes" because I am snob and my stories are the best, even though I don't care to ask you about your reading preferences, or even bother to make eye-contact.

*Well, that's a mouthful.*

Here, let me elaborate and provide you a visual: Authors sitting on their pompous ass, sipping free coffee and eating store-bought muffins and bagels—which should be for the customer, but they feel obligated to have anyway, while scrolling on their Smartphones, reading a book not related to their own, and here's the best, sewing, as if they should be finishing up on chores that could have been done at HOME!

*Good grief.*

To top it off, they rarely socialize with other authors who are at the tables right next to them. Folks, author events are there not only to sell your books, but meet other authors and network.

Here is something to ponder on. Do you think your books are better than anyone else's? Are you so close-minded that exploring other writers and the types of writing they do is beneath you?

To me and this is only my opinion, I say...*Shame on You*. How do you know that the writer across from you can recommend an illustrator for your next book that you've been struggling to find for the last three months? Maybe the guy with the green hair and the rocket display becomes your greatest fan and at a later time has an opportunity and he invites you to his daughter's sixteenth birthday party because now you have acquired a huge following for your YA book.

*Seriously?*

Yes, and there's more. Let's not forget the "hard sell" piece. A few months ago, I was at an author library event. Walking up to a table in which the man had a display of what looked like crime/cop type of novels, I stopped and perused one of his books, even complimenting him on the cover. When I asked him how he was doing, he boldly replied... "Better, if you bought one of my books."

What could I say to that?

Here's a spoiler alert. There is *no* guarantee that every single person who walks into a bookstore event or library event will buy a book, even *yours*. Book tastes are very subjective. Just like when you buy shoes. What I choose and what you choose will be different based on comfort and style. Your job is to court the perspective reader. Ask him/her what they like to read, not use the strong-arm tactic.



The same goes for author to author relationship. Learn about each other's work, you might come away with valuable information for your own writing. The other thing is, if you don't want to buy their book, support them in different ways: Tweet their book info, do a blog interview, or recommend their book to someone who might read that particular genre. Sometimes, authors do a book swap. That's cool too. But, don't expect *each* and *every* author or potential customer to buy your particular book.

*That's harsh.*

Duly noted, but this is not a flea market. Honestly, I'd rather have someone buy my book who I know will read it, enjoy it, and maybe if they are so inclined, leave a review.

**Bottom line.** Author events should not be your two-hour relaxation time away from home or family. Get up and talk to people. Make it a point to connect with five new authors at each event.

This holds true for those writers who are afraid to socialize and are hiding behind their display, or leaning against the bookcase, trying to look inconspicuous. It's hard, the social aspect of these type of events. I honestly get it. You see, my mind is always conjuring up make-believe characters. I'd rather spend an afternoon behind a computer writing about them, then chatting with real people.

Remember this; cross-networking can lead to many opportunities:

1. Getting out of your shell and not focusing on "me-me".
2. Insight and learning.

Most authors have full-time jobs, you never know if that person is an attorney, plumber, band singer, or real estate agent that you could use in the future. It's called using your resources.

*Snickers.*

Yes, your books are your babies, but opportunities can abound when you get your head out of fiction and into the real world.

*Smile.*

Now, get out there.

#authorrant #writing #authorobservations #locallibraryevents #bookstoreauthorevents #bookselling #connectingwithauthors

# The World View from a Child

September 29, 2017



*"The world is not how you see it; it's how God sees it."*

My seven-year-old drew this picture for me today. When I asked her what this meant she had this to say...(some paraphrasing included):

*"This is how God created the world: with beautiful flowers and the cross to remind us of His son, Jesus. Our world is in trouble, Mommy. There are people fighting each other and people saying mean things to one another. Nobody likes America anymore. I don't think God likes that, so he gave us hurricanes, so we can learn to be nice to each other again."*

My reaction. *"Oh, okay. Great observation...Nice job! It looks real pretty. Is this a specific place?"*

*"No. It's just a cemetery."*

*"Ah, why a cemetery?"*

*"Because it is beautiful too, even if there are dead people. But, especially if it is filled with flowers."*

And then, I asked where all the "living" people were in the picture?

*"I don't know. Gone, I guess. I have no people."*

*"Hmm...Wouldn't it be okay to have people in the picture?"*

*"No. People ruin the earth."*

So, my child drew a beautiful picture, one that she believes God envisioned, but with so much division and fighting in our world lately, there probably won't be any more "decent" people left.

I'm reminded of a quote from one of my favorite *Rocky* movies. This one was from **Rocky IV (1985)**:

It's toward the end. Rocky just beat Drago, the Russian boxer. Throughout the fight the crowd is booing Rocky, but when he beats Drago, they get on his side and begin chanting his name. This is what Rocky has to say about that...

*"During this fight, I've seen a lot of changing, in the way you feel about me, and in the way I feel about you. In here, there were two guys killing each other, but I guess that's better than twenty million. I guess what I'm trying to say, is that if I can change, and you can change, everybody can change!"*

So, on this Friday and on every day going forward, let's do something for someone else. A change of heart, a change of mind, and a change of attitude starts within each of us.

#FridayFeeling, #RockyIV, #TakenfromASevenYearold, #Outofmouthsofbabes, #writing, #ponderinglife, #Changebeginswithyou

# Recipe for Life

August 28, 2017



*"In the end, it's what you put into your life; not taken from the life you were given."*

For those of you who know me, know I have a passion for making cocktails. No, I'm not an alcoholic, nor am I promoting alcohol here. I do however; enjoy a drink every now and then. And, I like to experiment with different liquors in creating new drinks.

Now, I don't make any kind of foo-foo drinks, either. What are **foo-foo drinks** you ask?

Here's a simple definition:

*"An **alcoholic** beverage that is way too pretty or feminine. These drinks are usually characterized by lots of whipped cream, multiple **fruit** decorations and/or umbrellas. Also, they tend to be low in **alcohol** content."*

Ah...not for me. I actually don't like diluting the alcohol content of whiskeys, bourbons, and vodkas. So in essence, the simpler a drink is made, the better.

You see, I can cook, but I don't like baking. In fact, I dislike baking as much as drinking light beer. So, besides, writing, I enjoy my alcohol too.

Now, where was I? Ah yes, just like baking, "drink-making" is an art. Steps need to be followed when working with the ingredients. Those who are professional "drink-makers," are called Mixologists.

Let's define a **mixologist**:

*"A person skilled at making mixed drinks."*

I'm far from professional. You can say I'm a "learned mixologist". In fact, I had an enjoyable two-year stint working in a wine bar where specialty cocktails and martinis were also served.

Here's what I've learned about making cocktails:

1. Don't drown out the alcohol with other mixed liquids, you'll lose the taste.
2. Don't *over pour* the alcohol, so that it's too strong to enjoy even a second drink.
3. Measure your liquids so not to waste anything.

It seems so easy to follow a recipe, and BOOM...something is created. All this discussion on drinks has gotten me thirsty, not to mention ponder about life and how to make the most of it.

Maybe we need a recipe for living?

Now, you might be thinking. *Why the heck would we need a recipe for life? Just live it, and make the most of it. Isn't it enough that there are too many rules and laws on doing things?*

Yes, there are limitations, but sometimes within those confines, opportunities pop up. So, hear me out. We live in a world of excess. There is an overabundance of:

- Eating
- Working
- Playing
- Self-Indulgence

Not to mention, constant stimulation and attachment to gadgets.

It's too much of everything. With that I've noticed, comes the immunity to the mundane as well as excitement. There is no burning belly or shock anymore. We have become *desensitized* to the simple pleasures such as family time, quiet time, and faith time.

So, to make a perfect cocktail, you'll need specific ingredients; the right glassware, utensils, and mixing liquids. The same holds true for living a balanced life.

Here's my concocted cocktail:

- Two ounces of physical touch
- One ounce of gentle words
- .5 ounces of "me" time
- .5 ounces of a caring heart
- A dash of honesty
- A sprinkle of stress
- Add a slice of rest for garnish

Pour all the ingredients into a 12-ounce glass filled with ice cubes of spontaneity and stir. DO NOT SHAKE.

For those of you wanting to know how I made the Dirty Martini in the picture, here is the recipe I followed, click here:

<http://allrecipes.com/recipe/32238/dirty-martini/>.

**NOTE:** I used Tito's Vodka instead and only two olives.

You can also check my three blogs on Limoncello-making.

<https://www.chiaratalluto.com/part-1-a-writers-adventure-to-making-homemade-limoncello/>

<https://www.chiaratalluto.com/part-2-the-mid-process-peek-a-writers-adventure-to-making-homemade-limoncello/>

<https://www.chiaratalluto.com/part-3-reaping-what-you-sow-a-writers-adventure-to-making-homemade-limoncello/>

Until next time...Please drink responsibly.

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#procrastinating, #funwriting, #practicingmydrinkmakingskills, #amwriting, #writing, #mondaymotivation, #mondayminutia

# When Your Passion is Their Passion

August 9, 2017



*"My mom is an author." "My mom writes stories when we are sleeping."*

Ever wonder what your kids really think of you in terms of what you do? Your actions definitely speak louder than words.

From the moment your child enters this world, you are constantly scrutinized, judged, watched, and studied.

Knowing that notion can make one self-conscious, threatened, embarrassed, or feel holier than God himself.

Think about it. Their influences, ideas, and likes and dislikes, stem from you, their parent. It's been said many times over; there is no greater job responsibility than child-rearing.

And, your actions have consequences and those consequences can set a path for your child to potentially follow if they can't discern right from wrong.

So, if you want your child to see you in a particular light, model a righteous role. Set the example. Your joy will overflow when you see your children succeed in all that you've sowed for them.

I heard this recently and believe this quote sums it up:

*"The wealth of a mom and dad lies in the quality of their children."*

~Author Unknown~

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# Living Little with Growing Kids

July 20, 2017



[www.chiarataluto.com](http://www.chiarataluto.com)

You know this cliché... “Time flies when you’re having fun.” Folks, listen up. It’s very true. Where does the time go?

It seems like not too long ago, my daughters were infants, then they became toddlers, and now they are little people with attitudes and opinions of their own. I have one going into second grade, and the other going into third grade. Time has flown by.

Our summer days have been crazy fun. I’ve got to keep them involved and entertained, you know? The whole... “I’m bored” syndrome drives me up the wall. We are doing summer reading through our local library, in camp, in choir, going swimming, and exploring parks. And, this is only a partial list, I’m not including the countless other activities.

It’s go, go, go, go, go...

**MY MOTTO:** Let’s take advantage of the beautiful day. Don’t waste the day! Too much to do; so little time.

But, with all the running around, I’m getting tired and my girls are getting *very* cranky.

People tell me how great it is now, since the kids aren’t in diapers, or on a feeding schedule.

“At least you’re not stuck inside on a nice day,” they say with a smile.

I nod in agreement, but inside I just want to lie down and take a nap, and have them nap too.

I miss those “scheduled days”. The quietness and stillness of the house when everything stops.

Now, I get laughed at if I try and force them to nap.

“Mom, we don’t nap anymore. That’s for babies!” they say with hands on their hips, while yawning and squabbling with each other.

My girls want to stay up late, and fight me, so I let them. Until, they are so irritable and can’t fall asleep because they are sooooo over-tired and wake me up. So, now I can’t sleep. It’s a vicious cycle.

I know that as they grow older, my life with the kids will be busier. Gosh, and for one single moment I close my eyes and reminisce when they were just babies with rigid feeding and sleeping schedules.

It was hard then. More care and handling. These days, they talk back and are paying close attention to me and *my* handling of life.

It makes me a little nervous to have that kind of scrutiny; I’m not just their comforter, I am their teacher, and that takes a lot more energy. Tons of energy. The questions never stop.

So, maybe I need to take the slowdown of the “living little” and incorporate that into the “big busy days” and see what happens?

Surely, like every other mom out there I want my children to have a fruitful summer before school starts, rather than a rushed summer of events.

But—?

Stop.

Okay.

Pssst...

What?

**NOTE TO SELF:** "Time to take your own advice," I say with a smile.

#streamofconscience, #talktoSelf, #raisinggirls, #summerfunwithkids, #livinglittleinbigsummerexperiences

# The Very Next Thing...

June 26, 2017



*Have you ever wanted to alter, reverse, or change an uncomfortable situation that you happen to be in?*

Come on, can I hear a...*Ah yeah!!!*

Good. Me too. Plenty of times. It's like a video reel of regret that plays continuously over and over in your head.

This last time was *over the top*. And, I'll be honest, I've been having nightmares of *would of, could of, and should of...* only to awake in a drenched sweat and a thankful heart.

What appeared to be an innocent maneuver of fun had turned into a life threatening event. Vacationing in the warm water beaches of Florida, I had an opportunity to try *Stand Up Paddle Board (SUP)* surfing. For those who don't know what SUP is, here is a brief description:

*"The fastest growing water sport in the world, stand up paddle boarding came from humble beginnings back in 2004 when it first touched down on U.S. shores. It's now overtaking nearly every body of water in the world. You can do it in oceans, lakes, rivers, and bays – even a swimming pool if you so desire. It's a great full body core workout, and it's a whole new way to experience the water in the outdoors."*

I've never paddle surfed before. *How hard could it be?*

It was a free fifteen-minute trial. You see, three young twenty-something year-olds had just come back from paddle surfing, raving about their experience. The rental supervisor was waiting for them on the beach so that they could return the boards, when my husband struck up a conversation with the man. He graciously offered us a trial while he put the other boards back onto his truck.

My husband knowing I liked all things water-related, offered for me to try the paddle board. The man encouraged me as well.

"Yes, yes. You will like it. It's easy," he said.

No need for any arm twisting, I was eager to try it. The supervisor then demonstrated how to hold the paddle: one hand on top of the lever, and the other hand on the shaft. I wasn't comfortable standing, so he suggested I kneel.

That day, the water was higher than the previous days we had on the beach. The breeze was pushing out toward the sea, and the waves were soft and airy as they splashed upon the sand.

I Velcro-strapped the paddle board leash to my ankle and hopped on the board. At that moment, there weren't many people in the water, and I paddled smoothly away from land.

My husband snapped a few pictures as I glided out. My intention was to go out a bit, and then turn around. I'm a decent swimmer, but when the water is deep, I don't like it much.

I looked back and saw I was still close to shore. My daughters were waving at me. Yes, I felt like a cool mom—*Wonder Woman*.

As the waves carried me out, I became overtaken by the beauty of the deep green color of the water. Soon, I was moving a little faster, and realized the "No Swimming" pole was coming up quick. I turned back and saw I had gone farther than I had anticipated. So, I began paddling to turn the board



around.

It became obvious to me after a few seconds that I might be paddling the wrong way—I couldn't remember what the man had told me. Soon, the pole was inches from me, I quickly jabbed the pole with my paddle to push-off of it and swing around, instead the board bumped right past it.

I glanced over my shoulder and saw my husband, getting tinier and tinier and so I waded in panic for him. *Oh Jesus, could he see me?*

"Help," I screamed.

But, I was too far away for anyone to really hear me.

I began to panic and so I paddled and paddled, but it was useless, I was being pulled out farther and farther into the deeper waters. *Crap. I don't like deep water!* The paddle felt suddenly heavy. My heart was beating rapidly.

*Got to breathe...Got to breathe...My kids! I got to get back to my girls. I have to try again.*

And so, I plunged the paddle into the water and started paddling again. *I have to do it right this time. Come on, damn it, come on...*

It was eerily quiet out on the water. I couldn't see my kids on the sand. *Where did they go? Are they still safe? Shit!*

I was all alone. Having two, beautiful, active daughters, I'm never by myself, and I've often craved "my alone" time. Well, I was getting it now, and suddenly I didn't want to be alone anymore. I wanted my husband and daughters...I wanted my crazy, chaotic life back.

I needed help. And I needed help fast. I was insanely scared, and I started praying to God to save me somehow. *Oh Lord, what have done? I'm so sorry. Sorry for how I've been toward my girls and my husband. Please, please, help me.*

My help came via my husband— running into the water and swimming toward me. But gosh, he was so far away. *How long would it take for him to reach me? Would he reach me at all?*

Seeing him, gave me encouragement, and so I fought with the paddle, and I was able to rotate the board and head toward my husband and land.

We moved slowly toward each other in a breathless attempt to get closer and closer. And, when he reached me, exhausted, I jumped into the water, momentarily sinking but then frantically coming up for air and grabbing onto the board. Together, we gradually swam with the board toward shore.

The scary/sad part of this whole experience was that with at least twenty or so people in our surrounding area where we had our towels and umbrella, not one other person came into the water and helped.

