

CHAPTER FOUR

DON'T EDIT YOURSELF

“Don’t think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity. You can’t try to do things. You simply must do things.”

—Ray Bradbury

The title doesn’t mean don’t ever edit yourself. The adage ‘writing is rewriting’ is a truism. Whether it’s nonfiction, novels, screenplays, short stories, outlines, pitches, query letters or poems, my first drafts are generally disastrous. The drive and willingness to critically edit one’s own work is a formidable tool in the writer’s box of tricks to stay alive.

However, there is a magical time in the writing process when all that matters is the unedited flow of getting whatever is inside, out. On paper. On the computer. Chiselled on a cave wall. Somewhere, get it out. Actually, avoid chiselling stone. It’s slow, the dust is hard on the lungs and many caves are damp.

Writing without editing yourself is vital to feel creatively alive and helpful for reaching the end of a draft. If you haven’t yet got there, trust me, there is magic in writing *The End*, even in an unpolished draft. Two of my three novels were re-written, every line. *Every* line. Doesn’t say a lot for my first drafts. But getting to the end of a draft is like being a child again and feeling praise from someone whose praise matters to you. There is a sumptuous release of dopamine in the brain when this happens. I think it’s dopamine. I can’t go to the Internet to find out because I will never return.

I have to be strong, I’m writing *tips and prompts*.

Tip: you can deliver this rush of praise to yourself by getting to the end of a draft. And to get there, sometimes, if necessary, don’t edit on route. I just erased the last line, but that’s a minuscule edit. I’m going forward. This tip will not be further edited. Hardly.

One important tip to remember while flowing: create drama between your characters as soon as possible. It will be the engine that drives your flow forward.

Tip: don't spend forever describing your characters' feet or the town they were born in. Give the characters laser-sharp dilemmas related to your epic and let them burn and let them flow.

Flowing is magical and it can be experienced by choosing to not edit yourself. Get to the end. If *not* editing along the way freaks you out, I promise you this: there will be plenty of editing in your future.

Exhale the yearning to edit and replace it with affirmations: *I'm on fire! I am a writer! I am flowing! Look out, Stephen King, you're in my way!*

Did you ever hear the story of Bill Gates earning so much money at one stage of his life that if he dropped a \$10,000 bill it wasn't worth his time to bend down to pick it up?

That's you writing the first draft. Say it: *I'm so damn good today I don't need to bend down and edit.*

Leave out the bend down part. It doesn't make any sense. In fact it's weird. Actually, keep it in.

To repeat: a time to edit will come, either by you or some other smarty-pants reading your greatness. But *not* today, my writing friend. Today we flow.

Here's the **prompt**: Today, by this order, *Write without editing thyself.*

Do it. Start a fire with your quill or your fingers on the keys, simply by moving them as fast as you can. Or use a *Bic* lighter, if that's all you've got for heat. Then put that fire out, and start writing again without editing.

If you still haven't started writing without editing, laugh like a maniac who believes one day they will rule the world with their un-edited writing. That is you.

After one more rule-the-world laugh, go flow. Don't edit your laugh or your writing. You think I edited this chapter? I'll never tell. Another manic laugh.

Today, write without editing yourself. See how it feels. Do it again.