The Workshop

You might say that by watching my grandfather in his workshop, I learned the work of writing before I could even scrawl my name down. The workshop was in the old barn. Inside the walls with the faded red paint and beyond the big bay doors that swung heavily to the side was his dark, cool workshop. The pleasant, unmistakable smell of oil-soaked planks and machined steel hung in the air. What my grandfather did there was mysterious to me. His habit was to wake early and sip coffee until the light grew strong enough for him to begin work. By the time I woke, he'd already be deep into his work. He was a stern man, so I always tried to keep out of his way. Too short to see what he was doing at his workbench and not tall enough to peer down under the hood of the car, I watched him work rather than seeing what he was working on. When he was welding, he'd tell me to look away or I'd go blind. But the mystery was too tempting and I would quickly scan my eyes to and fro trying to piece together what he was doing from stolen sideways glances, looking just long enough for it to feel dangerous. For all that I didn't understand, I did know that his work involved wrenches, screwdrivers, a trouble light, and cursing—inventive and frequent cursing. I knew that it meant fixing the car or the tractor or the boat—there's never a shortage of things to fix on the farm. I knew that it involved mechanics. It meant taking things apart so that you could fix or replace what was broken and put it all back together again better than it was before. "Tinkering," my Grandma called it when she was in a good mood. "A blasted waste of time and money," when her mood was bad.

Writing is like this; it's not coincidental that we speak about workshopping our writing. Writing requires taking things apart to put them back together again better than they were before. In other words, good writing requires revision, a lot of it. On the outside it may seem like tinkering, or even a waste of time, but revision is necessary, unavoidable, and often difficult work that can be satisfying nonetheless. In my grandfather's pleasure in the steady pace of his work, I see a kinship to the desire Donald Murray expresses for novice writers to feel "the satisfaction of craft" as they revise. (167).

Revision is where most of the work of writing is done. For many novice writers, revision can seem like work that takes place on a workbench too high to see. They know

that writing involves mechanics, and they likely recognize the writer's equivalent of a wrench, screwdriver, and trouble light. They know that mechanics involves fixing an engine and they've likely seen enough working engines to know what a good one looks like and sounds like. But how to piece this all together, how to do it themselves, how to make their own writing purr like a tuned sports car (or even chug and rumble like a heavy tractor) lies beyond their reach. Even if they do see how it works, it comes from looking elsewhere and glancing at it sideways—seeing it like I saw the welder's forbidden blue spark as a boy.

To be clear, the novice writers that I have in mind here are my grandfather and me. My grandfather is a novice writer. He writes, but never much more than notes, phone numbers, bills of sale, and invoices. He understands the writing that I do as a scholar-in-training about as well as I understood what he was doing in his workshop. Although he respects my vocation, he doesn't understand it. He doesn't like professors, but he likes that I might be one insofar as it shows how far the family has come since the days he left Grade 8 to start work at a sawmill.

This piece of writing is both for him and me. As a self-assessed "advanced novice," I still have questions about how revision works. If I still have trouble understanding what happens during the work of revision, how much more so do first-year students falter when asked to do this work? What follows, then, is written for a novice by a novice.

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What you love to do, Grandpa, and what I love to do might not be so different. After spending more than sixty years dirtying your hands while working on engines, I could see why you might think that writers don't put in an honest day's work. Writing isn't just what self-important people do, people who feel that you need to hear what they think whether you care or not. It's not just something to do for people who couldn't cut it at a real job. Find a writer who still works with ink or a typewriter and you'll see that writers know all to well how to get their hands dirty. It's not even reserved for people who seem to be cut above the rest of us—those who seem to snag inspiration out of the air. Most writers work hard like other people. Writers are people who spend their time putting a lot of words down on the page without necessarily trying to get it right the first time. They just want to get the job done. Like you, they just want to see the work get finished with as little fuss and bother as needed, and they know a few tricks of the trade for doing just that. And like you, they care deeply about the integrity of the work and pride
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themselves in a job well done. Raymond Carver, a short-story writer, recalls his mentor teaching him that if "the author was faking it, writing about things he didn't care about or believe in, then nobody could ever care anything about it" (393).

