



Gin Phillips

171: Pacing and Suspense

Gabriela Pereira: Hello, and welcome, word nerds, to DIY MFA Radio, the show that will help you write more, write better, write smarter. I'm Gabriela Pereira, instigator of DIY MFA, and your host for this podcast. Now, let's talk writing.

Hello. Hello, word nerds. Gabriela here, and welcome back to DIY MFA Radio. Today's show notes are over at diymfa.com/171, because it's Episode 171.

Now, today's show is a really fascinating one; and I am so excited about it because I am speaking with author Gin Phillips. And I have to say, when Gin's publicist reached out to me with the pitch for this book, it took my breath away; and I'm not talking about the Oh, this is cool kind of 'take your breath away'.

I'm talking about the punched in the gut, heart-wrenching I don't think I can put this book down kind of 'take my breath away'. And I knew immediately that I had to have Gin on the show. So, a little bit about her book, and then I will introduce you to her.

Fierce Kingdom is a book about a mother and son, who are trapped in a zoo after it's been taken over by an armed gunman. And basically, it's about the lengths that this mother will go to protect her child. Gin Phillips is the author of two previous books, *The Well and the Mine* and *Come in and Cover Me*. She lives in Birmingham, Alabama with her family. Welcome, Gin. It's so great to have you on the show.

Gin Phillips: Thanks so much, Gabriela; and I'm delighted to be here.

GP: So, okay, this book really blew my mind. I mean, and first of all, no spoilers, please, because I'm about halfway through; and I literally was reading it all in one sitting, and I need like just another sitting to finish it. But the story is just so fascinating; and I kind of have to know, like, what possessed you to write this book because I don't know how one would even come up with this idea, but it was just so heart-wrenching – and, oh my gosh.

GPhillips: Oh, thank you. You know, actually, I have been thinking for a while, really ever since my son was born, he's six now, that I wanted to do a story that dealt with motherhood in some sort of substantial way.

And I'd played with a couple other story ideas, and then one day we were at the zoo for the like 3070th time and staring at the same exhibits for the 3070th time.

And so, you have a lot of time to think in that scenario; and I found myself wondering, 'What would we do if a gunman came in right now, where would we go? What would be the best spot? And if he were-- If he were with me, what would I do then?'

And what seemed us first, just like sort of a dark daydream, after a little while, started to seem like, 'Actually, maybe that's my answer to doing something about motherhood – maybe that's a really interesting way to explore mothering in a really intense situation with this very tight focus.'



And then the focus gets even tighter because the entire story is told within the walls of the zoo. So, they're these very set geographic parameters; and then it's tightened further because it's all within three hours.

So, I like that; and I like sort of the way that opened up having a really different perspective to look at this relationship between the mother and child, and then ultimately the relationship between them and complete strangers – who they come to know over the course of the book.

GP: So, there's so much there that I want to unpack. First of all, like the mother-child relationship; for me, that was probably the most sort of tug at my heart strength's piece because like you, I have small kids – in fact, my son is five, so I feel like we're maybe a year behind where you are.

And so, there is a certain, kind of-- There's something about being a mom that you really only know when you're there, right? Like I used to think I knew what being a mom was and what it entailed and what it meant. And you know, me being very like ultra-feminist, I wanted to turn all those expectations on their heads.

And yet, there's something about the experience that you really only get it when you're in there. So, that first scene that the book opens up, they're hanging out in sort of this sandboxy area – in a dinosaur exhibit – for our listeners to give them some context.

And that moment where they're just kind of hanging out and the feathers haven't hit the fan just yet, but we know something's coming obviously if we know the premise of the book. So, there's that sort of calm before the storm feeling; and yet, the characters have this wonderful relationship.

So, clearly, you're drawing from experience because it felt very real to me. But can you talk a little bit about how you brought that mother-son relationship to life without making it feel romanticized or cliché? Like there's so many cliché mother-child stories out there, this did not feel like that to me.

GPhillips: No, but I think cliché is exactly the right word that I was really conscious going in – you know, particularly with Lincoln, particularly writing a four-year-old. But a lot of times, yes. And stories, children are just sort of placeholders – they're a child, they're cute, they're demanding, they cry, they sort of move the plot along maybe.

And then, it was really important to me that Lincoln feel as three-dimensional as the adults because as you know, having children, they are as distinctive as an adult is. You have a completely different personality from one four-year-old to the next. So, that was important to me.

