



SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

DAILY FRESH

Jory Post

Daily Fresh

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SAMPLE CHAPTERS

It Was in a Dream

IT WAS IN A DREAM EARLY THIS MORNING, during that time where it doesn't feel like a dream, but more as if I'm sitting there with these two guys in this office where it feels like I'm supposed to help with ideas, with completing copy for a newspaper, writing stories, thinking about story lines, writing notes in a very old notebook that seems rare and antique, and I don't understand why we're using it to write on now, and eventually one of the guys says, "Why are you writing on this?" to which I say, "Yeah. It looks pretty valuable." And he proceeds to thumb through the pages, showing us a series of very detailed characters for cartoon images, images I fall in love with quickly. This sequence was connected to a number of other pieces which aren't bubbling up to the surface right now, but it seems like there was some mayhem in the streets, maybe fire, maybe Molotov cocktails and police wearing armor, and we had to get into this office and get to work because the work was important

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to get out to the people to change the mood, to redirect their anger and disgust in a way that provided solutions, looked at ways out of what appeared to be a dead end.

Loose Threads

USUALLY ON SOCKS, sometimes on a pair of pants or a t-shirt. The proper solution is to find my way to a pair of scissors and snip it clean back to the cloth. But the immediate response is to grab the thread between fingers and twist and pull until it either breaks away from the fabric or uncovers an even longer thread that just makes it worse. The same loose threads that appear in writing and thinking are ones that I enjoy, that I take advantage of by spending time looking at their construction, if they are frayed, if I think they can be extracted or not, if there are improvements I can make, rabbit holes that might be fun to bury myself in for a while.

Like this one. Came from nowhere I can think of. Just jumped to the top as a title and gave me an inkling of an idea of how to proceed. Sometimes I like to think of my mom, nimbly playing with embroidery threads to weave a project of beauty. I

wonder how her brain operates. How she decides to pursue a project. If it is always pattern-driven or if she ever just starts from scratch, lets herself go wherever the moment and fingers and threads take her. I know that's not her usual style. But I do have one quilt hanging on the wall, of branches with white leaves, and one of the leaves has fallen to the bottom, outside the frame, and I love it, because it is so different than everything else she's done. What I don't know is if the pattern called for the fallen leaf, or if it was innovation. Not that it matters, but my curiosity grabs it and runs with it, and I crawl inside her brain and try to discover how the idea moved through her head. I'll jump on a blood cell, ride it like a bronco, discover whether or not I'll get tossed off simply because I tried to discover the answer, or because I shouldn't be jumping into people's circulatory systems trying to discover secrets available only to scientists and surgeons.

A loose thread that appears today has to do with all those that dangle from the whiteboard in the foot-of-the-bed writing studio, all of the unfinished projects that are beginning to breathe, that show me their hearts flexing, wanting to surge to life, wanting my attention, each of them dangling with threads to be pulled, clipped, frayed, tied to other threads, shortened, lengthened, ignored, incorporated, isolated, split into smaller pieces, wound around fingers and slipped between moist lips. They beckon, some louder than others, those that have gained personality over the years, those that have remained dormant and not complained, knowing that I would eventually return, find my way back to the core thread that made me begin thinking and writing about an idea in the first place. With some of them I want to grow them, twist them, make a head full of dreadlocks that I love looking at even though to think and write about it could be construed by some as cultural appropriation because I will never have dreadlocks, have no friends with dreadlocks, have never

held a dreadlock in my hand, have only observed them from distances, usually through a TV screen of someone who might live 5,000 or 10,000 miles away. And the threads of dreads are anything but loose. They are twisted tightly, organized, orderly; merged with colors and metals, they reflect off the teeth of those who wear them, they attract others, they want more for themselves and the person who grew them and that person's children and grandchildren. They want to grow old and watch the grey slowly infiltrate and evolve into another level of beauty.

That the world is comprised of billions of threads that are unrecognizable to many, or are ignored by most, makes them that much more enticing to me. Undiscovered worlds, words, stories, and characters that link together in a body of work whose origins began as loose threads and move forward into a more cohesive existence where they are no longer loose but eventually grow connected, to the soil, to the trees, to the axons and dendrites in my head and others' heads, that they grow into something unimaginable, something they or I never knew could be possible and achievable.

Give me more. Loosen me up. Strengthen me.

What's Next?