Writers like the work, mostly. Just like you like working on your cars, mostly. Sure the work can make writers grumpy, make them panic as they worry about finishing the job on time, make them curse when yet another sentence doesn't connect with the next the way they hoped it would. But that's no different than when you strip a bolt and suddenly have to bring out the blowtorch for what was supposed to be a five-minute fix-up. Everyone has good and bad days on the job. So why is it that the image most people have of writers is them on their worst days, filling a waste basket with crumpled pages rather than filling pages with competent writing? Maybe writers are guilty of complaining louder than others, and I've sure done my share, but writing can be just another job that needs to get done. It can even be a job that you'd wake up early for because you want to do it.

You know, "everyone can write." Most people don't bother because it doesn't interest them or they're embarrassed or they don't like their writing or they don't have the time or they don't believe they can. You get the idea. But it's not hard to just put words on a page. You do it every time you leave a note for Grandma or write up an invoice or a bill of sale. You could write more than that too if you sat down with a piece of paper and a pen and promised yourself not to stop once you got started. For me, putting words down on the page in a steady but consistent flow has to be one of the greatest feelings as a writer. It's such a change of pace from the strain of waiting for words, stuttering out sentences, and then puzzling over a verb for twenty minutes. Even if most of this writing is as useful as a punctured heater hose, it's such a relaxing experience to see little black letters pop onto the screen. The sentences might be broken, but you look for what you can patch up and chuck the rest into a scrap pile. Later you might dig through that pile to pick out a part that will do in a pinch, but you can't worry about what works and what doesn't at first. You can't do the work of revision if you have no writing to work on.

I want to share with you something I read recently by Tilly Warnock. "Most of the people I know, live rough draft lives," she writes (34). Most of us feel like our lives are a little unmanageable and incomplete, so why should our writing be any different? Warnock understands people like us who do the best we can but still find that life can grind you down a bit. "Most people I know live by trying to make do," she says, "and only on occasion does

our writing seem just right" (34). In the process of revision, getting it just right should come a distant second to getting it done and making it work. Novice writers often feel their writing will never be just right and that knowledge can stop them from trying to revise. Decide from the start that coming up short would be okay, however, and we can start to figure out how to let our shortcomings point the way forward. We can find direction through indirection. Trying to get the writing just right from the start usually only leaves the writer with a feeling of their inevitable failure. If we waited until things were just right before getting on with life, we'd probably never do anything. It's like trying to wait until we're angels before trying to do right by the ones we love. It's a sentiment almost worth more than a year of sermons, "only rarely do we live by the straight and narrow, travel the direct route, or know where we're going before we begin" (34).

So if it's as easy as that, what makes working writers different from the rest of us? It starts with revision. Revision is tricky. Most novice writers think that "revision is a dirty word" because they take it as a sign of failure. Only failed pieces of writing need revised. Working writers understand that revision is where most of the work of writing is done. It isn't merely shifting a few words around at the end of writing; that's called copyediting and proofreading. Working writers know that no piece of writing springs from the writer's mind in perfect condition. Writing always starts off as a handy man's special. It comes in need of fixing. I'm not talking about tighten bolts here; revision can mean a total overhaul. Toby Fulwiler, a writing instructor, puts revision in terms that I think you would like: "reseeing your first words and determining whether or not they do the job you want them to do" (20). And a piece of writing does its job when it informs and intrigues the reader—carries them along with the writer's thoughts as if they were on a road trip with the writer.

Think about a piece of writing as an engine. You know how an engine works and you learned that by working on them. Pulling engines apart, seeing how the parts fit, remembering how other engines worked. Of course, an engine is more than the sum of its parts. The pieces are inert, but assembled together the engine can take a person places. But as anybody knows, you can drive a car without being able to fix one. And as any mechanic knows, you don't have to get an engine running perfect for it to get you where you need to go.

Writing is like that, too. It's made of parts of language that have specific functions and work together in specific ways. Maybe a verb is a little more flexible than a carburetor,

but the wrong verb in the wrong place will get you about as far in a piece of writing as you would get in a car with the fuel line connected to the brake line. But these parts of language also assemble into passages and paragraph that are then organized into a piece of writing that has a larger structure and purpose. Not every part of the whole needs to be perfect for the writing to get the job done. Sometimes a sentence or a whole passage might not work quite right but the writing as a whole can still interest a reader.

