

Turn Towards The Sun (originally written in 2017)

I'm writing this post on the 16th January, a day that co-incidentally is the one-year anniversary of my becoming a full time writer. Yes, one year ago today, I gave up the security of a well-paid, full time job and became self-employed. I swapped my suits for jeans, comfy tops and fluffy socks and took the plunge. So, one year on, how did I do?

Well, my new book, *Turn Towards The Sun*, is published on the 9th February, and I'll admit there's a shameless bit of self-promotion going on here in the title of this post, but it's also there for another reason, a reason that became more and more apparent as 2016 wore on.

Like a lot of people, 2016 was a year that I would rather forget. I won't bore you with the details, suffice to say that our family seemed to have more than it's fair share of trauma, which culminated with the death of my mum in the middle of November. Even at the beginning of the year, when I started writing *Turn Towards The Sun* things seemed especially hard going. I remember thinking back to a conference I had attended about eight months previously where the wonderful author, Julie Cohen, gave a brilliant presentation. Among other things, she exhorted us all to celebrate every success in our writing lives. Her reasoning was simple; as a writer, well known for being a solitary profession at times, we also live our lives waiting for the next review, the next set of sales figures, the next judgement on our talent, and there are a lot of us out there. It's easy to become despondent or feel we're not successful and sometimes it seems the only person willing to give us a pat on the back is ourselves. And so we should, because even if your success doesn't feel that great when measured against someone else's, it's still a success for you.

But, the publication day for my previous book came and went and the celebratory champagne stayed in the fridge. We'd just been given two months' notice to leave our current house and find another, so all the promotional work I'd planned went out the window as I was too busy trying to find said house for the six of us, pack up and move. I can't remember what I was doing come publication day, but it wasn't the sort of day I had dreamed of, that I do know. We moved house on my birthday, and yes, the champagne stayed in the fridge.

From there, the year just snowballed into one hideous set of events after another. I was still writing, but it didn't fill me with the joy I had so looked forward to feeling at the start of the year. It was almost a chore at times, sometimes a distraction, and sometimes a release, but I wanted to feel filled up by my writing, energised by it, enthralled with it, all things I know I've felt in the past, and that was when my writing was crammed into evening and weekends. Now, having been set free from the confines of regular employment I expected to feel differently, but I didn't, it just all felt a bit flat. Then, in the middle of August, came the time to find a title for the new book. Suggestions were made and discussed and none of them felt quite right, and then, Bekah, one of my wonderful marketing team came up with the suggestion of *Turn Towards The Sun*. Not only did it fit the themes of the book beautifully, it also struck a chord with me, so much so that my thoughts on it made it into the book's

afterword. It felt right, I felt better, but then, sadly events overtook us again, as we headed towards the close of the year. I had so many writing plans, but they got altered, or delayed, understandably so, but it was very different from what I had planned.

But, and it's a very big but, perhaps it's just the relief of seeing in a new year, and the tradition of looking at the year retrospectively, but I've realised that in actual fact, and much to my surprise, I'd had a very successful year. I am still a full time writer, I still have money in the bank and can continue with my dreams. I have written and edited a 110K word novel. I have written and edited three new novellas in a series, the first of which had already been published. The second of these was published in October, and the third and fourth are scheduled for release in the spring. That's another 110K words. My novel, *Letting in Light*, hit the bestseller lists, and my next is out in a few weeks. So to borrow someone else's well known analogy, in fact I'd not only wrestled all the alligators into submission but comprehensively drained the swamp. Julie was right, I should have been celebrating.

With all that goes on in our lives it's so easy to feel negative and frustrated by our writing, to focus on the things that go wrong, rather than the things we actually achieve, even if they don't go smoothly or deviate from our master plan. Life has taught me, however, that whatever challenges and sadnesses we face, we should never give up or give in to negativity. Instead, we should always remain celebrating and importantly recognising our successes, however small or hard fought, with our faces turned firmly towards the sun.