

Advice To A Young Writer

My mother said, "Eat well and get plenty of rest."
I say, "Remember your dreams,
For these night visitors carry the secrets of
The imaginal world."

Keep notes on your life,
The good the bad and the ugly.
They all have their place in the chronicle
That comes to rest on the thin blue line.

Make sure you eavesdrop often,
For in those words on the wind
You will unfold characters beyond
Your wildest dreams,
And what you might mistake for weeds
Could be a meadow of wild irises.

Pay attention to the details of your life—
The way you prefer milk in your coffee
Or the feel of your lover's hand as it touches your face.
These will be the juice that fuels your writing tank.
These will be the moments that fill your reservoir to overflowing.

Remember always the days, weeks and months
When writing seems an empty wasteland,
For this, too, will be a story.
It will keep you less than arrogant and a little more than humble.
It will keep your raft afloat through the turbulent rapids of your mind.

Grow accustomed to the taste of sacrifice,
The way it slices over the tongue
And tears at the soft places of the heart,
For the path of the writer is littered with fragments
Dropped along the way.

Do not compare yourself to other writers
Even when the urge to do so is mighty and strong,
For this will pull you away from the stories of your life
And will plunge you into a well of loneliness,
A well so deep that your exit could be doomed,
For you know in the seeds of your heart
That if you do not write, you will drown.

Always remember aloneness.
It is the handmaiden of the muse
And will be the candlelight that points you
To your jewels, your secret cave of demons and diamonds.

And write, no matter what the winds of history whisper in your ear.
Your story cannot be forsaken.
You are the only one to tell it,
And your ancestors are waiting for you to remember them,
To write the stories they could not tell themselves.

— *Margaret Caminsky-Shapiro*