

Dedication

As I referenced in the section entitled "The Birth of an Idea is Sacred," there is a very simple, yet powerful thought process that you can take yourself through to unleash your creative potential. It is to change what you ask of yourself during the formative stage of an idea.

Change the question from: "Can I _____ a _____?"

To: "If I were to _____ a _____, what would it look like?"

I'd like to exemplify this point in dedicating this book. Long after most of this book was written, dear friends of mine have encountered and battled incredible adversity. Everyone has had a moment in their lives where they have offered words of comfort similar to this: "My thoughts and prayers are with you." For me, when thoughts run through my mind and stay there in the forefront, such as in these situations, I feel compelled to find the right words to express those thoughts on paper. These words on paper may never see the light of day and may have merely served the purpose of exorcizing them from my head, or to just collect them in an organized fashion.

But I know I may end up actually communicating those words to the person facing the adversity, and I take comfort in knowing that they are there when needed if the right opportunity arises. I have been truly inspired whenever, and wherever, I have seen someone match the right words for the moment, especially big moments. Winston Churchill comes to mind.

I have never expressed my words in verse before, but again, I answered the question "What would it look like?" instead of "Can I?" It is with my love that I dedicate this book to my dear friends the Collier family and the Schoen family.

Please learn more about these wonderful people at:

Friendsofclaire.org

Jamesrobertschoen.blogspot.com

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I wanted to give a beautiful portrait of Claire.

Taken early in her battle against ALS, where the effects of this degenerative disease were starting to manifest, this portrait represented only that moment in time. This portrait captured Claire, her family, her fight, and her courage. A portrait done with oils on canvas can only show the subject. This portrait, done with words, also captured the fear, helplessness and sadness I felt with this diagnosis. In a strange and beautiful paradox, as I felt my self getting weaker as events unfolded, yet as Claire battled each step with grace, she seemed to be getting stronger and stronger.

This is called "Beacon of Strength."

Beacon of Strength

She's the same to you, as she is to me, as consistent as consistent can be,
For me it came in to view, very plain to see, in the middle of her adversity.

With the serum of truth, look in the mirror clean, and see yourself as others have seen,
Many times uncouth, some times even mean, our faces belie the places we've been.

Regardless of that, Claire welcomes us in, and with a smile; our tales she'd listen,
She'd go to the mat, the fake punch on the chin, and make us all believe we can win.

As our lives change, and get more complex, and we worry about what will come next,
It will not be strange, when on Claire one reflects, that no matter with whom she
connects,

There's a steadiness, a calm in the storm, a place where you will feel safe and warm,
It's her readiness, with which she was born, to carry more burden than merely her own.

Oh Jesus Christ - what could you have in mind, to make her own burden so unkind?
Wouldn't it be nice, if we were to find, some kind of way to put this all behind?

Distribute the burden! We'd all take a share. Wouldn't that be so much more fair?
Let me add a word in - it shouldn't be all for Claire, she's never put on a selfish air.

But alas in this play, much to our dismay, we are left only to play supporting roles.
It is safe to say, that each and every day, our hearts - though larger, now contain holes.

With this news we now live, is it too sensitive? To ask Claire about her dreaded disease?
Never submissive, with much candor to give, she speaks the unspeakable with grace and
with ease.

And there is Bill there, a reflection of Claire, calm and solid - reassuring.
Giving what-when & where, on topics we couldn't dare, an experience most prematuring.

Kieran, Bridget and Leah, with the best view to see a, couple in love unlike another.
Kieran, Bridget and Leah, how wonderful to be the, ones to call them their father and
mother.

It is now our turn, as we watch Claire's light burn, radiating stronger as things worsen,
To use what we learn, to strive and to yearn, to each become a better person.

She's the same to you, as she is to me, as consistent as consistent can be.
Well we would all do, if like Claire we would be, a beacon of strength for all to see.

More recently other dear friends faced what no one should experience. That was helping their son, JR, battle cancer, which abruptly arrived in the most dangerous form. What incredible courage this boy showed, along with his family. A reoccurring phrase seemed to emerge in conversations with friends about their situation. "I can't imagine..." I used that phrase and heard it often. "I can't imagine..." As I thought about it more I realized that phrase wasn't true.

Maybe for others too, but I couldn't help but imagine what it must be like. To hear the doctors; to make the trips to the various hospitals; to quickly learn everything possible about the disease; to tell family members about it; to tell friends about it. The most incredible part in my imagination was thinking how do you talk to JR about it? I know this mother and father handled that with all the love and care and humor and tenderness and goodness that could be ever summoned up between two people.

As a friend, and as a father of two boys, I tried to imagine, if there ever were a right moment, could there be any words I might find that could help. That thought rattled around my head for weeks without any words falling into place. One day I while driving around in my landcruiser with my boys, we found ourselves in one of the summer's wildest thunderstorms. It was brief and it was spectacular, so much so that we pulled over. The thunder and lightning was furious as a ton of rain dumped in only minutes. Just as quickly as this storm arrived...it ended.

The wind pushed it over the next town and the sun shined its light on the aftermath. Huge puddles, some braches down, and in the sky between the dark clouds leaving the area and the sunlit sky arriving...was a beautiful rainbow.



Not long after that day the little boy lost his battle... and these words fell into place. This is called "Heaven Works."

Heaven Works

"When I get to heaven, I wonder what I will do then..."
I wondered this for JR, a boy just shy of ten.

He never really asked, as he didn't get the chance,
But I'd thought of an answer, in case I'd have to take a stance.

*"JR," I'd say, just to open up the story,
"Do you know what I saw today, in all of its glory?"*

*A beautiful rainbow, which is God's greatest feat,
Yet it wasn't all there, it wasn't complete.*

*The arc was unfinished, the colors were faded,
So I wanted to talk to the Angels who made it.*

You know, JR...

*When we all go to heaven, we all get new jobs,
That bring the greatest of joys, from where once there were sobs.*

*When I get to heaven, I hope to hear God say,
"You help build full moons, every twenty-eighth day."*

*The moon is only full for that one night in the sky,
So I don't have to be perfect on the very first try!*

*Now, you on the other hand, JR, can do so much more,
God knows that, and surely has a great job in store.*

*A rainbow needs rain, to help it appear,
Your Dad can build that, he builds everything here.*

*The rainbow's colors must be lit by the sun,
I'm sure your Mom and Sis, would find that job fun.*

*But to fix the rainbow's arc, and make the colors vivid above,
Is the most important job, a job that you'd love.*

*Whenever God wants you to begin, there is this you must know,
As you are building those rainbows, we'll be missing you so.*

*We'll see all the beauty, and how you fixed all the parts,
And we'll know that we're with you, with all the love in our hearts."*