I TRY NOT TO SPEND TOO MUCH ENERGY thinking or worrying about what's next. Mainly because me worrying about the future will usually have zero effect on changing that future. The more likely effect is contracting an ulcer or increasing my blood pressure, neither of which I need to add to an already full plate of medical conditions. It is true that some forethought about some of what might come next could result in preparations that alter the effects of what comes next. But is it really worth the energy to imagine all of the possible "next" events that could alter one's life simply to gain an iota of control?

I think not. Let the chips fall where they may. However, to backtrack and recall a series of events that has affected one's life, that has brought one to the lively present place in which they live and breathe, that's another question altogether. I'm not able to ignore the journey back to help me understand where I currently

am and how I got here, and if that also happens to touch on where I might be next, I'll accept that, though not dwell on it.

Let's drift back. How far to go for the first question? Do I roll back to when I was five and was left in the hospital to have my adenoids and tonsils removed? Do I flash forward to my dad's hospitalization and track the one hundred pounds he lost in nine months? Do I share my viral-meningitis story when I was a senior in high school? Do I showcase my marriage and divorce to my first wife? Or how long I smoked pot and when I decided to quit? No. None of that. Those were not earth-shattering or life-changing events for the most part. This is not a memoir that becomes novel length and tells the A-Z story of me. Instead, this is a series of dominoes about a specific period in a slice of life that leads to the obvious next question—What's next?

We'll use the beginning point of having stomach cramps and diarrhea that led to an appointment with my primary doctor, who scheduled a series of blood, urine, and stool tests followed by a CT scan. To shorten this piece and make it less memoir-like, I'll cut to the 7:15 a.m. phone call following the CT scan, where the doctor said, "I hate to drop this nuclear bomb on you," which is when I hear of the malignant tumor crowding the breathing room out of my pancreas.

Now is an appropriate time for the first What's-next question. It's a biopsy conducted by the GI-doc down at the corner office, where they stick a needle into my pancreas and send a piece of me to Stanford for analysis. As expected, the results come back as adenocarcinoma.

Okay. Next?

This part of the story is way too long to tell and keep interesting, though it does have embedded in it a series of What's Nexts. But simply put, fifteen months of chemotherapy and Cyberknife radiation treatments, with a CT scan by Stanford that

shows metastatic movement into my liver as two lesions. I'm given months to live by the radiologist.

Right. Next? Well, to be blunt, *live* those months as fully as possible. Which I do. But my oncologist is not happy with that diagnosis, and puts me back on chemo again, which I begin in February 2020, while I am busy writing, finishing a novel, short stories, plays, thinking about forming a literary estate for my unfinished work to possibly see some light posthumously.

Next? Covid-19. What the fuck is that? It's a deadly virus that primarily attacks elderly folks and those with weakened immune systems. It's airborne and has traveled across the planet to every country and is killing tens of thousands of people. Our leadership downplays it, calls it a hoax, but it isn't.

Next? Masks. We wear masks to prevent the spread of germs. We shelter in place to reduce the incidence of exposure. We stay out of gyms, sporting events, the beach, any place where crowds gather. The governor closes down the state in mid-March, and I am seriously having withdrawal symptoms from not being able to attend literary events and readings at Bookshop Santa Cruz and other venues, so I begin an online reading series with local authors called *Zoom Forward!*

What's next? A *Zoom Forward* every Friday night that attract from 70 to 200 participants. It becomes a part-time voluntary job. I bring my granddaughter Hannah on board as codirector. I continue to take Folfirinox for six hours on Wednesday and carry a pump home with me for the next 46 hours. I write feverishly. Life is fairly good.

Next? Mother's Day, May 9. I decide to break the shelter-in-place restriction and take dinner to my mom's house along with my wife and sister. As we leave, Mom falls on the stairs and causes a compound fracture to her left wrist. A hurried trip to Urgent Care, where she's told it will require ER

treatment. Another hurried trip to ER, where my sister has to let my mom go at the check-in desk due to Covid restrictions. She stays in the hospital for five days of misery for all of us, mostly her. They diagnose her with Parkinson's and put her on a new med. The new med is devastating to her system, so when she gets home, she stops taking it.

What's next? We are told by Dominican staff that Mom needs 24/7 care. My sister moves in full-time. Lots of discussions about the future. Mom falls. We get calls in the middle of the night to come down and help. Luckily she's only a mile away. VNA gets involved. Neurologists get involved. Everybody gets involved. Except Mom. She mostly sleeps. Isn't too interested in food or drink. Shelly is extremely attentive and does everything possible to make Mom's life as comfortable as possible.

