



Creative Wordshops

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Writing Letter

Oct 2024

re-story, re-create, re-imagine you

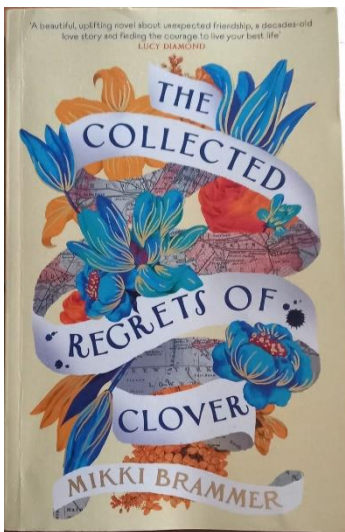
for this letter, a weekly story and ongoing opportunities - dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za

Dear writer, storyteller, reader, lover of words, images, silences...

Thank you for those who subscribe to the monthly letter and/or who receive the weekly Sat story. While the letter and story remain open as a gift to all, for those who wish, I'd appreciate any voluntary donation for the year (Aug 2024- July 2025.) Dr R D Haarhoff Standard Bank Current account 0828 59 248

A Death Doula

Let death find us as we are building up our matchstick protests against its waves.
Alain de Botton



Last year I offered a storyshop to the Soul Carers network in Cape Town. This month I'd like to share extracts from this novel related to their work as death doulas. Clover Brooks ushers people peacefully through their last days, collecting their final words into three notebooks: ADVICE, CONFESSIONS and REGRETS. The book offers profundity through simplicity, on the other side of complexity. As a young girl, Clover ends up living with a grandfather who teaches her that curiosity and observation are as important as imagination. Ironically, while she's studying thanatology in Japan, looking at how different cultures handle death, the old man dies

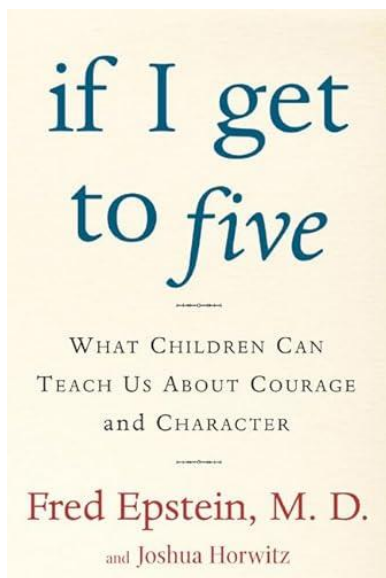
I'd like to share with you Grandpa's analogy, offered at their favorite booth at the diner: His response to her six-year-old question, "Why do we die Grandpa?" "He reached for a box of the diner's promotional matches next to the condiments and signaling out a green-headed stick. He struck the box's flank, and a small flame sprung to life. I watched the stick devolve from a crisp, pale yellow to a disfigured black as the fire slid towards his fingers. With the flick of grandpa's wrist, the flame reduced to smoke.

"You shouldn't play with matches, Grandpa," I proudly echoed the advice I had been recently taught to parrot by the teachers at my new elementary school. A smile flirted with the edges of Grandpa's mouth. You're right about that Clover, but we'll make an exception this once so we can explore your question..."



"In theory, each of these matches should burn for exactly the same amount of time, right? ... But sometimes you strike a match and it goes out almost immediately. Other times it stops burning halfway." "And sometimes it breaks when you try to light it..." "So even though they're technically the same, each match is actually very unique. Sometimes it's not as strong structurally, for reasons we can't see by looking at it. And there are outside factors that contribute how hard we strike it against the box, or the dampness in the air, or how much breeze there is when we light it.

All these things affect how long a match burns for."...



In his book (2004) neurosurgeon Fred Epstein celebrates matches that burn for a short while only. Such children teach us the lessons about seizing the moment and facing fears, about embracing the joy and wonder of everyday - to love without boundaries.

My parents were longer burning matches. After my father died at 70 (I was 11) my mother became Matron of a Home for the Elderly. Since then I have had been in conversation with death, spent time with dying people and have written poems as obituaries. Here is a yesteryear one:

My Father's Face

sedan door shut sharp as gunshot.
we walk a mourning step
to the parlour corner
near the mine museum,

and man-made hole.
flooded in days when he hung
a young man's mustache.
the street paved with the living
sparkles like the gem
that polishes the city.

frosted pains in coffin scroll
announce the partnership.
Human and Pit. Kimberly.
he always quipped at names,
undertaking the grim humour of death.

he lies in a room
shaved of smell,
upper lip scraped
in the blue of mourning,
clean as my chin,
the stubble still inside its skin
and that mouth so dry
no jest can bud around his tongue.

the pocket bereft of his flourishing pen
surrenders a white handkerchief
beneath the pinstripe and tie
his heart, that offending organ
which plucked his fine hair breath,
lies deep in its earth, mined of its diamond.
I see my first death mask
shrunk in the retreat of cells

and after the black car
has purred us home,
I took to pencil and pulsing type,
and in the erratic clutter of passion
rhymed to my father's face.
my first boy's ballad.
I kissed my words as full stop
on his sweet-fleshed fontanel.

May our matches strike true, whatever the length.

Dorian

Writing Retreat Radar –Spring 2024

detailed flyers on request

1. Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

last Wed of the month writeaway

a fun-loving supportive thinking/being group of aspirant writers (full)

Zen Pen A Writing & Being Retreat Hermanus



29 Sept
9.30-16.30

with
Dorian
&
Michele

let words breathe life into you
082 873 6802 (flyer)

2

3 Corporate Storyshop with HDI in Johannesburg 4 Oct

4. Corporate storyshop with Learning Organisation in Accra 15 Oct

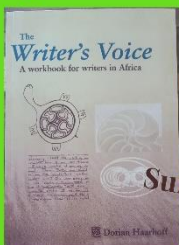
5. ZenPen Retreat (Groot Marico)

25 -29 Oct 2024 Writing, Being & Meditation

<https://tararokpacentre.co.za/event/zenpen-writing-being-and-meditation/>

014 503 8901

Write your Life Story



Thurs
31 Oct
11.30-14.00

@
Sunset Books
Strand

with Dorian Haarhoff

R290

082 873 6802

6. Sunset Books Strand : Write your life story as a gift as a legacy 31 Oct

Writer's Retreat writeaway in Pringle Bay



15-17 Nov
swim in
a sea
of words

10

places

R990

with writer & mentor
Dorian @ Selfology
082 873 6802 for flyer

7. Writeaway in Pringle Bay

8. Mentoring: ongoing one-on-one attention

You help me to sound like myself (numerous clients)

Like a pair of sandals we walk this road together. Taking in the view. Mentoring involves finding out where you want to go with your writing/story telling/work/life and encouraging you get to there.

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