

# Truth

*All good books have one thing in common - they are truer than if they had really happened.*

*- Ernest Hemingway*

I publish my stories on the World Wide Web. I don't know how many readers I have, but I treasure each of them because I am happy to have someone accept my writing. Good or bad, my offering is indeed a gift and a gift needs a recipient. Else, I'd be writing a diary, which is like sitting in a corner and talking to the wall. Or to myself, which is even less useful.

A few people have written to ask if one story or another is truth or fiction. I often write back and tell them I don't know. If anything, my stories are usually both. I am a storyteller, not an historian.

I am no arbiter of the truth for others. I am such for myself, by necessity and not by natural ability. Down here in the blizzard of my self conceit I often lose my way. Blown from the shelter of one tree to the next, I often believe I'm on the right path. Even when I keep winding up in the same hole.

When reality came to be what I saw when I opened my eyes, rather than what I was sure I'd see as I kept them clamped shut, I reached the understanding that the truth was not always obvious. It often required an act of the will, like what we experience when we try to wake up from a deep sleep. And only after years of waking up over and over did I realize I'd been falling asleep.

There seem to be different kinds of truth, but there are not. It's true I'm pretty free with the facts or lack of them when I'm telling a story for its entertainment value. I do distinguish between storytelling and truth telling. But each holds the truth in its own way. I am very careful

about my honesty when I conduct my affairs with other people and when judging myself. I wasn't always so careful.

In writing, there is so-called literal truth, but a story teller is not very interested in the literal truth of anything if it doesn't serve the story. And for me, the sharp accuracy of fact is not something I worry about when writing a tale. In the realm of storytelling, I understand there are those who think literal truth is very important, but I'm not one of them. For me, truth is seldom precise. It is often confusing.

The Oglala Sioux shaman Black Elk would begin each spiritual tale by saying, "This is the way it happened. Or maybe it didn't, but it could have. And anyway, this is what carries the truth." I try to carry the truth, if not always the facts.

There are factual truths such as gravity and other scientific concepts that we feel pretty sure of. There is truth that is much more personal. It touches us where we live and for me it parallels the "three times" of discernment spoken of by Ignatius of Loyola. Truth may be a logical construct, or it may come from the experience of living life. Truth may rise from a certainty lying deep within us, a conviction we may not be able to measure or describe. We just know it's there. Truth is not arithmetic. It is language. It comes not from working a formula, nor is it a dramatic testimony. It is more like the continuing unfolding of a story.

I sense that behind it all there is a single truth in the Universe, though I can't begin to define it. My failure to explain the ineffable speaks only to my humanness and not to a lack of truth in creation. It is there, all around us. If I needed proof, I can think of only one piece of evidence for the existence of truth ... our age-old desire to find it.

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