



**A free series by Mur Lafferty**



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## Chapter 2: Put Your Butt in the Chair



Beginning writers feel that there's got to be a secret. Some secret, some magic bullet, some blessing from an ancient shaman. They believe that successful writers must have been hit with a meteor or had a near-death experience. There's something that has to be hidden from them when it comes to success in writing.

This is one of the biggest reasons we stop writing. We get frustrated and feel like we're on the outside looking in. We clump writers into two worlds: We and They. We are the wanna-bes and They are the published. We want to know the secret, They already do.

AND THEY ARE KEEPING IT FROM US.

And when We hear the secret, it's so simple We call shenanigans. We are completely convinced that it's not true. It can't be that easy. But it is.

Crane your head around. Look down. See your butt? It may be bigger than you like, or bony, or not quite there, but it's a good butt, as it's served you well throughout the years. The butt has supported you in your sitting efforts, silently, steadfastly. It has supported you in your TV watching, your movie watching, your reading, your work, your break time, while sitting on the floor to play with your kids or pets, while nursing your baby, that time you had to wait outside the principal's office, and countless other times.

The butt is your unsung hero. And it is half of the equation of the magic bullet to writing.

Now look at your desk. Or your couch. Or your kitchen table. Somewhere there is a place for you to put that butt. Make it a comfortable place. Some place where your butt's best friend, your back, will also be supported. Put your butt

down in said comfy place.

Is it there? Good. Now. You're ready.

Write.

I'll give you a moment to recover. I know it's a lightning bolt of information. You might deny it, like the moon landing. Somewhere NASA has a secret room where they filmed the whole hoax. In the same building is the drug that they give really good writers, not to mention the books that they get all their best ideas from. (We'll talk about ideas in a later chapter.)

What people don't want to hear- and I will fully admit I don't want to hear it either- is that books are written a little bit at a time. You don't sit down for a crazy weekend and pound out The Great [insert your country here] Novel. It's a long haul. It requires not only butt in chair, but daily butt in chair.

Ideally you want to write a certain amount of time or a certain number of pages or words a day. But if that daunts you, just try to write every day. Sit down and write, 100 words, 250 words (that's one page to Standard Manuscript Format, also something we'll cover later), 1000 words. Whatever. Keep momentum going, keep your body and mind remembering that writing is something we do every day.

The biggest excuse that people use for why they don't write is **lack of time**. That is a lie. If you have time to watch TV, or to go out with friends, or have a beer after work, or read the newspaper, then you have time to write. If you blog, you have time to write. No, the real reason you don't write is that you haven't made it habit. How many things in your life are habits? Do you ever say, "I don't have enough time to brush my teeth?" How about, "I don't have enough time to make coffee/tea in the morning?" And yes, some smart alecks among you will be saying, "I say that all the time if I'm running late/too busy," but honestly, it's a habit, you do it without thinking about it, and if you made writing a habit, then you'd do that too.

And some of you are now complaining that sure, brushing your teeth takes five minutes (you do floss, right?) and coffee takes two minutes, while writing takes much more. And to that I say you're taking me too literally and you need to hush. The point is not the time involved. You also have habits of television watching, lunch breaks, exercise, chores, lots of things you do regularly that take time and you rarely consider NOT doing them.

Because they *need* to get done. They *should* get done.

(You know where I'm going with this, right?)

You should be writing.

Forget the excuses. Carve out 15-30 minutes a day. Get up earlier. Stay up later. Eat lunch faster. Skip one of your evening habits and use that time to write instead (the VCR and the DVR are great inventions for writers. You no longer can use the excuse, "I can't write, *The Office* is on.")

Put your butt in the chair.

Write.