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GUEST EDITORIAL

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The Blinking Cursor

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One of the things I always dread about writing is the moment when I start putting words to the page. There is something terribly unnerving about staring at a blank page and watching the cursor blink back at me impatiently. I feel as if I have kept someone waiting and he is now tapping his finger on the desk, annoyed by all the unnecessary delay. And it is at that moment that doubts come rushing over me as a writer. Can I really find the words for a clever lead paragraph, or even a clever opening sentence? Will I find the narrative arc that will carry a reader all the way through a book? Will my words do justice to a subject and to the people who have entrusted their stories to

me? Writing is a serious business, and I am never more aware of it than when I am staring at that blinking cursor. I feel a sense of mental paralysis.

I never know how long this paralysis will last. It may only be a few minutes. Or it may stretch painfully long days. It once took me two weeks to writing the opening paragraph of a book chapter. But as soon as my mind loosens and relaxes and allows the words simply to flow, it passes and I can get on with the work of writing. I am always grateful for that moment: there is a great joy in the sudden freedom, an elation that almost rivals the satisfaction of finishing a piece of writing.

I suspect that every writer dreads that initial moment to some degree. But each learns to overcome it, and we are all the richer for the books that they create from the paralysis of doubt.

-Heather Pringle
Canada

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