*I repeat...NOT ONE. NOT ONE DAMN PERSON. Even the rental supervisor wasn't near the water. He was off loading the boards.*

Maybe we didn't look like we needed help, but I personally would have thought it odd to see someone floating on a paddle board going farther out, while another person swimming hastily toward them. *Doesn't that seem out of sorts to you?*

Both of my daughters were thankfully safe. They stayed put under the umbrella, but they had been screaming hysterically. They had gotten frightened and thought my husband and I would never come back. Who could blame them? Seeing their father swim out to sea toward their mother who was drifting in deep water.

We tried remaining calm as best as we can as we swam back. When we got back on land; beat beyond belief, I tried smiling as best as I could and reassured the girls that all was okay.

*"No big deal. Momma just paddled way too far. Papa is our hero and brought Momma back. See, we are all fine."*

But, inside my gut, I was shaking uncontrollably—wondering what could have become of me if my husband hadn't come out?

We spent the rest of the day and evening talking to our children about the situation, keeping it light, but stressing the importance of "water" safety and for them to consider retaking swimming lessons again.

*Lesson Learned*—straight out of the mouths of babes: "Momma, don't try something if aren't sure how to do it, even if it was free."

And, they were right. I let them down. I had panicked and that was what had gotten me in trouble. Had I laid on my stomach and paddled with my arms in the water instead of the stupid paddle, maybe it might have been easier to turn around and come to shore. Maybe I should have hopped off as soon as I knew I had gone too far, and just swam back? *Maybe if...Maybe if...Maybe if...Too many "maybe ifs" to account for.*

I was lucky my husband had come; I hadn't even considered the threat of sharks (that's another story altogether).

I praise God, for this second chance of life. I really, really do. This chance to make it right to the Lord, somehow in the ...Very Next Thing...

*What is it that He wants from me in my very next thing?*

Now it's your turn: *What is God asking you to do in your very next thing?*

**NOTE:** This blog was inspired by *Casting Crowns: "The Very Next Thing"*. Click [here](#) for video.

#verynextthing, #castingcrowns, #standuppaddleboardsurfing, #paddleboardsurfing, #amwriting, #writing, #secondchanceatlife, #thankfulheart, #gratefulheart.

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# To Audio, or Not to Audio: That is the Question – Courtesy of Hometown Reads

June 15, 2017

I recently had the opportunity to be a guest blogger for [Hometown Reads](#). “... a community dedicated to serving local authors across the country, by helping them connect with readers in their hometown through what we call the [Read Local movement](#). Their site is the first of its kind to organize authors by local community, a design that is intended to facilitate both networking for authors and exposure/connection to more readers...”

*“A version of this post originally ran on the [Hometown Authors](#) site on June 13th, 2017.”*

Please check out the blog courtesy of Hometown Reads on whether creating audiobooks is for you at: <http://hometownauthors.com/everything-else/to-audio-or-not-to-audio-that-is-the-question/>.

For more info, go to [Hometown Reads](#).

For authors, go to: [Hometown Authors](#).

# The Empty Nest – Hope in Front of Me

May 30, 2017



*"The Chronicles of Esther and Mel – The Last Chapter."*

To catch up on the previous chronicles go to:

Part I: [The Nature of Life](#)

Part II: [Don't Mess with Momma](#)

For the past month, Esther, my "mother-to-be" duck has been my writing muse – becoming a friend and confidant, bizarre as it may seem.

From the moment I found out that she had moved in on our property, I made it a point to check on her and talk with her. I prayed for her safety daily from squirrels, raccoons, and coyotes. I lent Esther my ear when she wanted to vent and I was there to comfort a nervous, first-time mother.

I knew our time was short. And, when all three of her ducklings hatched on Mother's Day, minus the one egg that rolled down the grassy hill and died, I never expected what happened next...

The very next morning, Esther was gone. The only things left in her nest were empty, cracked egg shells and feathers. I was stunned. Certainly, I thought she might have stayed a few more days, or even given me a heads up that she would leave. But, Esther didn't.

It was all a surprise and I was saddened. I had gotten used to her for the last thirty days, seeing her sitting on her nest of eggs. Even my daughters were happy she was there at our home.

The day Esther left, I stood over her empty nest, puzzled at the quick disappearance. I was reminded of a scripture passage in [Luke 24:1-12](#) the day after Jesus was crucified on the cross. Early the next morning, Mary, the mother of James, Mary Magdalene, and other women went to the tomb to bring spices and oils so they could anoint Jesus' body. However, when they got there, the tomb was empty and Jesus' body was gone.

The scripture goes on to tell us that the women were "*greatly perplexed*". I can only imagine their shock, disappointment, and fear of what might have happened to Jesus' body.

Now, it may seem silly that I am comparing Jesus' empty tomb scripture to Esther's departure, but as I stood there, my sadness began to lift. Instead, I became filled with hope. Hope that this courageous duck mom would know where to take her babies, and give those little ducklings life skills to thrive in a very dangerous world.

In light of the recent terrorist attack in Manchester, England, the fatal assault on the Coptic Christians in Egypt, and remembering our Veterans this Memorial Day Weekend, my heart bleeds in constant worry of what kind of tomorrow we have to look forward to with so much violence.

And then, I read one of the most important lines of the scripture, *verse 8: "And they remembered His words."* The Lord's promise for us.

I certainly don't have control over the worldly things that happen each and every day, but I have control over how I spend my day. Doing good, serving others, and keeping my eyes fixed on the things above. Praying regularly for continued salvation for myself and the rest of the world, so that we can have...

*A better place...A peaceful place...For our children.*

Today's blog has been inspired by the song: "Hope in Front of Me" by Christian Artist, Danny Gokey. See the YouTube video [here](#).

Where ever you are my dear Esther, I hope you and your little ducklings are safe too.

Until next time...

#MissyouEsther #DannyGokey #HopeinFrontofMe #TheEmptyNest #amwriting #PrayforOurNation #PrayforOurWorld #MemorialDay #Aducklife

**Resources:**

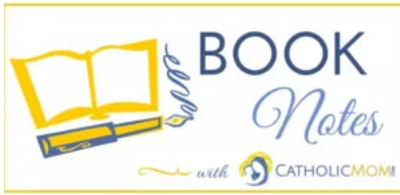
"Holy Bible" New King James Version (NKJV). Scripture: Luke24:1-12.



<https://youtube.com/watch?v=O5GFidGGGM>

# Still that Girl – The Road Less Traveled (CatholicMom.com – Article)

May 22, 2017



I recently published an article on CatholicMom.com on my writing adventure to writing a middle-grade fairy tale. Please go to the link below to read more about it.

[CatholicMom.com](http://catholicmom.com) is a great website that offers encouragement for moms everywhere.

<http://catholicmom.com/2017/05/22/still-girl-road-less-traveled/>

# Don't Mess with Momma

May 14, 2017



*"The Chronicles of Esther and Mel."*

EXTRA...EXTRA...THIS JUST IN...LATEST UPDATE

Esther sighting. Taking a stroll the day before Mother's Day.



On this glorious Mother's Day, one little duckling hatched.



A FEW DAYS AGO...

We had a scare. Esther was gone. Several of her feathers were strewn all over the red mulch, and one of our solar lamps was cracked in half. It looked like there had been a brawl of some sort. The worst of it; a broken piece of egg shell lay near the nest.

There was more. I followed the trail of shell pieces on my lawn. At the bottom of the hill, the remains of a cracked-open duckling egg.

I ran to it and bent to inspect it. There inside, I saw matted black feathers and a little yellow beak peeking out. There was no movement and I knew it was long dead. I stood up and turned my head, it was a gruesome sight, too gruesome for pictures.

I walked back up and peered over the nest. It looked like the other eggs were still there, and they appeared intact.

*Phew. Thank God! But, where was Esther?*

I prayed she was okay. The problem now was who would take care of the rest of the eggs if Esther was not around?

My daughters came home from school and I had to tell them the news.

My older one bawled her eyes out. "Esther's babies will die! She won't have a Mother's Day."

My younger daughter had a different perspective. "What did the baby duck look like? Was the egg bloody? Can I see the egg, Momma?"

On and on, the girls went. Each with their own analysis of what might have happened.

*What if a coyote had gotten her and her egg? What if she was hurt? And, where the hell was Mel? He's the protector.*

I spent the remaining afternoon trying to distract my girls from thoughts of Esther. Truly, I was just as sad. She chose our house to create her nest, and she didn't mind us walking by and peeking at her. It was cool to visit with her too.

Gosh, it was just the other day I had witnessed a lesson in love.

*It had rained for days and finally the sun came out. I was inside with the windows open when I heard a lot of quacking. I came rushing out to check on her.*

*"Hey, what's the matter?"*

*She quacked. "Mel is supposed to be here and he's not."*

*"He'll come, don't worry."*

*Esther huffed. "He probably went ponding."*

*Ponding???*

*I crouched down beside her. "What's 'ponding'?"*

*Esther kicked up her webbed feet. "Seriously?"*

*I nodded. "Yes, seriously. I have no idea what 'ponding' is."*

*She proceeded to tell me that it was male-duck game played on a pond where the ducks have to balance wet leaves on their beaks without dropping them, and then paddle to a make-shift basket in the water. The first duck with the most leaves in a basket wins.*

*I started laughing. Strangely, it reminded me of golf because most male-humans play the game.*

*Esther snorted. "It's not funny. He's supposed watch the eggs while I go and do my business, and he's still not here."*

*I was about to say...maybe he had good reason, maybe he was running behind...maybe he forgot...maybe...when suddenly, we see Mel fly through air and land a few feet away. He strode up all dapper and manly.*

*Esther began quacking loudly and pacing. It startled Mel and he hurried over.*

*"Where have you been? You're late!" She blurted.*

*Mel puffed out his chest. "Ponding, like I told you."*

*She shouted back. "You did not!"*

*"Yes, I did."*

*"Did not!"*

*Mel looked at me as if noticing me for the first time. I happen to be standing between them when the shouting match began. Aware of the awkwardness, I quickly got out of the way. It's not good getting in the middle of couple fights.*

*Mel snuggled up against Esther's neck. She seemed to relax. "I'm sorry for making you upset," he whispered. "But, I did tell you, yesterday."*

*Esther put her head down. "You're right. I just remembered. You did tell me. My mind has been fogged lately. I'm sorry."*



*"It's okay. Me too. You've got a lot on your mind." Mel then nudged her away. "Get going. I've got the eggs."*

*"Are you..."*

*"Yes, now go."*

*Esther quacked and flapped her wings and away she went.*

*I gave Mel a thumbs up. "Good hubby."*

I momentarily closed my eyes and wished Esther would come back. This was her home.

"Momma, Momma, I'm hungry. Can I have a snack?"

And, just like that, I was back to reality.

Later that evening, after dinner, I decided to go for a walk. It was almost eight, but still light out. I strolled around our block. I couldn't get the vision of the little cracked duckling egg out of my mind.

Just as I approached our house, I thought to look at Esther's nest again. As I approached, I saw Esther making her way towards me.

*Oh, my Goodness!* I marched up to her.

"Esther, Esther, you're back! Are you okay?" *She looked alright.*

The duck ignored me and went to her nest where she was squatting to get comfortable.

I waited until she was settled.

"I've been worried about you. Where have you been?"

Esther lifted her head toward me. "I don't want to talk about it."

"But, but, you little egg? You feathers?"

"Leave me alone. I'm really tired."

I nodded and took it as my queue to leave. "Okay, okay, I understand. We can talk another time." *I didn't want to mess with this Momma. She gave me the look, you know...*

I turned and left. A pain had been lifted from my heart. *Esther was back. She's okay. The girls will be relieved. And, it will be a wonderful Mother's Day, after all.*

As to what happened to her? I don't know. Whatever it was, it had to be.

# The Nature of Life

April 27, 2017



*"The Chronicles of Esther and Mel."*

Today, I met my new neighbor. It was by accident. Hidden behind a bush and sitting on top of red mulch, I noticed a female duck. I must have startled her as I strode past because her feathers fluffed up and she squawked, or quacked. I couldn't tell the difference, for I too, was taken by surprise, and jumped back.

We acknowledged each other and politely said our hellos. I proceeded to tip-toe on by, when she called after me to come back and sit with her awhile.

I hesitated. *This is weird. What if she bites me?* But, then I obliged and sat down about a foot away, on one of the retaining wall's stone pavers. *Didn't want to crowd her.*

It was windy and warm out, so I brushed aside the bangs from my eyes. I could smell the White Callery Pear Blossoms, and rain. It would rain later.

At first we just sat there, gazing at one another. We were strangers of course, and trying to figure out what to talk about.

It was awkward, but not really. I turned my attention to my feet. I adjusted the toe strap of the right flip-flop and then began to scrutinize the pink color on my toe nails, when she spoke.

"Thank you for joining me. I haven't had an opportunity for any 'grown-up' conversation, in well...quite some time. You see, I'm expecting the hatching of five little ducklings, soon." She chuckled. "It kind of gets lonely out here, if you know what I mean."

I smiled. "Well, congratulations are definitely in order. This is exciting news."

She ruffled her feathers. "I appreciate it. Oh, I'm Esther, by the way."

"I'm Chiara."

I looked around my property, having strolled around it often, and wondered. "How long have you been here?"

"A few weeks."

"Hmm...Never seen you before. You camouflage pretty good."

Esther quaked. "Ah...that's my job."

We talked some more. She was originally from Ohio, but her "duck" husband, Mel, was born in Chicago. They met down south and together, migrated back here in December. They married, and well, the rest is history.

I told her about my daughters, but Esther already knew about them; having seen the girls running around the backyard.

She shook her head in disgust. "Your children are loud and rambunctious."

I apologized, embarrassed for my wild little kids. Esther quacked again, admitting she was only kidding.

We became quiet again, and I went back to studying my toes. *Gosh, I have to get my toes done soon.*

Esther spoke up. "Ah...silence is golden."

I snorted. "Get your rest because it won't be quiet for long."

She sighed. "You're right."

"In fact," I continued, "do all the sleeping now because once those little ducklings are out, forget about ever sleeping."

Esther quacked. "I remember the good ol' days of freedom."

"Yeah," I agreed. *Freedom, huh? It's so long ago.* But then I gestured with my hand. "It's all worth it. Bringing life into the world."

"I'm scared," she revealed.

I shrugged. "I understand. I'm scared every single day too. There are no guarantees in life. You do your best in protecting, and loving and feeding your children. The rest is up to God."

Esther turned away. I could tell she was emotional.

She looked back at me. "I'm sorry. My hormones are out of whack."

I laughed. *A duck having hormone issues.* "Having ducklings will do that to you."

We giggled.

I then wondered about something else. "Do you get up? Walk around? You know, stretch, and go to the bathroom?"

Esther fluffed her feathers. "Are you kidding? Of course. My butt feels like a rock after sitting here all day long, not to mention my legs are so stiff."

I nodded. "That's good. What about the eggs? Are they okay being left alone?"

She stretched her neck. "Mel comes and guards the nest while I go and do my personal affairs, if you know what I mean?"

I grinned. *Yes, private time is important.*

Silence fell upon us again, and I was getting antsy. My own butt was hurting from sitting on the retaining wall.

Esther yawned. "Well, if you'll excuse me, it's time for a nap."



Got it. So, I stood up.

She quaked. "I liked our conversation."

I waved. "Me too."

"Hope to see you soon. Please, stop by again."

I said my goodbye, and strutted away.

The conversation left my heart filled. Filled in such a way one feels after having enjoyed the company of someone else. Content. *Did I really just talk to a duck?*

I realized fiction or not, one point was true. We were different, very different. Esther was a duck, an animal, and I was a human. However, we held a common bond—motherhood.

In the daily grind of managing a home, nourishing the young, handling of the homework duty, and being a referee, comes the rewards of nurturing life and sharing wisdom with the ones you love.

Raising children is one of the hardest duties of a woman's life. Sometimes, we too, need a good conversation with another being.

That evening, I peeked out my window and saw Mel standing guard. Esther had gone out to do her duties.

I snickered. "Good Mel. Take care of your bride, buddy."

And, that's the nature of life.

#motherhood #raisingkids #momconversation #momsdayout #natureoflife #amwriting #readlocal

# Call Me – The Telephone

April 11, 2017



Just off of I-65, about forty miles from downtown Indianapolis is an ordinary McDonalds. There, I was greeted by this pay phone. Remember these? Immediately, two songs from my childhood pop in my head.

“867-5309/Jenny” By Tommy Tutone. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WTdTwcmxyo>

“Call Me” By Skyy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYpNQXK6IpM>

Yes, I’m dating myself here, but that’s okay. You see, ironically enough, both songs were from 1981. The early 80s was an era where disco was slowly fading, hard rock still dominated the music scene, and electronic dance and funk were coming on, as well as a new kind of music, soft rock. Go figure.

