

## When the Voices in Your Head Won't Stop Talking

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When the voices in your head won't stop talking, it's time to find a good psychiatrist—or write a book.

Sometimes, those voices take your writing in a direction you might not have planned on. Other writers know what I mean.

I write non-fiction, and literary works and poetry. I also write dark fantasy, and swords and sorcery tales, and ghost stories. Those stories are in comfort zone. It's what I enjoy *reading*.

A little over a year ago, a fully-developed character slipped inside my head—and she wouldn't quit talking. Her name was Assumpta, and I knew she'd grown out of a conversation about old friends and lost acquaintances over dinner one night.

She *demand*ed I write her story.

Assumpta grew up in Baltimore. She talks to Baltimore's ghosts—and demons—and she recovers lost items by dousing with a pendulum. She's got a lot of spirit, and some gumption, and a bit of bravery when she needs it.

She had a (mostly) normal childhood, raised by two parents—despite her mother being a devout Catholic and her father being an alcoholic. But everything changed on her eighteenth birthday, when her father kicked her out of the house

(It's a long story.)

And kind of an interesting one, but it's contemporary, and set in Baltimore. I didn't want to write an urban fantasy!

But Assumpta just wouldn't shut up. She wouldn't leave me be. She *demand*ed that her story be told.

So, I started writing her story, and things got more and more interesting. And I was learning a lot.

First, I learned that Assumpta, like many people, is wrestling with her faith in God. God's rules are old, and we live in the modern world. How does all that stuff apply nowadays? Not only that, there's no room in Catholicism for things like dousing, or pendulums, or even in acknowledging other traditions. The dogma says: *Catholicism is the one true religion!*

Well, *crap*.

My character was taking me into really controversial territory. I didn't want to go there...I knew that the mere mention of religion was going to turn off a lot of people. And I knew I'd have to work really hard with my editor to make sure that the book didn't preach religion: either Catholicism *or* Paganism. And in order to get it right, I'd have to do a lot of research.

So, there I was, having to do a lot of research about religions, mainly Catholicism and the Greek and Roman pantheons, and Paganism. That was a rabbit hole I didn't want to fall down into: there's just so much stuff to read and learn, and all of it was fascinating. I didn't want to stop reading.

But Assumpta kept calling me back to write her story.

So, what's a poor writer to do?

I wrote her story, hoping she'd leave me alone afterward.

That's what a writer does when she hears the voices.