

Exercises in Timed Writing – Freeing Up the Subconscious in Writing

By Holly Lisle

What Is Timed Writing?

These are writing exercises that I do just for myself—ten minutes of typing the thoughts that run through my mind without any censorship, without any editing of self. Forcing words onto the page as they run through my head, not allowing my fingers to hold still at the keyboard.

I recommend this as an exercise for writers—actually, I recommend it as an exercise for anyone. You find out by doing it a lot of things you never knew about yourself.

Please understand that these are not edited (though I have spellchecked them), and as such, their grammatical structure is the structure of consciousness, and not of my usual writing.

Holly Lisle

Timed Writing on *The Wall*— Written 02/10/95 11:06:12 PM to 11:21

The wall. I've been there twice – dark, cold forboding place inside of me, a place without words, a place of endless keening anguish, of howling tearing pain. I know what it is to seek the silence beyond, to hope for the last breath, to pass

through pain to nothing. I have walked that road, I have run it, I have flown it and gone ripping tearing screaming up against the wall the wall the wall

There are no good or gentle words for that hard place. It waits, lurks, eats in the belly angry and hot and cold at one time, swirling and devouring and red rage black anger blue grief it swallows itself endlessly endlessly in untouching, unfeeling pain. But it can be touched, and it has its fierce evil angry beauty, and it has its allure.

I have stood on the precipice and contemplated the annihilation of day warmth light laughter joy and for a time the precipice sang to me a song louder than all the memories of light I could find. Once I stood there and once turned away alone, and because no one drew me back from the ledge I thought I was strong; I thought I had conquered the precipice and the wall and the haunting siren song of death suicide despair silence. Once, and once, and to walk away and laugh and breathe and believe that the darkness was no longer me –

The darkness lied; or I lied in the bright light of hope, thinking that once past, I would be strong forever. Pain leave its scars on the soul, my soul, and we who have walked to the wall are forever branded by it it knows our names and remembers its first song the song it sang that drew us and when the pain grows great enough that the songs of light and laughter are muted hushed waiting breathless in the stillness of twilight the song of the wall sings again and we fight valiantly to resist.

And a second time I walked to the wall, but this time I knew what waited there, and I had no courage left to face it. This time I knew the face of the abyss, and when I went to it I wept along the path, fearing the siren song would tear me from day and warmth and touch, from water and rocks and ice cream red striped circus tent candy cane barber shop music of the calliope. This time the song knew me better, and it knew the

words to sing, and though I fought and dragged my feet and stopped my ears it sang straight to my heart and it said 'all of this is pain and pain is a passing thing.'

That was my song. Those word brought me drew me twisted me stretched me until I couldn't think I couldn't breathe And so

I walked to the wall. I looked into the abyss.

And finally I screamed.

The time comes when the wall is too much for one small woman, when the infinity of the abyss and the gravity of annihilation pull too hard and so I screamed and dug my fingernails into the wall and bled, and screamed...

and I only screamed once, but once was enough. The help came the hand reached down the arms wrapped around and pulled back from the edge the shivering body of one too weak to resist the tide of pain and death. Help came.

Help comes when you scream.

Timed Writing on *Nightmare*—Written 03/16/95 9:05 PM

Run with the words, run with the rock and roll, listen to the music, the idiot songs, why do we dream, what forms those dreams images magic changes, mind candy?

Dreams, I have dreams I have nightmares voices of my past the skeletons of my soul, technicolor pictures of blood doom the sepia mists of an island with me, in a boat like Arthur, rolling across the tattermist water like glass, and an island waiting, the black branches shrouded in white, fingers reaching toward me, bare of leaves or life. And I, waiting,

dread in my belly cold as death, knowing that something waits for me on the island, something that I don't yet know, that I cannot yet see. And then I am looking for Becky, who is missing. Missing. I know she is on the island somewhere, I know that something has happened to her, but I don't know what. Terror, I feel the ice in my blood, the gutwrench nausea quiver and quake of doom the end of the world some disaster for my daughter.

And I step out of the boat. Walk up a pebbled path, through the shards of mist, tatterwhite and grey and sepia; and I am listening. Quiet, Jesus quiet, the hollow of my life bleeding out, because I will find her I will find her but what oh God will I find.

The hill rises, the path twists, and I follow, and go over the top and see, below me, a well. Tall, stone, dark grey and black stone, the roof over the well falling down, the rope frayed and broken. And I can see without really seeing, the white, still form in the bottom of the well. Floating. Not moving. And the only touch of true color in this whole scene the honey gold of my daughter's hair, spread out over the water, and there is no sound no movement and I run to the well and look in.

No way to get her. She is gone – I felt this before I even reached the island, felt that doom and despair waited, and that the world would end, and now it has.

Then out of the mist, a black form steps forward, flows forward, for stepping is not something this graceful thing could ever do, it is too mundane. It, he, tall and pale of face, lips red as blood or are they red with blood, and his eyes glowing, gleaming in the darkness, the twilight, and he smiles, and glides over to the well, and into the air, and down the well, as if he were suspended on strings, but I know that he isn't. And I hear a sound, the slow dull beating of my own breaking heart, thudding over the landscape, pulsing like

dying, irregular, scattering into the mist, falling silent in long pauses.

And it, he, rises out of the well, and Becky is in his arms, blue eyes wide and round and unblinking, skin grey-blue-white, the color of death that I have seen so often, her body completely limp and her head flopped back at a terrible angle, the angle of death, my daughter, my angel with honey gold hair who will never laugh or run or talk to me again. Never.

And it, he, says softly, with a wicked smile, an evil smile..

“I can give her back to you.”

Two fangs dripping blood, the hand of death about him, and he says this to me and I feel that I am dying, I wish it was me and not her.

“I can give her back to you.”

And I wake screaming.

NOTE: If this article resonates with you, and you want to meet other writers who share your passion and who are working in a friendly, supportive environment, come hang out with us and make progress on your writing in my free writing community.

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