Novice writers tend to think that whatever they write in the first draft will likely be the best they are going to do. They typically understand revision as fixing small issues, what some writers call cleaning up or polishing the work. Putting polish on a car makes little difference to how the engine runs but makes all the difference if the goal is to make car-lovers crane their necks as a shiny classic rolls by. A car with a solid, reliable engine can still be a cherished possession even if the body is dirty and dented. The same goes for writing. Unfortunately, most novices think that they can cover for a bad engine by trying to polish the car again and again. Of course, only a car with a highly tuned engine and a sparkling body will do for the biggest car-enthusiasts. Fortunately, that level of writing is usually reserved for special occasions. We only need to worry about getting the car running to begin with.

The way that most novices revise is like tightening bolts when the engine needs to be rebuilt from the oil pan up. Tighten bolts is like tightening sentences in a piece of writing so that every part fits together snuggly. Tightening bolts too soon works against revision because it makes it harder to disconnect those passages that you worked so hard to put together. That said, once novices understand the wider process of revision, tightening a sentence can sometimes clue a writer into larger structural problems, just like you could tighten one bolt on the fan belt and notice that the belt is worn out, the air-intake is plugged, the alternator doesn't work, and the battery needs to be replaced. But as long as novices think of revision only as tightening bolts, no amount of revision will improve the writing and in fact can often make it worse. It would be like continually tightening the bolt on the fan belt's wheel in order to replace the belt, unplug the intake, fix the alternator, and replace the battery. Likely, all that you would accomplish by all this tightening is a stripped nut or a broken stud.

Unlike a mechanic, however, writers need to invent the engine that they're going to work on. If writers start their work by inventing the engine, most writing starts off like a jalopy that sputters and stalls thirty seconds after it starts. First drafts hardly ever do the job,

but most novices think that their first draft is the best they can manage. With the amount of fretting most novices invest in that first draft, it's not hard to understand why many novices think that they can't manage to do anything better. Because many of us novices are taught over and over again about sentence mechanics, we can't think of any better way to fix a broken piece of writing. It would be like learning all about an engine but only ever being shown how to tighten the bolts. Novices tighten and tighten every bolt in the engine block on a piece that needs to taken apart and rebuilt. Admit that you've got a busted piece of writing from the start, however, and you can begin the real work, taking it apart and trying to fix it. Writers get something down on paper, then they revise it by pulling it apart and trying to look at it from different angles, and they do it over and over again. Writers produce as many revisions and drafts as there are cars that won't start in the farmyard. But like those rusting wrecks, each old draft and revision is a potential treasure-trove of parts ready to be reclaimed by someone like you who can see which parts will work and which ones won't.

Being able to read an engine schematic isn't necessary in order to fix a car. Sure a mechanic needs to know that the spark plugs ignite fuel that drives the pistons that turn the crankshaft, but you don't need an engineer to read you the technical specs to change the spark plugs. After you've worked on a few cars, you begin to know tacitly how it all fits together. Writers also work like this. Writers don't need to understand the scientific schematics of language like a linguist does. But when it comes to writing most of us were taught to think that we needed to know all the ins and outs of language just to write a sentence. Writers, even novices like us, already know tacitly how to string together words so that they make sense. If I said, "That Ford Mustang is quickly!" you know instantly that the sentence doesn't sound right even if you couldn't explain the difference between an adverb and an adjective or, harder still, why that difference exists in English at all. You just know that I should have said, "That Mustang is quick!"

I'm looking at a sentence as an example, but the same idea applies if we look at the larger aspects of writing. Because you already speak the language, you would be able to tell when two sentences don't transition between ideas or when one paragraph didn't work with the rest of the piece, even if you couldn't explain to me why. At some level it might not even matter if I said *quickly* instead of *quick*. You'd get the point. At the end of the day, the writer and the mechanic care about one thing: does the thing they're working on get the job done? Does the writing interest the reader and give them the information they want? Will the car

get you where you need to go even if it runs a little rough? Sometimes the job requires that all the nuts be bolted on tight, like tuning a high performance engine before a race. That's usually the job of proofreading. Other times, the job only requires that we make it home. The biggest concern of revision is whether the piece of writing can get us home. Often novices get so hung up on trying to tune their writing that they forget to think about the organization, purpose, and audience. Novices like us need to attend to the whole more than the parts.

