

(...Please note that this was written before Robert Skrezyna became sober...)

So I was thinking today: what if I just stopped writing? Would it be the end of the world and creation as we know it? Would the universe continue expanding or simply collapse upon itself? Would the fabric of time unravel in such a way that Bill Gates would barter with Socrates for a goat? The answer to all of these questions is (obviously) a resounding “NO!”

I do enjoy writing and a group of people I know enjoy reading it. I’m not a bad writer, if I do say so myself. The act of writing helps me free emotions I may be suppressing in a healthy, albeit not always coherent, way. So instead of punching a wall or polishing off the full pan of Hamburger Helper, I reach for a pen.

I have never really posed the best question of all, in my opinion. That question is: would I be able to survive without writing? And the only answer I can think of is a definite maybe. No doubt life would go on. But how would I react to things that normally wouldn’t get to me because of my creative outlet? Would I find another outlet or just say the hell with it and off myself in a Kobainian free for all of brain matter, smack and shotgun rounds? While this end would be rather apropos for a writer of my age, it wouldn’t suit my level of achievement. Before I could die in that monsoon of self-loathing I’d have to figure out what the public wanted, give it to them, and then feign disgust as the checks roll in. This is no way to live, and a poor excuse to die.

No, no, no. When I go, it’ll be in such a way that the world will stop, if only for a millisecond, and wonder what that burst of hot, fiery air was on their neck. Those who knew me would understand in that millisecond that it was I, and I was no more. Now this begs the question of what I would leave behind.

Obviously I’d leave my daughter and I’d leave the impression I’ve made on my fiancé’s girls (whom, for the record, I consider my daughters as well). And I’d leave a heap of records and 8 Tracks (yeah...I said 8 Tracks...wanna make something of it?!). I’d leave a bunch of antiquated, dust-collecting paperweights that used to be useful electronic gadgets. And, unfortunately, I’d leave behind a lot of writing that I’m just not very proud of.

It’s all the usual stuff: second-grade essays and second-rate novellas. The ramblings of a man who imbibes too much of life, then can’t hold it all. Instead it spills out onto the page in oftentimes meaningless jumbles of nouns and verbs and words that made sense when they were written, but by the time the alarm clock sounds, you’re left with lines of dashes, sevens, and ampersands. I salute you, Captain Morgan! Give Mr. Walker and Mr. Daniels my best! I’ll be back before you knew I was gone. This brings me to last night.

Before you ask: yes, I was a bit on the...happy...side of life, but the story still applies. I am working on a story I’ve had in my mind now for at least five years. I finally began putting ink to paper a few weeks (ok...months) ago and then got stuck. It wasn’t until yesterday that I was inspired to continue. Of course I needed the help of that old American patriot, Sammy Addams. He and I have conferred on many a volume of work in my life. This time though he guided me entirely. I couldn’t get as much as a starting line until I had one of his libations in my gut.

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I love that word: GUT. I could have prettied up that last sentence a bit by using a more pleasant word, but “gut” fit there. Think about it: have you ever had more than your fair share of alcohol, converted to a religion where your main deity is a porcelain commode and *not* felt like you’ve been punched in the gut? Besides that, gut is a damn funny word!

Sorry, where was I?

Oh yeah...so I was writing, drunk mind you, and began to scribble in some spiral I found on my coffee table. For all I knew this spiral could have contained the true meaning of life printed right there on page one, but I didn’t care. I needed to get these nuggets of genius on paper as soon as possible! I needed to share them with the world! I need to impart my legacy to this, the most perfect of the Mead family of office supplies! I need...I need...I need another beer!

Alright! One left! Writing muse in hand I stumble back to the couch and tray table, taking care not to kick or step on the cat. I looked at the clock. Just as I expected: it was 60 ounces past Miller Time and I only had until 72.

I took a drink.

I only had ‘till 70.

A fervor not known since the McCarthy era seemed to overcome the entire room. I was on fire! Words, ideas, phrases, and bits of storyline were strewn all about the floor, paper and table. Names, biographies, and twists of plot. Intertwining lives and unknown pasts leading to even less certain futures.

I noticed that something was missing. Even in my current state, I realized that I had failed to do something. But what the hell was it? Cue the light bulb over my head:

The story.

The actual story had yet to be written in the least. I had knocked out a six-pack and had nothing to show for it except what appeared to be the most abstract Rorschach tests I’ve ever seen. Scribbles here, arrows there. In fact scribbles and arrows outnumbered lucid, tangible words something like 6:1.

Let us take this opportunity to stop and ask how we got here.

Well, the obvious answer is that Bob went to the liquor store (as all of my really good stories begin, by the way), exchanged cash for goods, and then devoured every last drop of said goods in little more than an hour. Come to think of it, that *is* the answer. Ok...moving on.

Scribbles and arrows not a novella make, so it was on to organizing! Still under the influence of stupidity and the intoxicating aroma of #2 pencil lead, I resumed my assault on the English language. Assault was right. I bastardized words I’ve know since the third grade. It made no difference, I knew I was on to something here and the only way to prove it was to work through this brainstorm and pray for the solace that only the eye of the storm could provide. Then pray that the other side of the storm

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was only a slight drizzle that would require little more than a news paper over my head to keep me dry.

I never saw that eye. I don't know exactly what happened, but I woke up some time later, my puddle of drool leading to an arrow pointed directly to my temple. How ironic is that? Starting out feeling as though death is the only escape from life, and waking up to find this arrow poised to put me out of my misery?! Delicious!

I got up, wiped up the drool and stared in wild-eyed wonderment at my creation. It was then, in those few moments before the hangover set in, that I realized that writing is what I do and I love it, no matter how it looked when it escaped. This was my baby. Scratches and arrows and incomprehensible characters and all, it was mine. And I will love it. And I will nurture it and keep it safe.

I only wish I could promise it a happy ending.