And, I got to tell you, the wonderful mix of music was very influential to my coming of age. Ah, the good ol’ days...Okay, back to task...

So, let’s fast forward to McDonalds. I’m humming the tunes. Each taking their turn in my brain, while I’m standing in line to order a medium coffee and oatmeal to go. Finally, with the bag of my paid purchases in hand, I pass by this dinosaur of a communication machine again.

Pushing the songs in the background of my mind, I got to thinking. Today, we are living in such a fast world where technical companies are at war on who can make the fastest, sleekest phone with all the gadgets from tracking your steps, food intake, and mood modeling, all at your fingertips, 24/7.

In my youth, one had to drive, walk, or ride a bike to find a pay phone. They were usually at gas stations or grocery stores. If you look back at some of the television shows/movies of the 1980’s, you’ll notice that secret conversations were often held at pay phones, rendezvous happened near the pay phones, and arrests and burglary heists were made at those spots.

These days, I just have to pull out my cell phone out of my purse, and I can make a call, read a book, and track the happenings of the world, with just a few clicks.

Are we better off as a result of this great technology? Are we more connected to family and friends? Are we more available to those in need? The biggest question currently rocking in my brain (ha, did you get that, “rocking”) is: are we more sincere in the time we give of ourselves to others?

The pay phone reminds me of the lack of relationship-building we’ve lost due to things being instantaneously available. People at that time made an effort to call someone. They spent the \$.25 cents or more to talk and hear someone’s voice, and really listen. They had to physically get to the pay phone, maybe grab a snack or buy food on the way in or way out of the establishment, and usually their mood would change as a result of a good or bad conversation.

We can’t go back, but maybe the next time you see a pay phone, let it be *your* reminder to connect with others in a way of sincerity and compassion for the human race because that’s all we got left.

#payphone #connecting #callme #8675309 #the80s #Onehitwonders #stayconnected #besincere #payphoneversuscellphone

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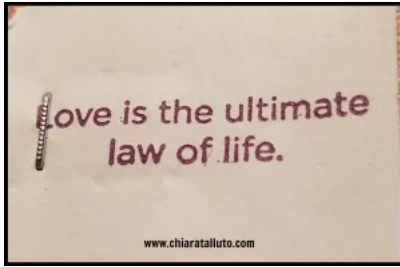
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# Love is the Ultimate Law of Life

March 23, 2017



I found this tag attached to my Ginger tea bag. I spent a little time and stared at each word:

*Love*

*Is*

*The*

*Ultimate*

*Law*

*Of*

*Life*

In the U.S. and all over the rest of the world, countries, states, cities, towns, and communities, all have laws. Laws are what keep our world and society working seamlessly in a crazy, sort of pattern. Laws protect you. Laws make sure there is some consistency and process. Laws have rules that must be followed and adhered to.

But, what if there were no laws? What if there were no rules? How would everything run?

My first thought goes to enforcing the law of speed limits. Just imagine there were no speed limits on a regular road? Some would drive over the speed limit and others below. Would you risk crossing the street where cars don't have to yield to pedestrians, or even stop at Stop lights? Not me!

What if there weren't any laws to how your meat and poultry were regulated? Or, even your fruits and vegetables? I'd be very fearful on what I eat, that is for sure.

Well, this one statement of love, got me thinking about the "law of love".

<http://www.Dictionary.com> defines Love as:

1. *A profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person.*
2. *A feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend.*
3. *Sexual passion or desire.*
4. *A person toward whom love is felt; beloved person; sweetheart.*
5. *(Used in direct address as a term of endearment, affection, or the like): Would you like to see a movie, love?*
6. *A love affair; an intensely amorous incident; amour.*
7. *Sexual intercourse; copulation.*

Numbers 1, 3, and 4 resonate to me the most. I believe these statements insinuate that love is granted freely, love is bequeathed toward a person/human, love is tender and love is rough.

Laws don't generally have "feelings" associated with them. Laws are factual in nature and are usually in some kind of systematic order.

Love has no order and no facts. It is given and it is received, love is felt and love is spoken, love is joyful and but it can also be hurtful.

What if we had another law? To love one another regardless of color, creed, or religion, but rather done by an act of civility to flourish our human prosperity? What if, we made... "*Love the ultimate law of life?*"

How would our world be then?



# “Mom and Pop” Bookstores – Rare Gems

February 24, 2017

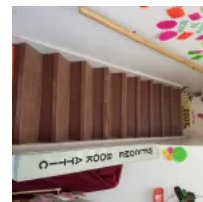
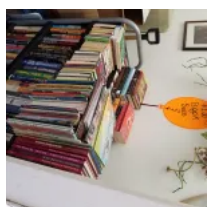


I almost passed it up driving south on Oak toward downtown Bartlett. Turning back, I pulled onto a blacktop drive and parked in front of the *Bartlett Coin Shop*.

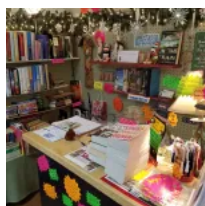
The *Booklady's Book Attic* was situated on the corner of a house which was also occupied by a women's fashion boutique, *Little Shop on Oak*.

At the entrance, I hesitated a bit before turning the knob. You see, I'm a sucker for bookstores and even though I couldn't resist going in, there was this exciting apprehension surging through my body of discovering the unknown behind the steel-framed door.

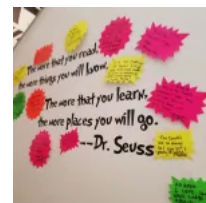
When I pulled open the door, a long, brown staircase greeted me. To the right, stood a black rolling cart with numerous books, all organized by height. A colorful sign announced that the books were \$1.00 each. On my left, there was a bronze stand with three rows of books. These were the free copies.



I placed my booted shoe on the first step. It creaked as I began my ascent up the stairs. The walls were painted an egg-shell white, and brightly colored sticky notes of testimonials and customer signatures, provided a warm accent in the vestibule.

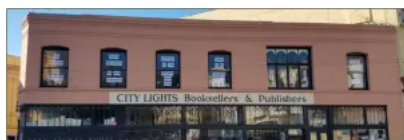


At the first landing, hand-crafted fishing signs hung from the wall. And, when I reached the top floor, a small, dark brown and beige-topped wooden desk stood in front of crowded shelves of books, toy figurines, and store advertisements.



The surroundings felt familiar and homey to me. Having worked at a Barnes and Noble bookstore, the smell of wood, leather, and cardboard boxes filled my senses. A radio played light rock music in the background.

My heart began to beat with excitement. This was my territory. Books, books, and books.



A memory suddenly materialized in my mind. It was the summer of 2002, and my husband and I had taken a long weekend vacation to San Francisco. While exploring *Fisherman's Wharf*, we ended up walking onto Columbus Ave. to experience the many Italian restaurants and sit "al fresco" for a double-shot of espresso. Dizzy from people-watching, we continued our trek further up Columbus where we happened to stumble upon a bookstore called *City Lights Booksellers & Publishers*.

Strolling into the retailer, it was as if I had been transported to another time period—a very different time. This bookstore has been a literary meeting place since 1953. *City Lights* is a landmark general bookstore, internationally known for its expert selection of books and for its commitment to free intellectual inquiry.

I later researched *City Lights*. It was founded by poet/author, Laurence Ferlinghetti and Peter D. Martin (who left two years later). Mr. Ferlinghetti is the author of many works, including, poetry, translations, fiction, theatre, art criticism, and film narration, but his most famous written work was “A Coney Island of the Mind”—a collection of poetry published in 1958.

*City Lights* also became a famous hangout for many authors but especially Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs who frequented the establishment and started what became the “Beat Generation”. *City Lights* has also been named as one of the top ten independent bookstores in America.

The floors were worn and uneven, the air was dusty and I must have sneezed at least twenty times, but the place was filled with the most eccentric/eclectic books I have ever thumbed through. I shivered with pleasure.

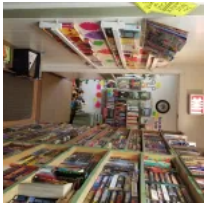
Ah yes, when I close my eyes, I can still picture the dust particles dancing in the air.

But, I digress. Back at the *Booklady's Book Attic*, my eyes glanced about, taking in this little book store in what resembled an oversized attic, hence the name.



There was so much to see, I didn't know where to look first. And, I have to admit, I was experiencing the same exhilaration of *City Lights*—beating heart and sweaty palms, and mind you, I hadn't even browsed *any* of the books.

The cluttered hallway beckoned me. There were stacks of books: books on the floor, books in boxes, and books in different color bags.



The Proprietor, Ms. Pam, enthusiastically greeted me. We got to chatting. I told her about my published books. Pam is also a great supporter of all local writers. Thank you, Pam!

Here we are pictured together...



She's been at this location for about two years. Previously, this space was formerly occupied by accountants, contractors, a flooring business, and meeting room rentals. However, prior to the various businesses, this property has had some history of its own. According to Pam and a little investigating on my own (watch out Magnum P.I.), this “house” currently located at 138 S. Oak was once referred to as *Block 2, lot 9-10*.

Thanks to the *Bartlett History Museum*, here's an abbreviated rundown of some its history...

- In 1874, the very first owners, Mr. and Mrs. John Carr bought the property and they build a home. This property was part of the original 40 acres that established Bartlett in 1873. Sometime later, Mr. Carr builds another home on the same lot. So, the house that stands there today is not the original one that the Carrs first built.
- The Carrs eventually move to Aurora.
- Lots 9-10 change ownership back and forth from 1883 to 1893.
- In 1893, the Carrs sell the lots 9-10 to Mr. Louis Stumpf for \$1,800.
- In 1918, Mr. Stumpf sells his lot to Mr. August Schick for \$3,600.
- In 1921, Mr. Schick sells lots 9-10 to Mr. Fred Brandt. No info on how much it was sold for. And, because house numbers didn't exist at that time, it is still unclear if lots 9-10 is 138 S. Oak, where the bookstore and boutique are currently located.
- According to a 1930 census, it showed the Brandts are living elsewhere.
- In June of 1977, the property was zoned for commercial and since then, has been home to many businesses.



**Caption:** Here's a picture of the Stumpf family. Historical information and image provided by the *Bartlett History Museum*, Bartlett, IL. To learn more about Bartlett history visit, go to: [www.villageofbartlettmuseums.org](http://www.villageofbartlettmuseums.org).

But, now it is Pam's book haven. She is a connoisseur of novel genres who is putting her imprint on her own history and preserving a dying brick and mortar business of bookselling.

The floor creaks; it's pretty tight—watch for the angled/sloping ceilings. There are secret doors, and maybe even some ghosts lurking around—ask Pam about “Mr. Poe”.



Above all else, there are books for all ages with shelves overflowing with stories that defy time. So many classics; new and old, and forgotten books, to peruse and enjoy. This place is for the book enthusiast....

Just read what some of the patrons have said about the *Booklady's Book Attic* from her Facebook page (see link below under **References**).

The testimonials themselves speak volumes as to the care that Ms. Pam has taken for every author's written word.

This store is everything I would want and more! Great service, awesome selection, great prices, and Pam gives back and helps others. I will always support someone with a heart like hers!

I finally stopped in at the BookLady's Book Attic after driving past it everyday on my way to work. What an amazing shop!! A great selection of books that should appeal to everyone! I was particularly impressed by the large and interesting collection of children's and young adult books. Pam is super friendly and was really great to talk to. I can't wait to visit again!

Truly a charming and must-see little shop in downtown Bartlett. There are a wide variety of books in all genres and for all-ages available, all in perfect shape and at rock-bottom prices. The owner is probably one of the most friendly people you will ever meet.

This place is amazing!! I feel in love from the moment I walked in, I was in book heaven!!! Pam is super friendly and so easy to approach. My girls loved getting all their new books and can't wait to go back."

I hope you get to visit this place. If so, tell Pam I sent you.

*Booklady's Book Attic*

138 S. Oak Ave.

Bartlett, IL.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

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# Do Small Things with Great Love – A New Year Wish

December 30, 2016



If you haven't noticed, we are at the end of the 2016 year, lots of things to reflect upon:

- Was it a good year for you?
- Did you accomplish "all" that you intended?
- What could you have done differently?
- What were the things that didn't go as planned?
- What were the things you are most proud of?

A brand new year is coming. Some can't wait and others are stressing and worrying about the "to do" lists. Whether you are ready or not, 2017 will be here. You might find solitude in the final days of this year to putting aside your political agendas, differences, and just winding down.

It's hard, I know. We live in a world of accomplishments and failures. Always with our feet to the ground, and in a sprint mode. But maybe this time around, you may want to take a different tactic.

Let me explain...

This Christmas, my husband and daughters gave me a [Wonder Woman](#) doll. Yes, you read correctly, a doll. No diamond, no new pair of leather boots, or a brand new purse. *A doll.* I got to tell you though, it is one of the best gifts I have ever received.

You see, as a young child, one of my favorite television shows to watch was [Wonder Woman](#). It aired from 1975 to 1979, and it only had three seasons. The show was based off of the popular DC Comic, "The Adventures of Wonder Woman."

I never got into the comic books, but I really enjoyed the [TV show](#). Lynda Carter, the actress who played *Diana Prince*, was a normal person who epitomized for me a super-willed woman, fighting the "bad guys", and solving everyday situations in a grand fashion. And then, turning into a civilian again.

Recently, [Queen Elizabeth II](#) aired a [2016 Christmas](#) speech. One of the things she [mentioned](#) was... "I often draw strength from meeting ordinary people doing extraordinary things..."

That line alone has resonated with me as I ponder about the final days of the 2016 year, all the while cherishing my precious *Wonder Woman* doll.

You see, I'm no "wonder woman". I certainly am not armed with a magic belt that gives me strength, gold bracelets that can stop any bullet, a tiara that can be thrown as a returning weapon, and an unbreakable lasso that can force anyone to tell the truth. I'm a human being with many, many flaws.

I am an ordinary person with the potential to do extraordinary things. And, that "thing" doesn't have to be big, either. The same can apply to you.

The greatest act anyone can give is *love*. But, in order to have love, you must be kind and have the courage to love.

Like [Queen Elizabeth II](#), the extraordinary can be found in people and in common things. Like Wonder Woman, strength is derived from doing what's right and just for your fellow humans.

So, have courage friends, put *love* as one of your “to do” lists. Battle for a worthy cause. And always, always, be kind.

Happy New Year! May it be a great ending to a new beginning for *your* 2017 year.

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#smallthingswithgreatlove, #happynewyear2017, #bekind, #Loveoneanother, #prayingforagoodyear #endoftheyearwishforyou, #my2016goodbye,  
#welcome2017

# Writer Depression: Fact or Fiction?

December 13, 2016



[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

A few weeks ago, I launched my second book, *Petrella, the Gillian Princess*. A middle-grade fairy tale aimed at children between the ages of eight to thirteen. It was supposed to be what I call my “interim” book. A filler book before my full-length, Women’s Fiction, *Make it Right; Make it Matter*.

I thought this book would have been a three-to-four month project with a hired illustrator, and some minor tweaks of a story that I had written back in 2012 for an anthology book, but it never made the cut. Instead, it turned out to be much, much more.

In fact, I resurrected the story, late 2014, for my daughters—a little gem for them. I began working on smoothing out the storyline. I was bored. I had just launched my debut Christian Romance, *Love’s Perfect Surrender*, and was doing author events, but I was itching to write again.

And so, I started rereading it; several times to myself and then to my daughters, hired a professional editor, and put together a launch team of readers. Forty-seven versions later, I completed *Petrella, the Gillian Princess*.

During the last three weeks before the reveal, I worked well into the night, finalizing the story, sending out communication, setting up distribution channels, and marketing the release of the story.

(I can attest. This is the rigorous process of an Indie Author. Wearing multiple hats and handling *all* aspects of writing and promotion for each and every book, he/she wants to publish.)

Exhausted and fatigued, and sometimes delirious, I plugged away at completing this project to the best I knew how. I made a commitment to myself and my daughters, and I was going to accomplish it no matter what. So, why did I put myself through such emotional stress for a just a 96-page tale?

In a recent *interview* with *Mundus Media Ink*, whom I used to help me convert my book into paperback and ebook format, I had this to say about my writing passion:

*“I write for the euphoric desire and need to transfer spiraling thoughts into words that move people emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I love taking everyday life situations and circumstances that people encounter, struggle and conquer, and turn it into creative storylines.”*

On my website’s *Welcome* page, I say...

*“People often ask me what it’s like to write. I tell them the effect of living and breathing your character’s lives is like immersing yourself underwater for an indefinite amount of time. Time being the key word. When I know I’ve captured all the details required, that’s when I come up for air. You got to have a good set of lungs to be a writer.”*

On my *About* page of my website, this is the root reason for writing...