When Grandma says that you like to tinker on cars, any mechanics knows how understated that word *tinker* is. Replacing an engine or rebuilding a gearbox is hardly just tinkering. But when it comes to writing most novices think revision is just tinkering with verbs. Revising means starting with the big changes. Before thinking about tightening a bolt, the novice needs to think about the whole structure and organization of the piece. It starts with a larger vision for what you want the piece to do and then making the big changes first.

I remember that summer when you were driving around that old jeep with no air-conditioning. You were sick of either sweating it out with the windows up or rolling them down and choking on the dusty country roads. You had two identical jeeps in the farmyard and a vision for what needed to be done. One jeep had air-conditioning and a newer engine but had a rusted body that would suck in dust through the holes. Rather than simply putting the air-conditioning unit from the one jeep into the other, you decided that it would be better to swap the bodies. I said you were crazy. "Crazy like a fox," you replied.

Over the weekend we removed bolts, cut wires, and disconnected hoses. You started up the old tractor and then slowly, slowly used it to hoist the body off both jeeps before slowly, slowly lowering the good body onto the frame of the jeep with the coveted air-conditioner. Only when the body didn't fit right did we stop to think that it might be a problem that one jeep was a manual and the other was an automatic. All of this just so that you could feel a little more comfortable in the summer. We worked it out in the end, but only after another weekend of rewiring the dash, cutting a hole out in the console for the gear stick, and worrying over the half dozen bolts left over when it was all done. We couldn't manage to get the radio to work but after so much trouble you didn't care. "I'll listen to the road so long as I can get cold air," you told me.

Revision is like what we did to those old jeeps. You start off with an idea of what

you want the writing to do before setting off to make the changes needed to make your idea happen. Decisions that writers make to change one part of the piece affects the whole and helps the writer to reevaluate and revise other parts of the writing. New solutions and new problems only emerge as you do the work and change the whole by adjusting the parts. It can be a little frustrating and even nerve-wracking because you generally do more work than you first expected as new ideas change your original purpose or new problems appear only after you've fixed something else. The piece of writing might not always turn out just as you expected at first, but it doesn't matter if the writing gets the reader where you want them to go. So the radio doesn't work. Maybe it's better that they listen to the road from time to time.

Now say I retold that story and took you out of the picture. Pretend that a novice mechanic like me swapped the bodies on two jeeps having only read the manual beforehand. I doubt you'd risk even taking it down the driveway, if you were *unlucky* enough to have the engine start in the first place. Fortunately, we don't put lives at risk when we ask novice writers to do the equivalent with their writing. As you might have guessed, we can't learn how to write and revise by talking about it. We can't fix an engine with technical knowledge alone, nor should we be able to do the same with our writing. We need the guidance of those who have experience to teach us the tricks of the trade and we need the experience of doing the work, which might mean we wreck more than we fix at first. It's only by fumbling with the tools at first that we develop the habits of revision. Most mechanics are well practiced in revision.

Revision is exactly that, re-vision, seeing again to discover something not glimpsed at first. When something's broken, you need to look closely at what's in front of you to see what needs to be changed before deciding what to do to fix it. The key is being attentive and decisive. I don't see engines like you do. I might be able to tell when something doesn't look right. Is smoke supposed to billow out from hood? Should it be leaking green stuff? But it's quite a leap from sensing that there is a problem to knowing how to fix it. A mechanic sees smoke and can begin to guess at what might have gone wrong. He decides where to start, tries one possible solution, and if the problem persists, he re-views the problem and tries another solution. In this way, a skilled mechanic will look again and look again—will revise and revise—until the problem is resolved. Each time you need to see the engine anew and make a decision about what's broken and how to fix it.

What's more, most mechanics I know have a distinct knack for hearing a problem. Again, I might think, "Oh God, there's a knock in the engine! Let's just keep driving and see if goes away." To be fair, most mechanics I know do the same. But when it comes down to it, you at least know the difference between a ping in the engine block and a clank in the transmission, and you can set to work fixing and listening until everything sounds right again. Everyone else can hear the trouble and maybe they could even tell you were it came from, but few know the slightest thing about fixing it. Writers learn to have the same ear for their language through constant revision. Something jangles in this sentence or that paragraph clunks along. They hear it and set about fixing it until it starts to sound right. This might surprise you, but your ear can likely pick out the broken parts of writing better than my ear could hear a problem under the hood.

