

Flipper Avoids the Tuna Can

by Laura Preble

When I was in about the fourth grade, I used to sneak away to my bedroom to write. I would get away any chance I could to jot down on paper my stories, my ideas, the rich stream of goodness that sprang from my little baby creative brain. It was pure joy.

Now, I know I love to put words together, but somewhere along the way, my dolphin-like love of writing got tangled in the big spiky sea net of publishing. It struggled to breathe, as did I, but that net kept pulling, constricting, teasing, promising freedom from the sea, which really meant a lack of oxygen and a ride in a tuna can. For those playing Metaphoropoly at home, the dolphin is me and my creative spirit; the sea is the crashing waves of creative thought; the net is worldly success. The tuna can is just funny because “tuna can” just sounds funny.

But wait. Maybe the tuna can means more than I think it does. Publishing was a great experience...the highlight of my life in many ways. But once I achieved that goal, that became the sole measure of success, and a clock started ticking. Ride that success! Translate that into a better publishing contract! Write more commercial stuff! Listen to agents and other people who all have totally different ideas about what you write than you do! YOU ONLY HAVE SO MUCH TIME BEFORE YOUR SUCCESS EXPIRES! The tuna can.

So on this, the day of John Lennon's birth and the day after my own b-day, I took a nap and when I woke up, I decided that if I write, I will write what I want, when I want, and I will stop thinking about publishing it. I will stop thinking about money, which is truly the root of all evil, but handy to have when you need to eat. And I will try to become the dolphin again, swimming freely in that beautiful, wild sea, flying a middle flipper at any attractive nets that sparkle from the horizon.