And luckily, yes, I had a real-life model that I could steal from; and that was a real joy of the story was Joan, early-on in the book talks about a sense that she watches her son walk beside her, that your child is constantly disappearing.

That the one who's in front of you now, you know, six months from now, especially in those really early years – you know six months from now, there's going to be a completely different set of interests and vocabulary and mannerism.

And she's very aware – that's one thing I really like about her character – of these, sort of, moments of real beauty and joy. And she has an immense appreciation for motherhood, for her child, the moments of beauty in life, in general.

For me as a writer then, partly what this gave me the chance to do was to capture one moment in my child's life – to try to do my best to, sort of, set in stone what he was like at this particular phase of four-year-old. And so, you know, there's certainly a lot of--



It is not entirely my son, but there are certainly plenty of details that I took because yeah, it's the small things that matter. And those, kind of, conversations that you're talking about early on, you know, that's different.

The conversation a mom has with your four-year-old is different than the one you're going to have with your six-year-old, and different certainly than one you're going to have with your 16-year-old.

So, yes, I did try very hard in the midst of this, of what winds up being certainly plenty of drama, and plenty of, sort of, 'not everyday action' to make sure that that was really grounded in the kind of details of everyday life – of everyday relationships, of the ways you talk to your kid and the ways they talk to you.

GP: You know, and what I love also about Joan is that while she's very aware of the fact that, you know, her child is morphing – literally before her eyes, as they do when they're very young – it's also not saccharine, right? Like there's so many things about motherhood or parenthood that are all like uber-nostalgic – almost to the point where you're just like, 'Ugh, gag me with a spoon.'

But it's not like that. Like I get this sense from her that like she's aware, and there's that bittersweet awareness that her child isn't going to be like this. And yet, there's also that intense joy of just being in the moment.

And that was I think another piece that kind of comes into play throughout the story, this idea of being 'in the moment' versus 'out of the moment'. And we see Joan struggling with that, especially in moments of kind of where she has to really think on her feet.

Like literally, when she is scooping her son up and running as fast as she can, where you have these moments where she's like, 'No, we have to stay present, we have to stay here.' So, can you talk a little bit-- Because that inner dialogue that she has sort of in her head in those moments of crisis are just fascinating to me. So, can you tell us about crafting those moments?

GPhillips: Sure. I mean, you phrased that in a really interesting way that I don't know that I've quite thought, of how there is this overlap between her sense as a parent that she wants to be very present – and we find out more about her own background and why really seeing and hearing her child is so important to her. And, of course, it's not perfect. She is present.

Early on in the book, she's talking to him; and yet, he's talking about superheroes. Her mind is also drifting to a hundred other things. And in part, because you know, as you say, motherhood, there may be some nostalgia – there is joy and sweetness, and there is boredom and repetition and frustration.

And it is all those things wrapped up together – often, all at the same time. You know, I wanted to have that sense of her as a mother of someone who, you know, at least, attempt to be present.

But then, yes, that carries through. She has such a strong sense as the night goes on that she needs to forget about the world outside of the zoo, that she needs to stop thinking about her husband. She needs to, in fact, stop thinking about the police; and think that they would come and help her.

She needs to stop even thinking about her phone and what it might tell her. And instead, immerse herself completely in the 'here and now' and this place. And she has a strong sense that I think winds up being correct, that that is the way to get out of this.

But also, then connected to that is what she can rely on is herself. She doesn't need someone to save her, but she can get herself out of this – and she can get her son out of this.



And from that moment, there's a moment that, yes, I won't get spoilers either, but there's a moment where that really shifts for her – where that comes together, the sense of, 'I'm not going to wait and I'm not going to keep thinking about what might be playing out out there – I'm going to trust myself, trust how well I know my son, trust the decisions I make... and I'm not going to second-guess that.'

I like what that says both about her mindset; and also, sort of, her worldview. I mean, that I think it's very-- It's something we all struggle with when not in a life-or-death situation – the idea of being present in the moment. And so, it may--

There's some nice echoes there – in that, it is a book about not just the situation but also motherhood; and also, the world, as it is larger than that... the ways we're connected to each other, and the decisions we make in our life.

GP: And you know, I think it's such a great metaphor for parenthood, right? Like for motherhood, especially, I remember when I was pregnant with my son and I was kind of terrified out of my mind because I don't consider myself a naturally responsible human being.

