

NANCY-GAY  
ROTSTEIN

## A Passion for Writing

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**W**RITING is an illogical passion. It is born in isolation, away from the pragmatic world and its comforts. For me, the joy is in the very act of writing.

There is nothing quite as exhilarating as when a poem seems to be writing itself, or the perfect word arrives effortlessly, the feeling I am part of something greater than myself, a creative force for which I am merely the conduit. It is a very humbling experience and a process I have learned to respect.

When the words start, I suspend everything else. Not satisfied with the imagery in the concluding chapters of *Shattering Glass*, I went back to the place in Italy where the novel had begun. When I arrived there, my characters were waiting for me. The book seemed to write itself as the words and images for which I had been searching flowed unaided. Not daring to interrupt the process, in the weeks it took to rewrite the concluding chapters, I rarely left my room. And when I did, I spoke to no one.

Sleep can wait – but the urgency in an idea cannot. I cannot begin to count the pocket flashlights burnt out in the course of my novel when, wakened by an idea, I would continue throughout the night until all was safely jotted down.

For with the exhilaration also comes the certain knowledge that a poem passed-by, an image unfinished, an idea severed in mid-thought – the spontaneity of the writing, the “*donné*” – cannot be called upon at will.

Regretfully, I learned this lesson from experience. I was at an amusement park in the United States when I was drawn to a mother on a merry-go-round holding her severely handicapped child. Seeing the serenity on the mother’s face and the happiness of the child, I sought

to express how too often we value only what is beautiful and perfect, ignoring the joy that comes through love. But I was with my three young children and dared not leave them unattended. Many times afterwards, I tried to convey the essence of what I had experienced, but the poem I had passed by eluded me. Years later, this time by myself, I returned to that carousel and remained there until the images came alive, and the poem complete.

### Carousel

lithe Lippizaners leap  
toward storybook stars  
exposing golden hoofs,  
sleek stallions spring  
into frenzied silence,  
centaurs carved for  
Gepetto-chiselled perfect children  
froth frozen foam

music pounds, centrifugal concave  
calliope mirrors laughter

golden haired, the lady  
sidesaddles gelding  
and cradles the enlarged head  
of her dreamy, droop-lid son,  
fragile frame pressed secure;  
his face, glowing,  
is haunting in happiness;  
her eyes are serene, carefree  
as the crystal carousel spins



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