

A man sits at a table moving his mouth in sync with his pen, reading the words he wrote, or writing the words he read in his mind – either way they were silent, mere reflections of some more meaningful method of communication. Two metallic tablets lay like guards on either side of a stack of paper from which the man drew one by one.

He writes:

Have you ever had that feeling that something big is going on in the world and you just don't know it? But you can feel it. Sometimes you may feel you're even a part of it. That's because you are.

Before writing another word, he crumpled up the paper and threw it in the bin. It bounced off the mass of similarly doomed stories and rolled to his foot. He rubbed his hand across his face, searching his five o'clock shadow for something to say.

"I can do this."

He put pen to paper. (The old fashioned writer in him preferred this. There were others who did not).

Sometimes I'm walking down the street and it seems like everyone I pass – everyone in the world rather – is just a figment of my own imagination. Some schizophrenic manifestation of my desire for more. Just some meaning to this life, even if it confines me to the most lonely of existences.

Crap. It's crap. He crumpled it, but as he did a bright flash skirted across his field of vision. He heard a child's laugh – or children laughing – or laughing children... the ambiguity was enough to cause insanity.

"Who is it?!"

It wasn't surprise – or anger – but annoyance. Would they just let him get back to work? He knew who it was, but now the light had caused his gaze to shift to the bottle of Jack lying on the floor next to the story rejected even by the trash.

Was this the only way he could write? He picked up the bottle and took a swig. Its sweetness soaked his already quenched throat, but the returning burn was a welcome prod to keep trying.

And so he did. His editor would have his throat if he didn't have anything.

Anything. The word itself is perplexing. Any Thing. A Ny Thing. What is a Ny? Mix up the letters: A Nightly – stroll is what he needed.

He jumped back to reality, his hand crumpling the paper on reflex. Nonsense.

“Non sense!” Came a voice.

“You’re falling apart.”

“I most certainly am not.”

His hand went back across his stubble – cheek, to chin, to cheek. He could feel his mouth moving, though he dare not trace over it to confirm.

“Do it.”

“Do what?”

He knew perfectly well what suggestion had been made. It was quite a revelation. Under the right... mind freeing circumstances he could meet his deadline, but in doing so would lose another piece of himself – by finding one.

“yyooou knowww what hass to be donne...” The voice started high pitched and bent downward in a near-inhuman way.

“No.”

“You need us chap!”

“I can do it.”

“Last time it was fun! I like it!” The enthusiasm was childish, like the laugh that had started this torment.

“Imagine the discovery lad: to have such ability and not use it. Well it’s a travesty!”

One had already noticed his hand reaching for the ash tray. “Yesss! It isss donne.” His other hand shook, holding the bottle.

“Yayyyy!”

“Jolly good!”

In an instant, he changed. He sat up straighter, pushed the stack of paper off the end of his desk and drew both tablets closer. With both hands working at the same time he opened the laptops and their white glow illuminated a smile – his arms the spindly grin; the screens, eyes. Watching.

He sat for a moment, closed his eyes, and then opened the drawer against his stomach. He leaned on the two back legs of his chair to open it just enough to reach inside. From it he grabbed: an iPod, a white set of headphones, another iPod, and an identical set of headphones.

His fingers worked rapidly. Plug. Plug. Both white cords connected, and he placed them in either ear. Their smaller screen blossomed, and without looking his fingers traced the familiar path to playlists:

A.

B.

There was no other name for them. On the left he chose “A,” and “B” on the right.

He placed a single ear bud into each ear, and then his hands went back to the laptop.

Immediately they began playing the keys without interruption.

As if compelled by some childlike instinct, his left hand reached for the second ear bud, and placed it against his filled ear. It fell back to the side. He moved mechanically, as if without thought at all. More by tireless command.

“Jolly good!”

“I don’t know anymore.”

“Oh my boy. You just encouraged him to do it, not two minutes ago. Cheer up. He’ll be fine.”

The serpent-like voice added. “Worthless.”

“Hey!”

“What do you think this one’s going to be?”

“I want to hear Movin’ Right Along Now!” The child begged.

“I fancy some Kate Nash.”

“Well you can’t place two ear buds in one ear. That would just be silly.”

“Lllett himmm writtee.”

“I want to try it!”

“Sssttooppp.”

“Oh fantastic! And he’s off!”

“Ssssee what yooou’ve donnne ?”

“Let the man write.”

As if umbilical, the music fuelled his writing. He was plugged in. In the zone. Words spilled out on either screen as if from a pre-existing book. There was

no crumpling, no stumble. Nothing but smooth writing, his smile, and the music(s).

He wrote his book. An epic – his editor instructed. That’s what the research said the public wanted.

