

I'm a Real Writer

I'll probably never write anything again. I can't think of why I would. I have no more ideas. I have no more thoughts to convey. My mind is parched. It's empty. And my will to make it full, fecund, with new thoughts, to make it grow out again, is gone. It has slipped away from me. It has gone somewhere. It has left me unable to reach out, to find it again. I can feel that getting heavier, the gone fact of it—it weighs me down. My head is heavy. My eyes are heavy, staring at nothing, at a blank screen, at the wall. I feel like my will is shrouded in mud. Every ounce of effort required to even begin to compose a word, any word, a simple and inconspicuous word, let alone a whole phrase or paragraph, something organized and thoughtful, must be coaxed and prodded, wrenched out of the last rare wells of purpose left in my imagination. Regardless, nothing comes. I have nothing left to give. And beyond that, I have no wish to. I'm utterly uninterested. It's too hard; it's too much work to even try. Every sentence is more difficult than the last—first to write, and then to justify. Each sentence feels less meaningful, less worthwhile. They arrive not from any kind of joyful purpose, but, increasingly, from the requirements of habit. I just feel compelled, like I owe it to myself. I've organized so much of my life around writing—the friends I have, the social circles I exist in, the events I attend. There's a whole framework of knowledge I've dedicated years of my life to constructing; it sits in my mind like a stone. I can't imagine what I would do without it—so much of how I think or speak, or consider the world around me, is tied up within the practice of writing. But I hate to write. It's awful. It's boring, painful, like a chore, attended to with the same obnoxious sense of obligation that accompanies any other practice of personal maintenance: cutting my nails or washing the dishes that have piled in my sink. These acts give me no pleasure. They waste my time. They waste my energy. And writing is no different. There's no payoff—at best, it brings me to an equilibrium of accomplishment. Past years of euphoria at having produced some text of worth, something to surprise and delight myself and my friends, to confound the sense of inevitability that otherwise dictates the routine-managed facts of my daily life, are no more. The writing has become just as inevitable as anything else. It says the same dumb shit over and over. It uses the same techniques, the same formal moves, the same rhythms of development, all well-worn by now. It relies on the same sense of timing, the same vocabulary. It offers the same critiques, the same insights. I can't justify it. I'm just tapped out. There's no argument I can give that makes any of it seem interesting anymore. I feel as if I've been able to muster maybe two or three ideas about writing, what it might accomplish, or express as possible, and that's probably all I'm going to get. I'm not even sure how useful those contributions have been. At least one of them has been proven wrong. The others are so vague as to be largely inconsequential. None of them excite me anymore. They don't drive me to discover new applications, new lines of

inquiry that could give rise to some freshly realized story or poem, something that could punch through one or more of the self-imposed rings of expectation that otherwise entrap the majority of my thinking at this point. I've resigned myself to them. They're comforting and simple. They let me escape the problem of writing. I can just regurgitate some basic structural idea, some reflexive presentation of style or concern. It's so easy. I could do it in my sleep. I could do it hungover the morning after getting ripped until 5AM. I could do it after working 10 hours at my horrible job. Of course, this ease isn't due to any real proficiency on my part. It's more like a symptom, a manifestation of my own failings as an artist. It's easy for me precisely because I don't give a shit about it being hard. I don't care about challenging myself. I don't care; I can't move anything forward. I can only circle back around. It's too much of a pain to do anything else. The long nights spent reading, studying, trying to expose myself to anything that might serve as inspiration or influence. Trying to stay abreast of what's currently being produced in the writing worlds, to be informed and knowledgeable, to be able to have opinions, and express those opinions in a way that is convincing or at least provocative. Working on drafts upon drafts of poems, essays, short stories, novels I'll never finish. It's all a pain. It's a pain in my ass. It's a fucking pain in my goddamn mind—it's a goddamn headache. It's so painfully worthless, even the physical exertion of typing out these symbols onto the anemic glow of the laptop screen: it hurts my wrists and my eyes, and keeps me from sleep. I wish I was sleeping right now—an easy, unbothered sleep. A sleep unburdened by the anxiety of commitment. I wish I could sleep and not wake up depressed at having lost those hours, hours that could have otherwise been spent producing work or consuming some form of media or engaging one experience or another that might be useful. A sleep unburdened by the anxiety of losing anything at all. I wish I could close my eyes and feel calm. I wish I could lay down on my couch and stare at the ceiling. I wish I could put a clean sock on my hand—fresh out of the laundry—and gently run its softness against my forehead, against my cheeks. I wish I could take that sock and bring it to my nose, and sniff deeply of its fresh chemical scent, tinged with the artificial floral perfumes of the detergent. I wish I could put the sock in my mouth, run my tongue over its fibers, bring my molars down, gently, against its soft, soggy shape. I wish I knew that anything I was doing was done simply to experience the pleasure of its execution: how the sock tastes, how it feels. Understanding that pleasure of the sock as distinct from accomplishment or the desire to self-aggrandize: instead, it's utterly tactile and hermetic. I just want to suck on a sock in peace. I just want to eat a sock. Writing has robbed that from me. Now anything I do is at the expense of writing: the sock becomes fodder for a hastily sketched confession of idiosyncrasy. It's just an eccentric detail. It retains none of the secret joy of having that sock in my mouth. It's been emptied out. It feels inevitable. Writing consumes everything. There's no place for the sock in my life—if I'm not writing, I'm wasting away. I'm

