

Full moon

The forest was full of sound. I used to think it was quiet at night, but I learned it wasn't when I moved out of the city. I thought of the dark, silent, forbidding forest, full of all the scary things that go bump in the night. I decided fairly soon after moving out of the city that I needed to deal with my fear, so a friend and I walked a fire trail into the woods, found a clearing, and just sat and listened. It isn't as dark as I had thought. Once my eyes adjusted, I could see pretty well. We both got jumpy a few times when we heard weird noises, but we got over it. The forest at night is a very busy place.

We went out again last night. It has become a regular break for us. About once a month when the weather is nice, we'll go sit among the trees at night and listen to the life around us. It's a good way to calm down if the rest of life has gotten too hectic. Tonight was special; the moon was full and the whippoorwills were out.

Whippoorwills are fascinating. They lay their eggs so they will hatch before the full moon. The chicks are ready to leave the nest twenty days after hatching, so they grow fast and eat a lot. The parents use the light of the full moon as a way to get more time hunting for food for their chicks. Our timing was good; tonight was the night.

It's loud. It's much louder than I expected the first time we came across this. The birds' wings are audible, and their calls, which they are named after, get almost deafening at times when so many are calling at once. We sit very still and feel the wind from their wings around our heads. It's slightly unnerving but also incredible. We can see their silhouettes in the moonlight, darting through the night, capturing insects and taking them back to the nests.

It's a full moon. Nothing amazing, nothing freaky, just life moving around us. Birds, insects, little creatures, all doing their thing, and we're lucky enough to sit in the middle of it, silent, letting it all wash over us. Life is good.

—

For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Sherree](#) gave me this prompt: Under the full moon, something happens. Is it wonderful or horrible? No cliches please!.

I gave [Kurt](#) this prompt: You lost, but you are happier than you've ever been before.

All's well that...oh, wait.

The land all the way to the horizon was smoking gently. A haze hung in the air. No wind came to blow it away; no rain loomed.

"Why did you tell me to push the button, sir?"

"I didn't tell you to push the button. I was on two calls at once. I was trying to get the Prime Minister to understand that we were not going to push the button, but the call got switched to your line just as I said the last part."

"I asked if you were sure."

"I thought you were the Prime Minister. Your voices are very similar."

"So I pushed the button."

"Yes, you did."

"And then they pushed their button."

"We had worked so hard to get to this point. It was all going so well."

"Up until I pushed the button."

"It's not your fault, young man."

"Well, I guess I have a long time to think that over."

"You have enough food and water to last until it's safe to go outside again. I hope that they provided some entertainment, too. I doubt you are going to get any news or outside information, since even this line won't be up for much longer. The blast did a lot of damage. We won't release your name. No one will know that you pushed it. I hope you make it through until it's safe."

"I'll do my best, sir."

"Thank you."

The call ended and the line was suddenly dead. No dial tone. He turned on the television and saw only snow, something he remembered vaguely from his childhood. He looked out the window one last time, closed the shutters tightly, and locked and sealed them. Everything was battened down, safe from the aftermath, except, perhaps, his sanity.

—

For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Michael](#) gave me this prompt: And everything was going so well, too..

I gave [Eric Misener](#) this prompt: Write from the perspective of someone in the same situation as the Greek, Cassandra – she sees the future but no one believes her.

What is necessary

Fill what's empty. Empty what's full. Scratch what itches.

When I first heard this, I thought it was incredibly selfish. I thought it meant that you should do what you want and not worry about anyone else. Do what looks right, what feels right.

I sat with it for a while. I decided that my first reaction was shallow. I decided to go outside my comfort zone. I looked at the world outside instead of just what's easiest.

Fill what's empty. What is empty? We have a library that's short of books and a lot of used bookstores. I went to the library, got a list of books they wanted, and I went looking. I brought them 150 books. Average cost of \$2 a book, so it certainly hit my savings account, but it was worth it to bring in boxes and boxes to the librarians I like so much. Now they're sending me lists and I bring them books whenever I can. It's getting less empty.

Empty what's full. That was harder. I looked around trying to find something that needed to be emptied. I ended up at the local no-kill shelter. I started working on training dogs, getting them to be very polite, gentle animals, comfortable in any situation. I've gotten six dogs adopted so far and I am working with the seven most frantic dogs in the shelter. They're getting better. They're calming down. It's working.

Scratch what itches. I think that means do what brings you joy. I had an itch; I stopped working, and I was bored. I am not bored now. I go digging for interesting books, train challenging dogs, cook good food in small amounts for myself (which, let me tell you, isn't as easy as it sounds), and I

wake up in the morning looking forward to the experiences of the day. I'm getting enough sleep and a lot of exercise. I'm coming out of my funk.

