

Türchen 12 | Advent Calendar Door 12

Are you a squirrel or an adventurer?

(You do not know? Take our test [here](#))

Are you concerned that your current draft is a mess? Don't worry, and embrace the chaos and confusion (at least at the beginning of the project). As Anne Lamott reminds us in her classic *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (1994, first Anchor Books edition, 1995, pp. 28-29), perfectionism may turn out to be a serious obstacle to getting your writing done.

Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane your whole life, and it is the main obstacle between you and a shitty first draft. I think perfectionism is based on the obsessive belief that if you run carefully enough, hitting each stepping-stone just right, you won't have to die. The truth is that you will die anyway and that a lot of people who aren't even looking at their feet are going to do a whole lot better than you, and have a lot more fun while they're doing it.

Besides, perfectionism will ruin your writing, blocking inventiveness and playfulness and life force (these are words we are allowed to use in California). Perfectionism means that you try desperately not to leave so much mess to clean up. But clutter and mess show us that life is being lived. Clutter is wonderfully fertile ground—you can still discover new treasures under all those piles, clean things up, edit things out, fix things, get a grip. Tidiness suggests that something is as good as it's going to get. Tidiness makes me think of held breath, of suspended animation, while writing needs to breathe and move.

