



THE LITERATI'S

I've got to start somewhere and "A dark, stormy night" ain't gonna cut it this time. I stare at the blank page and try to conceive of how to begin. What images can I conjure up? Ether. Egg. Coma. Death. Shit. What am I going to do? My publisher is calling incessantly; it used to be just his assistant who was bugging me. But now I have the big guns up my ass. I can't do it... I just can't....

My intro to you should be a big, blank, white page. Ta Da! Here you go. Welcome to my world; beckoning you with its innocent, pristine appearance, yet mocking you with all its immaculate pureness. It's dreadful. I have writer's block. Hell, I am lost. A lost writer's soul, begging for the epic Hemmingwayian's first line. Here is my favorite Hemmingway opener from a *Moveable Feast*. And I quote, "Then there was bad weather."

Does this not reek of an interpretation of the proverbial "dark, stormy night"? Why can't I come up with that? Oh, how I sit at my computer and wonder the thrill and satisfaction ancient authors must have had from being able to rip imperfect first-line pages from their typewriters. Oh, no! I have none of that. Just this humming, stark, innocuous 8 1/2 by 11 ghostly page...in Microsoft Word, on my monitor. I highlight and delete... often I just backspace my inadequate words into oblivion. I have got to get out from this impending study and see the light. Find the light; find inspiration. This city has harbored (and impaled, let's not get too romantic here) some of the most prolific and wondrous writers our free world has ever known. Now that's inspiration. I am putting on my old tweed jacket and grabbing a pack of smokes. I'm going out. I am finding an opening line.

- 1.) The writer's life is not so bad,
If an opening line could just be had,
Introspectively you wander west on Montague,
A specific shop you do pursue.

Past o'Henry, a great satirist,
Of Indian short stories you do hold dearest,
Further, on the left, a store of great elevation,
With tomes in large denomination.
You wander in and look around,
For enlightenment to be found.
A rack of postcards catches your eye,
And the author of Ulysses you do spy.

Inspiration, plus a bonus, will be met,
If you choose to continue a few blocks west,
The Manhattan skyline you can identify,
Take a picture together, aided from a passer-by.

- 2.) Musings to a lover spurs your heart,
And back to Court Street you do part,
The N or R leads you to Whitehall station,
Continue on a romantic speculation.
Should passion begin your opening line,
A girl on a white horse is so nickel-and-dime.

North walk the street of the sub station's name,
And right onto a troubled waters fame,
You are feeling the need to ask advice,
And try out another opening device.

Introduce yourself first to the server fair,
And your literary problem you do share,
Ask if humor could be a ploy,
Tommy answers rather coy.

Upstairs reconnect with the author forsaken,
Perhaps a suggestion you will find for the taking.
Clear your throat and try it out,
With Tommy and a pint of stout.

Funny, you muse, but you still delight in a horse,
You're fantasizing now, although not off course,
Still converse with your server, as he may know,
A party animal is located within a stone's throw.

3. Take your quest uptown and wonder now,
Could the verse of Yates inspire somehow?
"The Magi" was thick with interpretation,
But the N or R is clear, return to Whitehall station.

Riding the train, your thoughts aimlessly wander,
Thinking of that perfect opening one-liner,
Magical you think, and deep with expression,
You remember books that have made an impression.

Back to childhood, you begin to reminisce,
Your favorite stories, like the **Little Prince**,
Authors C.S. Lewis, L'Engle, and Seuss,
Dahl and Carol, the greatest tales they produced!
But now back to task and begin thinking of tits,
At the title of the aforementioned book, exit.

West on the street with the same station's name,
Past Greene, see a bronze monstrosity of artistic fame,
The sight of a woman with ample childbearing hips,
Her face would never launch a thousand ships!

4. Shakespeare, Chris Marlowe, and Alexander Pope,
All borrowed that phrase with great literary scope.
Where could you find these three centralized?
Probably in a store of tremendous size.
Back to the N or R and go north, be aware,
Get off the subway at 14th/Union Square.

South on a rue that reminds you of the stage,
At 12th, the red awnings captivate and engage.
Inside find a map, quite helpful to direct,
8 miles of books, organized by subject.

The playwrights, you muse, are a special breed.
Chekov, Miller, Shaw, Sophocles.
Moliere, O'Neill, Williams, and Wilde,
Their opening lines were never reviled.