*“I have two addictions: reading and writing. I feel restless and empty when I can’t read fiction, write my deepest thoughts in my journal, or even write down story ideas. Writing calms me, centers me, and provides a healthy outlet to my communication of imaginary friends.”*

I can’t explain it, but I got to think that the fastest Marathon runners like *Dennis Kimetto* and *Emmanuel Mutai*, Olympians like *Michael Phelps*, renowned scientists like *Albert Einstein*, and inventors like *Steve Jobs*, would understand about passion, going beyond to find solutions, experiencing hopelessness when something goes wrong, and wondering, where do you go next when you’ve accomplished the highest record achievable?

I can’t break world records in running or swimming; I am definitely not a scientist; and I really haven’t invented anything. But, I can personally understand “post-partum” emotion. Growing and nurturing something inside me, talking to it, feeling the heartbeat and kicks, and going through all

sorts of sensations for nine months, not really seeing what that “final” creation looks like, but loving it, no less. Even though, seeing your baby live when it is born is the most awesome, blessed miracle; it’s just not the point here. Keep reading (wink...wink)

Which leads me to this...

*Petrella, the Gillian Princess* was released to the world on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016, two weeks later from my original launch date. A story dedicated to my daughters who were the inspiration behind the main characters: *Princess Petrella, King Hermas, and Finerd*.

Oh, the many nights of conversation I had in my head with all my characters. And now, poof...*Done*. No more tweaking or changing the storyline. Conversations ceasing altogether because they’ve been documented, transcribed, and are now printed.

And so, right after the book launched, I felt myself plummet into a dark hole of isolation, realizing this ugly feeling of finality.

Going online, I did a Google search on “Writer Depression/Why Writers are Depressed?” I discovered there were over thirteen million hits on the key words.

I started reading up on well-known writers who have suffered depression during their writing career. A few are listed here.

- Sylvia Plath
- William Styron
- J.K. Rowling
- Anne Sexton

I then started researching ways to overcome these dark feelings. And I learned the importance of ...

- Setting a regular schedule of writing—Doesn’t always happen with me. I’m a mom first and the “CEO” of my home; so chores and errands sometimes take precedence over writing.
- Exercising—Yep, every day...I have too even for 15-20 minutes a day.
- Getting enough sleep—Love this one! How? Most of my creativity happens after 9 p.m., and I write in the middle of the night.
- Talking with others or joining various social groups; Do volunteer work—I try and am involved in groups and organizations.
- Even taking a break from writing altogether—Eh, maybe?

We are in the last month of the year. Lots to do and accomplish. I’m a little burnt out of writing and have reluctantly decided to give myself time to relax (hard to do as I am a type “A” personality), celebrate having written and published two books, and do a little of selling/promo for *Petrella, the Gillian Princess*. Importantly, I want to focus on the Advent Season/Christmas.

I have two projects waiting in the wings. A short-story, a Dystopian-type tale that I had written back in 2007 which I want to resurrect again. And, a Woman’s fiction in which I have a ton of edits to work through. At this point, I am not sure when I’ll start those projects. Time will tell. I need to pause.

One of my favorite up and coming Country singers these days is [Brett Eldredge](#). A fellow Illinoian and Cubs fan too, I had the joy of seeing him perform live in October with *Keith Urban*.

His song, “*Wanna Be*” is a perfect anthem for where I am with writing these days. It’s a song probably better suited for weddings, but none-the-less, I’ll make it my own. Check out his video [here](#).

It’s my muse to the Lord that I “wanna be” that messenger of words for Him. He has given me a gift of writing and I must surrender to accomplishing that task. I “wanna be” that writer for my readers—by writing stories about people who struggle with decisions and conflicts that arise in their lives. Things that we can all relate to. And, I “wanna be” that role-model for my daughters—tell honest and compelling stories, show them what it takes to work hard and persevere, and never give up for the right cause.

Because in the end...this is what sums it up. “*When you’re standing in the moment, every life has a sound track...*” Every character has a voice, an action, and thought.

I don’t know what the next chapter of my life is going to be, but I now understand (finally, after two books), that it’s okay to grieve when I finish a book, and that I can slowly begin to wean myself from the story and let it flourish—Just like a newborn baby, there is a need to let it become.

“Sometimes it’s the **unseen** experience that helps one understand the **seen** potential.”

If you or someone you love is experiencing feelings of depression or isolation, please contact:



**Resources:**

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# The Story Behind the Story...Behind the Story: Publishing My First Middle-Grade Fairy Tale

November 23, 2016



What constitutes a successful book launch?

How does one write a compelling story that readers will fall in love and read over and over again?

What type of discipline is involved in writing a book of any length?

Why did you write what you wrote in the first place?

How long does it take to write a book?

There are so many questions to how a book is written, drafted, produced, and published. But, one needs to go back to the root of why a writer writes in the first place.

Today marks the launch of my very first middle-grade fairy tale: *Petrella, the Gillian Princess*. A story about a courageous young princess who defies rank and authority to follow her heart. Click [here](#) for full synopsis.

This short story was written in the fall of 2012 with the intention of it being part of an anthology. It never made the cut. Placed in a drawer, it sat patiently, waiting. I didn't find it until the fall of 2014 while rummaging through old paperwork. After rereading it several times to myself and then to my daughters, I decided to bring the magic and imagination of *Petrella, the Gillian Princess* back to life. I spent the better part of 2015 and 2016 enhancing and streamlining the story, which I now have 47 versions of the tale.

**NOTE:** So, to answer the question on how long does it take to write a book? Well, as long as it takes to make it right in the writer's mind.

Recently, I sat down with Michelle Rene Goodhew from [Mundus Media Ink](#). We worked together on creating the paperback and ebook format for the book.

Click [here](#) for the interview.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# There Goes My Life

September 2, 2016



*"...There goes my life, there goes my future, my everything..."*

It's that time of year again. Summer is winding down, the weather is changing, fall clothes are already in department stores, and many kids are in school already, or returning back to school this week.

Another grade, another year of growing, and another year of homework. Ugh...

Some parents are breathing a sigh of relief; their children needing routine and discipline after a summer of freedom and fighting.

For me, the worries are just beginning. Call me a "mother hen" but I've felt the most secure while my girls are in my care.

Yes, I need time for myself. Who doesn't? The noise of life and children's chatter can overwhelm anyone.

However, I know my kids better than anyone and I pray every day for their well-being and safety, as well as for those teachers and grown-ups who are taking care of my loved ones during the day.

Nowadays, the world is not as safe as it once was. And maybe, we weren't as safe twenty, thirty, or even forty years ago, as we thought we were.

For those short hours that I am alone, my little girls are never far from my thoughts. Yes, I have more time to write and take care of me, but still...you know...

- For every picture drawn...*there goes my life*
- For every tear shed...*there goes my life*
- For every giggle...*there goes my life*
- For every silly story I am told...*there goes my life*
- For every tantrum...*there goes my life*
- For every hug and kiss...*there goes my life*
- For every single "I love you, mama"...*there goes my life*

Cherish them while they are little.

Cherish them while they are older.

Give them guidance while you can because life is fleeting, so I'm told.

*Lord, protect your precious treasures...please keep all the kids, your children, safe during this school year.*

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

Today's inspirational song: *There Goes My Life*, by Kenny Chesney. You can click [here](#) to see the video. The lyrics to the song are below.

*All he could think about was I'm too young for this Got my whole life ahead Hell I'm just a kid myself How'm I gonna raise one  
All he could see were his dreams going up in smoke So much for ditching this town and hanging out on the coast Oh well, those plans are long gone*

*And he said*

*There goes my life*

*There goes my future, my everything*

*Might as well kiss it all good-bye*

*There goes my life*

*A couple years of up all night and a few thousand diapers later*

*That mistake he thought he made covers up the refrigerator*

*Oh yeah...he loves that little girl*

*Momma's waiting to tuck her in as she stumbles up those stairs*

*She smiles back at him dragging that teddy bear*

*Sleep tight, blue eyes and bouncing curls*

*He smiles*

*There goes my life*

*There goes my future, my everything,*

*I love you, daddy goodnight*

*There goes my life*

*She had that Honda loaded down*

*With Abercrombie clothes and fifteen pairs of shoes and his American express*

*He checked the oil and slammed the hood, said your good to go*

*She hugged them both and headed off to the west coast*

*He cried*

*There goes my life*

*There goes my future, my everything*

*I love you*

*Baby good-bye*

# It's a Beautiful Life

August 25, 2016



My heart is ablaze, my soul is on fire.

- An earthquake of 6.2 magnitude struck central Italy. Hundreds have perished.
- Flooding and devastation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
- Hate crimes against Police.
- Constant shootings and killings in neighborhoods.
- Lawmaker support for abortion and late-term abortion procedures rampage. Click here to see the number of abortions performed daily and worldwide on any given day. <http://www.numberofabortions.com/>.
- Corruption and deception in politics everywhere.

Everything seems to be going to pot, lately.

What's the matter, World?

Why is there no value on human life anymore?

Every day, I read various online newsfeeds. On this particular day, I get up from my chair in the office and grab a soda. I'm in need something to zap me out of my rapid feeling of depression-away from the madness and sorrow enveloping our world.

I return, set my Coke can on the desk, and continue reading. Distracted, I open the top. Something silvery catches my eye. It is then that I notice the following words etched on the side of the can: "*It's a beautiful life*".

Huh? Really?

Are these words...*A diamond of hope in sand filled with sin?*

Many won't cry out, even though they are hurting. But for those few who do, this prayer is for you. Because today and every day, we need to cry out to God...

*Dear Lord,*

*I'm listening. It's been awhile. You've been calling me and it seems like I've been getting farther and farther away. But now you've pushed me to my knees and I'm here now. Yes, I believe life is beautiful. You see, I have air in my lungs, eyes to see, and a tongue to speak. YOU gave me life. "It's a beautiful life".*

*I know the world is not perfect. Only YOU. Give me courage to do what is right for you. Give me courage to be what is right, and give me courage to live fully, sharing your love with others.*

*Help all those who are hurting and suffering today. Take away their anxiety, take away their pain, show them who you are.*

*Thank you for all you have done for me. Thy will be done for YOU.*

*In Jesus name we pray.*

*Amen*

Today's inspirational music is by Third Day: *Cry out to Jesus*. Watch the video...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmVxRI5bc4Y>

# The Facebook Dare

August 14, 2016



*What do country artist, Tim McGraw, and Facebook have in common?*

I admit I enjoy social media. For one, it's addicting, and secondly, there are lots of stories to scroll and read through. But, it's what I like to call, "A time sucker". Just when you think it will take ten minutes to read and browse, ends up turning into an hour of wasted time.

I remember the 'good ol' days' when reading a local paper, or thumbing through the *Time* magazine sitting in the waiting area of the dentist office was the "your *time consumer*". You go into a doctor's office now, and all the magazines and newspapers are untouched because everyone is on their phones.

Even more so, regarding *Facebook*, someone posts something on their wall and tons of comments follow. Some jokes, lots of personal opinions, and silly derogatory remarks. And frankly, I've gotten reeled in reading those commentaries.

The truth is, I'm tired of *Facebook*. It's not because I'm on other social media like *Instagram*, *Pinterest*, *Snapchat*, or *Twitter*, but rather, I've been feeling out of touch lately. Something has been missing. Because while I have been busy "reading" the news feeds on *Facebook*, I have been missing the happenings of **NOW**.

It took me a while, but I realized I had to do something. I walked away from my Smartphone, PC, Tablet, and left *Facebook*. And then,

*"I went skydiving,*

*I went Rocky Mountain climbing,*

*I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu..."*

Okay, not exactly that. I exercised, which I normally do, but didn't stop when my phone beeped with news feed updates. I finished reading a book in three days rather than three months, I danced, I napped, and I played with my girls.

I didn't feel the tug of grabbing my phone to read what I have been missing because what I was missing was time spent with my family, and time for myself.

If I want news, I can just turn on the TV. It's not the greatest source of information, but I could catch what's happening in a few minutes, rather than being glued to a chair in front of a screen for hours. It's also easier to hear the news while multi-tasking because I've become a pro at doing just that with small children around.

Most importantly, I didn't feel the pressure of wanting to be connected all the time. I think and this is my personal opinion, this "connection-thing" that people fear they may lose if not following or commenting is just a fear for not associating with others on another level—i.e., face to face communication, or phone conversation. Remember that?

Humans aren't wired to be connected all the time. We need downtime; we need quiet, and an opportunity to hear our thoughts.

STOP BEING PLUGGED IN and PLUG OUT every so often.

Because, then you can go...

*"I went skydiving,*

*I went Rocky Mountain climbing,*

*I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu..."*

Even, if it's only in your mind.

So, take the *Facebook* challenge. Walk away and walk away without...*Facebook*, or any social media for a time.

Then, drop me note and let me know how that works out for you.

Connection is only as good as being in the moment of that connection.

Lyrics and Music Credit: Tim McGraw, "*Live Like You Were Dying*."

For your viewing pleasure. Watch the video. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_9TShIMkQnc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9TShIMkQnc)

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.



# The Night She Gave God Away

June 28, 2016



It was a starry Tuesday evening in June. My family and I were at an outdoor venue. It was Country Music Night in the Park with fireworks afterwards.

The lawn area and sidewalks were jammed packed with families and couples relaxing and enjoying refreshments from local vendors. Children danced and summersaulted to the echoes of banjos and tambourines. Everyone seemed to be having a real great time.

As I looked around though, I noticed the very visible police presence. We had been to this venue a few times last summer, and I could swear there weren't that many cops around. Ah, but that was then, and things have changed. Increased random shootings and "terrorist" attacks have become the norm in this world. The most recent in Istanbul, Turkey, and Orlando, Florida.

I wondered to myself about the potential threat here. We were in an open area. Just sitting ducks. While the young singer on stage belted his last song, Tim McGraw's *"Something Like That,"* I kept my eyes fixed on the law enforcement.

When the concert was over, and we started packing our things, my two daughters who are almost eight and six asked if it was okay to go and say thank you to a group of officers standing under a lamp post. You see, my youngest has recently declared she wants to be a Police Officer when she grows up. I could tell the thought of being near an officer thrilled her.

She twisted about, excited, "Yes, please Momma. Can we go by the officers?"

I nodded. *What a nice gesture.* "Sure. Why not?"

My oldest turned around. "Wait! We should give them something. What can we give them, Momma?"

Caught off guard, I chuckled. "Ah, I don't know." *What could we them? A bottled water? I didn't know what she meant.*

Her eyebrows crinkled. She was deep in thought.

I drew the purse strap over my head. "Listen, you don't have to give them anything. Go over there and say thank you for keeping us safe."

Suddenly, my eldest jumped up and down. "I have an idea. How about this?" She pulled a blue plastic bracelet off her arm, the one she received this week from Vacation Bible School; it read...**WATCH FOR GOD.**

My younger daughter squealed. "Yes! That's perfect. How about that?"

I shrugged. "Well..."

My insides churned like a blender blade on "Chop" mode. One side of me felt joy. *This is cool.* My kids have such a pure rooted love for God. I couldn't be happier. But, the other side of me was a little leery. We have become a society where talk about God and religion is frowned upon. *What if they told them to beat it? It's just a bracelet. But, it says GOD...*

They waited for me to answer. Their eyes glowed with happiness. They were standing up for their faith. It's what I've been teaching them all along. And, they wanted to share that and say thank you to those who put their life on the line *every single* day. It was the right thing to do.

I smiled and took both their hands into mine. "Okay. Remember though, you won't have a bracelet anymore. Are you sure you want to give it away?"

My oldest grinned. "I'm sure, Momma. It's good to give God away."

Joy filled my heart like running water into a jug.

And with that, my two sweet babies dashed over to the group of officers. My oldest eyeballed the clean-cut, dark-haired one with the dimpled right cheek, whom by the way was very cute, and I heard her say thank you as she handed him the bracelet.

He smirked, might have been slightly embarrassed but then took the bracelet anyway, just as the girls turned and ran back to me. I crouched down and gave them both a big hug.

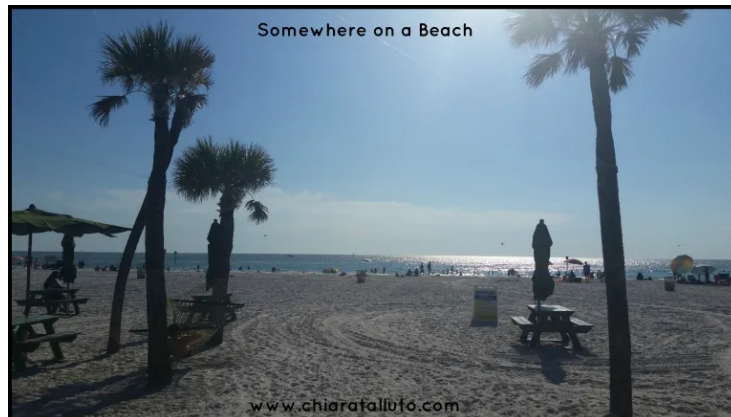
Later that night, I couldn't sleep. I thought about that officer. *What did he end up doing with the bracelet? Did he put it on his wrist or shove it in his pocket? Did he toss the bracelet in the nearest garbage can? Did he even take it home?* Regardless, I prayed for him.

