

Flexibility

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So the New Year is well under way, and like most writerly folk I've given some thought to my aspirations and plans for the coming year. But rather than going with an outright resolution as in, I will write 2000 words a day, or, I will file all my tax receipts properly and not just throw them on my desk, I decided I wanted to focus on something a little broader. So I've decided that I want to be more flexible.

As a writer, what does the word flexibility mean to you? Does it mean that thing you loose after spending far too many hours tapping away at the keyboard? Is it the thing you have to be when your editor says *we really love it, but...* and you say *of course I'll rewrite it from a completely different character's point of view*, and then you do it whilst editing another book entirely, making the dinner, repainting the bathroom and practising the hula hoop. Or, is flexibility another thing entirely?

I had cause to ponder this very thing recently when the hellish year that was 2016 drew to a close and I was presented with the relatively blank canvas that is 2017. You see, just over a year ago, I signed my first publishing contract for two books, the second of which, *Turn Towards The Sun*, is due out on February the 9th. This will bring my current contract to a close and while there are things in the pipeline, for the first couple of months of this year until the details are worked out there are no deadlines in place, or certainties to mark in my diary. But what there is, apart from my expectations, is a whole heap of possibilities.

You see, among the calamitous events of 2016, just before Christmas another thing happened. Of course, at the moment I'm not able to tell you what the thing is, but suffice to say that it could very well bring opportunities for 2017 that a few months ago I wasn't even planning for. And then I realised that if I am really going to benefit from these possibilities, what I need most is to be flexible.

When I first started to write I knew instinctively the kind of stories that were going to flow across my pages and, by and large, that's exactly what has happened. No bad thing, and indeed there is every argument for keeping the status quo, it does, after all, pay the bills. But now there exists a little temptation, some bright shiny new possibilities and if I continue to think I can only write a particular type of book, there's a good chance I might miss out. It's a changing market out there, a hugely competitive one, and if I'm going to make the most of my career and every opportunity I can, I need to be nimble. I need to be flexible over what I write and how I write, because apart from the things I expect to happen, if those opportunities really do come my way, I'd like to be ready. It will mean dipping my toe outside of my comfort zone, trusting my instincts, and testing my limits, but I'm going to have enormous fun doing it.

So flexibility is definitely going to be my watchword for 2017, what's yours?