



**What if I never  
dared to dream?**

# I want to write, and write, and write.

FINDING YOUR TRUTH  
BY MEIKKO LEE

I hate sharing my writing. And wouldn't you, if the story that demands to come out of you so closely mirrors your reality?

But yesterday in my prose workshop class unlike in previous workshops, I was inspired by the words of Anne Garreta in *Not One Day*: "To those who might object to the memory you have kept of them, you will respond that this memory stems from you just as much as from them: why didn't they leave you a nicer one? And as for those you did mistreat, who can say that they didn't deserve it?"

And just like that, the tight-sealed vault of memories began to twirl and unlock in my mind and I began to wonder: What would it feel like to abandon my hesitations and to not be afraid of allowing the wind to carry my spirit wherever my destiny has been calling—but I've been too afraid to answer?

And so to the girls in college—who told me that my beauty did not fit within the constraints of yours and thus should be beaten down to nothing—I dare you to play.

And to the boys who have seen nothing that did not look like you—and therefore wanted to know if going black indeed would make you not want to go back—I dare you to play too.

I want to breathe life into their thoughts and let it exist on its own in any way that it pleases. I want to write, and write, and write; and to live and die and live again all because my pen decides that's the path that it wants to take.

I want to turn my characters inside-out, and then hold what's left of them in my hand and ask: "To be or not to be?" and be okay with their deaths if it is not meant to be.

As writers and thinkers, we spend our time dreaming and writing of a life that we are bold enough to assign to a character but never courageous enough to seek out for ourselves.

But wouldn't that be something? To live? To slip out of our fictional suits and into something more comfortable—like inside of one of our favorite characters, perhaps?

There's no need to ask me twice; I'm halfway to Marseille to join Edmond Dantes as we speak.

And to think: What would have happened if writing never found me? Just writing down that thought brings a shiver to my spine.

But seriously, what if? What if I never changed my major from Biology to English? What if I was never required to write a creative story for my final undergrad project—the very same story that granted me admission into my MFA program?

What if I never knew about the endless story realms still left to be explored; the feeling of soft satisfaction that vibrates through my fingertips every time my dreams become narratives; the friends that have been tattooed in the same addictive ink that calls for us to use our words to create?

"It must be dreamed in order to be lived. When it is dreamed, the real flourishes like a garden. But one must, as Italo Calvino says, dare dream very high dreams."—Rikki Ducornet, *The Deep Zoo*.

What if I never dared to dream?

## MEIKKO LEE

I am a first year graduate student at Mills College in Oakland majoring in creative writing. Two assigned books of the semester were Anne Garreta's *Not One Day* and Rikki Ducornet's *The Deep Zoo*. Reading these books, I have called into question my position as a writer in the current frames of societal pressures. What does it mean to really dig deep and find your own truth—and then not be afraid to share it with the rest of the world? This essay aims to highlight my experience of what it means to fall in love with my experience and my writing—and hopefully the passion that others feel behind the joys of writing as well.

I am a Writing Fellow at Mills and director of a nonprofit organization in Berkeley. I am working with my school's literary magazine, *580 Split*, and I am looking to become involved with publishing on a much larger scale.

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Images by Shawna Haymon.