Like I couldn't even take care of like a plant when I was, you know, in college – like it. So, the thought of taking care of a child was just really beyond me. And you know, and of course, I'm somewhat responsible, but anyway, that's neither here nor there.

But I remember distinctly having this conversation with a relative, you know, aunt of sorts; and she said to me, "Look, at the end of the day, you are the mom – like whatever the doctors tell you, whatever the teachers tell you, whatever other experts are telling you, this is still your child – and so, you will know this child better than anyone else... there's nobody who can possibly know this child as well as the parents."

And I remember that feeling of it being very liberating hearing that and realizing that to a certain degree as a parent you do have to trust your instinct. So, like, it's sort of interesting how the way you craft the dilemma that Joan is in is also sort of expands to become a metaphor for parenthood.

That like as parents, we all have to trust our own instincts; and we all have to recognize that at the end of the day, we can't be relying on people outside our situation to swoop in and save the day – we have to do it for our child and for ourselves. So, I just love how the different layers work

GPhillips: And, of course, you're right, I think you are in a unique position, as the mother or the parent, to know your kid like no one else does.

And that's certainly in the story is sort of, Joan – we don't find out that she's like an ex-navy seal or Black Belt in karate, but her strength and her real power comes from the (A) being smart and capable, but (B) from knowing her child really well – from being able to see what's going to come next, of what to predict what's going to happen in the next couple of minutes in a way that no one else can.

Something, right? That's something that's very distinctive to parents, of how you read your child.

GP: And another thing that I loved about it too, again, going back to sort of the smaller sort of more quiet moments, like right at the beginning, you were talking about how, you know, the obsessions that Lincoln has sort of have evolved over time; and that's totally true.

Like as a mom, I can attest to the fact that like this week might be dinosaur week – and next week will probably be superhero week; and it kind of changes week by week. It's the way it is with kids. But there's also--



Like, there was another nuance to it that felt so real to me, the language – the way they speak to each other, things like how she says, “Do you want your sips?” And like, there’s that-- That’s like their language for his water bottle or his drinky or whatever. And like, every parent-child has that language, where like my daughter, it’s like her paci, was her pacifier – or other little things that we say to our kids that like people outside the bubble would look at you and be like, ‘What kind of crazy is that?’ But you’re in there--

GPhillips: And then, you lose all track.

GP: Yeah.

Gin Phillips: Right, right. No, I like that too. And that’s certainly the same in my family. You’re right, then you that, yes, it sounds to you like perfectly normal English – after a while, but it’s not.

GP: And it’s interesting because it’s almost like you had to craft another dialect, right? Like the parent-kids speak becomes almost like a language, in and of itself. And there’s definitely-- Speaking as a mom who has small children, there’s definitely like a syntax to it. Like you wouldn’t use certain words in other ways because that would sound weird in your like parent-child code.

But it’s something that only when you’re there, and you’re interacting-- I see the similar thing, like for instance, in preschool classrooms – like when you go into a classroom, they have like the lingo for how certain things are phrased like, ‘This area is closed,’ or you know, different things like that where you’re like, “Wait, what are you talking about? The blocks are closed? No, like they’re just hanging out there.”

But like, the kids know what that means, and there’s like that lang-- So, that to me was fascinating how you sort of brought that in, in a way that felt very natural and not sort of Lord of the Ring-thy like, ‘This is how parents speak to their children.’ So, I loved it. That was one of my favorite things personally about the book.

GPhillips: Thank you. That just made me think of, you know, language is just sort of one of those ways that just sort of helps shape what that relationship is, you know, for the reader.

Your story about being nervous when you were pregnant let me think of-- I remember when I was pregnant with my son, I had the dog in my lap one time and turned to my husband and was like, “I hope I love the baby as much as I love the dog.” And like, it was literally a concern of, ‘What if I don’t?’

And then, of course, they put the baby in my arms, and it was like an aura I didn’t really expect – just sort of an immediate like, oh. I think part of writing the book was realizing what a different kind of love that is from other types; and in large, because it is immediate, that other people may... while I adore my husband, that love took like months or years to turn into that.

Whereas with your child it’s like, puff. And so, I think it’s-- You know, part of the appeal of the book as-- Language is a good example of that, was like, how do you try to get a hold on that, of what that is?

And the words like ‘love’ don’t work; they’re so overused that the truth of it seems like you can only get at it by fitting all the pieces together, by sort of stacking them up and trying to get the shape of the thing. But yes, I love-- I love the language part too.

