WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Pull Up a Chair

Come and sit with me a moment. There is a place for you here.

Imagine an invitation arriving with your name on it. You have been asked to lunch with twelve Black billionaires, and you may bring as many questions as you like. Picture yourself taking your seat. What would you ask first?

Perhaps you would ask about the houses. Fair enough. I would probably have a question or two about those myself. Once we had settled that, though, I would want us to get comfortable. There is a great deal more to hear.



Give those zeros some time.

Suppose you could count one number every second. No sleeping. No snacks. No stopping to ask what is for dinner.

Here is how long the counting would take:

1,000	16 minutes, 40 seconds
1,000,000	About 11.6 days
1,000,000,000	About 31.7 years

We would need considerably more than a packed lunch.

That is an imaginary, steady counting speed. The years here use 365 days. In real life, saying the bigger numbers would take longer. The comparison gives us a way to feel the difference in scale.

Now bring that huge number back to your desk. You edit three short promotional videos for $30 each. Customers pay you **$90 in revenue**. Music licensed for the videos costs $12, and online file storage costs $8. Your total costs are $20.

$90 revenue - $20 costs = $70 profit

This practice example assumes you already own the laptop, use free software, and have no other costs. Your own time is unpaid. The $70 is profit before tax. If the same jobs cost $95 instead, you would have a $5 loss. Keep an eye on both sides of the calculation.



THE STORY

Before the seats filled

Perry grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana. After hearing advice on Oprah Winfrey's show about writing down difficult experiences, he began writing letters to himself. Those pages helped inspire his first play, *I Know I've Been Changed*, which he staged in 1992. The audience he had hoped for did not arrive.

Over the following years, he kept working on the production. Money was tight, and there were periods when he lived in his car. By 1998, the play was drawing sold-out audiences and moved to Atlanta's Fox Theatre.

Six years.

1992 TO 1998

If something you have worked on falls flat, give yourself a little kindness before deciding what comes next. Then ask for useful feedback. You may need a different approach, more practice, or a smaller test. Changing a plan is part of learning, too.

TRY THIS

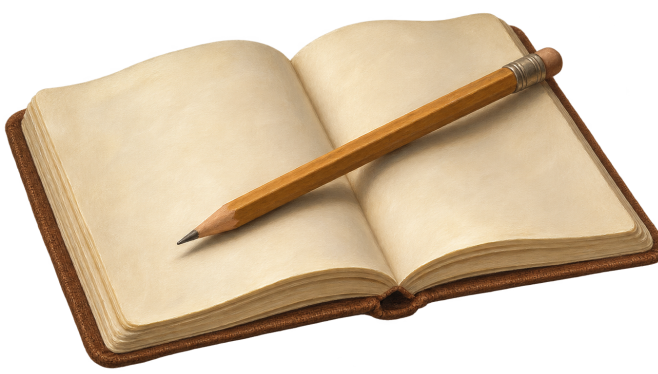
Give your story a first audience

Take a fresh page. Invent a character who wants something and runs into a problem. Give the character a name, choose a setting, and write a short scene. Five sentences will do for a beginning. You can add a drawing if you like. Now read it to someone you trust. Ask which part they remember and where they wanted to know more. Listen before explaining what you meant. Their answer may show you something useful about the words actually on the page.

Choose one part to revise.

Then think like a producer. Who might enjoy this story? What help would you need to turn it into a small performance? You can test an idea by reading it aloud before spending money on scenery. Write down how you would recognize everyone who helped.

For a little number practice, imagine selling 20 tickets at $3 each, with total costs of $35. How much profit before tax would remain? Keep the working in your notebook. You should find $25.



Keep that first scene. It gives you something to work with. Next, Tope Awotona will show us what an everyday frustration can set in motion.