

The Fishwife

by Jill Johnson



I stood in front of about three hundred writers this morning and “kicked off” the eighth annual Whidbey Island Writers Conference. The eagerness in their faces; their willingness to listen and embrace storytelling and storytellers amazed me. It happens with musicians, dancers, potters, graphic artists, and photographers, too. There is this wonderful feeling of comfort as I tell- or talk about what I do. I immediately feel at home and now – suddenly – I think I understand why.

You see, we’re part of the “club”. Every time we begin the task of creating a new story or step up to the podium to tell, we are taking a risk. We- like the others, the musicians and artists and fellow craftspeople- step off the cliff into the unknown. We take that step - risking everything – in the blind faith that we are creating something new, something entertaining, something valuable. We launch ourselves into thin air – hoping, praying that our efforts are worthy.

The keynote speaker this morning was talking about something else we all share: the slimy green monster that lives within us. That’s the voice that tells us- when we’re faced with rejection or disappointment – “you’re no good” ... “go do the laundry” ... go back to your old job”. I call my monster the “fishwife”. She slides into my head, making sly, insinuating remarks about my ineptitude. Sometimes, she shrieks at me – and sometimes I shriek back!

What we have to remember – and what I remembered this morning – is that we are not alone. And THAT, in my humble opinion, is one of the most important reasons for the Seattle Storytellers Guild.