

## **A Day in the Life of a Writer**

**Or**

## **Confessions of a Binge Writer**

I approve of writing discipline. To take one's craft seriously, whether or not one is getting paid for it. But in my life this has not happened and I take full responsibility. I'm easily distracted, sometimes lazy, and reluctant to put writing before family, friends, adventure. This hasn't prevented me from writing – perhaps I write *because* I deprive myself of privacy and time. Writing can be a way of burrowing into a quiet dark cave, in the middle of chaos.

I tend to write in short bursts between other activities. I keep notes, when I remember to bring a notebook. Sometimes I use envelopes or newspapers. No matter what I'm doing, my current work-in-progress simmers away, and snippets of conversation, memories bubbling up, observations on busy streets and queues in Tesco's – these compost into my story.

Some days I feel like a human-sized recycling centre, turning everything and everyone into biodegradable fiction.

This lifestyle has drawbacks. I'm never fully present, living simultaneously in two worlds. I daydream, sometimes walking by friends in the street or forgetting to flip pancakes. While writing, I'm distracted by the practical things I'm meant to be doing later, or should have done earlier. Hang up the washing, return that phone call.

Now and then life offers a chunk of time to dedicate to writing. This is sometimes due to a grant, allowing me to say no to obligations. This past summer, I awarded myself a writing

retreat in our caravan on the west coast. I'd never stayed there alone and was unsure if I'd feel self-conscious - a caravan park is the equivalent of a suburban neighbourhood. Luckily it was rainy and no one else came. I quickly settled into a routine, determined not to waste a minute.

So, finally – a proper writing day:

I wake early and jot down all the thoughts I'd had in the night, then decide to keep pen and paper by my bed from now on. Don't get dressed, just put on more layers. Drink coffee and walk on the beach with the dog, still in pyjamas. More novel-related thoughts occur.

They're brilliant and I scold myself for not having pen and paper. When I return I make more coffee and jot down the beach ideas. Then, peanuts and blueberries by my side, I commence the proper writing on my laptop. It's so much fun, I cannot recall why I don't have a proper writing routine all the time. By mid-day, I've the first draft of a chapter. I nap late afternoon, then rush back to my writing with a sense of urgency. Pasta and red wine about 8pm, another beach walk, then I write till after midnight. I've spoken to nobody but the dog. I've had to remind myself to stand up, stretch, drink water. I write till I cannot write another word, then go to bed in last night's pyjamas, forgetting pen and paper. When I wake, I see the shape of my novel as if it's been completed and all I have to do now is connect the dots.