



How I Create Universes (or Don't)

Why I Create and Why I Stop

Just Because You're Omniscient, Doesn't Mean You Can't
have a Confidence Crisis

Have a Word

Write this Down

by Saffron Swansborough

Sun

"Winters devils are destroyed by light. Their doomed castle is struck by a brilliant white and yellow." The opening line of your story in 1983 in response to the prompt, Spring. Pre-National Curriculum, you wrote creatively for an hour a week at school. Unfiltered, unedited. You loved that someone would say a word and a fire burst out.

At secondary school, you had a feisty single-parent English teacher with a Victorian profile. You loved Oscar Wilde and EM Forster, so you were a perfect fit. She encouraged you to skip PE to launch a newspaper.

You interviewed the late MP Ian Gow about the first student loans. Despite that, he invited you to Westminster. 10 years later, you became a journalist. Your teacher doesn't know that.

Space

Lost.

The A Level English teacher groaned at the style of your story. A university professor wrote YUK! on your Modernism essay where you attempted to write something poetic instead of using a critical voice.¹ The pen became impotent.

In your twenties you travelled to 40% of Asian countries yet all you wrote were postcards. You lost your mind and dignity taking the Bachelor of Bad Behaviours (BBB Hons). You didn't capture any of these mind-expanding travels in leather-bound journals. But you wrote facts for 10 years as a broadcast journalist. Perhaps you just needed someone to give you a word. You have only just come to this conclusion. And only now do you realise that you can mine these gap years for writing.

During this haze you discovered a male writer who completely changed your life.²

Moon

In a Southwold hotel one squiffy afternoon in 2012 you wrote a list of things that would improve your life because you'd heard if you write something down you're more likely to make it happen. One of these was Writing. You were strong-armed into an interim management job and promised yourself a creative writing course as a reward.

Luminosity. At the class, the teacher read a word and you invented worlds. You learnt about writing. You bought a notebook and recorded train conversations. At the end of year one you fell pregnant and switched to a writing group above an Eastbourne pub. That half-Guinness was good for the baby, she's merry. There was a Christmas birth and a threat of homelessness.³ The pen rested.

Four years passed. Your daughter due to start school. The writing group was still going, you saw it on a flier at the hospital where your youngest visits the paediatrician. You re-connected. You never share your writing outside of the hall. But today your eldest told you to write about yourself because she thinks you are a writer because you write.

If you want something done, write it down.

Mars

Will you ever reach it?

¹ You now work at the same college and know that the A Level teacher was a thief. Later, the professor endured a terrible death.

² That's another story.

³ That's another story