

# Writing and the Creative Life: Your characters want you to tell their story

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Lean into your characters. After all, it's *their* story.

*Your characters want you to tell their story.*

I found myself blurting this out in a recent teleconference with some writers in one of my screenwriting classes. I assume someone has said or written this before. I don't know the source... but I believe it.

When we write a story, we deal with characters. We may think of them as existing in our imaginations, yet as we dig into and develop them, details begin to emerge and 'attach' themselves to each character, aspects of their personality, events in their past, different parts of their psychological makeup. In this process, I think it's fair to say these characters begin to feel more and more *real* to us. Indeed the entire story universe in which these characters exist emerges into view as a tangible place.

We can look at this experience — characters and universe becoming more and more real — as a natural result of our hard work, brainstorming and creativity. But what if we choose to look at the dynamic in a slightly different light?

What if by doing due diligence and really spending time with our characters in the places where they live, these same characters honor us by revealing themselves and their universe to us? What if they have been waiting for us to come along and find them?

What if our characters want us to tell their story?

What if we actually believed that? What if you believed that? Imagine what a difference that could make in your writing experience.

Instead of an aimless foray into narrative mush, might not the fact these characters know a specific story they want told give us hope we can find that story?

Instead of painful plodding through a creative miasma, perhaps if we reach out to these characters, they will show us the way to FADE IN?

Instead of a solitary sojourn through the process, our characters can act as allies to encourage and lead us?

You may choose to think this is illogical. The characters exist in our minds. Period.

But what if we choose this other way: The characters actually exist in their own story universe. In this respect, it is the ultimate act of creation: The word become flesh. Incarnation.



What if we elect to believe these characters want us to tell their story?

Isn't that possibility at least worth considering?

Go into your characters. Seek them out. They have a story to tell. Will you tell it?

*Writing and the Creative Life is a weekly series in which we explore creativity from the practical to the psychological, the latest in brain science to a spiritual take on the subject. Hopefully the more we understand about our creative self, the better we will become as writers. If you have any good reading material in this vein, please post in comments. If you have a particular observation you think readers will benefit from and you would like to explore in a guest post, email me.*

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