



Not everything has to make money or even make sense.

So, it's been a minute. Okay, it's been *a lot* of minutes.

My best laid plans to send out a newsletter once a month went up in smoke as I got deep into admissions season at my new job. Who knew when I took this job back at the University of Washington that the only day I'd take off in December would be Christmas? Like, literally, just *that* day. That's how busy my job has been. You might be asking, is it worth it, Peg? Yes, it's still worth it. But why it's worth it is a newsletter for another day, another time.

There are some things that we do because they make us money and they make sense in the I-need-to-support-myself-and-my-family kind of way. Then there are other things we do because it's a labor of love, because by doing it we will answer the many tugs on our heart. We write that poem, or start that story, and daub that paint on paper simply because we want to. We don't even know where it's coming from, we just know we *want* to do it.

In this quarter's newsletter (see how I pivoted to this *quarter*, not this *month*? Yep, I'm smooth like that), I share why my husband Marcus and I created our new zine, [Noodle Taco](#), and why you should consider creating a zine too. I also share my friend Brian's latest amazing and beautiful book, [Land of the Dead](#).

Both are things we wanted to make. They were projects that we felt were worth the time, effort, and resources to bring into the world. Sometimes you don't know if something is worth it until you do it. You have to take a leap of faith.

So, here's to taking leaps. Read on!

NOODLE TACO

A TAIWANESE-MEXICAN-AMERICAN
CULINARY ADVENTURE



**PEG CHENG &
MARCUS DONNER**

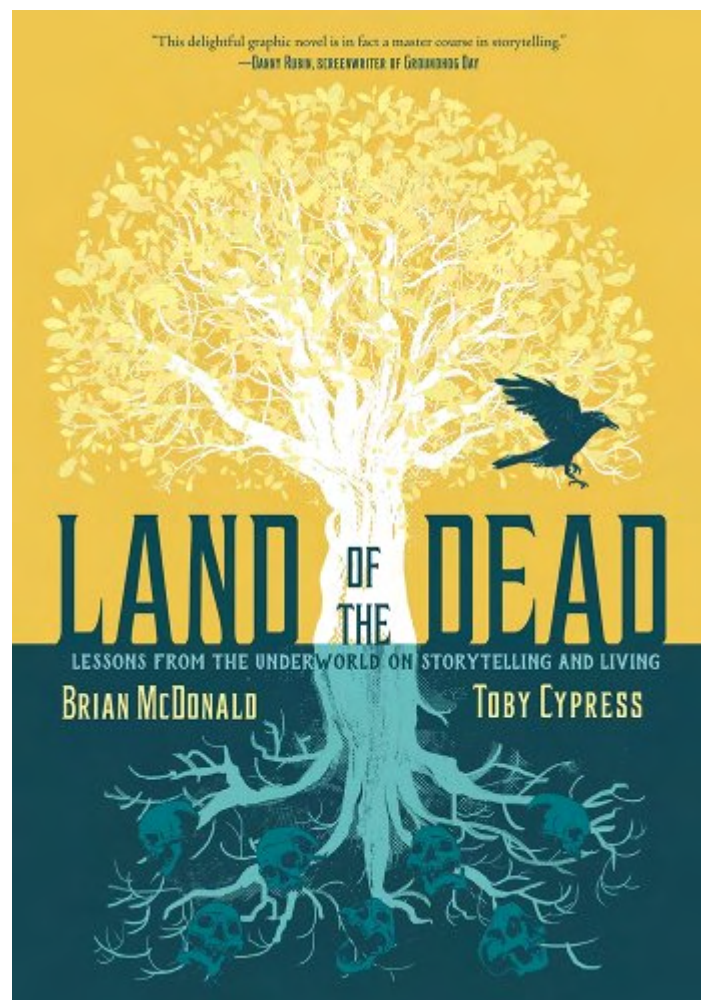
**Why I Created My NOODLE TACO Zine
& Why You Should Create Zines Too**

I co-wrote [NOODLE TACO](#), this 36-page zine, with [my husband Marcus](#) and it's a collection of our cherished family recipes, the stories that go with them, and some beautiful and mouthwatering photos.

But really, [NOODLE TACO](#) is a valentine to our mothers and all the good food they nourished us with over the years. We wanted to spread the love that they embedded in these delicious dishes to people all over the world. That is why we wrote it.

The beauty of zines is you create and publish what you want, how you want, and when you want. You can make your zine full color like we did or you can make it black and white. You can use a home printer or use a copy machine at your local copy shop or a professional printer like Mixam which is who we've used to print [all our books and zines](#) and who also printed 100 copies of [NOODLE TACO](#) after the Olympia Zine Fest. You can make your zine eight pages, 36 pages, 60 pages or whatever amount feels right. It's totally up to you.

Read more



Land of the Dead: Lessons from the Underworld on Storytelling and Living

Buy now

There is wisdom in the land of the dead, for it is the place that all stories lay to rest. And what is a story, if not a simulation of survival?

Wielding his massive experience from film, tv, comics, and more, Brian McDonald lays out a history of storytelling and shows the reader how the best tales tug at our truest biological instinct: the need to survive. Readers will see how different forms of survival--physical, emotional, spiritual--inform the arc of character development in a way that makes them more complex and compelling. And how plot and circumstance must then force your protagonist to meet their worst nightmare. Toby Cypress's electric art guides the reader through the underworld, visualizing each narrative masterpiece, and bringing the ideas to life.

Whether you're in film, books, comics, or simply a story enthusiast, this book offers a way to see character development and the crafting of plot through the lens of human questions of morality and mortality.

This is taken verbatim from the book jacket of [Land of the Dead: Lessons from the Underworld on Storytelling and Living](#) by my friend and writing mentor, [Brian McDonald](#) and illustrated by the remarkable [Toby Cypress](#). I could sit here and try to describe what the book's about in my own words, but why? The book jacket encapsulates the essence of the book so well.

Marcus and I were lucky to read an early draft of Brian's book several years ago. It blew us away. Reading it felt like reading a book that had been out for years--not just 10 or 20 years, but more like 100 years. It felt like a classic from the first page.

Having the book in my hands now and seeing the haunting and beautiful illustrations by Toby on page after page sends chills up my spine.

This book will not only enrich your eyes and heart, it will enrich your soul. If you're a writer, artist, or storyteller in any form, you will learn about the history of storytelling, the meaning of storytelling, in a stunning way. It will motivate you to want to tell stories that last.

There's not much more to say except, get your hands on this book. It is worth so much more than what you will pay for it.

This is for me



I hope you enjoyed reading this newsletter. I am not going to promise that another one will come out soon--I know myself and my situation better than that--but I will say that I do enjoy connecting with you in this way even if it turns out to be only a few times each year.

Speaking of which, I used to get down on myself if I didn't do my writing, blogging, and newsletters regularly and on time. Are you like that, dear reader? Ahh, the folly of being a perfectionist and Type A personality! Becoming self-employed more than a decade ago taught me that I didn't like being that kind of person, even if I had been that way my whole adult life. Going through the pandemic these last three years taught me that I can live a good life without the pursuit of perfection.

So, I hope this newsletter gave you some good things to think about. Remember that the next thing you write or creative project you start doesn't have to make money or even make much sense, but it does have to be something you *want* to do. Take that leap of faith. Follow your heart.

Until our paths cross again, I'm wishing you a winter season brimming with possibilities. To inspire you, I'm including this pic of me in Laguna Beach, California, in January. Yes, *January*. Winter is subjective, people.

With love + gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jey' or similar, with a stylized flourish.



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Peg Cheng

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