



## Loneliness and the Writer

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**T**HERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LONELINESS and being alone. Loneliness is a sadness, brought on by the lack of company, a lack of friendship. The state of being alone is to have no one else present. As a writer, I spend large amounts of time in my house, at my desk, with no one else nearby. This solitary way of working never makes me feel sad. I rarely experience loneliness.

I do sometimes wonder what it would be like to work in a more social environment; to travel to an office and share my workspace with others. I would have more friends perhaps, I would be inspired in different ways, noises and distractions would be different. There would be no domestic timetable, no washing pile to address causing me to lose batches of my time in my working day. Home would be where I physically retreated to when my work was done. But, in a way, I retreat here now. When my daughter is at school and my husband away at work, I don't want company. I cherish the hours I have to myself and I use them wisely, productively.

There are schemes in operation offering writers a place of privacy and isolation to focus on their work. From libraries to bothies, from castles to eco-pods, writers can settle into weeks of refuge for the purpose of conjuring new words only. I have never applied for such an opportunity. My life as a mother restricts my ability to up sticks and disappear. But that's not the main reason preventing me from pursuing such avenues to aid my creativity. The reason I don't is because I am terrified of being lonely when I get there. I fear that after I have unpacked my things and



absorbed the spectacular view that typically comes as part of the package, I will lay out my laptop and pens upon this strange new desk and write nothing. I fear I will feel cut off, desolate and forlorn. That such solitude will not afford me creative freedom, but in fact curtail it. A pressure must exist surely, to make the most of this rare experience and produce one's very best work, yet I know of writers who have left these places having not written a single word.

My husband, a furniture maker, helpfully offered to build me a shed at the end of the garden. Coveted writer's headquarters, a short gravel path away from my kitchen door. I declined. His suggestion made me feel ejected from the family home. I had to explain that if he built it, I feared loneliness would be waiting for me inside its wooden walls. I would miss the sounds of my house, the changing light from that small window above my desk. I would miss the domestic chaos that surrounds my defined corner, my daughter's scattered things from upstairs to down. I embrace all of this as a creative space. And it is why, when I write, immersed in my aloneness, I never, ever feel lonely.