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INTRODUCTION

“The most significant problem is that one cannot prompt creativity.”

—Anna Abraham, Neuroscientist

I wrote these 31 chapters full of **tips, prompts** and ideas for you and me and, at the last minute, Dr. Abraham, that scientist with the quote above, who likes the word *significant* and doesn't think we can 'prompt creativity'. Well, Ms. *PhD*, look who knows so much. Anna, you've been using mediocre prompts, with subpar ideas and hardly a tip to be found. Here we're working with magic.

We creatives might look like lab mice to you. We're not.

We are city mice. We are at our typewriters deep into the night.

And we're open to **prompts**. We're open to anything. Bribes. Love. Delusion. Feedback. Success. And, of course, rewriting.

In my artistic journey, I've had good years, great months and magical days. All the way, I battle creative roadblocks, the least of which is writer's block. Here's an abridged list: getting down to the writing, self-esteem, confidence in what I'm producing, a lack of time, asking why I even bother, the biz itself.

My goal was to put together, in 31 short chapters, hundreds of lessons, **tips, prompts** and ideas useful and inspiring to the process of writing. Useful being the key. I know they're useful because I use them and look at me know, riding a cresting wave of, if not fame and glory, lots of great work. There's no sin in that.

The fact is, my scattered, writing brain needs **tips** and **prompts** and ideas. What kind of **tips**? Some have suggested, as a **tip** for focus, the university all-night study stimulant *Adderall*. Problem is I already make coffee jumpy. For now I'm going to stick with all natural brain-inspiring, endorphin-producing creative **tips**.

So here's the **first prompt**: if a lack of confidence or fear is holding you back from writing, write *about* the fear that is blocking you. Now you're *writing* about not being able to write—which *is* writing. Checkmate. Seriously, *write* your fears. From here, close this book and write your epic.

Maybe you tell yourself it's stupid and useless to write about the fear of writing something stupid and useless. **Prompt 2**: write about *that*. In the process of proving-by-writing how stupid it is to write about the fear of writing, you create a character — your character—proving an unprovable point. That's got best-seller written all over it. Might even be the plot of *The New Matrix*.

Remember, whatever is stopping you from writing is smothering your true nature. We are born to be creative. We are meant to be creative. It *is* what we are. It is what you are. Granted, to be *relentlessly* creative takes relentless drive. But to simply *be creative*? To write? That takes a pinch of desire and a twist of self-belief. It takes sitting down with a working pen and a sheet of paper. Or a computer. A chisel and a rock? Whatever. You're getting close to writing the first word, which is how every work of genius starts. After the first word, geniuses keep going. But it doesn't take a genius to write that first word or to keep going.

I'll offer all kinds of ways to start, including *just start*. **Prompt 3**: write that *first* word. Keep going. Avoid distraction. Not working?

Tip 2A: Try *Adderall*. Kidding.

Peek out the window or around your abode. Take a deep breath. Let it out. Another. Now put your thoughts down...write a paragraph about, say, how your heart got broken when you were ten or what frustrates you at work. Make it a rant, if that's the way to flow.

That reminds me. After I wrote my second novel, *Understanding Ken*, about a kid caught in the crosshairs of his parent's divorce (a fictionalized version of a year in my childhood), readers would ask: "How did you remember all those details about '70s pop culture and being a kid?"

Before I'd answer, they'd rattle off multiple events from their own childhood. They couldn't stop themselves. Like song lyrics from your childhood, the writing information

is there. *Your* song is waiting to be sung. The paper is the crowd. The pencil is the singer. Sing, dammit!

In *Hey, Writer*, I will inspire you and inform you with all I have, but it's *your* journey. Use *whatever* triggers *you* to be more creative. The words you write, in whatever form, are yours. That's the beauty. Your writing offers notes to the world and your own soul. Your writing says, *I'm here, I exist, this is me and, garl darnit, I'm worth it.*

So use the **prompts, tips**, lessons and nudges. Use anything you can. I promise you this, my co-writers, self-belief will grow by *exporting* your creativity *beyond* your brain. Whether you're working on a novel, a screenplay, an essay, poetry or a free-flowing journal; whether you write fiction or non-fiction, suspense, horror, coming-of-age sci-fi, epic fantasy, LGBTQ romance, dystopian YA, business proposals, comedy, social justice manifestos, tech manuals, biography, historical fiction, drama, political satire or anything else, the act of writing your words down will make you a better writer. If you're brave with your words, it might even make you braver. It will certainly make you more creative.

Creativity is a sustainable resource. It only dies if it's not used. And even then, it's not dead. It's lonely. Creativity is a life skill. In an uncertain future, creativity is a super power. Creativity helps negotiate trouble and joy.

Be a friend to your creativity by writing. Writing might be the best friend you ever have. I hope it's not, actually. But if it is, make it a great one. Loyal. Honest. Exciting. It's time to write.

