The View From Fifty-Four: Writer On A Mission

written by Holly
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Writing was, and is, my passion.



Vision, Passion, Mission

I worked at my fiction from the time I was twenty-five until I was thirty-one without ever making a dime, and never begrudged a minute of that time. While I was writing, I was happy. I was creating. I was learning to write better. I was finding my stories and my voice. I was discovering a life-long love.

When I was thirty-one, I sold my first novel, and experienced the realization that I was home.

In that moment, I knew my purpose in life.

I was born to write fiction, to create worlds and characters and stories—and every crazy, dangerous, scary, heartbreaking, and wonderful thing I'd done in my life had been building up to that moment when I could roll what I loved and desired,

feared and hated, lived and remembered, into stories that people who shared my same passions and dreads could read.

More, I found my mission.

I knew I wanted to be able to help other writers know what it felt like to come home to their lives' purpose, to get their fiction into print, to get paid to do what they loved in the world, to turn what had been an impossible dream into "This is my real life, every amazing day!"

I have a vision.

Mine is not a grand vision of a whole world changed by what I love. **Mine is a little vision, but it's mine.**

- **I want to live in a world where readers can buy stories they love directly from writers whose work they love,** and who can directly, one-on-one, help those writers keep their careers alive, and keep writing the fiction they love, where the commercial publishing issues of sell-through or book-to-book increases cannot interfere with this human-to-human connection.Where the reader will always be able to ask her favorite writer, "Can you tell me a story?" And where the writer will be able to say, "Yes, I can."

  The potential for this world now exists, but it isn't fully realized.

- **I want to live in a world where writers can wake up every morning to write their fiction first**, because that is what they're being paid to do directly from the people who love what they do.

  Where motivated, passionate writers can afford to feed themselves and their families, can afford to create

better lives for themselves, because their readers happily buy their stories and ask for more.Where every writer who is willing to work hard to perfect his or her craft can connect with the people who value that writer enough to pay to read what he or she does…and who will recommend the writer to friends who share the same loves and passions, and who will love this writer, too.

The potential for this world exists, too—but too many writers don't realize that what they love is within their reach, or know what they have to do to reach in.

This is a problem I have solved for myself and know how to teach other writers to solve.

- **I want to live in a world where writers from anywhere in the world who want to write for a living can do so,** regardless of previous education, regardless of pressures from family or society, and in doing so bring joy and laughter, comfort and courage, to the people who share their community, their understanding, their world view. And who can, by reading the works of these writers who share their world and lives, know that they are not alone.The Internet makes this world both reachable and creatable, and I am working right now to build my small part of it.

Since 1991, I've been feeling my way toward building my part of this world I want to live in.

I made mistakes along the way. I went in wrong directions, forgetting that every person who wants to live a better life has to work to do it, and has to be paid for that work—and

that **the only way any writer can fully realize his or her dream of writing full-time is to get paid for doing that.**

I was the first person who jumped in front of the ‘do it for free’ bus I once recommended, and my family suffered for many years because of that.

When I realized that if writing was going to be my work, I had to work for money, I put together a little writing shop, and invited other writers to create work for readers and writers and publish it there—but while I did pretty well for a few years moving nonfiction for my writers, I couldn’t do anything for their fiction.

And keeping up with the expanding platform and the books on it turned out to be more than I could handle while still keeping my own writing career going.

I tried to create **Rebel Tales** as a way for writers to connect directly to their readers with serial fiction, and got my ass handed to me by a thief pretending to be an editor.

Both of these projects of mine were before Amazon and other online bookstores opened up their platforms to indie authors. Amazon and other platforms created much larger access for writers than I could ever offer. They are one of a number of pieces now in place that can allow me to expand my vision, my passion, my mission.

I have strengths and weaknesses that affect what I can do with this vision, this passion, this mission

of mine.

- **I know how to find the best people on the internet, both readers and writers.** Some of them hang out here, and have for years. Some of them hang out in my old Forward Motion writing community, now owned and run by my friend Lazette Gifford. Some of them hang out in my new—well, newer—writing community on How To Think Sideways, which has been alive for about seven years now.

- **I know how to show them how to change their dreams into their reality.** What they love is what I love—and for the writers, what they want to do is the same thing I wanted to do. I did it without college, without funding, and without assistance from the government, and I know that to succeed, other writers don't need those things either.

- **And I know how to write good fiction, how to revise it, how to make it hang together so that readers want to read more.**

  Those are my strengths.

On to the weaknesses.

