

What did I hope to achieve?

“What did I hope to achieve?” questioned the man. And he went on, “All my life I’ve disagreed with almost everyone and everything, except for those lone voices who I found or who seemed to find me. Their words rang as true as the tone of a single note of a gong.

The nakedness of being alone. I learned the truth from lies at too early an age, the age when I should have been learning the truth.

As the man thought he heard himself say, “I wish I’d have known this earlier in my life.” But then he laughed aloud, shook his head, and said to himself, “You first learned what you didn’t want. You then learned not to trust anyone but yourself. Then you learned there were some words of truth you could trust. You learned you wanted to be a person whose words others could trust. So, you chose that path.”

The man joined a writer’s group, hoping for some friendship. One member asked, in a group chat, “What part of writing do you dread?” Another member asked, “What aspect of writing a novel do you hate?” Yet another wanted to know how many words a day was an acceptable amount to write. The man answered the questions by replying that he neither dreaded nor hated any part of writing, and that there were no rules. He wrote that, for him, writing was a privilege. He had truly hoped to find camaraderie; instead, he quit the group.

He wanted to belong, and he was optimistic that he would. But he wasn’t disappointed at what he found because he was able to interject words learned from his own experience into the conversation. “There are no rules”, he thought. Then he thought, “That should be a rule!” Then he laughed out loud at the contradiction.

A thought came from deep within him, and he heard it more than he thought it, and what he heard was that living life without rules was to be the same as your heart or your breathing- they are both learned activities, but once learned, they become automatic.

Written by Peter Skeels © 1-10-2026