Because in the end, all I know is that..."It's good to give God away."

#thankanofficer, #policerock, #giveGodaway, #PrayforPolice, #PrayforPeace, #Pray, #amwriting, #writing, #promocave, #raisingkids

# Somewhere on a Beach

June 10, 2016



It's after five. The sun still burns bright in the cloudless Florida sky where the temperature is a cool 99 degrees. In this kind of heat, the air is heavy with moisture, the salty wind softly glides across your constant perspiring face, and the ocean is like a wavy steam caressing your skin.

I can sit here on a tan lawn chair, under a blue umbrella, number 519, *forever*, while watching foamy-white waves cuddling the sand, listening to excited giggles of children and deciphering the multi-cultured languages of the surrounding adults.

I don't want to leave here. I just want to stop the time and live in this wasted moment. Yes, wasted moment. Moments that I'm not rushing to check off "to-do lists", laundry, grocery shopping, and rearing two very energetic little girls. Oh, not to mention, writing in the middle of the night.

I've been waiting for this recharge all year-long, and now, I know it's going to end. Soon, I'll be heading back to my "normal" hum of life. And I'm okay with that, *slightly*, even as I push my feet deeper into the sand, letting the granules massage my toes.

With every blink, I am visually snapping images of this place and locking away the sounds and smells of the ocean. So, at any given time, whenever that be, I can close my eyes, and come here in my mind; this God-created and awe-striking nature, where the Earth and the Sea hold hands somewhere on a beach...

# Confessions of a Kindergarten Mom

May 19, 2016



It's 2:33 am and I can't sleep. In just a few short hours I will witness the celebration of my youngest daughter's achievement. Her Kindergarten graduation.

She has come so far in just nine months. She has learned the sounds of all her alphabet, can count to 100, can write her first and last name, spell out several words by herself, read simple books, and learned addition and subtraction. Her vocabulary and inquisitive mind is beyond maturity.

Physically, she is taller, fuller, and doesn't look like a child, but rather a bright-eyed and smiley little girl. I'm so proud and happy for her, but I also feel a sense of grief. She is my last child to go through Kindergarten. I don't have any more children. So, her graduation is bittersweet. I feel like an empty-nester, even though I have another eighteen years or so of schooling to go through for *both* girls.

I'm reminded of a scene from my novel, *Love's Perfect Surrender*. The mother, Antoinette Libero takes her daughter, Isabella, to preschool. Antoinette has spent weeks preparing her child for the big day, worrying whether Isabella will cry or cling to her. Instead, as soon as the bell rings, her little girl happily wanders into the school without a tear shed.

When Antoinette returns home, she collapses and cries her eyes out—unable to contain her emotional roller coaster inside her heart. Preschool is her child's first step into the big "bad" world, and Antoinette knows, slowly she will lose her little girl. And that's where I am. Teetering between elation and sadness.

It's been a year of adjustments and growing pains for the family, but we've managed. I know there are many books out there to help mothers with these kinds of changes. But, the truth is, I know now I don't have any more *babies*. My *only* two girls are walking, talking, full of attitude little people. They are growing up and I am growing older.

When the moment comes and my little child and all her twenty friends throw their graduation hats in the air at the end of this assembly, she will have shed another layer of innocence.

And that is what worries me the most.

# Reaping What You Sow – Young Authors Program

April 19, 2016



[www.chiarataluto.com](http://www.chiarataluto.com)

Last week, our elementary school where my two daughters attend, hosted an Arts and Literacy Night. Part of the event was a Young Authors Program. An opportunity for all students, Kindergarten through Sixth grade to write and illustrate their very own books. Out of 425 students, 341 participated in this program, and I was the coordinator who led this incredible initiative.

It has taken the last three months of preparation and organization to get this program off the ground. I've had the backing of the Principal, and wonderful support of all seventeen teachers in the school. Most importantly, it was the children's enthusiasm that truly made this a fantastic experience, not just for me, but for everyone involved.

As a published author and voracious reader, this program was near and dear to my heart when I was asked by our PTA committee, to run it. There was no doubt in my mind that I wanted this project to happen.

During the pre-launch, I felt it was important to encourage the kids and get them excited, so I made it *my* priority to visit each and every classroom and share with the students how I became a writer. It all started in elementary school when I first read the *Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys* books. From there, I took a try at poetry writing. In high school, I discovered *Danielle Steel* and immersed myself with all her novels. My poems became longer, and more complex, and suddenly, I was writing short stories. I did this for a while, until I started writing a very "long" short story, which finally became my first published novel. It only took nine years to write a novel, which included tons of editing and re-editing, three title changes, and twenty-seven versions of the same story. I've kept all my hardcopy versions too—in an extra-large plastic bin. Yep, the kids got a kick out of that one. Poor trees.

Blank booklets were ordered and I distributed them to the classrooms. In the meantime, the students began writing a rough draft of their stories with the teachers overseeing the task. I checked on all the classes two weeks later, some students had already finished and were transferring their content over to the booklets, and some hadn't even started. I talked to the kids about procrastination and distraction when it came to writing. No one person is immune to that, one just needs to sit their butt down and well, just do it.

A couple of weeks later, the students saw me again in the hallways. I was starting to become a recognizable face. This time, I picked up all the completed booklets from the teachers.

From there with the help of a couple other moms, we organized the booklets by teacher/grade, and utilized one mother's graphic artist talent for a poster and communication flyer to the families regarding the Arts and Literacy Night with the Young Authors Program.

Throughout the process, I communicated regularly with the teachers via email on next steps and expectations.

I distributed Certificates of Completions and Excellence stickers to the teachers. Then, it was the day of the event—organizing the booklets on tables for display. The families and students got a chance to view and flip through all the beautifully created books. It was a sight to see. The families were pleasantly surprised and the children were very proud of their efforts.



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And, when it was over, I picked up all the books, reorganized them again, and then the following day, passed them back to the students in the classrooms.

It was a team effort all the way the around. I'm grateful for the support of the school. And, I've just learned through the grapevine my new name is "Mrs. YAP", short for "Mrs. Young Authors Program".

As a writer, we get consumed in our daily writings that we forget to share those gems of experiences to others who are just as enthusiastic about the written word, as you might be. Community involvement is not as difficult as one would expect. All you need is a little bit of creativity and a desire to pay it forward. After all, who knows where our next best seller will come from?



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Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

#communityinvolvement, #youngauthorsprogram, #youngauthors, #writers, #writersandillustrators, #illustrators, #youngwriters, #encouragingyoungwriters, #encouragingyoungillustrators, #promocave, #writing, #creatingstories.

# The Journey of a Catholic Writer

April 1, 2016



Once in a while an opportunity comes along and as much as it is difficult to convey an emotion of expression, you do it anyway. I learned long ago to take a risk, and leave it all on the table. Because in the end, it's not what you take with you, it's what you leave behind – what you did, but most importantly, how you treated others.

It may be April 1st., but it isn't an April Fools joke. I am proud of my Catholic-Christian faith and I am more than humbled and honored to share my story as a Catholic writer through the [Christ for Hope Magazine](#), which is part of the Diocese of Joliet.

Enjoy the story. I would love your feedback. Please leave a comment.

<http://faithdigital.org/joliet/JOL0416/#?page=16>

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# The Spoof on Querying Agents

March 3, 2016



Querying agents is like speed-dating. The prospects are endless, but the best match can only occur if there is a connection, an attraction to the storyline, and the desire from both parties to commence a long-lasting relationship.

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Google, “How to query agents,” “Query agents,” “How to write queries,” and you’ll find over eight million results available. Not to mention the number of books on query writing you can find at your local library.

Querying agents is a tough process. I’m totally for it. Having been rejected years ago, over one hundred times by agents/publishers with my first novel, *Love’s Perfect Surrender*, and then independently publishing it myself; I value and believe in separating the slush pile from the “diamonds in the rough”.

Writing a book is hard enough. Everyone says they want to write a book, but it takes discipline to weave a storyline, a good storyline. But then, once that is complete, you have to sell your concept to agents/publishers, whom have tastes and desires of their own, and who then must sell your storyline to those who will put it in print.

So you see, I’ve come to the realization that querying agents is like... *“speed-dating. The prospects are endless, but the best match can only occur if there is a connection, an attraction to the storyline, and the desire from both parties to commence a long-lasting relationship.”*

But, unlike dating, hooking and breaking through to the right agent can be complicated. It starts with knowing your genre. It used to be that there were only a few genres under Fiction, some include:

- Westerns
- Romance
- Crime
- Thriller
- Horror
- Fantasy
- Religious
- Self-Help
- Erotica
- Cookbooks
- Sports

Today, there are sub-genres under practically every genre, such as:

- Dystopian
- Apocalyptic
- Speculative
- LGBT
- Inspirational
- Gothic
- Paranormal
- Historical



And what about the categories of writing:

- Young Adult
- New Adult
- Middle-Grade
- Adult
- Childrens

And then, there are:

- Chapter books
- Picture books
- Comic books

The lists go on...So, know the genre you're writing. Click [here](#) for a listing of genres.

And then, pay attention to the specific writing requirements from the agents/publishers that you are querying. They can ask for any of the following, and more...

- First five pages of a manuscript,
- First ten pages of a manuscript,
- First three chapters of a manuscript,
- Synopsis,
- Full Synopsis (with spoiler) and the first fifty pages,
- Last three chapters (yes, I've seen this),
- An outline listing all the chapters, including,
- Chapter descriptions,
- Your Bio,
- Audience appeal,
- Comparable books,
- Book sales from previous books,
- And finally, how you plan on marketing your book.

Though, none of this should surprise anyone. It's what's needed for the agents to make the right decision on whether to dump your query in a slush pile, or take a chance on your story. It's cut throat, yes, but there are more books out there than there are people reading them. The market is saturated enough, and there needs to be filters. And, in an age where there are sites that you can post your writings, blogging, and companies that offer self-publishing, we are constantly inundated with words. Lots of words...

So, how does one land an agent?

- Careful preparation on your end; the writer,
- Speed-dating – querying the right agents/publishers based on your writings,
- A good dose of divine intervention.

Here are some other thoughts on the basic ingredients of getting noticed.

1. Write the story. Not to fit a category or certain topic, but actually write it. From start to finish.
2. Perfect the story. Hire an editor to have them review, cut it to shreds, and then revise and revise the story.
3. Create the following:
  - Hook/Logline,
  - Short synopsis,
  - Long synopsis,
  - Book jacket content,

- Chapter outline,
- Character Tracking Grid (I do this with all my stories. It's a listing of character names, their physical looks, and emotional temperaments.),
- Determine themes within your story, or it may be one theme that resonates throughout.

These are for you to develop and polish. Later, you will have it ready to hand off when the agent/publisher requests it. Take your time, and...

1. Study query writing, and write the best query you can.
2. Research agents/publishers carefully. Review their submission guidelines. Send only to those that are compatible with your writing. Gosh, be selective. Don't waste your time on those that will reject you right off the bat because you didn't follow the guidelines.
3. Rejection letters will come...Don't let that deter you...Never give up.

As for me, I haven't found my match/Romeo agent yet, but I continue querying. Below, is a sample of my query letter for my second novel, *Make it Right; Make it Matter*.

Take a read. Leave a comment. I would love your feedback.

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Dear Mr./Ms. Agent/Publisher (Name of the agent),

I found your agency name through (*This is important. Let the agent know where you found his/her agent information*). According to your agency, I see you're actively seeking *Women's fiction*. Let me introduce you to my 83,000 word novel, *Make it Right; Make it Matter*. An alcohol-addicted mother of two who is spiraling in guilt and resentment; she must surrender, forgiving her past so not to jeopardize her future.

#### THE "MINI" SYNOPSIS

Thirty-six-year-old Amanda Reynolds thought she was happily married. She has a sweet, loving, successful husband, Ryan, two beautiful daughters, Emily and Rose, and a perfect, manicured home in a quaint suburb of Chicago. However, deep inside, Amanda is harboring a secret, a past no one knows about, with the help of alcohol and crave-producing foods. On one Memorial Day, as she watched a float carrying local Marines from their tour of duty in Iraq, buried memories come flooding back, memories of being abandoned by her mother, Louise, and witnessing the death of her older brother, Joshua. This causes Amanda to go on an alcoholic binge after being sober for four years. When she awakens later in a hospital and learns she drank herself into a stupor in front of her children, Amanda realizes she has to get clean once and for all, leaving Chicago in an attempt to slay the demons that have plagued her for so many years.

#### AUDIENCE APPEAL

*Make it Right; Make it Matter* will appeal to fans of Billy Coffey's, "Snow Day", David Baldacci's, "Christmas Story", Elizabeth Gilbert's, "Eat, Pray, Love", and the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life".

#### PREVIOUS PROMOTIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

My first novel, *Love's Perfect Surrender*, a Christian romance was published in May of 2014. The novel and ebook are available through *Amazon and Barnes and Noble*. Ebook only via *Smashwords* and *Kobo*. My book appears on the shelves of six local libraries. I recently earned a **5 Star** rating from *ReadersFavorite.com*. Click [here](#) for the latest review of the novel.

#### WHAT I'M WORKING ON NOW

I will be independently publishing a middle-grade, short-story, fantasy fairytale, *Petrella, the Gillian Princess*, this summer. Click [here](#) and scroll down for a review of the book. I am a member of the [Chicago Writers Association](#) and a critique group called the [Schaumburg Scribes](#).

Thank you for considering *Make it Right; Make it Matter*. I have included...(list the items requested per agent specification, i.e., in the body of the email, or in a separate document). I look forward to hearing from you should you decide *Make it Right; Make it Matter* is a story that is right for (add the name of the agency).

Sincerely,

Chiara Talluto

Author of "*Love's Perfect Surrender*"

[www.chiaratalluto.com](http://www.chiaratalluto.com)

[amazon.com/author/chiaratalluto](https://amazon.com/author/chiaratalluto)

<http://www.facebook.com/ChiaraTallutoAuthor>

Twitter: @ChiaraTalluto

# An Affair with Words

February 2, 2016



No, I haven't cheated on my husband. Well, maybe a short rendezvous.

What? You say.

Okay, I'll admit it. I've had an affair—not with “whom,” but with “what”.

**NOTE:** Read at your own discretion.

Words. Yes, you've read correctly. I'll say it again... Words. An affair with letters that consumed me, excited me, and then tore me to pieces. This all comes about because a few weeks ago, I finally finished editing and re-editing my second novel, *Make it Right; Make it Matter*. Eliminating almost 1,700 words in the 83,000 word manuscript. Like a roller coaster, I returned, again and again. Frightened and nervous in the beginning; but elated and satisfied of the results at the end.

So, why do I put myself through this? The euphoria of creating something out of nothing is what drives me to continually perfect my craft.

It's like this. A photographer takes a picture. This particular photograph has the potential of invoking thousands of images in one's mind. On the other hand, a writer weaves a compelling story, taking that individual on an imaginative journey conjuring all sorts of emotions.

In an age of social media, however, where most everything is “words”. Sometimes, too many words numb our sensation to really feel. So don't cheat.

Whether you Tango or do the Cha-Cha dance, speak truth in words, and carefully review what you wish to express because words are a “universal” visual means of communication.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# A Brave New Year

January 10, 2016



*A brave new year.*

I've spent the first week of this month pondering my New Year's resolution. Honestly, I haven't had a resolution in God knows how long. I don't keep them and it always ends up not reflecting what I intended at the time I made the resolution.

Two years ago, I incorporated a "New Word" of the year. Everyone was doing it and so I tried it too. You know what happened? Nothing. Six months later, I forgot the "Word".

"Resolutions" and "Word of the Year" don't work for me.

On recent afternoon while on Christmas break, my daughters begged me to go outside. They were bored of staying in. It was a cold day, so we bundled up and headed out. They wanted to romp around and make snow angels as well as play explorers on a mission. As I observed my kids, it dawned on me—my wish for 2016. They were living in the moment, exploring their surroundings, solving made-up problems, braving each step ahead of them with a curiosity to reach an intended goal—the other side of the driveway without getting eaten up by giant polar bears.

By taking one step at a time using a jump rope, two shovels, and one pail, they were deliberate and intentional with their decision-making process. Their comments and responses to my questions as to the "whys" and "how" they were going to make it to the other side—alive and not frozen in the deep snow where wolves and vultures would come and suck out their blood, was amazing. Children are so keen on finding simple solutions to difficult tasks.