- **I am only one person, and I've now used up more than half my life, no matter how optimistic I might choose to be about how long I can hope to live.** My great-grandmother lived to be 103, and when I was twenty-four (and she was ninety-four) I looked at her and thought, "I need to be doing something that I can still do when I'm her age."

  That was the origin of my New Year's Resolution to

finish my first novel before I turned twenty-five.I made it, and I made it here, and as long as my mind stays sharp, I can do this until I die. And I intend to.

But in the last four years, I've had a brain tumor scare and a cancer scare. So far, the symptoms turned out, after expensive testing, to be from benign problems.

But one of these days, they won't be. I can't do everything. And I don't have forever in which to build the world in which I want to live.

- **In my HowToThinkSideways.com writing school, along with pros who are sharpening skills and intermediate writers who are close to breaking out, I have thousands of "baby writers."**

  Many of these folks are going to become the great voices in fiction for the next fifty to seventy-five years. But right now they're brand-new, and struggling to find readers.

- **I want to help them find readers—but I need to help them find THEIR readers.** I need to help them find the people who will love what they do, who will help them discover their voices, and who will, when they start publishing, find and buy their first stories, and their later stories.
  People who will value them for their writing, will pay them to keep writing, will love what they do and spread the word to other readers who will ALSO love what they do.And I don't KNOW their readers. But you do, or someone you know does, or has a cousin once removed on his mother's side who's uncle reads exactly what this person writes.

I want to recruit people who share my purpose, my passion, my mission…my vision.

I have some of my core people already.

My web developer, Dan Allen, understands what I'm doing and why. He knows this mission, and like me, he sees why it matters. He's on board to build the infrastructure that will make it fly. And he's in this for the long haul.

My amazing moderators know the mission, and in the forums every day, they are now—and have been for years—helping writers figure out new ways to use my writing courses. They help people adapt processes that I use myself into processes that work for brains wired far differently than mine. And as we move forward, they'll be putting together writing challenges, and using new forum features to help writers make their fiction better.

Even while we're on the crappy forums we're stuck with until Dan finishes turning a battered, ancient database into a well-oiled machine, they're on the boards every day. They are magnificent.

I'm still missing some core people.

I have two service providers who are also HowToThinkSideways students, and who created special offers for my writing members, so that they could get better prices on getting their books edited and formatted.

- **I need more folks like these.**
- **And I need readers for my writers.**

As part of my ongoing mission to create an online writing school that teaches writing dreamers how to become writing professionals, I’m adding a service for readers.

http://ReadersMeetWriters.com will introduce ***READERS WHO SHARE MY VISION*** to writers who are working to become professional writers, and who are trying to find their readers.

- These are **readers who are dedicated to helping the writers** who are going to become the great voices of fiction for the next fifty to seventy-five years,

- **Who want to read good fiction and who are willing to support the careers** of the people who it by buying their work…

- And by **recommending their work** to others…

- **Who are willing to pitch in** on crowdsourcing final manuscripts, for example, to make sure broke beginning writers are able to put out high-quality, non-buggy fiction even when they’re just getting started…

- **Who are willing to help** split test things like cover art and cover copy (basically, you’ll just go to pages linked from a Want To Test? page and click around, browsing what interests you and ignoring what doesn’t).

- Who are **willing to get involved in helping the writers you’ll someday** love BECOME those writers.

Dan and I will have to build this, and my moderators, and volunteer readers and writers, will have to test it.

As Dan and I work toward building a better online writing school, I’m going to ask you what you want, either as a reader or as a writer.

I’m going to use this site to talk to you about these things, and ask you to test various site features and let me know what you think about them. I’m going to ask for your opinions. I’m going to ask for you to help me find the people I need to make various parts of this vision of mine work.

I’m building this thing so it will outlive me. I want to know that writers will still have a place where they can learn what they need to know to build lives, feed their families, and reach their dreams doing what they love. And I want that place to still have some part of me in it. To go on doing what I love when I no longer can.

I don’t know how long this place can last.

I don’t know who else besides me this vision, this passion, this mission speaks to.

But if this matters to you, please tell me here. And tell me WHAT matters to you, and WHY.

The view from fifty-four is a wonderful view. It is watching my dreams made real in the world in the lives of writers who reach

their own dreams.

Thank you for joining me for all these years in making this happen. Please help me make the vision clearer, the mission stronger, the passion more loved, more respected, and more cherished.

Join the Readers Meet Writers Brainstorming team and get Founder Benefits

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