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WRITING SCHOOL

The Courage to Transform Through Story

Let's discuss possibly the hardest thing we undergo as writers:
Transformation.

When we're truly moved by writing that amazes us, what we are actually feeling is the transformation the writer experienced through the creation of her work.

Even when we write about characters who appear to be worlds apart from our own experience, *we go through everything they go through.*

Even our subtlest stories take us through stages of yearning, disappointment, mystery, and conflict to get to a resolution we never saw coming.

A part of us is in there exploring that transformation. We are listening to the scenes unfold, responding as our characters, with our characters, in a strange alchemy.

The alchemy of writing a story moves us, and then it moves the reader.

How do we make ourselves available for that transformation?

To reach the profound understanding that comes at the end of a story, we have to let go of old ways of being and knowing.

We have to surrender to the mystery. To let go of one trapeze before we've grabbed hold of the next.

It takes courage to take the risk. To do something unreasonable, and raise the stakes. To venture into unexpected territory. To experience the emotional turmoil of an unresolvable dilemma. (These are the kinds of brave feats that provoke transformation.)

How can you know you'll be okay?

You can trust your experience. You can be sustained by everyone you've read and loved. And above all, you can rely on your craft.

Our practice reminds us that we are safe, through all the reckless creative moves, stumbles, and pitfalls.

We can stretch ourselves, use our tools in new ways, read weirdly and widely, and try new things, because we trust that craft is the container that holds the magic.

The magic itself is not our responsibility.

Provide the structure, show up with presence, and put true words onto the page — those are our responsibilities.

Knowing our craft is how we *respect* the magic.

You never know what's going to happen when you write.

And if you make it through the portal and happen to look back over your shoulder, it can be dizzying! Here you are, flying at such great heights. *What if you fall and the story shatters?*

Take a deep breath. Acknowledge the fear. You feel the quickening because your heart is invested. You care about this story. You're onto something. You're in the throes of transformation.

It's best that you don't know what's going to happen.

Let the mystery do its thing.

Trust that your craft will hold you.

You've got what it takes to brave the unknown.

Sarah