Each of our so called "resolutions" and "one word(s)" should include all of what they experienced...for our whole year and every year after. It's a lifestyle and mindset change. Taking a risk, and living the life of an adventurer because you just never know when wolves and vultures will deter you...

# A Video Christmas Wish From the Author

December 23, 2015

Hello. It's not always that I share my writing updates via video. I prefer the comforts of transferring my inner thoughts onto a blank screen. I'm a writer, and my mode of communication is the written word. One where I can see it, type it, backspace it to delete, and then type over again.

However, one cannot hide behind a computer screen. So, this last communication correspondence comes to you through a video screen. The real me. The real writer. The person behind my character's thoughts and actions.



<https://youtube.com/watch?v=Dfa6nvj4g6Q>

Enjoy. If you are so inclined to leave a comment. Please do. I strive to perfect the craft of storytelling and video making (Lol), and it is my honor to do so for you, the Reader.

Merry Christmas and healthy and happy 2016 to you.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# The Rainbow in the Clouds

December 16, 2015



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*"A joy that has been hidden will always resurface."*

Even before she stepped off the bus, I noticed her downcast eyes and slumped shoulders. The brown-eyed, double-hair-braided little girl trudged on the cold, wet sidewalk dragging her pink-colored UGGs.

I treaded cautiously toward my seven-year-old. My heart in a worry. She had either gotten into a fight with another child at school, or didn't pass her spelling test that she was scheduled to have earlier in the day.

I exhaled loudly and met her at front of our house ready to embrace her with a loving mother's hug, hoping to wash whatever she was feeling away. After all, it was my job to carry the sunshine even on those gloomy days.

However, before I even had a chance to open my arms, she jumped into me, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"She's gone, Mommy. She's gone," she cried.

I was caught off guard. *Who?* "Who's gone? What happened?"

Sniffing, she looked up at me. "Oh, Mommy. I told you already. Why don't you listen to me when I talk?" She stomped away toward our door and turned. "Melissa, that's who. She moved."

The screen door slammed behind her. I straightened just as my neighbor walked on by with his daughter. He smiled. A look that said he understood. He had two daughters of his own and he often recounted the drama in their household.

"Rough day, eh?"

I nodded. "Apparently."

I went in and looked for her. She lay face down on top of her bed. I settled quietly on the edge of her comforter. Not sure what to say, but remembering several weeks ago when my daughter had mentioned that her best friend, Melissa, was going to be moving. Not just moving across town, but out-of-state, and out of the country. For good. I brushed it off then. The little girl lived in our neighborhood, our girls played together most days. I spoke with the parents, her father, on a regular basis at the bus stop. Surely he would have mentioned something. I scratched my head. *There was no For Sale sign outside their home, either.*

I leaned over and encircled my arms around my baby's tiny frame. "Can you tell me what happened?" I whispered in her ear.

She sat up and rubbed her eyes. "Melissa wasn't on the bus this morning."

"I know. I was there. Maybe she was sick."

"No, Mommy. She wasn't. She came later. And, she walked in our room with Mr. Gratson (the principal)."

She paused. I caressed her arms.

"Mr. Gratson told the classroom, Melissa was leaving to go out of the country and they were cleaning out her desk." She huffed. "Mommy, he asked us to hug her and say goodbye. She looked so sad. Why would her Daddy take her out of school?"

I didn't know what to say. "Well, maybe she's going on vacation."

She glared at me. "No. No, she's not. She left. How many times do I have to tell you? Now, I have no best friend."

I closed my eyes. Images of the last two years flashed in my mind of their many playtimes. Melissa was a dark-haired, dark skinned, quiet little girl. Her eyes were large, and she always had a smile. Together, the girls enjoyed wonderful dress up games, Barbie playing, and giggles, lots of giggles. My daughter looked like a light had gone out. Her eyes were puffy and swollen. Her whole world had just come crumbling down.

I knew the pain she was feeling. I remembered too when my best friend, Richard, a plump, rosy-cheeked, blondish-haired boy who lived several houses from where I lived, had moved when I was nine. We did everything together. Played cops and robbers, attended the same grammar school, did our communion together. Both parents joked we would get married someday. That summer when he moved, I was completely devastated. In fact, it was long summer.

I stroked her hair out of her eyes, and brushed a tear that was making its way down her face. "I'm sorry, Melissa left. I'm sorry you are sad. I am too. She was a very nice girl."

Burying her face in my chest, she shook. "Who will be my best friend now?"

I could have easily responded, "Don't worry, you'll find more friends." But, that would have sounded so silly, and so cliché. My daughter didn't want a solution. She wanted comfort. We all do at some point. Comfort that whatever we are going through will eventually fade. I knew she'd slowly get over this. It would take time. For now, I would let her grieve in her own way.

I sighed. I wish I could keep her little. This was a huge problem for her.

Someday, she'll be a teenager and the issues much more complicated. As a parent, you wish you could take away all your children's fears, pains, and sorrows. But, the truth is, you can't. It is how they learn to deal with the life curves that will come their way.

This world is not easy. There are big problems and small ones. But, I believe they are there to give us hope for a better tomorrow. A piece of innocence to hold onto. A joy that has been hidden will always resurface.

I prayed. Silent thoughts to well-wish Melissa on her new life adventure. A wish for my daughter to savor the wonderful time she had with her friend, and to look for new friends to share one day when she was ready.

I kissed her forehead. "Hey, guess what I saw today?"

She looked up. "What?"

I smiled, recalling the wonderful image. "A rainbow."

My daughter straightened. "How? It's been cloudy all day."

I laughed. "I guess it was God's way of shedding some color in the midst of today's dark circles."

Her frown became a grin. "I like rainbows, Mommy. They bring brightness to the sky."

I nodded. "Yep. So do I."



# The Thanksgiving Tree Branch

November 18, 2015



UPDATED NOVEMBER 23rd, 2020.

I found this post a few days ago. It was written back in 2015. At that time, we didn't have an uncertain post-presidential election, nor the Covid-19, the deadly virus, and global pandemic sweeping the world. There were other issues then, as there are now.

I realized something though. The issues, the diseases, the uncertainties, and everything that can go wrong in the world, will continue to fail and disappoint. We live in a fallen world. Sin and pain go hand-in-hand. But, also, good and love go hand-in-hand too.

We are all lost to something. Each one has his/her path to walk through. We are in need of a good shaking. We need to wake up and stand for the things that are right and morally just. We need to be true to ourselves, so that we can be true to others. And yes, there is a potential to get hurt, but if we are honest to one another, maybe there is no need to pretend and lie.

Hoping and praying for a happy and healthy Thanksgiving to you all even if your traditions have to be a little smaller this year.

God bless!

---

In a few days most Americans will be sitting down together eating turkey and watching football. Prayers will be said and some will go around the table sharing what they are thankful for.

A few hours later, many will join the obsessive price saving shoppers heading to the malls and stores for Black Friday sales. In a blink of an eye, one will go from family gathering to business as usual. Thankfulness forgotten and the frenzy of every day back in stride.

Why is it that we only allow ourselves the minimal hours of gratitude and peace, but spend years incubating in a world filled with greed?

I think (my personal opinion) we'd rather hide behind the masks of our jobs and created busyness instead of letting others see us—the true "us" with our human flaws.

We're like trees. Leaves colorful and bright on the outside, but underneath we are just branches—bare branches.

The 2015 year has been a tough one. We continue to be racially divided, exposed to cowardly school shootings, saddened and confused by suicides, and made to fear terrorist attacks. The most recent in Paris.

I wonder if we were all just more truthful, honest, and kind to one another, maybe there wouldn't be so much suffering and we'd see ourselves as we really are – bared branches in need of loving leaves. In need of random acts of kindness, in need of more smiles, more human connection, and more tender words.

Call me naïve, but why is it more difficult to be honorable and kind, than to be rude and hurtful?

It's time. Where is the real you? Time to let the leaves camouflaging the branches fall to the ground and be blown away.

# Thursday's Thought Provoker: Writing Scenes and the Common Seasonal Cold

November 5, 2015



People often ask me if it's difficult or easy to write scenes in a novel. I tell them it depends on the scene and what I want to accomplish to move the story along.

Some scenes can be summed up like this:

The character's demeanor clearly pops in my mind, the dialogue is impactful, and the description is vivid. It is a euphoric sensation and I'm writing it all down by hand in a \$.99 cent notebook as fast as I can. Yes, I write everything on paper first and then type it. Call me old-fashioned or just plain weird, but I have to see and feel the scribble of the pen beneath my left-hand fingertips. All of it, and every time. It is only then that it becomes real to me.

Everything is flowing, flawlessly and effortlessly, and then, BAAM...I'm there, on a patio, sitting on a beige wicker chair, arms resting on a frosted-glass round table facing a vast blue-green ocean. Listening and watching as the waves are coming up on the sand, sipping a tall sweet tea with a large lemon wedge, and eating a turkey and cheese rye sandwich with sprouts and a generous amount of Grey Poupon Dijon Mustard. Wait? What? Grey Poupon? Really? Yes. See what I mean?

And then other scenes can be summed up this way:

All your ideas are squished up in your brain itching to come out—nervously shaking the fence that they have been trapped in. Pounding and pounding on the chain-link like a migraine headache because they have been engulfed in a veil of fog way too long.

I can visualize the scene but it is so blurry that my eyes are burning. And the more I'm trying to write, the more the whites of my eye balls are getting redder. I'm hyperventilating and perspiring, cursing myself to push out the jumble consuming my thoughts, but I can't. My ears are piercing like a constant freight train rumbling through, jarring and jilting my ear drums. I can't breathe, my airways are blocked, and any dialogue or description I'm feverishly trying to put down into words is constricting my throat and rapidly I'm painfully swallowing the ideas away. They are disappearing, oh no, rolling down the esophagus with my saliva.

It's not working. I need to step away from the notebook, or just surf Facebook for a bit. Until then, I'm blocked. Blocked like the fever, sinus infection, swimmer's ear, and sore throat which I currently have. Ugh...the sick season has arrived. Is it November already? Of course it is.

For me there are only two kinds of scene writing and it is described above. Until then, I'm out of commission. I am crawling back under the covers for some recover. Be back soon.

# The Cross at the Crossroad

October 22, 2015

*With outstretched arms, it called to me, urging me to fold into its safe and comforting embrace.*

*"Leave your troubles here," it whispered.*



If you happen to be driving north on Interstate-57, located along the side of the road, near Effingham, IL, you can't help but notice a monstrous structure. This awesome man-made sight warrants putting that foot on the brake and slowing down just bit, or pulling over all together because you'll want to stare at this gleaming white piece of metal glistening high above, almost reaching the clouds. What is this structure? A giant cross. A beautiful, towering, holy mass.

Completed in July 2001 at a cost of over one million dollars, it stands 198 feet high. The cross arm spans 113 feet long. Nearly 34 tons of reinforced steel footings along with 848 cubic yards of concrete make up the foundation. There is almost 181 tons of steel in the structure.

My head whipped around. Looking out my car window, I couldn't believe how gigantic it was. I suddenly felt very small and could only imagine how much smaller I'd feel if I was standing right next to it. It beckoned me to come closer. I turned my steering wheel toward the side of road along the white line, and braked.

*"Leave your troubles here," it whispered again.*

I was in a zone. The only noises vibrating within the confines of my vehicle were country music and unfiltered thoughts spiraling in my brain. I-57 is mesmerizingly mundane, so it's pretty easy to let your imagination get the best of you. There are two-lanes on each side. Tall trees provide a border to farmlands hidden from view until the next town where it usually opens up to small manufacturing plants, a few businesses, and fast-food restaurants. Until then though, it's your car, your reflections, and the concrete pavement. The cross took me completely by surprise. I welcomed the distraction.

Whether you are spiritual or religious, it was a surreal site to say the least, even if it was a few minutes. I envisioned the cross bending forward, wrapping its arms around all those who are suffering, and gathering them up in the cavity of its breast. Loving all the people carrying gigantic burdens on their shoulders.

No human is ever without pain, anxiety, or problems on this good earth of ours. It's called life. When you're alive, you're traveled, bumped, and sometimes bruised. It's in the comfort of others, a simple touch, a smile, and/or chocolate, that can often help soothe a broken spirit.

With one final glance over my shoulder, I accelerated and got on the road again. I did what came naturally to me. I prayed. I prayed for our nation, our leaders, our schools, my neighbors, my friends, my family, and even myself—to stop the momentum of dark words and malicious actions. It was a lot to pray about, but I felt convicted to do so. Did it change anything? I'm not sure. Maybe that one person I was thinking about had a fleeting moment of peace in their chaotic life. If so, I will never know. And that's okay. It was a release, and I left my own troubles at the foot of that cross.

Credits:

<http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/10913>.

<http://www.crossusa.org/>.

[http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g35934-d3655071-Reviews-Cross\\_at\\_the\\_Crossroads-Effingham\\_Illinois.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g35934-d3655071-Reviews-Cross_at_the_Crossroads-Effingham_Illinois.html).

YouTube video of the making of the cross. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1I7y1Mc1CTg>.

[#crossatcrossroad](#), [#illiniotravel](#), [#I57cross](#), [#roadtrip](#), [#carthoughts](#), [#pray](#), [#amwriting](#), [#writing](#), [#promocave](#)

# Raising Parents – The Payback

September 4, 2015



Wikipedia defines “The Sandwich Generation” as a generation of people who care for their aging parents while supporting their own children.

Going through my hard drive, I ran across this piece I wrote ten years ago. Ten years ago, I didn’t have children, and ten years ago, I hadn’t even begun drafting my first full-length story which became *Love’s Perfect Surrender*.

The essay is as relevant today as it was years ago because this summer my sisters and I helped our elderly parents move out of their old home where they had spent twenty wonderful years cultivating and creating memories within the very walls of a house they adored. They downsized. A much-needed task that was emotionally and physically draining.

It’s not easy moving, so you can well imagine the difficulty at an older age. My parents have a long road ahead of them now. They are starting over—slowly getting acquainted with their neighborhood, neighbors, new driving routes, and creating a brand new system of living within the home.

Re-reading the words I wrote about my mom and dad has given me a greater appreciation for how their influences, disciplines, life-lessons, and successes and failures have shaped me to become who I am today. No mother and father can ever be perfect. You can get married, move out-of-state, or never speak to your parents ever again, but the truth is, they will always be your parents. Blood is harder to separate from than water.

My sister recently sent me this scripture this week about honoring your parents. It’s right on. *Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.* (Exodus 20:12, ESV).

I’ve kept the essay as I originally wrote it; without any editing or revisions. I guess it’s my way of preserving my thought process at the time, but it’s also a way for me to compare how my writing has changed/stayed the same over the years. I’ll never forget where I’ve been or where I came from. It may be the past, but without the past, one can’t pave a different future without looking back to see where they had once begun.

This is for my Mother and Father—my perfectly, flawed parents. I rejoice in your love.

November, 2005

It’s been a long time since I was parented. I remember the first time I tried riding my bike without training wheels and my father calling from the driveway, “Come on, you can do it. Remember, life is like the two wheels you’re riding on. Everything else is baggage.” Or when I was in eighth grade and my mom caught my two best friends smoking pot, and she firmly advised me in not so many words to stay away from marijuana. Then for some reason I can’t quite remember exactly, she said something to the effect that she’d kill me, if she ever found out I was doing drugs. *Hmm...I must have blocked that part out.*

Growing older, I recall being upset about breaking up with my first boyfriend, Andrew, and my mom telling me not to worry. “There’ll be others,” she said nonchalantly. “This isn’t the last boyfriend you’ll ever have.” She was right. When I graduated from college, my parents told me this was “the ultimate gift” for them. You see, my parents only finished second and third grade from their home country of Italy. Now, having three daughters – my older sister, me, and soon my younger sister, attaining a college education, is something they aspired to achieve when they came to the United States in 1967.

It was right around my twenty-fourth birthday when I got my first real job out of college. The family celebrated by going out to dinner. When the bill came, my mom handed it to me and said, “Now that you have job, you can pay.” Then, when I was laid off from two jobs within a one-year period, my parents supported me in that time of employment uncertainty.

Ten years ago, when I was getting married, my dad sat me down and shared an invaluable piece of advice. “Now you’ll know what it will be like to have a family and make sacrifices, just like we did for all of you.”

Since I’ve been married, my relationship with my parents has changed. I’m not only their daughter, but I am now their finance advisor, doctor, counselor, and of course parent. Our conversations revolve around ailing limbs, Medicare prescriptions, Wheel of Fortune, and rising gas prices. I even find myself supporting and assisting them on the very things they’ve counseled me all of my life. Their wisdom that they successfully instilled into me has made me into the woman I am today.