GP: That and also like the personal boundaries thing. I think like again, only someone who is a biological mother and knows what that is about. Like I remember being pregnant with my son and turning to my husband one day and being like, ‘You know, pregnancy is the ultimate violation of personal space – like I have no personal space anymore... this is it, it’s over.’



And like, it's interesting because you go from that situation, where you are literally having no personal space with this child; and yet, there's still this like-- Like my kids still come up to me and, you know, my son is five, like he'll ram his fingers in my face; and I'm like, 'Why are you doing that?'

But like, kids don't get that there's a personal space bubble; and so, you capture that really well with how, the way they connect to each other. It's almost like they morph from being one being to two beings to one-- Like it's very fluid that personal space boundary between Joan and Lincoln – in a way that it would never be able to be between her and any other human being, which I thought was fascinating and so real.

GPhillips: Right. No, I find that another one of those moments, I think, are one of another one of those elements where it's multiple things at once where there is both a fondness for it and occasionally like a slight repulsion of--

Sometime recently, I think that I was watching my son eat a bunch of raisins, and then scratch his butt; and then he kind of twisted, immediately twisted his hands and my hair and thought like, 'Okay, that's really gross, and, you know, charming.'

There's a limited amount of time where he'll still eat raisins and scratch his butt and put his hands in my hair. But no, I think that's a-- Yes, that's another one of those elements that you're right, I think when you're in the middle of it is really striking that he's sort of separate but not entirely. And there is still a sense of like, 'You as mom, are basically an extension of me that I can sort of use your arms or your legs if I'm tired of my own.'

GP: Exactly.

GPhillips: And just, 'You hold me, you scratch my head.' But, right, no, I love-- Those are favorite moments of mine in the book to more so than sort of action moments or those moments where we get a glimpse of just how they are together.

GP: And so, a couple of things I wanted to tease apart for our listeners on the craft side.

One, I feel like both the language and the fact that they have this sort of code – pseudo code, between them – and the fact that they have this very fluid personal space... not only serves to build the characters, but I think what makes it work, and it ties to what you were saying before, the fact that she knows her son so well and that they really have that really 'super glue bond' is what allows her to be able to anticipate what he's going to do so they can actually survive.

And that, so it's interesting how when crafting that, it's not just like these details are placed in the story to be like, 'Hey, this is what motherhood looks like,' but it's about also tying to the plot and advancing the plot as well as the character, which I think in a book like this where it's very tight and fast-paced, you have to make sure that every single detail does that.

So, were you consciously thinking as you crafted these quieter moments about, sort of, how it contributed to the plot down the line?

GPhillips: To some extent, I certainly wound up cutting a good mini of it. I sort of wrote as I normally do, wrote a little bigger than I knew I wanted it to be; and then could come back and sort of call down the moments that I thought worked the best, because you're right, I love that sort of driving force of the story.

I found it really interesting the way that it forced me to be just as tight as possible with each sentence, but it also meant that I really wanted to make sure that each detail we get about Joan's childhood or each reflection that we get on Lincoln, had some sort of bearing, and that--



A lot of that wound up, you know, certainly, surely, 8 to 10 pages of sort of quieter stuff of her telling stories of her remembering bits of life before the zoo with him got cut because it needed to matter what was being told.

And it couldn't just be that it was a cute story, it had to be that it told, I mean, you know, to some extent some of those stories I just do, I do want to set up Lincoln – his sense of humor or his interest or just the sort of bizarreness of a child's mind.

Occasionally someone will say like, usually it's not happened with anyone who currently has small children will say, "I don't know, sometimes Lincoln seems younger than four and sometimes he seems like a grownup with what he says -you know, it's not that consistent."

GP: Well, that's what being four is all about.

GPhillips: That's right. That's four. That's what it is, but yeah, so you know, some of that-- There are times where a detail might be there just to give us a more comprehensive view of him or to let us see how Joan sees him. But yes, you're right, that that bond works.

That was always going to be a big part of it, that Joan strength was being a mother and that being a mother was not just this passive thing, that it became a real empowering thing that would get them out of this. That was always there about they have to be three-dimensional; and yet, there's a very limited amount of space to develop them. So, yeah, how tightly can that be done?

GP: Tying into that also, I think is sort of that balance between the specificity of those moments, because I think a lot of writers, especially when they're first starting, if they want something to apply universally, the temptation is to try to make it as broad or as universally applicable as possible.