losing time, energy. Every tendril of sock-flavored saliva that trickles down my throat, that isn't subsequently described, in detail, in some journalistic account, feels less real, less present. But once described, the taste of the sock loses its allure. It turns flavorless. It evaporates into usefulness, mere instrumentality—the cruel alchemy that transforms desire into exchangeable content. It's perverse. Nothing is my own. Nothing can be felt anymore. I can't enjoy jack shit. I can't even go for a damn walk without trying to somehow glean from it some useful reckoning, or description, or quip, or overheard line of conversation that I can transcribe into a poem and shovel out to people to “appreciate.” And that's if I'm lucky. Most of the time, these useful, useable artifacts—these observations—won't even appear. I just walk around, stressed, desperately looking for something, and all I get is the ambient dread of knowing the whole exercise has been a bust. All I can see, hear, feel, smell, and touch is my own inability to interpret. It permeates everything like a film of dust or grease. Behind it, the world recedes into a stratum of various disappointments. I'm a failure. Can't walk; can't think; can't write. So I have to sit here and stare at this blank screen. I have to sit on my ratty couch and try to think. Then I have to zone out. Then I have to smack myself in the forehead repeatedly. Then I need a snack. Peanut butter, straight from the jar, eaten with a spoon. Then I have to look at the internet for a bit. Wonder what's going on. Nothing. Some terrible shit. Mostly boring. Then I have to walk over to the window and look at my apartment building's dilapidated backyard, full of trash and freakishly large cats that shit everywhere and eat trash. They're doing alright. Then I have to come back to the couch and be reminded how gross it is. Super gross. How long has it been since I washed that blanket. So long. That pillow looks stained. How do the cushions get so fucked up—all I do is sit on them. I'll deal with it tomorrow. Right now I have to write. I have to force myself to put something down. C'mon. C'mon you idiot. Write something. Think of something cool. If you can't do that, then what worth are you? You're worth nothing. Worthless. A worthless loser. An uncreative sucker, simply existing. Just another asshole living out their stupid life. Just some basic drone laying on your dirty couch, staring up at the ceiling like an artichoke. Like a potato. A braindead, potato-headed jerk. A gibbering fool wiping a sock against his face, as if the world were simply a flash of stimuli, contextless and void. As vapid as your brain. As if it matters what you want. As if wishes were important. “I wish I were doing something else.” Oh well. “I want to be walking to the supermarket.” Too bad. “I wish I was cooking right now. I wish I was making a big pot of boeuf bourguignon. I wish I was making Chef Joel Robuchon's puree de pomme, an actual work of art. I wish I was peeling off the bright yellow leaves of a belgian endive, to pile on warm spoonfuls of duck rilette, or foie gras, or roquefort. Instead I have to sit here and complain.” Because you have nothing else to write about. But it doesn't matter, because this is your only real day to do this—tomorrow you have to do laundry and then on Monday you have to go back to work. So, get it together. Bang

this shit out. Just start writing. Let it flow. Let the poetry spew. Go crazy. Open your mind to it. No holding back. Here we go. Here we go. Making it happen. Writing. I'm totally writing something. I'm getting it all out. I'm writing like a motherfucker. Like a fucking badass writer who doesn't give a shit. I'm writing, you assholes. Hell yea. Here's some writing. I'm writing the craziest shit right now. Nobody's even heard anything like this before. It's gonna blow their goddamn minds. People are going to read this like, "Whoa, what the fuck? This is blowing my mind. This dude is a fucking wild man. He can't be held back. Rules don't apply to him. This writing could only come from a state of consciousness unconstrained by all social conditioning. It's a vision of freedom. It's out of control; he's launched himself into the damn stratosphere with this shit. And we're just looking on, hapless witnesses to greatness. We see it; we know it: the game is changed. Nothing will ever be the same again. Our lives are irrevocably altered. It's a goddamn crisis. Suddenly, all previous works of art pale in comparison. A whole new vista of possibility has been made available. We'll be studying this for years, decades, centuries even. And still there'll be more to say about it. This guy should get all the grants. Every literary prize that has money attached to it, they should all go to him. He deserves a choice gig teaching one workshop a semester in a major, cosmopolitan urban center that carries international importance, earning like six figures from a well-endowed university that also offers really good benefits and Summers off. we should all get started making sure this happens immediately." That sounds good. That's some good writing right there. I think that's probably good enough for today. Nice! I did it. Phew. Feels good. I'm glad that I wrote. I'm glad that I worked myself up to that. Even though it was hard. It's good to work through it when you're feeling a bit blocked. Get a little bit of the confidence back. Some reassurance. Still got it! I've still got it. Still got it. Yea. Right on. I feel better now. I feel like I've contributed something. Did my part. Put together a cute little poem. Heh. That's cool. Most people can't do that. They'd just wither. But not me! Not me though. I wrote. And I wrote something good. So take that: a nice little poem. Nice little poem there. Cool poem. "Cool poem, bro." Oooo. Maybe I can write that next. Something about a cool poem that a bro writes. That'd be hilarious. I could even title it "Cool Poem, Bro." People would love that. "Cool Poem, Bro." Damn, I'm full of ideas today.