

YEAR '21

I am not doing a great job of getting to work on the book, but I want to try something this week. I want to prepare myself a cup of tea every evening as a ritual to mark the beginning of the task as separate from the rest of the day. I want to hallow the evening with my pen and keys. Perhaps I will also light a candle. I will sit at the desk and start a timer on my phone for 50 minutes.

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I am pretty proud of myself and my writing. I am becoming more confident in it. I am able to talk about it with people a little bit better.

Why is it that I can't talk about my writing very well? I can't speak if you ask me what I write about, or why I want to write.

But luckily, no one asks.

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I will be clear about what I want. What I want is to write a book. What I cannot stop thinking about is the book I will write. What I believe is crucially important is the act of writing and distributing novels.

In novels, I have lived. I have confronted myself in novels. I learn from a novel what people are really like and if I want to be like them. I can get inside the mind of someone else the only way I feel it appropriate to do, from the words they have strung together on a page. I want to be understood in the same way. I want to understand myself that way. I want to leave a mark of my life that way. So I will write a book.

Before learning these new things I've learned, I would not say "one day I will write a book," I would say "I hope I write a book one day." I always expected I would be different by the time I started writing a book, but I couldn't imagine what that difference would be. I think I know it now, I think I know that it means I have to be serious about my life. I have to care about what I do. I have to be intentional in my habits. I have to be discerning in how I spend my time. I have to be careful and creative.

I thought that by the time I started writing a book, it would be in response to a marvelous, cosmic idea, one that would take me from this world and absorb me dutifully and obsessively into its world. I've learned something

about ideas that change what I expected of myself. Ideas are not important and usually not good. I will not run out of them. I do not need to protect them and lock them in, because not only does it not work (they disappear instantly), they never hold up after a second look when I happen to write them down. I am never interested in them a second time (not always true, but true enough times to act on). Waiting around for the right idea to suddenly strike me and take over my life is so silly. But at the same time, I am growing more aware and appreciative of my ideas. I want to record them and exercise them, see what is inside them and if they are worth anything. To do that, I have to shape them. I have to use tools. I have to be diligent. I have to be more than what I am now, know more than I know now. And I will be more and learn more as I try. I anticipate this as a growing experience.

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I can't decide what kind of writer I will be, and I think the indecision is keeping me from moving forward? I don't know how often I think up premises for novels in my head, I haven't counted, but it seems like it's every day. Today I am thinking again about an idea I had a few days ago: the summer with my brother's kids.

I want there to be as little friction as possible to the flow of writing. But I have to get better at dealing with the friction, because it will always be there. I'm ashamed of my sparse efforts to write.

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I feel so much love working on this project. I look at the words on the screen, and there I see the narrative of my Grandpa's life forming through the work of my hands, and I feel gratified.

We both share a curious, pleasant desire to have the content come out, to go over the experiences that have shaped us, to dig into them. I think speaking on the phone is the best way to do this. It makes the distance sweeter.

After I have spent the morning with my Grandpa's recollections, I feel lighter. I feel like smiling for the rest of the day. It is so sweet to have a bridge to someone from a different world.

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I am talking all over about this book. I really like how I've chased this idea. And I keep growing it. What I want to do next is make physical copies of grandpa's stories, write them down on paper, put that paper in the binder I

have, then use those pages to mark up as I write, make the stories dynamic and have a space for that. I am focusing on this book for the year. I am not starting anything else. This is the project. I am a writer who is writing a book. And I'm very happy with it.

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All right. I no longer imagine that I will have this book completed by Christmas. What I will have is one nicely written, heart-warming story to give everyone as a gift and as a teaser for the full-length book. That is totally comfortable to me. Writing is hard, and I'm learning as I'm going. This project is worth it. And I look forward to it. I just need a thousand motivations daily and more found, recovered, protected time. I need a new structure for habits. I haven't been using the weekly habit tracker on my wall for a couple months now. I stopped using it because my goals shifted from writing in general to writing this book. I haven't found a way to plug that into my day to day, and with a new job in the morning, I'm just floating by. I don't want to float. I don't like how it feels.