And yet, it's the very specificity of it. Like it's the fact that Lincoln is currently obsessed with why Captain America doesn't wear a helmet – and like, that is a very important thing to him. That specificity is so true to four that anyone who knows a four-year-old, can relate to that though it might not be, 'Why does Captain America not wear a helmet?'

It might be, you know, 'Why did Velociraptors do yada-yada-yada?' You know, like it's some other random thing, but the way that kids latch onto it is so universal. So, can you talk a little bit about that, like using the specific detail to then tap into a broader, like, emotional resonance for the reader and how that can bring the reader into the story?

GPhillips: No, that's a-- That's a great point. It works as a writer. I mean, I think that works on sort of two levels. One is, yes, general writing sucks. I mean, you just-- You know, it's never that interesting. It's never that real.

I mean, you just always want to be specific because you've got to paint the picture, you've got to see the people, you know, just across the board, whatever you're writing – if you want your reader to connect with it, it needs to be specific.

That works so well, I think, because the truth is also, geez, I don't know how old or wise you would need to be to truly try to write some sort of comprehensive general statement on life – like, all of life.

But there's a danger to that, how would I write a book that tries to encompass motherhood in general across the cultures and the ages? You know, what I can do and what I can feel good about is trying



to capture one specific mother-son relationship and then hope that that has some broader context.

I mean, to me, a good story always works that way. My guess is that a lot of other writers feel like that, that you focus in on what story you think you can tell, and that is very specific to characters; and you hope that if it works well, that connects more deeply and has some wider ripples.

I think sometimes, you know, you don't know that until it's finished. But what I knew I could do was tell a story that mattered to me and that I thought was working about this mother and son.

And if that's all it was, then okay – it's still a good story about a mother and son, and just hope that when I'm finished that my experiences and my view on it happens to connect more than that. But man, yeah, no, to start out and think, like I said, I wanted to write about motherhood – really, you know, I want to write about my experience with motherhood and enjoy thinking through it.

And trying to capture some shape of it for myself and based on my own limited experiences, it'd be terrifying, I think, to sort of sit down instead and think, 'I'd like to write a book about motherhood,' that's just, there's no, that's a 'no win'.

GP: And you know, I think you hit the nail on the head, right? Because I think there is not just the danger of trying to be too broad and not being able to accurately capture it, but there's also sort of a presumption of, you know, like the fact that like, 'Who am I to ever be able to write the definitive book on motherhood or whatever?'

And yet, the specificity, like those moments are so specific to the story; and yet, the reader looks at it and can say, "Yes, I know what that's like," and they're inserting their own version of what that moment is.

So, like for me, it might not be Captain America's helmet, it might be my son's obsession with like traffic and traffic patterns in New York City because we live in the city, and that's what he obsesses about. So, like, you know, but it's still, that moment feels very true because it's so specific.

If it had been broad, a broad statement like, 'Children are obsessed about the darnedest things,' no one can relate to that, right? Like, we look at that, we go, 'Okay, whatever.' So, one thing that I wanted to talk to you about, and it's probably the elephant in the virtual room; as it were; and it's the timeline. I've never seen a book with this tight of a timeline.

And yet, the first thing I thought when I saw the premise of the book, when I realized that it takes a place over a span of just a few hours is, 'Well, it takes readers several hours, like more than just a few hours, most readers to read a book.'

It takes me, at least, like seven, eight hours to read a book of this length. So, how does one stretch the narrative so that it fills up that much time in real-time; and yet, spans only a shorter period of time in the book-time?

I mean, it's easy to think about how you can take a book that spans a week and condense it down to a few hours of reading, like that's what most authors do – or a year or whatever. But doing it the other way around, kind of, boggled my mind. And part of what drew me to the book was like, 'Okay, how's she going to do this? Like, how's she going to pull this off?'

So, can you talk to us a little bit about actual techniques you use, because I saw you doing certain things throughout the book to help us feel like the story still moved; and yet, fill that space of reading time without filling narrative time in the story.



GPhillips: First of all, I should say my husband would really appreciate that you just said it is not actually a three-hour read, which people do read it in real-time; and that always really makes him feel like an incredibly slow reader. So yeah, I think some people certainly come--

Yeah, I think that's very fast and would frankly rather people maybe slow down a little bit. I didn't necessarily-- I knew it could be close to real-time. I mean, I thought I didn't necessarily-- I didn't necessarily know I was going to break down the chapters with the time at the beginning – but was thinking, 'Yeah, I want this to move quickly,' probably—

I love the Stephen King quote, which I will probably misquote now, about how stories are fossils waiting to be found. It always feels to me like that writing that your story has the right shape, it has the right framework; and you just have to figure out what it is.