From beginning to middle. From end to middle.

His hands worked independently, composing a novel which would live well beyond the flesh that clothed him.

His palms sweat furiously with some disjointed nervousness. Unexplainably the man felt uneasy, as he always did. Ripping the brain in two was bound to have unexpected consequences.

He stopped writing. Something had shaken him from the story he was meant to create. The story that had to be told.

Both hands rubbed his cheeks, and he felt his mouth moving, not mimicking the words he wrote, because he did not write.

“What’s it say?! What’s it say? I want to read it!”

In the beginning, there were Three. From themselves, they created. Everything. Heaven and Earth were their experiments: something to keep them company, to divert their time. An eternity was forever. In time they grew to love their creation. It was, after all, a single creation – not multiple acts, but something set in motion. It was chaotic, it was entertaining. And it was fun. The things they experienced with their creation were impossible without it, and so they wondered

but it would never come to pass. The world had shifted – ripped apart by the war which was foretold. They were fighting destiny, and Fate is not easily defeated. There had been hope. There had been chance. They were simply no match. The Three, did not mourn the loss of such beauty – such fun. They simply created. For that was their role. And the role of their next creation was yet to be decided. Unwritten. Undetermined. *The End.*

“Oh this is good!”
“Yessss.”
“Hello?”
There was silence.
“Hello? Where am I? What’s happening?”
A high-pitched cackle curdled up from the depths of –
It was cut short “Hello mate! Welcome!”
“Where am I?”
“It isss not sso easssily explained.”
“I’m trapped! I feel it. Let me out!”

“Look what you’ve done. You mustn’t shout.”
“I did the same thing. Don’t worry. You’re fine!”
“What are you talking about? What is this?”
“Commpllex.”

Back to work. He couldn't concentrate. His fingers danced in the air; his eyes broke focus from the desk between tablets.

He did not blink.

He did not write. He needed to write.

He willed himself back to the keyboards. The music blaring from his ears, it's tempo would pace his writing. One faster than the other, but the eloquence was different, the feel. It would have to be edited.

But at least there was something.

Amidst the dank apartment, the unclean smell of deadlined-author, and smoke there was somehow beauty.

It was in storytelling. Editing wasn't his job. His was to pull something from nothing. To act as a vessel for Muse. She was stubborn, but when she came it was as if the stars burst open. She could be coaxed.... could be lured in, he had discovered. A powerful discovery, but with it came stories which might take centuries to emerge otherwise.

Twice the speed. Half the writer's block. (None of the writer's block). He would be the greatest author ever known. And even if he weren't, he would

"HELLO?! Let me out of here!"

"We are not really here. If you'll just let me explain."

"NO! STOP IT! Don't say anything! Just let me go!"

"Weee aren't hollding yooou."

"I can't move! I can't breathe! Who is doing this?"

"Heee issss."

what it might be like to join. They could live among their creation. There to examine, to enjoy.

And so they did.

They would take a form similar to that of their creation. Not bound, but disguised. It did not matter who guessed the truth. It would simply be a matter of determining what should happen next.

They could do that. They could do anything, and yet this creation gave them something they could not do. At first it gave the joy of watching, but that was not enough. Now they

"It is done."

He dropped the dagger to the ground. Submission. Defeat. It was indeed over.

Why had they thought it could be saved? When the Three had created something they could not have, they created need. It would be a difficult move. But they had made one such before.

There had been stories of how things might be different. Opportunities presented in farce. Whimsical tales of how Heaven and Earth might be made whole again,

"It's not his fault. He's a writer. Hi! I'm a boy – not a writer."

"And I'm a proper business man – not a writer."

"Wha-? What?! Please, I'll give you whatever you want!"

"Sssscared. Welcome."

"You're fine chap! Just let the man work. You aren't needed right now. Your time will come."

"My time?! What are you talking about? Why can't I move? What's wrong with me?! STOP! HELP!"

"He's writing. Let him write."

"Sssshhhhhh." "No I will not 'shh'! Somebody tell me what the hell

at least be the most prolific.

He would meet his deadline, but his mind was more restless. Always more restless with each time. What was happening? Were the consequences? Something he hadn't expected?

He hadn't expected any of it! There were no expectations. Only words. This was the best way to write. He knew it.

He heard the same laugh.

"Back to work, lad."

He would not put pen to paper ever again, no matter what.

is going on!"

"Boyy yooou tallk toooo himmm."

"You're scared. It's ok. I think it's unsettling for all of us at first. You'll get used to it."

"Scared?! Of course I'm scared! What is this?!"

"No. *You're* scared – not a writer." The boy laughed again.

"Back to work, lad."

"You can go back once he's done. For now, just try to enjoy."