It’s weird how you can look at your parents as indestructible all your life, only to realize they’re human like everybody else. Growing up and getting older is a strange process, almost like two parallel lines – a beginning and end running alongside of one another. My parents have become dependent on my sisters and me, the same way we depended on them most of our lives.

In a world where people are living longer, much care will be required from the children for their aging parents. And, no amount of education can define the value of *Raising Parents*.

# The Taste of Freedom

August 18, 2015



*The Webster's Dictionary defines Freedom as (a.) "The state of being at liberty rather than in confinement, or under physical restraint. (b.) The absence of release or ties. (c.) Exemption from external control."*

Summer has always been my favorite time of the year. I love the heat, wearing shorts and flip-flops, and the fact that it gets dark later. However, the best part of summer from when I was a child, and even now as a "grown-up," was riding my bike; feeling the wind in my face and hair, while exploring streets, going on dirt paths, over hills, and under tunnels. Riding has also helped clear my head. In fact, I've done my best creative thinking while riding my bike.

At the beginning of this season, I made it my goal to model the joy of pedaling on two wheels for my daughters who are five and seven. I'll be honest; there is nothing more constraining than training wheels. They're bulky, ugly, and no matter how securely fastened the wheels are, they are never really aligned correctly, which makes one feel like constantly tipping over.

So, a couple of weeks ago, my husband and I donated our children's older bikes and bought two new bikes—without training wheels. We set them up on their kickstand in the garage, with helmets dangling from their handle bars. Then, we announced we were going riding—the whole family. Oh, my kids loved the bikes and were extremely excited to have them, but there was a *But...* and the great mystifying excuse... "We don't know how to ride without training wheels."

"Sure you can," I replied.

You see, my girls had become too complacent in their own world, pedaling on "four wheels". It was time to take them off.

Four chestnut-brown eyes stared back at me, uncertainty creasing their brow, along with some fear-stricken hesitancy. The situation looked tense at first, but there was also a willingness to try, after all, they had brand new bikes. And then it happened. With some needed practice and a few bruises, they learned how to ride without those "restraining" wheels—each providing the other support and encouragement. A sigh of relief—a little nudge was needed.

As we finish off August and pour into the fall months, and with their renewed confidence in bicycle riding, I believe my girls will be pedaling up and down the street until the first snowflakes hit the ground. And, that's okay with me. They've tasted and felt the freedom of riding.

Someone recently commented to me. "If you think this is freedom, wait till they learn how to drive a car. You'll be in trouble for sure."

I laughed it off. "Ha. We shall see. I'm in no hurry for them to grow up. Right now, I'm happy with this accomplishment."

Until then, the saga of raising children continues, one pedal at a time.

(Photo. Courtesy of Freedigitalphotos.net)

# I know who I am. Who are you?

July 14, 2015



This is dedicated to all the young girls who have felt they are not good enough.

*You are worthy.*

*You are beautiful.*

*You are loved.*

*Loved by the one true God who created you in His self-less image.*

One afternoon as I sat in my office staring at a blinking cursor on the computer screen, my eldest, almost seven-year-old daughter approached me.

“Mommy?”

**Caps lock.** *SHIT. Backspace. Backspace. Backspace. Backspace.*

Sitting back, I let her fall into my arms. Stroking her hair, I noticed she wore a long face, and her big, round brown eyes held a reservoir of sadness.

Sighing, I asked. “What’s the matter?”

In a rush of tumbled and twisted words, she blurted. “I was in the bathroom and looked at myself in the mirror. I don’t like the way I look Mommy. I look ugly.”

*Huh? Where did this come from?* I opened my mouth but nothing came out.

Shaking my head, I finally responded. “Wait. What?”

I was caught off guard. My head was in a whirlwind. The truth was, I was in a self-loathing mood. It was my birthday. Yippy! And I felt like crap. I had been trying to write a blog post for my website for weeks and frankly was having a mental block. *What kind of writer am I if I can’t even come up with anything to write?*

Plus, I was having one of those summers. Too many family distractions were pulling me away from what I loved to do—writing. I frantically searched my mind for something profound to say and still nothing. I was tired and burnt out, and understood her sadness. Like my blank screen, I had nothing to offer her. Just fear. Fear of my inspiration drying up. Fear of the realization that my first born and her younger sister could be influenced by a world that puts stipulations on everything. From weight, height, hair, etc., and then pollutes their minds, persuading them to think they are not worthy.

It’s heartbreaking to see how things are enfolding in this life, and knowing that you may not have control over them, either. People have become so consumed about the flesh that they don’t look at the heart of a person—the emotional tracker of all humanity. But I am still hopeful. I still pray for that silver-lining of parenthood to help me teach my girls how not to be so worried about what others think.

She repeated, “I’m ugly, Momma.”

Holding her close to my chest, I prayed. *What can I tell her God? Please, give me something.*

And just like that, coming from our stereo, we heard these words from new Christian Artist, Blanca:

*Another voice, another choice To listen to words somebody said Another day, I replay, one too many doubts inside my head Am I strong, beautiful, am I good enough*

*Do I belong after all, that I've said and done Is it real when I feel I don't measure up Am I loved*

*I'm runnin' to the One who knows me Who made every part of me in His hands I'm holdin' to the One who holds me 'Cause I know, 'cause I am I know who I am I am sure, I am Yours*

*Turnin' down, tunin' out Every single word that caused me pain Unashamed and unafraid 'Cause I believe You mean it when You say I am strong, beautiful I am good enough And I belong after all, 'cause of what You've done This is real what I feel No one made it up I am loved*

*I'm runnin' to the One who knows me Who made every part of me in His hands I'm holdin' to the One who holds me 'Cause I know, 'cause I am I know who I am I am sure, I am Yours*

*Fearfully, wonderfully, perfectly You had made me*

*I'm runnin' to the One who knows me Ya-a-ay I'm holdin' to the One who holds me Holds me holds me-e-e-yay*

*I'm runnin' to the One who knows me Who made every part of me in His hands I'm holdin' to the One who holds me 'Cause I know, 'cause I am I know who I am I am sure, I am Yours Oh, I am Yours I am sure, I am Yours And I know who I am*

I rocked her in my arms to the melody of the music, and when it was over, I said: "I love you and your sister so much. Not because of your messy hair or sauce-stained shirt, or bruised up knees, but because of who you are. And, to whom you are. You are His."

Wide-eyed, she stared at me. I hugged her closer. As much as my child needed to hear these words, I think I needed to hear them too. No writer is perfect. No writer can write awe-inspiring and profound prose all the time. It takes work. Lots of work. I just know that.... *I'm holdin' to the One who holds me*, to guide and direct my steps every day.

Thank you, Blanca for making this song a mantra for those who are lost, and all those who suffer from low self-esteem, as well as casualties of bulimia, anorexia, obesity, and bullying.

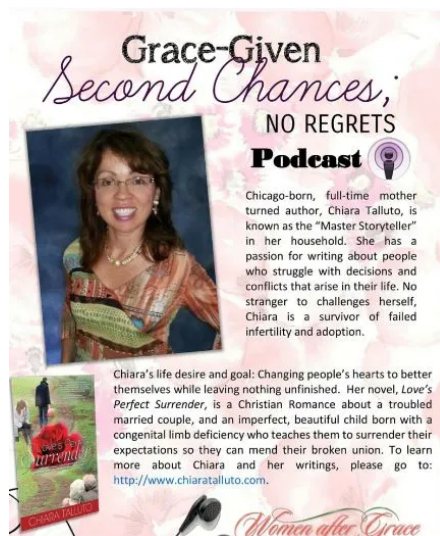
*Believe in the power of love and encouragement, and then pass it on.*

Check out Blanca's wonderfully, uplifting video [here](#).



# Grace-Given Second Chances: No Regrets

June 14, 2015



The image is a promotional graphic for a podcast. At the top, the title "Grace-Given Second Chances; NO REGRETS Podcast" is displayed in a mix of fonts, with "Second Chances;" in a large, elegant script and "NO REGRETS Podcast" in a bold, sans-serif font. A small lightbulb icon is next to the word "Podcast". Below the title is a photograph of Chiara Talluto, a woman with glasses and a patterned top, smiling. To the right of the photo is a short biography: "Chicago-born, full-time mother turned author, Chiara Talluto, is known as the 'Master Storyteller' in her household. She has a passion for writing about people who struggle with decisions and conflicts that arise in their life. No stranger to challenges herself, Chiara is a survivor of failed infertility and adoption." Below this is a paragraph about her life goal and her novel: "Chiara's life desire and goal: Changing people's hearts to better themselves while leaving nothing unfinished. Her novel, *Love's Perfect Surrender*, is a Christian Romance about a troubled married couple, and an imperfect, beautiful child born with a congenital limb deficiency who teaches them to surrender their expectations so they can mend their broken union. To learn more about Chiara and her writings, please go to: <http://www.chiaratalluto.com>." In the bottom left corner, there is a small image of the book cover for "Love's Perfect Surrender". At the bottom right, the logo for "Women After Grace" is visible, featuring a microphone icon and the text "Women After Grace" in a cursive font.

Recently, I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Ramona Pinckney from [Women After Grace](#). A website that provides encouraging podcasts from Christian women and men who share their messages of living victoriously because of Christ.

I recorded my personal story of infertility and failed adoption to the conception of my debut novel, [Love's Perfect Surrender](#) and the miraculous births of my daughters.

Please take a listen [here](#).

# The Walt Disney Belief

May 12, 2015



*"All your dreams can come true, if you have the courage to pursue them."*

~ Walt Disney

I recently visited Magic Kingdom with my family at DisneyWorld in Orlando, Florida. It was our first trip there. We were excited and wondered how the experience was going to be. We'd seen the "Castle" and watched the Walt Disney documentary on television, but our expectation was from what we had viewed in the comforts of our family room, not live.

Getting into Magic Kingdom was amusing. Never mind the traffic on Hwy 4, once in the park; we were surrounded by a vast parking lot that just continued on as far the eye could see. We found a space two miles away.

From the lot, we took a shuttle bus to the ticket counter, and then climbed aboard a ferryboat across a three-mile stretch of man-made lake surrounded by the hotels on the premise. At the dock, we walked in a single-file through a roped pathway to the security checkpoint, and then strolled to the ticket validation counters.

Going under a tunnel we entered the town square and made it onto Main Street, U.S.A. Suddenly, we were transported to the 1950s. There was an ice cream parlor, an old-fashioned Coca-Cola stand, a town hall building, a theater, diners, and countless little shops along the most well-known street in America.

It was here we observed a parade of all the characters on floats and then stood mesmerized gazing at the "Castle," where at night a magic show of lights and animation reflected off the enormous structure, followed by a magnificent firework show.

Amidst the crowds and crazed moms with their sweet daughters dressed up as Princess Belle, Tinker Bell, and Anna and Elsa, we managed to see several attractions. There was even a steam train that ran around the whole park, taking passengers to different lands: Adventureland, Frontierland, Tomorrowland.

The lines were long and it was hot out, but we used our time efficiently. Note to self: Wear good walking shoes. A day won't cut it, either. The park is so large; you need at least two-full days, if not three. We did the two-day pass. It was enough for my children.

What was fascinating to me is that for a brief moment during my experience, I completely forgot everything outside of Magic Kingdom. Its seclusion enveloped me and brought me solace and peace, even though there were some screaming kids and crying infants around. It allowed me to focus on my two girls and participate in their joy and excitement. I was impressed with the organization of how things were run, cleanliness of the rides, and the smiling faces of the staff and characters. If those people were having a bad day, they didn't show it. Their goal/job was making *each* and *every* child smile. Giving them a memory of imagination to remember.

Yes, I know this is not the "real world" and nothing is this perfect. That's okay. My kids get it. Mr. Disney built a huge enterprise. He was an innovator and creator. The Mickey Mouse cartoon is an icon and is known all over the world. This is a billion-dollar industry, but it doesn't come cheap when the machinery for the attractions has to run perfectly, *all the time*.

Walt Disney may have been a savvy business man, but I think deep down inside he was a child at heart, a man who persevered to fulfill a vision where kids and adults could come explore and get lost in a world of magic.

As the last of the fireworks flooded the sky over the beautiful castle in Magic Kingdom, and my girls stared in awe, Mickey Mouse's voice crooned over the intercom. "If you just believe in your heart, dreams do come true."

I closed my eyes and grinned. *Thank you, Mr. Disney.* That is the best piece of encouragement anyone can give a child because the first step in any endeavor is believing it can be accomplished.

# Permission to Celebrate a Milestone

April 30, 2015

One year ago today, *Love's Perfect Surrender* was launched. There was no confetti, no balloons, or even a champagne toast. I was exhausted and relieved it was over. What do you mean by *it*, you ask? The process: countless hours working with my editor and graphic designer, editing and proofing the novel (product) to make sure it was perfect and ready for the world to read.

My exhaustion thankfully turned into an adrenaline-induced fever after that launch. Why? Because even though the product was finished, it still had to get in the hands of the readers. I got right into the trenches, setting up author book signings and launch parties, even selling the books out of the trunk of my car. My motto: *Every encounter is an opportunity to discuss your book(s)*.

In the beginning, the fruits of my labor were few and far between. But, I kept at it. As I gained momentum, I sent out newsletter (at least once a quarter, as I currently do through my email list), created a website, and started blogging all sorts of topics that came across my mind. It was writing and I was building my following.

And then the reviews starting coming in, and I started connecting with my readers, and learning what they liked and not liked about the story, and in some cases, how it impacted their lives. That's when I began to smile.

In the meantime, my Amazon ranking and online books sales teetered between okay and mediocre at times. I understand number of units sold and overall rankings matter to the publishing world, but I convinced myself to focus on the number of people this story touched instead.

Today, I'm a published author. I'm still the same person I was yesterday, the day before, and tomorrow. I haven't become a bestseller yet, and frankly that's okay. Everything in its own time. I am grateful, and my cup overflows with other things besides the books I write.

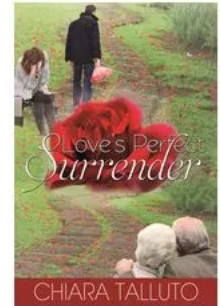
Having said that, I'm confident I have done my best this year in branding myself as a Christian writer. There is always a lot more to do, and I will take up that challenge to do so. I know *Love's Perfect Surrender* will get in the hands of those who need it most.

For now, I want to wish *Love's Perfect Surrender* a happy **first** birthday. And this time, I have in my hand a glass of champagne. Cheers to you...

God willing, a new novel is in the works and is coming. Her name will be *Make it Right; Make it Matter*.

Until next time...

★HAPPY★  
BIRTHDAY!



# Splintered Wood

April 21, 2015



“I am more broken than a piece of splintered wood.”

This is a line from one of my characters, Harvey Huckfinn, in my upcoming novel, *Make it Right; Make it Matter*. I thought of that line today as I stared at my cedar deck from the kitchen window. It made me realize that wood could be pretty fragile and as it ages it gets worn down and dry—easily splintered.

Day in and day out, I look out to my backyard at the deck. Every year the darn thing needs to be power washed and stained before summer comes. Like me, it’s aging under the climate of our Midwestern weather. It seems sturdy and at times it is, but it is still fragile and desires the love and care for its upkeep and well-being. Harsh words, lack of sleep, bad food, and seductive advertisements all contaminate a body that’s meant to withstand the worldly views in which we live.

Like Harvey, a part-time pastor, he dedicates his life to serving others. He once said, “I often forget I’m human too, and have my share of failures. His shoes are hard to fill, but one must try every day.”

When it is our time to go, we will be just as weathered as the cedar deck. But, if we take the time to power wash our minds and pour good stain on our hearts, it don’t matter what kind of elements are out there. We will be preserved and protected by the *Spirit*.

# The Germ Lesson

March 16, 2015



I love March. The days start getting longer, and the snow is thawing. *Finally!* Something about spring that gives me the sense of rebirth and recharge. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy winter from the comforts of my home, watching the little snowflakes cascade from the sky on a cold wintry night. But, this winter was a tough one for my family in terms of sicknesses.

Both my daughters got the flu, not once, but twice this last season, and that's not including myself. This past week being no exception. Like colds, the flu has to finish its course and work through the whole body, taking the time needed to heal.

I did a lot of reflecting during the waiting of the "healing time" with my four-year-old, and then again with my six-year-old. There I was in the wee hours of the night holding each of them, dozing on and off in the stillness of the house where everything is quiet, except the breathing of a little precious child in your arms, and the beating of my aching, sympathetic heart.

I've been on a roller coaster lately with my writing. Pushing myself to finish editing the second novel, *Make it Right; Make it Matter*, getting it into shape to send off to my editor, who will wonderfully cut it up and shred it pieces. It's what I want of course. But, I've also been trying to market and promote *Love's Perfect Surrender* on social media and pursuing venues for book signings. All that coupled with being a full-time mom, has left me quite exhausted.

