



**Creative Wordshops**

Dorian Haarhoff

082 873 6802

dorianhaa@gmail.com

www.dorianhaarhoff.com

storyteller facilitator speaker writing-coach poet

## Writing Letter

Nov 2025

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

for this letter, a weekly story and ongoing opportunities - [dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za](http://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 as a gift to all, for those who wish, I appreciate any voluntary donation.

Dr R D Haarhoff Standard Bank Current account 0828 59 248

### Travelling Light

*These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it, (Alan Paton, Cry, the Beloved Country,)*



This letter celebrates one of the numinous places on the earth (Buddhist Retreat Centre Ixopo hills) and the privilege of facilitating a retreat there in late Sept. My 25<sup>th</sup>. When I teach in such a space, words come through not from me. The theme I chose was *Travelling Light: Words to Lighten the Load along the Road*. Here is the blurb:

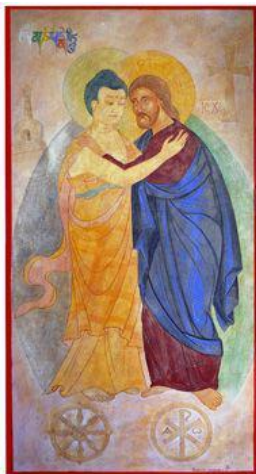
*Oh, tranquility  
Penetrating the very rock,  
A cicada's voice. (Basho)*

Writing and Mindfulness are close travelling companions, walking ancient paths. As they step through the natural world of wonders, they communicate sometimes in silence, sometimes in words. They offer healing of body, mind and spirit.

Come and practice how to release stress onto the page/screen amid the natural splendours of the BRC hills.

Here is part of a journal entry: First night. Before the fire in the studio, rests a box of kindling. I ask the people to take three sticks and then to share with a partner any thoughts that arise. Someone offers 'The sticks are all different, individual. If I keep on peeling away splinters, then the stick won't be able to light the fire.' Another participant on close inspection finds in the wood, waves patterns. From close observation, the birth of a metaphor. Somebody speaks about a stick as part of a tree connected to other trees via an underground root system. Someone sees a pyramid structure, someone else speaks about the sacred number three. 3 is also a story number together with 6 and 9.

We consider the triangle - how there's you, me, and there's the relationship which creates the third. I quote Antonio Machado, 'Between dreaming and sleeping, there's a third thing. Guess it.' The way opens into a third possibility.



Jung also talks about holding opposites without trying to reconcile them. And if you leave them long enough, a third way appears, as in my Christian upbringing and then encountering Buddhism in my fifties. Finding similarities and holding differences. At Temenos (Sacred place) in McGregor where I also teach, all faiths meet in the Garden of the Beloved. In the Litte Way chapel named of Teresa of Avila, a Christian mystic, there is an icon by Brother Maidwell. Christ and the Buddha, embracing.  
<https://www.scross.co.za/2015/02/spirituality-of-icons/>

And so purely drawing inspiration from the three sticks, we look at other triangles, as in the structure of a story. If there are two people, there's the dialogue. If there's three, there is drama.

All of this coming out of that inner voice that guides me to ask the dozen retreatants to take three sticks. I also ask, 'Why three? Why didn't I ask you to take four, two or one?' Off they travel with that prompt. I share one of my 3 lines a verse poems, written for sons Adam and Dominic way back when:

## Kindling

off to find the night's firewood,  
I link fingers with two sons  
weighing their different gravities.

we track through twilight.  
scuffed soles and new old shoes  
run the forest floor and spin its spaces.

the younger treads a rhino path  
his eye, a horn, prizes pine cones  
from a camouflage of sticks and debris.

his brother follows the rustle of light,  
a long-lashed giraffe, nibbling  
where leaves are sweetest.

one with an armful of cone, stopped with earth,  
the other with wind laced through twigs,  
one drops, one plants the load for the fire pile.

to raise the flames under first stars,  
in the hands of my fathering  
I take their gifts of earth and air.

I ask, 'Apart from sharing about three sticks, what happens to the conversation? If I had asked the two of you to talk to each other, what would the conversation have been like? Instead you spoke about the three sticks, and look what emerged. You spoke true from a deeper part of you. You focused, engaged, shared.'

Among the participants, a 16 year old, tall, enthusiastic Indian teenager, an 85 year young Irish woman looking like she's 10 years younger, a lifelong learner. A mid-twenties man, arriving on a motorcycle, having sold everything, A Zulu sangoma woman.

Staying with the no 3, I ask people to choose three magazine pictures that attract them and paste them on a sheet. These become metaphors for the experience of each other, of the place and the retreat. The sangoma in training, in response to a picture of bones says 'Sangoma means hollow bones

so it's about being spoken through'. She adds, 'Many voices speak to me, and I'm not sure which to listen to. But when I came to this place for the first time, the voice I need to follow is clear'.

So it is in the writing. A clarity in coming here as our inner voices emerge in the silence and light and enlighten the way. A trinity of place, me and the emerging words.

Dorian

000

## Writing Retreat Radar – Summer 2025

detailed flyers on request

### 1. 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.*

### 2 Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

last Wed of the month writeaway

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

3.



**A Writeaway  
fun half-day  
in Pringle Bay**

**25 Oct  
2-6 pm**

**craft your  
draft**

**9 places**

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

**R280**

**4 BookBedonnerd Festival Richmond Northern Cape 30 Oct- 1 Nov**

## **5. Bloemfontein workshops 3-7 Nov**

Igno van Niekerk for info 083 376 1330

### **a. Storytelling for coaches and leaders 3-4 Nov**

#### **b. Why story telling matters 6 Nov**

How stories influence our children, business and lives

#### **c Re-imagining Sunflower Children's Hospice**

7 Nov 16.00-19.00

## **6. Creating your Tomorrow**

**A Words Breath & Being Retreat Sat 15 Nov 10.00 - 16.30 R960**

**wine farm Bot River**

**Genevieve MCC <https://share.google/d6aCIpVIGeWj5zlaD>**

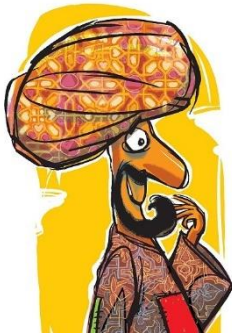
In this mini retreat we explore our connection to words and presence. These states of grace increase our awareness and wake us up.

The day includes breathwork with Fiona Hardie

## **7 Accra Ghana Storyshop for Authentic leadership**

19-20 Nov

## **8. Sedgefield @ In Toto 096 511 1964**



**Fri 28 Nov 19.00 - Once upon a Life: Nasrudin, Rumi, Oom Schalk the Rabbi and You (a Story eve) R170**

**Sun 30 Nov 10.-16.30 - New Wine in Old Bottles: a wordshop on ageing without getting old R950 includes a light lunch**

## **8. Betty's Bay A String of Beads Writing Workshop**

### **Threading your story and life together**

Sat 13 Dec 11.00 - 16.00 R680

We string a set of beads, assign meaning to each bead and create our words around this structuring device. Each bead holds a kaleidoscope of stories asking to be told. Beginner writers are welcome.

000