

In the town of Noncents there is a magic pen. Whoever holds the pen has the power to write a publishable and well-received novel. We all want that pen. Noncents is a town full of wanna-be writers. According to the legend, it started back in 1895 when Marcus Polus, whose statue stands tall in the town square, became the first writer published in the Totalcents Times, a national publication. That publication launched the successful career of our beloved Marcus Polus.

Marcus Polus attributed his success to a pen he was given by his mother. It was a beauty. The pen was black with a beautiful gold ring around its center and the black ink flowed so smoothly. No mistakes were ever made when one wrote with the pen so there was no need for correction ink or anything like that. Marcus Polus was one of the most generous men in Noncents and he wanted everyone to share in his success. He gave the pen, with his mother's permission since it was a gift from her, to Phil Sanford.

Soon, Phil had a best-selling novel. He believed it had to do with that pen so he passed it on once again. On and on through the years, we produced more best-selling novels than anywhere in the world. So you can understand why we all want that pen! We all want to be best-selling authors like William Shakespeare or Stephanie Meyer.

The most recent person rumored to have that magic pen is Arthur Roberts. It was also believed that he refused to pass it on to the next writer. Arthur is actually a great-great-great nephew of Marcus Polus. We thought that the good luck needed to be shared. Arthur had written six books in two years and the books were flying off the shelves.

There have been imitations of the famous pen since Phil possessed the magic pen. So, the trick is knowing that you have the real pen in your possession and learning to whom the pen will

go to next. The magic pen was so sought after that some of the more wicked writers of Noncents have created imitation pens to trick writers into thinking they have the true magic pen.

The town of Noncents is a quaint little corner of the world. It boasts the largest amount of bookstores per capita. It rivals the Starbucks generation of having a coffee shop on every corner. Noncents has only one coffee shop, which also serves as a diner and church space on Sunday mornings. There is a gas station but there's only one dispenser so if there are more than three people at the station it takes awhile to get a tank filled.

Along with the most best-selling books in the country, Noncents has other unique townspeople. For instance, Carlie Bly, is recognized as being the youngest mayor in our history – she was only 18 when she was elected as mayor. We also boast the fastest runner – Bob Billings. Ironically, Bob is also one of the fastest writers we have. He once wrote an entire novel in one month. It was a best-seller. The novel was about a snail. Bob was big into irony.

Two writers broke into Arthur's house and stole the pen. They took it home and tried writing novels. They had no luck publishing anything and Arthur kept on publishing. They figured they stole the wrong pen so they broke in again. This time they took all the pens that looked like the magic pen.

They were still not able to publish anything. The two writers coordinated a town hall meeting to call out Arthur for keeping the pen for himself. We were all present at the meeting when a messenger came from Arthur's home carrying a pen and a note.

"He was too chicken to bring it himself!" said one of the thieves.

"He knew he shouldn't have kept it and now he's afraid to face us!" said the other.

"Just be quiet and let's hear what this letter has to say," the townspeople said.

Carlie Bly volunteered to read the letter.

“The letter says, “My dear townspeople, you are quite mistaken that I possess the magic pen. It was passed on by me years ago. I don’t even know who has it anymore. But you have all missed something very important. The power of the writer is not dependent upon the magical pen. It doesn’t even matter if you write an entire manuscript with a box of crayons. No single pen can create the perfect novel. It is all in the magic of the writer.”

“What?! This has all been a hoax?”

“Arthur’s lying, he kept the blasted pen!”

“Let’s get him!”

Carlie interrupted the cry of the townspeople.

“There’s more to the letter. Quiet down so I can read it.”

“If you must know, there never really was a magical pen....”

“What?!”

“Liar!”

“He’s crazy!”

“Please let me finish reading this,” said Carlie.

“The magic pen is something I made up long ago. I could see how everything in Noncents wanted to write and be successful. And after I published my first novel, I decided it would be fun to share the pen I used with another writer to spread the wealth. It was fun for a while, watching the townspeople enjoy a burst of creativity found when you had the pen. I even added the look-a-like pens so that all the writers would have a useful tool.”

“But I was saddened that the pen became such an object of desire to the point that someone broke in my house and stole my pens,” the letter continued. “My dear friends, you forgot who can really write fascinating novels. It’s not the magic pen, it is you.”

The town of Noncents was floored. How could this have happened?

“We need to apologize and return those pens,” said one citizen.

“Maybe we should each write a few words for Arthur on how this experience affected us,” said another.

Each writer in town got out his or her favorite pen and wrote part of a community letter for Arthur.

“Dear Arthur, your letter inspired me to look within and start believing I can be a writer on my own – no matter if I use a pen or a pencil or even one of my child’s crayons,” read one part of the response.

“I didn’t realize how much we focused on the tools of our trade rather than our own skills,” read another. *“I started to look at my own abilities and realized that I needed to find my voice again. Thank you for the reminder.”*

Instead of spending all our time looking for the magic pen, we each took turns sharing our own pens after we published our respective novels.