

## One Thought after Another

“Attention class, we have an important visitor today,” announced my teacher. I slumped in my chair; visitors meant writing reports. Our last visitor was a firefighter. He told us all about his work, and then our teacher made us write a 5 page report. My name is Sarah Winds. I am a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at Burnbeck middle school and I hate writing reports. I never know what to write, even though I listen to everything the visitor says. The door to my classroom opened, and a woman walked in. She wore a light blue dress with a black sash around her waist and her blonde hair pulled into a high ponytail. In her hands was a big, blue binder. “Hi, my name is Susie Willows,” said the woman. “I am a children’s book author, and I am here to help you write your own story in only 3 days”. I gulped. A story within 3 days? That’s impossible! Susie started passing out blank pieces of paper to the class. “Use this piece of paper to write your ideas, characters, settings etc. This will help you plan out your story”. Everyone immediately started working, but I just stared at the paper. I glanced at Willy Burks, who was sitting to my right. In his character column he wrote: pencil, marker and crayon. Willy loved school supplies, so it made sense that he was making them his heroes. I looked to my left at my best friend Ellen Rose. She had written worms, birds and trees. Ellen loved nature, so again I wasn’t surprised. Just then the bell rang. I scribbled my name on the blank paper and shoved it in my backpack.

I was heading towards the door when Susie said “Can I talk to you for a second, Sarah?” I wanted to say no, but I knew I couldn’t. Susie waited for everyone to leave the room before she started talking. “I’ve noticed you were having trouble focusing,” she said. “Sometimes,” I said quietly. “I had the same problem when I was about your age”. “You had trouble?” I asked. “Yes indeed, and I was too scared to ask for help, so I kept it to myself. And do you know what happened?”. “What?” I asked. “I failed my reports,” Susie said with a sigh. “Well, that’s what’s been happening to me,” I replied. “It won’t anymore if you let me help you,” Susie said with a smile. “I’ll think about it,” I answered.

When I got home that day, I went straight to my room. I sat down at my desk and took out the paper. I wrote “story” at the top of the page. Susie’s words echoed in my head; “I failed my reports”, “I failed my reports”. Just then my mother called from downstairs, “Sarah, time for dinner!” I raced down. I never miss dinner, never. Tonight’s was spaghetti & meatballs. I ate in silence, hoping my mother wouldn’t ask the “how was school question”. I guess she read my mind, because she didn’t. I finished dinner and went to my room. That night I wondered if Susie would be disappointed in me for not finishing my work. I fell asleep with the question lingering in my head.

The next day at school, Susie told us about events and problems. "Events in a story need to have a problem, which eventually you solve. Remember, you must solve all your problems or the reader will get confused," she said. Once Susie finished her lesson, she let everyone continue working on their stories. I looked down and pretended to be writing. I heard Susie's footsteps come toward me. I looked up at her. "Come with me," she said. I got up and followed her to the door. I felt a shiver go down my spine. I turned around, expecting to see all eyes on me, but thankfully everyone was too busy with their work. I felt Susie's hand on my shoulder. I blushed and quickly walked out the door. "How's the story going?" she asked. I let out a sigh. "Not good," I told her. "Well, if you don't know what to write about, try thinking about things that are important to you," Susie said in an encouraging way. "Okay," I said and walked back into the classroom. I sat down at my desk, trying to come up with an idea. Suddenly a thought struck me. I couldn't believe it was that simple. I picked up a pencil and started writing. I had just finished my characters, setting and title when the bell rang. I picked up my no longer blank paper and put it carefully in my backpack.

When I got home, I ran to my room. I was almost there when the doorbell rang. I hopped back down the stairs, two at a time. I opened the door to find Ellen. "I thought maybe you would want some help with your story," Ellen said. I was about to say no, when Susie's words floated into my head. "I was too scared to ask for help". I took a deep breath, "Sure, I'd love some help," I said, and invited her in. Ellen happily followed me upstairs. I told Ellen all about my story. She was very impressed, but then her smile disappeared, "I guess that since you already have a story you don't need my help," Ellen said disappointed. "Of course I still need help! Especially from my best friend," I exclaimed. Ellen laughed and we started writing. By dinnertime, I had a masterpiece. Ellen stayed for dinner (homemade pizza), then went home. That night in bed, I had a feeling tomorrow was going to turn out just fine.

The next morning I confidently told Susie that I had finished my story. "That's great, I'm very proud of you," she said. "I could never have done it without Ellen," I replied. I glanced over at Ellen. She was beaming. Once everyone turned in their stories, Susie made an announcement, "I am very pleased with all of your stories, and as today is our final day, I'd like Sarah to share her story". I let out a gasp. I felt all eyes on me as I walked to the front of the room. I started feeling queasy. I took a deep breath and said "the title of my story is "One Thought after Another".