You Take This Writing Seriously, Don't You?

By

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That's what a friend said, when they saw my beautiful blue-green 1957 Steampunk Royal FP on my kitchen table, with a light next to it and a folder with typewritten pages.

"You take this writing seriously, don't you?"

Yes, yes, I do. I've been taking it seriously for years, and only now did you notice? What did you think I have been doing behind my MacBook all these years?

I don't ask him, I just nod and say, "Typewriters help with the creative process."

"Ah," he says, not really understanding. "But how do you get it to your publisher? Scanning the pages?"

"No," I say. "I retype everything on my MacBook in Scrivener, so I can format stories to PDFs or ePubs."

"Doesn't sound very efficient," he says, his fingers stroking the cream-white keys of the Royal. "Not efficient at all."

"Efficiency is over-rated." I take a blank page and roll it into the typewriter. "Sit down."

He looks at me, confused. "I can't type."

"Doesn't matter," I say. "Sit and tap the keys. Don't
press them like on a computer keyboard, but hammer the keys like a honkytonk piano."

He climbs onto my Stokke Variable chair, a backless wooden contraption that is like an elevated kneeling position to keep your back straight and your arms at the ideal angle to rest your fingers on the keyboard.

He looks up at me. "What should I write?"

"Just write, 'What should I write?'" I say. "Write what pops up in your mind."

Thunk!

The segment goes down as he shifts to Caps and presses down on the W. The typebar comes up too slow and lightly kisses the ribbon.

I press the backspace, keep the shift in and hammer-tap the W key, making it thwack against the paper and show up in stark black on crisp white.

He smiles and starts typing, two-fingered pecking the stained old keys of my Steampunk FP. A sentence, then another two, and he stops and gazes out the window.

I turn and switch on my old Pavoni espresso machine, another relic from a bygone era, simple boiler to heat up the water for the vacuum lever slurping it into the chamber where the portafilter is attached with the fragrant ground coffee.

By the time I've made two cappuccino and carried them to
the kitchen table, he has filled half a page with typing. He stops typing and caresses the machine, idly touching the white tabulator buttons sticking from the embossed blue-greenish panel and running his hand almost tenderly over the gleaming red Royal emblem, that pops inward and releases the ribbon cover like the hood of an old Mack truck.


"It is," I say. "The old felt had disintegrated and without the felt the machine made more noise."

I show him where I replaced the felt, on the inside of the margin cover, and tilting the machine back to show him the new felt on the inside panels. As I put the machine back down, his hands start caressing the keys again.

"Have you ever stroked your laptop like that?"

He looks up and says, "No, but this machine just begs to be touched."

I nod. "Do you see now how this machine connects you straight with your creativity? You don't have to write at great speed. Efficiency is not important, thinking is. And an uninterrupted flow from your mind to the page."

He looks over at the paper and said, "I made a typo."

"I make typos all the time. But on the computer, my Inner Editor interferes and tells me to correct the typo before I go
on with my writing. And that pulls me out of the flow."

"You don't have corrective fluid? Tipp-Ex? White-Out?"

"No, I mainly type drafts. If I make a typo, I can usually figure out what I meant to type when I have to re-write it on the MacBook."

His eyes narrow slightly. "So your Inner Editor doesn't interfere when you're typing."

"Exactly. This machine divorces the Editing from the Creative process. I'm the only person reading the drafts, so I don't care about the mistakes and errors. I can remedy that later, when I edit as I rewrite it on the computer."

"Is that why you returned to writing on typewriters?"

I nod. "I rarely feel blocked in my writing anymore."

"Cool," he says. "Where can I get a typewriter?"

"I'll give you one of my machines," I say. "If you'll use it. And spread the word."

We smile in conspiracy and drink our coffee.