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Life is awesome right now! I'm writing a book and I'm enjoying it! Of course it's challenging but lately when I sit down to write it's just like I can find it. I can find the voice. I hope it's a voice I like a month from now. I'm really happy with my work and motivated by it. I'm happy talking about it and I'm thinking about it a LOT. I'm experimenting and so far the experiments are rewarding. I definitely need the rewards. I need to be blessed by them when they cease.

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Definitely feeling discouraged today. This week when I have opened up Notion to get started writing, I look at my table of drafts, and my eyes glaze over. I can't focus on it. I can't generate the ideas I need to generate. I distract myself. And I give up way, way too easy. This is the last day of September. I know that time is slipping away from me.

I might need to spend some time brainstorming. I might need to call grandpa. Mom gave me something interesting to ask him about: work ethic. He always got his work done. How did he do it? I never heard a complaint come from him once about having to do work, whether it was physical or mental, and much of his work would have been exhausting and draining. It makes me think how weak I am.

I'll do some brainstorming.

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I'm not going to start a blog this year. But I'm going to keep thinking about it. I AM going to write a book about my grandpa this year. That's the focus, and it all needs to start coming together soon. I'm excited to get into it, but of course I'm a little afraid. It helps that it's for my family, so much. I love talking about it with them, and I usually hate talking about my projects with anyone.

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There is a contest on Medium that I want to enter something into. I need to write a narrative in reflection of any one of these words: reentry, death, work, space. Work may be the most relevant to me now. I'm thinking about it a lot, and loathing it. I think about what it was to get a job for my grandpa, and how I have to do so much more to get a job now. I don't want to do any of it. I feel so phony and worry I'm so stupid. I'm trying to put myself out as a writer, but I'm a little embarrassed, and I'm also doubting myself. I hate that. I have some reflections on what it means to work, maybe I will write about the farm. What is a simple idea that can guide that piece on work?

Something about the fear of being mediocre, and asking too much of yourself, feeling destined to be humble. My grandpa was humble his whole life, and it led to his greatest blessings.

Am I meant to be mediocre? Am I kidding myself by dreaming? I think I'm beyond that now. I think I have a good understanding of my capabilities and beyond. It is potential that is tricky. I negotiate with my potential every day. Every time I plan to sit down and write, it is a negotiation with my potential. I know that realizing my potential requires my work to be consistent and to build into something more, that is the only way I can become more than what I am now. And I feel myself moving toward this. It is getting easier and easier to make the choices that I know lead to the fulfillment of my potential. But all these plans and schemes are mine alone. Maybe another's dream for me would be better than mine, and maybe they could help me. I do need help. Yet I like my own dreams well enough. I like my ideas more than anything. The ideas that haven't escaped my head yet, those are the most precious. They whisper to me through my potential. I'm also scared of them. I keep them slumbering as much as I can, try not to rouse them.

Work is different for someone my age and in this year. Well, everything is different. That's the easiest claim to make of all.

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I am really moving myself toward being a writer, like working on something toward it every day. And I'm considering things I would never have done before, like familiarizing myself with best practices for search engine optimization. That's all part of the package I bring, part of the value you get when you choose me as a writer. I'm trying to be competitive.

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I'm writing about Grandma today and I'm realizing how lonely it is to write this. I'm writing about her last days, about getting her into bed at night. Once I had the first sentence down describing the nightly routine, I said out loud, "Fuck that was so sad" and I started to cry. I haven't stopped, but it's been good to write it. It's been good to go back to that time and let myself feel it. I wasn't feeling then, and I'm thankful for that. At the time, it was just what we had to do for Grandma. I'm happy that other members of my family will read about this time. Not many of them were there, few of them know what it was like.

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I am going to have a writing career.

I am exactly where I want to be and I have everything I need.