Inspiration for writing comes from many places.

Last night was graduation for our small high school senior class (17 students). The valedictorian, a brilliant, hard-working 18-year-old—and a friend of mine—is the inspiration for this week’s issue of *The Golden Thread*.

He should also be an inspiration for you, as you go through your quest for success in copywriting.

I got to know Chris when he was in the seventh grade, six years ago. I could quickly tell his academic brilliance extended beyond his favorite subject, math. This kid was just downright smart.

He also is unassuming and unpretentious. Anyone who gets to know Chris very well knows he is really smart. But he doesn't make a show of it.

We have a couple of rather generous scholarships in our community, scholarships that are essentially a full ride. Everyone who knew Chris in an academic setting "knew" he would get one of these scholarships when he graduated from high school. And Chris planned his high school career to maximize his chances.

Chris didn't rest on his academic ability. He was involved in sports, school activities, and community service. He did exactly what both scholarships required of recipients. He was the ideal candidate.

Disappointment, not defeat …

For some unknown reason, Chris got neither of the scholarships.

Chris’s valedictory last night was about disappointment and overcoming it. It was the best and most unusual valedictory I've ever heard.

Most speeches of this kind usually end with an inspirational quote. Chris—true to his remarkable intellect—ended his with purportedly this true story instead …

One winter afternoon, two little boys were playing by themselves on a frozen lake. As the boys were playing, they weren't paying attention and soon were near the middle of the lake.

Then, suddenly, a firecracker-like noise rent the air. One little boy fell through the broken ice. The other little boy—all
alone with no one on the lake to help him—frantically tried to pull his friend up. He kept losing his grasp. He watched in horror as his friend dipped beneath the ice.

The little boy stood up, and ran to the lake's edge where a small grove of trees stood. He jumped up and grabbed the end of a large branch on one tree, snapping it off so it dropped to the ground.

He picked up the huge branch—it was bigger than him—and dragged it back to where his friend was struggling under the ice. He took the branch and repeatedly smashed it against the ice. On the fourth or fifth attempt, the branch shattered the ice. The little rescuer pulled his friend to safety.

**A special kind of miracle …**

Paramedics arrived and revived the first little boy. The paramedics and others who'd arrived at the end of the rescue were astounded that the patient's friend, as little as he was, could have performed this "miraculous" feat.

Numerous people remarked that it should have been impossible for the little boy—all alone—to have raced across the ice, broken the huge branch from the tree, raced back across the ice, and broken the ice to save his little friend.

All except for one man. He spoke up and said, "Of course he could do it. There wasn't anyone around to tell him he couldn't."

Chris has the potential to be an outstanding scientist or mathematician. Or he might choose to be a remarkable teacher. Whatever he chooses, he will succeed because of who he was to begin with and what he learned from his disappointment. The lesson he learned was this …

*Do not listen to people who tell you that you can't accomplish something.*

As you go through the many ups and the inevitable downs of becoming a successful copywriter, remember the little boy on the ice. And remember my young friend Chris.

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**3 Responses to "A Little Boy, Broken Ice, and You"**

How inspiring! I'm sure anyone reading this WILL become a NEW MAN!

*Sugam* – June 16, 2014 at 10:27 am

Because of uplifting reminders such as this one, I don't even listen to my own self-defeating thoughts any more! ;-)  

The only direction anyone can move is forward ... so you might as well think about it positively and try to enjoy the ride.

Thanks again, Will!

*Guest (Cheryl)* – June 16, 2014 at 11:51 am

"You can do it! You can do it! You can do it!" are the messages we should all be feeding each other.

*Sebastian the Great* – June 18, 2014 at 1:40 pm