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# IN THE MUPPLE WITH THE LIBRARY WRITER

**Hi again, friend!**

**Thanks for joining me for a glimpse into the muddy middle of a writer's journey from reader to author.**

“If you feel like giving up because you're not seeing results, remember this: the last thing to grow on a fruit tree is the fruit.” - Author Unknown

## **Greetings From The Asylum**

In last month's letter, I asked if you have to be crazy to do creative work or if the creative work makes you crazy.

I seem to have answered my own question because, as I sit writing this, I've just returned from a solo writing retreat at what was previously the Northern Michigan Asylum and the Traverse City Regional Psychiatric Hospital!



*Photo: The Village at Grand Traverse Commons*

It's on the National Register for Historic Places and it looks like an old college

with its little red-roofed cupolas atop 3-story yellow brick “cottages” laid out in the batwing-like Kirkbride style. Since I think it’s cool (and May *is* Mental Health Month), I’ll tell you a little about what made this place unique when it and the neighboring “asylum farm” opened in 1885. (I sometimes feel like I’m running an asylum at *our* farm, so you know I had to dig deeper when I read that phrase!)

According to [Wikipedia](#), the facility’s first superintendent, Dr. Munson, “was a firm believer in the “beauty is therapy” philosophy. Patients were treated through kindness, comfort, pleasure, and beautiful flowers provided year-round by the asylum’s own greenhouses and the variety of trees Munson planted on the grounds.” Also, as part of the “work is therapy” philosophy, the asylum provided opportunities for patients to gain a sense of purpose through farming, furniture construction, fruit canning, and other trades that kept the institution fully self-sufficient. Munson ran the place for nearly 40 years, as it grew to include a dozen residential cottages, a dairy farm, greenhouses, gardens, and other structures to support up to 3,000 patients. Over the years, it’s supported programs for addiction rehab, the elderly, and nurse training, as well as patients of various tuberculosis, typhoid, diphtheria, influenza, and polio outbreaks.



*My AirBNB in The Village at Grand Traverse Commons was the perfect place to renew my motivation for writing and editing.*

I discovered this spot a few years ago when one of my daughters was medevaced to Traverse City after my grandson decided to arrive two months early. While baby C. was in the NICU of the wonderful hospital named after Dr. Munson, my daughter stayed at a beautifully restored 1903 dormitory turned hospitality house for patients’ families. Driving around the grounds, I was entranced by the recently restored main building, which is composed of over eight million yellow bricks and was built with hand tools and mule power! The condo where I stayed for my writing retreat was inside that main building, and from the top floor living room I could see a vast lawn across from a circular pavilion. From edge to

edge, that lawn's mow lines were the straightest I’ve ever seen - and I’ve seen a lot of military golf courses, so that’s saying something.

Apparently, if you take one of the trails between the now-bustling retail area and

the old barns, you can visit the grave of one of their more famous former residents - a world-champion milk cow. That cow's name was Traverse Colantha Walker, and if I don't find a way to work that name into one of my novels at some point, I will have failed us all.

## Beauty As Therapy

Do you share Dr. Munson's belief that being surrounded by a beautiful environment can uplift our emotional and mental state? I'd been feeling burned out in the eternal slog of editing my first novel, and was grateful for the opportunity to test that "beauty is therapy" philosophy. It was a treat to get away from the farm and a delight to come home, too. (Especially since the cherry trees along the route were starting to bloom, and I came home to about half of our apple trees in full blossom!)



## Living A Good Story

When I get frustrated with some aspect of my writing process (this month it's been the glacial speed of my revisions), I try to remind myself that the story I'm living is at least equally as important as the ones I'm writing.



Since my last letter in April, we lost my father-in-law, someone with a rich harvest of stories. You know how some people have dodged death so many times they begin to seem immortal? My father-in-law was a Purple Heart recipient, a husband for almost 60 years, a Vietnam veteran, a fighter pilot, and a pioneer of several

regenerative farming practices. Over the last 20 years, I was privileged to witness some of his life story, and heard many more stories shared at his funeral which was also a reunion of his 7 kids, most of his 29 grandkids, and even 1 of his 5 great-grands. When I saw all the John Deere tractors and other equipment holding American flags aloft at the farms along the processional route between the church and cemetery, I fell a little more in love with my husband's hometown Minnesota community.

**"We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories. " — Jonathan Gottschall**

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### **Over at Beckon Hill Farms**

On the farm front, my little heritage crossbreed chicks hatched and proceeded to judge me (see photograph for evidence of their condescending stares.) All five are now thriving with the big girls in the main coop, and the brooder is now filled with Duclair ducklings and tiny Orlopp Bronze turkeys, shipped direct to me from their breeders through the U.S.



postal service, which always just tickles me. If you haven't gotten a call from the post office to come pick up your chirping package, have you really lived?