I retired and a year later my husband died. All of our plans went down the drain. Now I fill what's empty, empty what's full, and scratch what itches, and two years after his death, I am learning a different kind of happiness, alone, but okay. It isn't easy. I still miss him every day. I think about things that I want to talk to him about. I write to him, kind of. I suppose I should say I write, and I write as if I am writing to him. I know he's gone. I think, though, that he would be happy to see me learning to live again.

Starting over is hard. I am glad I have found a few small things that make it easier.

—

For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Tara Roberts](#) gave me this prompt: "I have a simple philosophy. Fill what's empty. Empty what's full. And scratch where it itches." — Alice Roosevelt Longworth (You don't have to use the actual quote.).

I gave [Cameron](#) this prompt: One of life's best coping mechanisms is to know the difference between an inconvenience and a problem. — Robert Fulghum

Midnight

He sat waiting, watching the altar at the cathedral. He knew the madman was coming soon, even if the police didn't believe him.

“The madman is coming! The madman is coming!” He almost laughed as the refrain began going through his head. He had imagined being Paul Revere when he was a little boy, and he had loved the thought of warning everyone that the bad guys were coming. This time, he’d tried to warn everyone, but no one listened. He was alone, watching for the man who had killed at least eight people.

There was movement in the narthex, a shadow moving, becoming a tall man in dark clothes. He was carrying a cloth bag that the watcher knew held the spoils of his gruesome hobby. The watcher texted to his friend. “He’s here! Get the cops. Please.” The watcher was careful to not let the light from his phone show anywhere the murderer might be able to see. He tucked the phone away and continued his vigil.

When the murderer made it to the altar and began setting up his presentation, the watcher decided he had to act. He picked up the heavy flashlight, crept up behind the murderer, and hit him over the head. The murderer collapsed, and the work of months was finally over.

When the murderer was being taken away to the ambulance, he looked at the man who had captured him and said, “I guess I should have come earlier. You knew I always did this late at night. I should have come just as they closed. Nothing good happens after midnight.”

The watcher smiled a little. “I guess that just depends on which side you’re on. Today, something good happened after midnight.”

—

For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Michael](#) gave me this prompt: □“Whatever you want to do can be done before midnight...Nothing good happens after midnight.” -Vanna White.

I gave [Eric Storch](#) this prompt: The first rainfall after weeks of heat

Some days

She liked a lot of children's books, but one line had been used more than any other growing up. By the end of the day some days, she felt like she shouldn't have gotten out of bed in the morning, let alone tried to slog through such an awful day. She hadn't ever woken up with gum in her hair, but the way today had gone, the sentiment was appropriate.

It had started with the stupid raspberry tart. She had made a tart the night before. When she woke up, she discovered that the heat of the day before had gotten the ant colony that lived under the house moving in high gear. The tart was crawling with the little creatures. She had resisted the urge to shriek or throw things, but it was difficult. No matter how many times she called an exterminator or put out ant poison, they always came back the next year. She hadn't seen any yet this year. She had put the tart on the stove, where they seldom bothered going, on top of a cooling rack, but one enterprising ant had found it and now the stovetop was covered with them.

She had been looking forward to that tart.

She threw away the tart, sprayed down the stovetop, and got ready for work.

Work wasn't much better. There was a voicemail waiting for her when she arrived from a client who had misplaced an important document and needed another copy immediately. When she called him back, he swore at her at great length because she hadn't

been there at 5 PM the night before. He didn't seem to remember the time difference; she was already at home and making the tart by the time his emergency came up. He had been so worried about the document that he'd come in early, so she got it to him before his day started, but swearing was never a good way to begin.

The copy machine broke. The fax machine only worked intermittently. The power went out at 3:12 PM because of a thunderstorm, leaving her unable to help most of her clients. When the power started coming back on, the lights in her office flickered for a while; by the time they had stopped, she had a blazing headache. She wanted to go home and crawl into bed, but she had a blind date set up by her best friend from high school.

She came home to a drenching thunderstorm just as she stepped out of the car, bills in the mail, and a message from her neighbor that they would be pruning the tree and that there might be falling limbs in the next day or two. She got dressed for her date, checked the mirror, and went to the restaurant. Everything seemed fine until she checked the mirror one more time as she got out of the car and realized that one of the two matching clips in her hair had disappeared since she left the house.

After a frantic search, she gave up, repositioned the remaining clip, took a deep breath, and walked into the restaurant. She met her date. They sat down and the first thing he asked was how her day had gone. She looked at him a little blankly – that wasn't usually a question for the first date.

“There was a book I read a lot when I was little, and one line perfectly describes today. ‘Some days are like that...’”