It's there and it is like a set thing, but it should be – you just have to discover it. So, I probably got a couple of-- I usually write chronologically, although I will sometime skip around a little bit if I'm having trouble with something.

So, I got probably through the second or third chapter with a rough draft and started to think, 'You know what, this actually, it could be something pretty close to real-time, I think – let me just keep going forward with that and kind of see how it works.' So, you know, a lot of that, I think there's no quantifiable reasoning, it's just gut of, 'This seems to be working, let me go a little further with it and see how I like it.'

As I said, I'd certainly cut some bits that maybe were a little too slow, but, you know, it worked well because you're talking about stretching it out. To me, despite the fact, again, that it is sort of technically called a thriller, to me, the intensity of the story comes from that connection to character.

It comes because you actually care, hopefully, what happens to Joan and Lincoln. And so, those moments where it does slow down and you get to know what drives particularly Joan, where you get to see a little bit more of their life before the zoo, those did feel equally important to me, that these are not just two people running – that they are, that they feel like they have a real path, like they're anchored.

So, I knew that had to get into the story, somehow. That was really the question, not necessarily to sort of fill, but how to cut those down and intersperse them; and I did have a sense of these bits and pieces of their past I really want to get in, but how big of it do I want the chunks to be?

And I moved those around a little bit. You're probably somewhere around it. About halfway through, we do get sort of the longest exposition of Joan talking about her own background. And there's basically one chapter, that background – everything else, every other bit of background is sort of interspersed through the first half of the book.

You know, that certainly was something in later drafts that I started playing with moving around and pacing. I don't-- I think some people do sort of elaborate diagrams or outlines early on to decide about pacing – but I tend to just write the first draft, see how it looks, and then start moving things around if I'm seeing slow places or places that maybe are a little too speedy.

GP: And also, another thing I noticed that you did that worked really well, was right about maybe 25% in, we started seeing little bits of other characters around, in the park. And I think that also sort of helps to fill out like, sort of, the muddle in the middle, like the dreaded Act Two.

Like when we moved into Act Two, and they're now running and they're hidden, I was like, 'All right, now what's she going to do?' Because like, how's she going to fill that much space in Act Two?



And so, that was another thing that I noticed that helped sort of the pacing move along and gave us a broader view of what's happening in the park or in the zoo without feeling like we're just huddled with her and her child in this hiding place for, you know, however long, and it's like in real time, because that could also be very, that would slow the story down. So, I think that was another way to sort of keep the pacing moving, which I loved.

GPhillips: And I liked that too. It also-- It sort of evolved from what I saw as a story about a mother and son to something that addressed something that I found really interesting about motherhood, which is that it's both really selfless on one hand – that, you know, 24 hours a day, like what you want does not matter that much, that you're sort of perpetually pushing back what you want to accommodate someone else.

But on the other hand, it's also pretty selfish because we take care of our kids and we care deeply about their happiness – in part because if something happened, if they're not happy, if something happens to them, then we're devastated that we are completely tied up with their wellbeing.

And other characters come in too, because it starts to play, I think it's a much more interesting question, you know, not just, 'What would I do for my child' – but, 'What would I do for somebody I've never met?'

But those connections start to play out a little differently and they're at odds with each other, of wanting to protect your child versus wanting to help someone else who you don't even know. And so, it gave Joan's decision-making another layer of complexity to have those other characters popping up who, sort of, just against her will, she starts to become connected to.

GP: Absolutely. So, I always end every interview with the same question, what's your number one tip for writers?

GPhillips: Make yourself write. I think inspiration is highly overrated. I think you make-- I think if you want to write – you sit down every day, you open your computer, you make yourself sit there for whatever the amount of time that you give yourself.

And maybe you write something that's really crappy, maybe you keep one sentence out of 10 pages; but I think that routine and just the work ethic of making yourself sit down and do it, is much more important than anything more romantic.

GP: Just like motherhood, right? It's, there's no romanticized thing, right? It's like you just got to do the work. Well, I love that so much.

GPhillips: You do it day in, day out.

GP: Thank you so much for being on the show, Gin. This was a blast.

GPhillips: Thank you, Gabriela. I had a great time. Thank you.

GP: All right, word nerds. Thanks so much for listening. Keep writing and keep being awesome.