All 16 piglets and the two Scottish Highland calves born in Feb. are all cavorting in green fields. The most time-consuming aspect of regenerative farming for us is the rotational grazing, so we've been brainstorming and buying fencing supplies to, hopefully, make that aspect quicker, safer, and less profanity-inducing. As they say, if a marriage can survive moving cattle, it can survive anything!

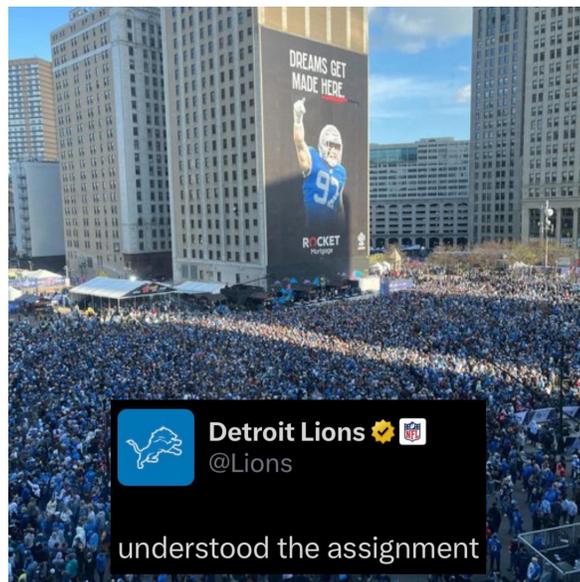
*You can always check in on our farm friends [@beckonhillfarms](#) on IG and sometimes even on Facebook, if you're into that.*

OUR MINDS WERE MADE TO MOVE, TO CHANGE, TO GROW. WE THRIVE ON QUESTIONS AND LIVE IN DIFFERENCE. NOT BEING SURE IS ONLY AN INVITATION, NOT A FAULT. THE HUMAN MIND IS A BEACHCOMBER, NOT A PAPERWEIGHT. SO HERE IS ANOTHER HERESY: IF THE SHOES ARE TOO TIGHT, KICK THEM OFF AND RUN BAREFOOT FOR A WHILE.

**Steven Charleston**

*Ladder to the Light: An Indigenous Elder's Meditations on Hope and Courage*

#kindlequotes



 **Detroit Lions** ✓   
@Lions  
understood the assignment

## What's Been Keeping Me Going

- I took my 11-year old son to the

NFL  
Draft  
Experience  
in  
Detroit.

It  
was  
just  
us  
and  
275,000  
of  
our  
closest  
friends.

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and  
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much  
fun!

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back  
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Minnesota  
this  
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month,  
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I  
passed  
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hours  
with  
audiobooks.

By  
far,  
the  
happiest  
audiobook

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Lucy  
Gilmore's  
*The  
Library  
of  
Borrowed  
Hearts.*

- Shaboozey.

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listen  
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Song"  
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tapping  
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toes,  
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not  
sure  
we  
can  
be  
friends!

- The  
always  
enthraling  
poetry  
of  
Jan  
Richardson.  
I  
love  
Jan's

*This  
Grace  
That  
Scorches  
Us  
(A  
Blessing  
for  
Pentecost  
Day)*

in  
which  
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reminds  
us,  
"To  
bear  
this  
blessing,  
you  
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take  
yourself  
to  
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place  
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everyone  
does  
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you."  
We  
Episcopalians  
mark  
Pentecost  
Sunday  
as  
a  
celebration  
of  
the  
Church's  
birthday.  
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church,  
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involves  
kazoos,  
because  
if  
you're  
having  
a  
party  
without  
kazoos,  
are  
you  
really  
having  
a  
party?

++ I feel like Ms. Richardson would be surprised to find her religious poem included in a list that includes the NFL draft, Shaboozey, and kazoos. Welcome to my brain, lady!

## Looking Forward

I've calendared some novel editing time in between shuttling back and forth to our kids' end-of-year school and sporting events, making deliveries to our new farm-to-table restaurant partner, chaperoning a middle school field trip to the state capitol, and hosting a foster teen for a farm stay (we provide respite to support full-time foster parents in our region).

Even though a huge percentage of my professional life up to this point has involved writing, my first novel doesn't seem to be in the same universe as any other writing project I've done. It's like I'd been doing 500-piece puzzles and thought I'd stretch to do a 2,000-piece puzzle, but really, I've started a trillion-piece puzzle and am still trying to find the edges!

**Friends of Authors: Release the book already! Why are you revising it for the tenth time?**



[CarrieTurner.com](http://CarrieTurner.com)

**Until our next huddle in The Muddle,  
Heather, aka The Library Writer**

**May your day hold a good story, whether you're reading  
it,  
writing it, or living it.**

# THE LIBRARY WRITER



HEATHER RAUENHORST  
✦ AUTHOR ✦

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