After all, you taught me how important it is to listen. You told me once that you were the youngest and fastest sawyer in the sawmill after only a couple of months working there. You tuned your ear to the pitch of the saw better than anyone. The whirring and squealing of spinning steel spoke to you, letting you know exactly when to clutch and switch gears so that the blade wouldn't skip or sputter. Later when you started on the rigs at only sixteen, you won $100 off your boss because he figured that you couldn't drill as fast with the old manual drill as he could with the newer automatic model. The engine sung for you as you clutched through gears faster than he could on his shiniest new machine. You told me that it was the sweetest bet you ever won.

Revision in writing asks for the same sort of awareness (though rarely promises the same rewards): the ability to see and hear so that we can identify problems and then choose what needs to be done to fix them. Helping novice writers like us means teaching a set of habits, tricks of the trade learned inside a workshop. We need to develop those habits through practice.

Of course, developing new habits usually means breaking old habits, so from the onset we have to admit that this is going to take time and practiced effort. Making time, then, is probably the first trick of the trade learned in the writer's workshop. Without giving yourself enough time in the revision process, you can't accomplish anything else; it's the key that unlocks the toolbox. Time allows for some distance to develop between your work and your thoughts. Because writers have to invent the very thing in need of fixing, this distance is essential for being able to see the work better. Writers can sometimes look past the place

where they connected the fuel line to the brake line because they did such a great job of tying the two together. I do this all the time. When I write, even the clunky bits that should be tossed represents hours of research and drafting. I know it's broken and it doesn't work, but I leave it in because I spent so much time trying to *make* it work. Only with distance can writers begin to see their work less for what they hoped to do and more for what the work actually does. Forget how hard *you* worked! Does the *writing* work? A mechanic could never boast of a job well done if the car breaks down while driving around the block.

I have always been impressed by the confidence you show in your ability to fix anything. Some jobs give you more trouble than others, but I never felt that you wouldn't finish the work in good time. Except for your old boat, that is. That thing didn't stop breaking down once between the time I was five years old until I turned twenty-five. Working writer are the same, though. They all have a stack of projects they can't abandon but can never seem to fix either.

When it comes to mechanics, I'm a novice with near thirty years of experience. I can change my oil and fix a flat. Yet, whenever I pick up a wretch I feel like it doesn't belong in my hand. I feel unaccustomed and ill suited to the work; I must be the only guy in the family who doesn't have grease in his veins. You and Dad have shown me how to fix small engine troubles multiple times, but I lack the steady hand; I worry whether I tightened bolts too tight or not tight enough and I always feel like I missed something important. I've watched you work as long as I can remember, yet I still had to call you to ask where the dipstick was on that little Suzuki you let me drive for the summer. Exhausted by feeling stupid for still not knowing which is the carburetor and which is the catalytic converter, I want to give up and consign myself to being a novice for life. Novice writers feel the same weight of inexperience. Many of us see the work of experienced writers everyday in print and we immediately assume that we can't do the same work. Given time, confidence, and some help from others, we can start to pick up the skills, as long as we don't stop writing.

Of course, even experts need another set of eyes and ears to help fix a problem. A working writer also needs help to understand their work and to see their work anew. That's why you and my uncles always congregate in the workshop at family gatherings. Not fifteen minutes after we arrive, you and Dad will start working on some problem that's been giving you fits. You need another set of eyes and ears to help you. Writers work like that, too. When we revise, we often try to imagine how our audience will read or hear our writing. Sometimes

we need other people to step in and help us hear our work anew. Even though novices might feel equally unsure about how to fix their own writing, it's still worthwhile to have them try to help each other.

Many novices doubt that they can actually learn to do this. I want to share with you a story from my own workshop to show you that it's possible. I successfully revised a piece for the first time last year. A professor invited me to present at a student conference and without any new work at the ready, I pulled out a paper that I knew could be better than it was. During the few weeks that I rewrote that paper, I felt that I finally understood how working writers revise. I had stepped into my own workshop. I had a space to work in and the skills needed to do the job. I was confident in a way that I had not experienced before. Here was a piece of writing that didn't work and I was ready to fix it.