*What's my rush? Why am I constantly racing to beat a deadline that I've created? Why do I put myself through so much pressure?* You can well imagine the countless other thoughts that have swirled in my brain, watching the clock tick on my nightstand.

As I concentrated on taking care of my children's needs and cuddling them with a blanket, it all started to make sense. God removed the chaos that was taking over the priorities in my life by having not one, but both of my kids sick in the same week. And now me. Some will argue... "Come on, your children got just got a bug, and passed it to one another." Yes, I totally agree with that. Small children; constant sicknesses. But, I also believe things happen for a reason. God put the brakes. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters (Psalm 23:2)* He sat me down and planted me. Rooting me deep in the soil, taking my focus off myself and into my family where I am needed.

This morning I heard this song by a Christian band called *Sanctus Real*. The song is called, "*Whatever you're doing.*" Take a listen on *Youtube*. It spoke to me. *Slow down. Everything has its proper timing and place. This too shall pass in a few days. Until then, I must rest and recharge.*

Call it an epiphany? A coincidence? An act of God? I know what I know. *I heard you, Lord.* You're free to make your own impressions.

"If it takes a small being to move a stubborn heart, then so be it."

Reference: The King James Bible Online: <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org>.

# Death is the end of time of one's life; not the memory of their life given

January 13, 2015

This blog is dedicated to my Great-Aunt Angela and her children, Maria, Mike, and Joe, during this time of grief in their life.

*Death is the end of one's time of life; not the memory of their life given.*



What is death?

Most will say it's the end of one's life or physical being. The Webster's Dictionary defines death as *a permanent cessation of all vital functions*.

My Great-Uncle Leonard passed away this week. He was 86 years old. Wide-eyed and gregarious, he lived life to the fullest, even though he suffered much at the end. The thought of his death and death in general got me thinking about time. The time one spends in a lifetime waiting in line, stuck in traffic, showering and bathing, eating, driving, watching TV, and so forth.

Life here on Earth is all about time. The happiest people are the ones who make the most of their time whether it's five minutes or six hours. You see, if you live life in a blur, you are unable to make memories of those moments and capture those instant feelings. Unfortunately, our world is fast-paced. People multi-task, cram so much on their "to do" list, and rush around in caffeine-induced comas, jumping on the next thing to get done.

My great uncle's death is sad and will be hard to swallow for a while. In this case, it will take time to lessen the sorrow and grief. But for all who had known my uncle and had the opportunity to be in his company, may your memories of him stay alive in your minds and hearts. I believe he'd want you to do as you continue your time travel of life.

Time keeps ticking and waits for no one. Make the most of *your* time, and surround yourself with those you love. Uncle Leonard knew the people who mattered to him, and he made the most of his time to be with them.

*Remember: Death is the end of time of one's life; not the memory of their life given.*

# 2014: A Retrospective Perspective

December 31, 2014



Every year on New Year's Eve, I write down thoughts in my journal. This 2014 year is no different.

I've observed so much life loss around the globe due to plane crashes, school and police shootings, terrorism attacks, racial division, and fatal illnesses like Ebola. I've become more aware of my surroundings, more attuned to the happenings of what's been going on around me. It has forced me to ask myself how I can teach my kids right from wrong and keep them on the righteous path, so they will continue to prosper even in a world where morals and values are fleeting.

I've prayed and gotten down on my knees more this year than ever in my life. Not just for myself and my family, but for others in pain, suffering loss, or just in need of comfort. Prayer has been my muse and my shield of armor.

The release of my debut Christian Romance, *Love's Perfect Surrender*, was a huge undertaking for me as a writer. A risk in putting my work and words for others to judge and criticize. I thank those who have supported me in my writing endeavor. We are here not to live perfectly, but to love with surrender and without expectation.

I'm most thankful for another year of life, good health, being surrounded by family, and an opportunity to write words that hopefully can inspire others.

As I look ahead to 2015, let me leave you with this word that's been a whisper in my ear:

Flourish. In everything and with everyone.

Happy New Year!!

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.



# Part 3: Reaping What You Sow. A Writer's Adventure to Making Homemade Limoncello

December 17, 2014

For the previous two parts/ installments on how to make homemade Limoncello, follow the instructions in these two parts below:

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

Well, this is the last installment of my little adventure to making Limoncello. It's been a process, but an enjoyable one. Not only did it give me an opportunity to do some non-fiction-related writing, but it helped me concentrate on something else, while thinking about my characters and the story in my second novel. A tool I've learned from other writers who have done this.

Though quite not the same, Limoncello-making reminds me a lot about making wine. My family made homemade wine for many, many years. I remember how excited my father would get in making something with his heart and hands. From selecting the grapes, putting together the press, washing the barrels, and then the first taste months later. All were a process, but one taken with pride. This was his wine, good or bad, it was his.

I approached making Limoncello with that same desire. Selecting plump, organic lemons, getting and cleaning my glass bottles, zesting the lemon skins, and researching the best grain alcohol to use. I've taken pride in what I've done. Wanting to share the end result with my family and friends in celebration of Christmas. Good or bad, however the Limoncello will come out; we will still cheer and salute each other during this precious season in our lives.

Here are the last two steps of the Limoncello-making process:

**Making the Sugar-Water or Simple Syrup.** This can be done ahead of time while the lemon skins are soaking in the grain alcohol. Actually, it's recommended because the simple syrup has to cool to room temperature before it is mixed with the alcohol.

In order to yield two bottles of Limoncello, I boiled 5 cups of water and then added 3 cups of sugar. You let the water come to a boil again, and then turn it off. When the sugar water has cooled, I place them in glass bottles. It comes out to a bottle and a half of the liquid.

**Mixing the Simple Syrup and Alcohol.** I had the lemon skins and alcohol ferment for 6 days.

1. I removed and discarded the lemon skins from the alcohol. I knew they were done by the firmness and stiffness of the skins. The alcohol truly soaked up all the lemon flavor.
2. I stirred the liquid to distribute the lemon and alcohol evenly.
3. In a large bowl, I poured the lemon alcohol and then poured in the simple syrup. With a ladle, I turned the mixture together.



4. I poured the Limoncello through a funnel into two glass bottles.



5. Then, I placed the filled bottles in the fridge. **NOTE:** You can also freeze the bottles.

Saving one glass for myself, I tasted my concoction. Result: *Perfection*.



Thank you for journeying with me.

As we say in Italy, Salute!

## Part 2: The Mid-Process Peek. A Writer's Adventure to Making Homemade Limoncello

December 10, 2014

So, I'm seventy-five percent through with this first batch of Limoncello-making, and I'm getting antsy as to what my lemon skins are currently looking like stored away under my cabinet, in 90 proof alcohol. I'm guessing all the skin brain cells are in lala land and feeling quite good at the moment.

Today though, I couldn't take it any longer. I had to see. While my girls napped this afternoon, I tiptoed to my cabinet and gingerly pulled out the aluminum-foiled and Saran-wrapped glass bowl where my pretty little "organic" lemon skins have been soaking in grain alcohol.

With the bowl securely on the counter, I peeled away at the aluminum foil and plastic and inhaled deeply. I smelled lemons of course, and then something else...wait, rubbing alcohol? The aroma was so fragrant that my pores opened up. Suddenly, I visualized this voice in my head,

<http://youtu.be/oSs6DcA6dFI>

You got to be kidding me?

"Orson Welles, go away. I'm just checking to see my progress."

Again the voice boomed, "...no wine before its time."

"It's Limoncello!" I screamed with my fist toward the ceiling.

Then, quiet.

I dipped my finger in this wonderful concoction and smiled. Good, I thought. I can only imagine what it will really taste like when I add the water and sugar part or the "simple syrup".



*(If you look closely, the alcohol has taken up a golden color. It is clear too. All the pictures I've seen on the internet show just this.)*

I'm excited now. I hurriedly covered the bowl again and placed it back under the cabinet. Three more days and the simple syrup and lemon alcohol will unite as one in a marriage of flavorful bliss.

"Orson Welles, eat your heart. There will be no Limoncello, before its time."

For Part 1 to making Limoncello, click [here](#).

For Part 3 to making Limoncello, click [here](#).

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# Part 1: A Writer's Adventure to Making Homemade Limoncello

December 7, 2014

I'll admit I'm not one of those women who do crafty things for the holidays, like bake Christmas cookies, make candles, or homemade soap. That's not me. I write. Give me a pen and paper, and I'm happy. That's my passion second to my family.

So, it was to my husband's surprise when I announced I wanted to make homemade Limoncello. What is Limoncello? It is an Italian liqueur made with lemon essence, sugar, water, and clear grain alcohol. Limoncello is a popular digestive, or after-dinner drink in Italy, usually served ice cold in small ceramic cups.

His initial reaction, "It won't come out good."

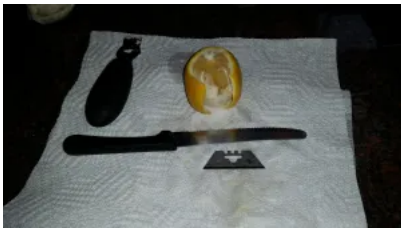
Gee, thanks for the vote of confidence, I thought. At least I can cook and write...

Regardless of my family's support. I'm going to take a risk and try my hand at Limoncello-making. If it doesn't turn out, well, I'll drink it myself and call it a day.

*(Here's a picture of what's needed to make this wonderful lemon concoction.)*



**Organic Lemons.** Why organic? I really don't know. Everyone I spoke to has said they're better, even folks who've documented it on the internet. I don't see a difference. I have to wash them in soapy water and scrub them with a vegetable brush anyway, so why would it matter. Non-the-less, to satisfy those "organic buffs," I bought organic. I used seven lemons, but in some recipes, it calls for 5-8 lemons.



*(Peeling the skin. A careful process. This one lemon looked cold. I even used a razor-blade to remove the skin.)*

**Lemon Zester.** A strange kitchen contraption that takes out the white coating or pith under the lemon skin. Looks like a cool tool. Nothing in the directions says that the white coating under the skin comes off easy. **Note to Self:** Some arm muscle and a constant rubbing motion is required to remove the coating. **Note Again:** People with arthritis should not try this at home. It's hard work and the most important work too. If there is any white pith left on the lemon skins, it will leave a very bitter taste. And, we don't want that.

**A Bowl or Bottle.** Preferably glass to place the lemon skins in.

**750 ml of Grain Alcohol or Vodka.** Preferably, grain alcohol. I guess it comes out better. I bought that instead of the vodka.

*(I went against the instruction and used a stainless steel bowl thinking it would be deep enough to hold the alcohol and lemon skins. I was wrong. The bowl was too big.)*



**Time.** From start to finish: One hour and a half. I'm a first-timer, so give me some slack. This included, peeling the lemons, zesting the skins, pouring of the alcohol in the bowl over the skins, and then covering it with a plastic and foil, just in case, and placing it in a cool dark place. Psst...It's under my cabinet.



*(Final product: It's ready to ferment.)*

What did I do with the naked lemons? I don't want to waste lemons, organic ones for that matter. So, I cut them in half and squeezed out the juice. I can use that juice and add that to my water. A good internal organ cleanser.

**Next Steps?** We wait. I've scoured the internet for directions on making Limoncello and asked around. All seem to say to leave the lemon alcohol mixer for 5-10 days. So, I'll do just that.

For the next installment, go to [Part 2: A Writer's Adventure to Making Homemade Limoncello](#).

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# Saving Thanksgiving – The Home-Style Way

November 21, 2014



One week from today is “Black Friday”. Even before the turkey has digested in our bellies, the shopping frenzy begun.

Historically, *“Thanksgiving was neither a feast nor a holiday, but a simple gathering. Following the Mayflower’s arrival at Plymouth Rock on December 11, 1620, the Pilgrims suffered the loss of 46 of their original 102 colonists. With the help of 91 Indians, the remaining Pilgrims survived the bitter winter and yielded a bountiful harvest in 1621. In celebration, a traditional English harvest festival, lasting three days brought the Pilgrims and natives to unite in a “thanksgiving” observance.”* (<http://www.allabouthistory.org/meaning-of-thanksgiving.htm>)

Wikipedia says, *“Thanksgiving has traditionally been a celebration of the blessings of the (agricultural) year, including the harvest.”*

Now, it’s Football games, eating, and spending.

What’s going on with America? Have we lost the significance of giving thanks? Seems that way, doesn’t it? And the questions more real when your six year old child studying Thanksgiving in school, and has this to ask:

“Mommy, why are all the stores decorated in Christmas when Thanksgiving is not even here yet?”

Yes, *a tiny voice of reason*. I nod in understanding. I’ve asked that question myself many times. *Why?*

“Well,” I clear my throat, “because the stores are about selling, not celebrating how thankful we should be at this time, and every time.”

Folding her arms across her chest, my daughter hesitates before answering, letting what I just told her sink in. She finally whispers, “That’s not good.”

*Exactly.*

My heart fills with an aching knowing that my child’s pureness is slowly getting doses of the reality in which we live in. I quickly crouch down and give her a hug.

She releases, standing tall, and responds, “We won’t forget Thanksgiving, right?”

I caress her face and smile. “No, we won’t *ever* forget.”

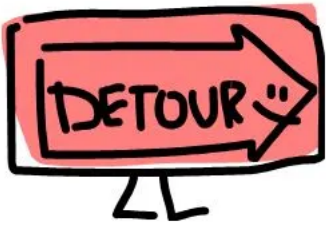
Hope dances in her chestnut eyes. I pray that this one valuable nugget of tradition will stay strong in her life for generations to come.

I hear a voice in my ears, “Good job. You have pleased the Father.”

And folks, that’s all I ever want to do.

# The Non-Intentional Detour

November 9, 2014



Today I sat at my desk, which is the kitchen table, and opened the manuscript of my second novel. With a red pen in hand, I recited the following: "Yes, I can. Yes, I will. Yes, it has to be. I know I can, I know I will. It definitely needs to be. Yes, I should, no, I won't. It's not happening, you see."

Head down in defeat, I clip the manuscript back up, rise from the table, and put it away. Then, I stroll to my computer, search for another manuscript—a short story, print it out, and begin editing. Finishing it all in one sitting. A sense of satisfaction spreading across of my face.

This was not my intention, you see. My second novel was written two years ago, and I have done several online edits. But now that's it's printed, it has to be read and edited some more, and more, and more. Call it procrastination, call it avoidance. But, I'll confess, I'm feeling estranged from my story at the moment.

I spent nine years editing and reediting *Love's Perfect Surrender*, my first novel. Becoming the characters; learning their quirks; feeling their emotions; and seeing the world through their eyes. There's nothing wrong with these *new* characters. They are fresh and quite different.

I shake my head in frustration. Nine years is a long time. Surely, I can't edit and reedit the same story for the next nine years. On the other hand, that edited short story is looking pretty good.

Maybe what I need is a tasting or reacquainting of the daunting task a writer has to go through in perfecting each and every one of their works. Hmm... Such as an appetizer before the main course; a good stretch of the legs before a long run; a cocktail before wine. Could the edit of the short story be enough of the practice?

Tomorrow is another day. It will come no matter what. I will sit at the kitchen table again, open my manuscript, red pen in hand, and recite: "Yes, I can. Yes, I will. Yes, it has to be. I know I can, I know I will. It definitely needs to be. It's happening now, you see."

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.

# To Drama or Not to Drama?

October 31, 2014

## To Drama, or not to Drama?

I just finished reading the book, *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry. I don't usually read YA books, but this story caught my attention when I recently saw the movie trailer.

It's an interesting story about a boy who lives in a community where "sameness" is a way of life. There is no color, no inequity, no wars, no differences, and no feelings or memories. Life is the same, each and every day until the boy is assigned a job as a receiver and holder of memories past. As the story unfolds, he begins to question life in his community, desiring and appreciating the memories and feelings he's receiving. Love being the most important of all.



I truly enjoyed the story. It's not action-packed, or gruesome, but rather introspective. As Lowry said, "quiet." There is tension, but it's internal, and there is no accelerated drama.

It got me thinking about writing as a whole. There are those that claim each story needs to have a story or narrative arc, climax, anti-climax, plot, structure, subplots, and on and on, it goes.

Life can definitely mimic books. Imagination is a powerful tool. When tapped into, fruitful stories abound. Ever wonder what life would be like without imagination or memory for that matter. It would be boring, without drama.

Life should dramatic. As country artist, Keith Urban sings, "I just want a little bit of everything..."

I guess when it comes to books, readers just want that too. Something to get lost in. And that, should be enough for a writer to write.

Until next time...

Be well. Be safe. Be happy.