

Messages

May 6, 2012 at 4:26am

Assignment Prompt:

Writing from an Object -- Use an object to inspire writing.



Cell Phones for Soldiers

That which does not destroy us makes us strong. Tumor. Short time to die. Well, maybe for a writer, this would inspire a written legacy. She could transcend death by using it. She would be enriched, not destroyed.

That's when she decided to begin writing her goodbyes.

No pity. So she wouldn't tell anyone, but she would write each important person in her life The Note. The One Note that each would cherish, put away in their special place to turn to for comfort when needed. Exactly what could she say to each person she loved?

To her mother – too late. They'd been so much alike they never got along. Why didn't she know her better? She was the first person in her family to go to college. Saw that each of her kids got a college education. Didn't even know we were poor because she made our lives rich enough. So that's why we had pan-fried potatoes even with our nearly meatless homemade chili. I wish she'd known how much I respected her, how she helped me stand on my own, be what I wanted to be, even though she got no chance to be anything but a worn-out mother of three whose dreams didn't matter at all. Why didn't I ever ask her what she had wanted to be when she had gone to college as a girl?

"I'll do better with everyone else. I have time," she thought.

Never had any children. No little me to be a part of the world. No immortality. Did kinda spoil my niece. We were both book lovers. The year Regina started school, she sent the young girl a box of books signed by the authors and illustrators, each with its own personal note. What's the point of being a writer, if you can't take advantage of your friends who are also writers?

The college boyfriend who broke her heart, who emailed her, saying he hadn't meant to hurt her and asking her to get in touch. How that had given her comfort, even after so many years. She always felt ugly and unimportant around him. She had been such an over-emotional needy girl. Shy. Fearful. Afterward, even though she made some uncorrectable mistakes, the woman she became was strong and independent. Would it help him to know how he had healed a wound she had become accustomed to?

Husband who stood by her. When she was gone, there would be no children to comfort him, just one way she was flawed when he decided he would love this broken woman anyway. What could she possibly say to him after 40 years of a marriage that would seem weak, cold, and lonely to most outsiders? Compromised

so much. Maybe he was happy with his compromise.

Bill Stephany who gave her a new life by selecting her for that summer to study in Siena. Maybe a quote from Dante -- In the middle of our life, dark place, Dante and me all the way. Bill would get it. She could be cryptic and let Dante speak for her.

How the days run away while she was trying so hard to hold them still!

A craftsman is only as good as his tools and she would wait for hers, for the right moment -- if she had time. She ordered special note cards -- a memento should look like a memento. Obvious. This is a symbol. You're supposed to keep this; it is special.

The day the stationery arrived, she was ready. She had been more tired, not weak yet, but it was time.

Perfect paper. Crisp embossed ivory cards. Perfect cool grey ink in dip bottles so she could write with the glass pen she'd brought back from Italy. Quietly, she addressed each envelope. Stacked paper. Thought. Small cards. This is no time to be wordy and ramble on and on. She put stamps on each envelope. Magic in those envelopes.

She noticed that the shipper had included a small pre-paid plastic bag in the box.

Cell Phones for Soldiers. A Cell Phone Recycling Program. Since 2004, teens Brittany and Robbie Bergquist and *Cell Phones for Soldiers* have raised millions of dollars to help our troops call home. Proceeds from donated cell phones are used to purchase prepaid calling cards for troops. Your Mission: Help Our Troops Call Home. No postage necessary.

A chance to be useful to a complete stranger. Epiphany.

First instruction. "Deactivate phone and turn off power." How's that for irony? Laughing. So obvious that it's almost profound. Even this old English teacher's densest class would have gotten it.

Just to be safe, make sure there's nothing on here you might need. Contacts, saved voicemail. Then, erase everything.

"Sandra, this is Mack. Give me a call." Voice still kinda gave her a little frisson of joy.

"Is this Sandra? Would you like to spend the summer in Siena?" Voice of a stranger; now a friend.

"Auntie Sandra. I love my books, I do." In that sweet little Texas belle voice.

"Don't forget we have tickets for Bonnie Raitt tonight." Some people think we sound alike on the phone, but her husband's strong familiar voice gave her immediate peace.

Last saved message, her mother's voice. "You promised me a girls' day out. I'm counting on you."

As she placed the erased cell phone into its package and into the mailbox, she thought, "The notes can wait for another day."

Some days are almost painfully beautiful and this was one. The sun so bright it hurt her eyes. Could bring tears if you weren't careful and looked directly at it.