Next? My friend Kathy wants me to put on three of my short plays on September 14. She will produce. She puts up money. We start figuring out how to present two-hander, two-actor, plays through Zoom, because we certainly can't do them in front of a live audience. It becomes a monumental task trying to solve the technical issues. Not unlike Sisyphus pushing that stone up the mountain and watching it fall down the other side. Over and over. Mom has more falls, more fallouts. Karen relieves Shelly when she can. Shelly decides to leave her thirty-year apartment at our house and move everything out, which serendipitously leaves it available for our granddaughter Georgia and her boyfriend AJ.

What's next? Some excellent news! My novel *Pious Rebel* will be published by Paper Angel Press and will be launched by November 1. I cry when I hear the news. I am thrilled. It negates many of the negative What's Nexts that I've been dealing with.

Another next? A CT scan in early August 2020. (What a year!) The oncologist uses the word failure too many times when

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we discuss it. Result is two weeks off, then starting a different flavor of chemo, and having a biopsy to see if we can match my condition with any other trials or treatments. Definitely a bit of a downturn, knowing that the shortened time frame gets shorter, but also knowing that I need to crank on my writing to get as many finished pieces out into the world as soon as possible. Motivation. Inspiration. Even if the push is guided by mortality.

Next? An unbelievable dry lightning storm that lasts through the night and into the morning. The kind of storm I have only seen in the deserts of Arizona. The streaks of lightning start thousands of fires.

What's next? A heat wave that puts us into the hundreds and is debilitating to me, and which, along with my continual nausea, puts me horizontal more often than I like.

And next? The fires. The River Fire in Carmel. The Salinas Valley fire. The three fires just north of Santa Cruz. The call at 2:30 in the morning from Karen's sister, who lives in Bonny Doon, evacuating, headed our way in the morning. Karen's niece and family, evacuated, heading our way, with all their pets.

Next? We order tons of breakfast items from Silver Spur's take-out menu and have it ready when they appear—two kids, four adults, two dogs, one cat. They bring their own pet food.

What's next? Who the fuck knows? An asteroid? An earthquake? My mother dies? Aliens invade Earth? Or maybe I'll win the National Book Award! I won't put much forethought into it. I have too much work to do. That's what's next. Fingers on keyboard.

About the Author

Jory Post was an educator, writer, and artist who lived in Santa Cruz, California. He and his wife, Karen Wallace, created handmade books and art together as JoKa Press. Jory was the co-founder and publisher of *phren-z*, an online literary quarterly, and founder of the *Zoom Forward!* reading series.

His first book of prose poetry, *The Extra Year*, was published in 2019, and was followed by a second, *Of Two Minds*, in 2020. His novel, *Pious Rebel*, also appeared in 2020. *Smith: An Unauthorized Fictography*, a collection of fictional interviews, was published in 2021.

His work has been published in *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Rumble Fish Quarterly*, *The Sun*, and elsewhere. His short stories “Sweet Jesus” and “Hunt and Gather” were nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

Also by Jory Post

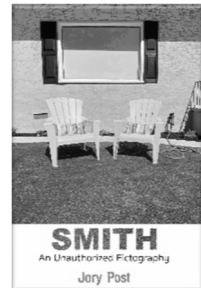
PIOUS REBEL

After her partner dies suddenly, Lisa Hardrock realizes how little she knows about the life she's been living—and starts exploring her questions in a blog that unexpectedly goes viral.




SMITH: An Unauthorized Fictography

In this kaleidoscopic, episodic joy ride, Jory Post treats us to thirty interviews that may or may not be real, with an array of “ordinary” people who turn out to be anything but.



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In the summer of 2020, the final summer of his life, Jory Post gave himself an assignment: He would write one essay a day, inspired by whatever caught his eye and imagination. The seventy essays that emerged — personal and idiosyncratic, contemplative and fierce — range in subject from the writing life, extinct birds, and the origins of words to “the three ‘C’s” (cancer, chemo, and Covid) and his love for his wife and friends. As he faced his last days, Jory Post measured the world around him and threw the full reach of his emotions and literary skills into these pages.

PRAISE FOR JORY POST

PIOUS REBEL

“A brilliant novel of reckoning, joyous and sinister.”
— Elizabeth McKenzie, author of *The Portable Veblen*

SMITH: AN UNAUTHORIZED FICTOGRAPHY

“An imaginative, witty, and surreal work that manages to be precise, profound, and heartbreaking.”
— Syed Afzal Haider, author of *Life of Ganesh*



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