If you could see me during those weeks working in an unadorned part of the kitchen, you might not think that I was in my workshop. Yet each familiar detail was important for me. I sat in a tall Ikea folding chair and worked at the counter of our kitchen island. The chair was easily the most uncomfortable piece of furniture in our house, but I could work in it for hours. There were only two ways to sit on it: either right at the edge so that the seat wouldn't dig into my spine or slightly askew so that I could rest my arm over the back of the chair. More often than not my discomfort forced me to my feet and into action. On my left was a pad of paper scratched with arrows pointing to words in such a jumble you'd think that it was a code meant to confuse prying eyes. On my right was a stack of books that stared back at me reminding me of all the research I had done and pressuring me to cram each one into my paper against all better judgment. A cup of steadily cooling tea sat in a space reserved next to the books.

I worked best during those weeks in the afternoon light. Even now, morning light leaves me feeling too peaceful and a little lethargic, and around supper I get drowsy and lose focus, but the afternoon light makes me alert and eager. When the writing goes poorly, that eagerness turns to anxiety; the stack of books reminds me of all that I haven't yet said, and the outline sketched on the notepad perplexes me and leaves me a little unsure if I even wrote it. I greedily drink cup after cup of hot tea to keep me hands around the mug rather than lifelessly on the keyboard. But this time the writing went well. The books were opened and stacked up like the roof of a pagoda, ready to be sourced for some needed information. The indecipherable notes now pulled ideas from my memory like iron filings pulled by some

magnetic force, giving me the next sentence to write if I became stalled. With my concentration fixed on the work, the tea grew cold through neglect.

I attribute each cup of cold tea I poured down the sink to the confidence I felt before rewriting that paper. I hated the paper when I originally wrote it. I tried to revise it several times before handing it in to my professor, but the process was tortuous and the results were disappointing. Rereading it almost two years later, I was surprised. Not only was it better than I remembered but I could also see clearly what needed to be kept and what needed to be changed. Seeing the paper again with new eyes gave me instant confidence. I knew that I could improve it, and I knew more or less how to do it. I had a substantial draft to rework that had lots of great material to reuse. Whenever I grew unsure about what to do next, I could return to that draft to find my focus. I reread it at least a dozen times, each time refining my sense of what needed to be said and what could be cut. I no longer felt committed to include passages that I worked hard on but obviously weren't working. Moreover, knowing that I would read it for a student group made me refocus the piece to suit my audience and gave me more motivation to cut weak passages. Rather than anxiety or fear, I felt a pervading sense of confidence that overrode my doubts. My confidence grew with each sentence I erased and rewrote because I felt like I was in control of the writing, not the other way around.

Working this way wasn't ecstasy; it was satisfying. It was still difficult work that vexed me at times and still kept me working right to the deadline. But it was pleasurable work, too. I felt attentive, decisive, and capable. Time had given me a way of re-seeing the piece and I could now fix it. As a friend said to me, perhaps I enjoyed the work so much because I was doing the work of writing for the first time. For a moment, I was no longer a novice; I was writing as working writers do.

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Revision requires careful attentive, decisive action, and a confident hand. Novices come by all three only with difficultly and retreat to resignation and the inertia of indecision all too easily. Such feelings deflate confidence and stall revision. They prevent novices from doing the same things that working writers do when they revise. Fortunately, all is not lost. Novices can change their approach to revision by having faith that even failed choices can still bring a piece closer to working in the end. With some time between drafts to shift perspective from writer to reader, they can begin to see what needs
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changed and how. To help novices along, they can find others to workshop with.

Watching my grandfather in his workshop as a child showed me the steady and pleasurable pace of work that comes from having the habits of a tinkerer. My grandfather still spends his days out in his workshop when he can, although my uncle had the old barn torn down and replaced it with a top-of-the-line steel building. Gone are the familiar smells of old wood, dust, and oil to be replaced by the stale air of central heating. Now that the cold makes his hips hurt, my grandpa reckons that it's a good trade and leaves the nostalgia to me. He still tinkers almost everyday; he can't kick the habit even if his hips also flare up when he stands for too long. Most weeks he's down at the auto auction looking to snag a bargain out from under the keen eyes of all the other regulars. He's after the thrill of the chase; what he buys matters less. Without fail the car that just needed an oil change when he took it off the lot suddenly needs shocks, a new timing belt, a radiator, and rear brakes. He acts upset but really wouldn't want it any other way. He loves the work. He loves the careful attention and confident hand needed to fix up a piece of junk and send it back out into the world. And maybe that's a little like writing, too.