“‘Even in Australia!’” he broke in, laughing.

She smiled at him and decided that the end of the day would be

better than the rest of it had been.

—

I'm late this week; I thought Friday was Thursday. Sorry! For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Barb Black](#) gave me this prompt: raspberry tarts and a missing hairpiece.

I gave [Last Mom On Earth](#) this prompt: Survival of the fittest.

Drip, drip, drip

"Fish got to swim, birds got to fly, I got to love one man 'til I die..."

The needle skipped.

"...that man of mine."

The music and a steady *drip, drip, drip* from the living room were the only sounds in the house.

The front door slammed open. "Police!"

"Tell me I'm crazy, maybe I know..."

The two men sidled in carefully. "This is the police! We had a report of screaming. Is anyone here?"

Drip, drip, drip.

One of the men stepped into the living room and then dashed outside to vomit over the railing.

"God." The other man was looking at the source of the dripping

noise.

The first man came back in, already calling in the murder team. The two men proceeded to clear the rest of the house; no one else was there.

“Home without him ain’t no home to me..”

“Turn that thing off. Use gloves and move carefully, but make the music stop. I can’t stand it.”

Both men sighed when the music went silent.

Drip, drip, drip.

“Let’s go outside and wait.”

One stood on the front porch, one on the back.

Inside the house, there was nothing alive anymore.

—

For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [Eric Storch](#) gave me this prompt: Write whatever comes to mind from the words: “There is nothing”.

I gave [Andrea](#) this prompt: Someone else is in control of a huge decision that will change the course of your life.

A smile

“This is a stupid superhero power!”

“At least you aren’t aquaman.”

“Aquaman was a putz, but he had cool powers. He could talk to

sea creatures and stuff. I can destroy things.”

“So can the Hulk, and everyone likes him.”

“Argh. Don’t I get a say in this?”

“It’s just how people come out. You got hit by weird lightning and it changed you. Just think – if they could figure out how to harness the energy you produce, you could power a small town!”

“And in the meantime I have to not smile. Ever.”

He snickered. “Okay, so that part is pretty funny.”

“I blow out every fuse in the area. I can take out transformers. I just point my teeth at it or something like that. It’s stupid.”

“Well, yeah, on some level. Maybe the government will find a use for you. You can get invited to important parties, smile at everyone, cause a blackout, and in the ensuing chaos other agents can steal important papers.”

“After the first or second time I did it, they’d make everyone smile before they were allowed in.”

“I’m sure they could figure out some way to block it until you can use it. You’ve only had the power for a few days. It will take some getting used to.”

“Says you. How would you know? You don’t have a stupid superpower. You can touch people and make them go to sleep.”

“It goes through my hands. Think about how frustrating that is when I’m trying to, well, you know...”

“Ew! You’re my brother. I don’t want to know.”

“It sucks. Or, in your case blows.” He started laughing at his pun, and she grinned reluctantly, carefully not showing her

teeth.

“Okay, whatever. You can help me figure out how to use it for good or something. This is so stupid. I’m a teenager and I feel like I should superglue my lips together.”

“It’ll be fine, sis. We’ll figure it out.”

–

For the [Scriptic](#) prompt exchange this week, [lisa](#) gave me this prompt: Her smile could light up the world on even its darkest day..

I gave [Chelle](#) this prompt: Pull out the nearest book, open it to the sixth page, take the fourth sentence, and incorporate that into a piece of fiction.

Storytime

“...and they lived happily ever after.”

The little girl’s eyes opened.

“I thought you were asleep.” Her father smiled at her.

“Papa, it’s not the end of the story.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, they got married. Did they have babies? That’s their story, too.”

“When do you think a story ends?”

She frowned. “Maybe not until all the people who knew them die.”

“What about the people we still remember, like Mozart or Aristotle? No one is still alive who knew them, but they still have an impact on people who are alive now.”

“Their stories aren’t done yet.” She thought for a moment. “Maybe I’ll do something that means my story goes on forever.”

“Maybe so.” He kissed her forehead. “G’night, bug.”

“‘Night, papa.”

—

For the [Scriptic.org](https://scriptic.org) prompt exchange this week, [Barb Black](#) gave me this prompt: This isn’t the end of the story. and I gave [Bewildered Bug](#) this prompt: As she watched, the lizard slowly crept over his arm.

[Scriptic – a new place for writers!](#)

I am going to interrupt my normally scheduled Tuesday Tidbits to bring you this exciting news. If you are a writer or artist of any kind, please check it out!

[scripticorg:](https://scriptic.org)

Hello, world! It’s been a very busy week in the world of the Scriptic Collective. We’re working on the new website, and in the interim, we’ve got this Tumblr, [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) ready. If you’re interested in participating in creative challenges, writing prompt exchanges, photography and art challenges, or submitting work to the Scriptic Collective, come and chat us up! We look forward to working with you soon.

