
WHERE STORIES COME FROM

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I turned off the main highway, passing a sign pointing the way to a town called "Inspiration."

Following a long dirt road I came upon a tiny town - one I felt certain couldn't live up to its name. Old, wooden buildings held together what was barely left of a long forgotten community.

The general store, complete with an old, but still working, Coke machine out front, anchored this quaint cluster of

weathered store fronts, wooden sidewalks,
and bleached white railings - the kind you
tie horses to.

Just as my Coke bottle clunked to where
I could grab and open it, I spotted what
looked like a used bookstore. I took a long
swig of the Coke and walked over to that
store.

The door creaked loudly as it opened. I
looked up at the top of the door when a bell
jingled. The wooden floor was waxed and free
of any scuffmarks. An antique, brass cash
register, polished to a shinny luster, sat
prominently on an oak counter that had a
special sheen and luster to it.

An elderly, bespectacled gentleman in a
tweed suit sat behind the counter. He
ignored me as he thumbed through piles of
what looked like contracts and legal papers.

I nodded in his direction anyway, and
observed this wasn't a book store, even
though there were stacks of books piled in
the windows facing the street. The rest of

the store was filled with ornate, glass display counters.

Writing instruments of all types were in the waist-high counters. I carefully put down my Coke bottle on the first display case I came to. With outstretched fingers pressing down on the spotless glass, I leaned over to get a closer look. Dozens of elegant pens were neatly arranged on crimson velvet, with hand written labels next to each pen.

There were no prices on the labels, only letters. My concentration was so intense I jumped when, from right behind me, the old man said, "Nice pens, huh? You mind stepping back and removing that bottle?"

"Sure," I said. Then I quickly asked, "These pens for sale?"

Smiling as he used a cloth to erase the circle left by the bottle, the man said, "Not in a manner of speaking. These are special pens for writers."

"I'm a writer," I heard myself say.

"That right," he said looking at my slightly distorted reflection in the once again clean beveled glass of the counter. "Would I know your name or any of your books?"

Pausing, I then said, "Well, I, ah, I've written articles, and features, mostly local stuff."

Turning to face me, the man leaned against the counter and said, "As a writer, you've never heard of this establishment?" He continued as I shook my head left and right, "Well, you see, these are extraordinary pens, made exclusively for specific writers."

Not sure what to say, I said, "Soooooo. Then. Can you make one for me?"

"Doesn't work that way," he said.

Before I could feel insulted, he continued with, "You must understand, this emporium is unique. Our sole purpose is to be of service to writers ... real writers. And, as it always has been, true writers

must seek out this place before we can do anything for them.

"Each of our pens is precisely crafted with contents so distinct that only one, selected individual can benefit from what we have packed into each writing barrel. You understand what I'm saying?"

Furrowing my brow, I said, "I'm not sure. Are you saying you actually put what it is that writers will write into these pens."

"That would be one way, though rather crude, to put it," he said, smiling broadly. "But you have the basic idea. The bottom line is 'worded plumes' and 'sentencing masterpieces' all stemming from the simplicity and charm of words to phrases, paragraphs to pages."

Putting his arm around my shoulder, the old man steered me toward the back door that had two large, bold words above it:

"Intellectual Stimulation." He motioned for me to open the door, saying, "I do have

something back here I think you'll find quite useful since you did manage to somehow find your way here."

I put my Coke bottle on the floor next to several other empty ones and opened the door wide. I wasn't surprised to see more display cases, although these were smaller and much more plain looking. We walked all the way to the back of the room where we stopped in front of a case filled with many ordinary looking pens.

Pulling a magnificent key ring out of his pocket, the old man selected a worn, gold skeleton key and opened the case. Lifting the lid, he said, "Grab that blue pen. The one next to the label with your initials on it."

My mouth dropped open as I picked up the pen. Though it appeared to be nondescript, this was no ordinary pen. What I felt when I picked it up was the noticeable literary weight. I knew this pen

was a tool made solely for creating memorable collected combinations of words.

Smiling kindly, the old man took a contract out of his inner coat pocket and handed it to me, saying, "You can get a feel for the power of this pen by filling in the blanks on this long-term agreement and then signing it."

Then, looking over the rims of his reading glasses directly into my mind through my wide-open eyes, the man continued, saying, "With this pen, you simply write, the way all writers do. This pen allows you to shape words definitively, stirring reader intellect in new and exhilarating ways. This pen is an excellent one to start with because it is packed with a good, solid volume of smooth flowing ink - enough to write several good short stories."

I quickly signed the contract and the old man put it in the pile with all of the others at the front desk. Then I left that store to head home and write!

I was pleased with the words I crafted using that writing pen, including one short story I particularly liked called "**Where Stories Come From.**"