By the book-selling station, locate Joanne or John and a locked case,
First editions are there, as well in that space,
An anthology of plays, the dialogue you praise,
A blend of flowers and a brand of mayonnaise.

5. Return you go to Union Square Park,
Take the N or R north, at 34th/ Herald depart,
Don't leave the station, just the line you must switch,
Follow the signs, the B, D, F uptown sans a hitch.

Exit the station at 42nd Street,
The grounds of a library you locate due east.
The lyrical poetry of music in motion,
The laughter of kids is quite a commotion.

A bronzed literary great heeds from a German homeland,
He I quote: "Everyone hears only what he understands."
What price must you pay for a profound line like that?
But first ride the party animals, a frog, horse or cat.
Your tickets please find, Barbie you ask,
Now you can complete the following task,
On this tour of your life, pictures please take,
Up and down you go a great opening you will make.

As you spin around, be greatly aware,
Passing a bust, the devil may care,
Strike a deal in his famous dramatic piece,
Finding your clue here should now be a breeze.

6. Continue east on 42nd to make a quick trip,
Take the 7 at 5th, when *centrally stationed*, exit.
You have a fantastic idea, why you're so smart,
You ask yourself, am I the only one who can start?

Eight million New Yorkers, a city alive with creative spirit,
I'll place an ad for a calling of local literary merit!
Have someone else author my signature first line,
What a concept! This may work out just fine.

Off the main concourse, find a local paper,
The bookstand is named for a famous NY river.
Be careful, however, three stores here have this name,
In your bag is a map to help stake your claim.
The news is everywhere; the animal only at one,
Announcing your praise, your agent will say, "Well done!"

7. Take the 6 within this grand station,
Uptown to 77th, your next destination.
West you go between 79th and 81st,
On Museum Mile a vendor you search.

The great Russian writers had first come to your mind,
Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, socially embracing their time,
The poet Pushkin and the author Pasternak,
Although engage a hatted Englishman, and his frig's artifacts.

Are you meeting Sergei from your opening line quest?
However English writers, like Dickens and Browning, are some of the best,
Tiggy may have something of use for your team,
A transaction you await, he will finally come clean.

8. A walk south on Fifth Ave is easiest and true,
Past the 7th Infantry, you march and pursue,
67th enter the park, a right you should take,
Straight past a playground, a dog, under a bridge, left you break.

Four statues together constitute a literary gawk,
The greatest writer of all times starts the grand Walk,
The busts have markers along the tree-lined sides,
Perfect for solving your puzzle's sublime.
The Mall, it is exalted, by New Yorker's fame,
Within it you can determine your next clue's name.

One standing by itself, the others grouped together,
E.B. White helps with the animal, Willy-here-or-nether,
The bottom line for you to ultimately know,
Is your inspired creativity will undoubtedly flow.

9. Whether walk or taxi only you do declare,
A long walk it is, your feet may need to be spared.
If by taxi, say to the cabbie, sixth and east 44th,
If by train you shall go, stride with candor.
South down fifth, reach 57th
West to sixth, it's B,F heaven.
Continue south walking to 42nd street,
North two blocks, and then onward east.

A landmark hotel, a favorite literary meeting spot,
Critics and their sarcasm was the whole lot,
Lunching and gossiping, they coined the quips of the time,
The true round table pass up, but closest to 44th, in the lobby you find,
Weave through the columns; search a circled table if you dare,
A glorious idea, an opening line that will never be compared.

Mrs. Parker, Harpo Marx, and Benchley made it happening,
A famous quip from Wollcott. a member of the group:
"All the things I really like are immoral, illegal, or fattening."

The party animal is alive; see her in the grand picture,
Matilda, she's called, has full run of the house, a fixture.
Rather aloof and quite pouty, she's usually lazing behind the desk,
Take a picture of her fluff and now off you go on your quest.

10. All day you have searched for an opening, my friend,
Brilliantly, your novel starts, and quite simply,
You write.... "Home is what you find in the end."

Ah, home! A place with food, drinks, and a bed,
Hurry! South two blocks on Sixth, then west dead ahead,
Back to Times Square, on 42nd, grab the 1, 2, 3,
Downtown you go in your creative revelry,
Get off at the next stop, and soon you will know,
There's no need to exit, please stay below.
Go toward a place where people escalate,
And a liberal turn you must now navigate.
Do not forget, be there by eight,
And meet someone with your next rally fate.
Your writer's block is gone, let's celebrate,
With friends together at a location so great!

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