Regards,

Your Faithful Editors

On writing

“I believe that writers run out of material, I really do.” – Brian Wilson

I don't believe that writers run out of material, or at least not exactly. I will rebut this a little with a quote from one of my favorite authors:

“If you only write when you're inspired, you may be a fairly decent poet but you'll never be a novelist because you're going to have to make your word count and those words aren't going to wait for whether you're inspired or not. So, you have to write when you're not inspired and you have to write the scenes that don't inspire you....when people come to me and they say I want to be a writer, what should I do, I say you have to write. Sometimes they say, well I'm already doing that what else should I do, and I say you have to finish things because that's where you learn from. You learn by finishing things.” – Neil Gaiman

There are days that I don't want to write. Since Katja was born, there have been more days that I don't want to write than days I do. There are a myriad of things to write about if I just look around a little, but I am tired. At the moment, it is 6:30 in the morning. I have been up since 4:45, fed Katja and gotten her back to sleep, gone for a 1.5 mile run in 24 degree weather (one of my toes went numb!), and done dishes. All of those are things that I can write about. Katja's contented snuggling when she finished her bottle, the

streetlights making the frosty grass sparkle, coming home to a warm house, the satisfaction of creating order from chaos: each of these could be the beginning of something interesting, be it short or long. Each could provide a snippet of a novel, a scene of contentment or thoughtfulness, or a description of fighting for something, even something as small as wanting to be the best person possible for those you love.

I think that writers suffer from a couple of problems when they are focused on trying to write. One is that they get so wrapped up in their writing that they forget to lift up their heads once in a while and look at the world. When I get particularly stymied, sometimes I will go someplace very busy. I will sit on a bench and watch people. I see how they interact with each other and wonder why. I look at how they dress, how they move, how they present themselves to the world. I think about what I might have in common with them and what I might not, what their day might be like, and why they react that way. I see kindness and cruelty, laughter and pain, and the stories start running in my head again. Sometimes it doesn't take much. A brightly woven scarf on an otherwise very mousy person, for instance, or a small act of kindness, unexpected.

The other problem I see is fear. We write for an audience, whether or not that is our primary goal. I write here because I need to sort out the world, but I know there are a few people who read it. I choose my words carefully (or I try to, at least) and I am very aware that I have an audience, even though it is small. That sometimes chokes my words. I sit down to write and I start thinking too much about what it might sound like to someone else. Once I'm thinking about that, it is almost impossible for me to write anything. I think it sounds stupid or inane or that no one will get past the first paragraph without giving up in disgust.

I had an English teacher who had us write a page in five minutes at the beginning of every class. We didn't have to

write anything in particular; if all we wrote was one word or one sentence, that was fine. We just had to write. As we got better, as the year progressed, she began giving us topics, but we still got a good grade on the exercise if we filled a page. It seemed somewhat silly at the time, but it taught me that sometimes I just need to start writing, even if I don't feel like there is anything to write about.

I have been singing all my life. I am not amazing, but I'm not bad. I enjoy singing. I don't much like performing, though, for the same reason that writing is sometimes difficult. I do not like feeling judged. I doubt that anyone really does. There is a song that helps me a little, though, that I first heard on Sesame Street when I was fairly young and have loved ever since. It's called Sing (Sing a Song) and it is, as far as I can tell, originally by the Carpenters.

Here are the lyrics that make it easier to keep singing and writing and trying:

Sing, sing a song,
Make it simple, to last your whole life long
Don't matter if it's not good enough for anyone else to hear,
Sing, sing a song.

It doesn't matter if these words are never read or if my music is never heard. I still need to write and I still need to sing. Both of these make my life fuller and more interesting, make me happier, make me pay more attention to the world.

I believe that writers only run out of things to write about if they allow themselves to stop paying attention to what is going on around them or allow themselves to be controlled by fear. If you want to write, write. If you don't feel inspired, look out the window, take a walk, take a break, and then sit down and write anyway. It won't always be easy; it often isn't. Sometimes, though, the pieces you like least while you are writing them, those pieces that come from a complete lack

of inspiration, can turn out to be quite good when you look at them again.

Just sit down and write. Put words on paper or on a screen. Even if it's just one word, over and over, it may develop into something more.

—

For the [IndieInk Writing Challenge](#) this week, [Michael](#) challenged me with ““I believe that writers run out of material, I really do.” -Brian Wilson” and I challenged [Tara Roberts](#) with ““I speak for the dead.” Don't go the Orson Scott Card route, please. Make it scientific rather than psychological.”