

I am a writer. I have always been a writer. I write this at an hour that people normally reserve for sleep, sex or drunkenness. Or all three. And why do I choose to write at such an hour? There are most likely an infinite number of reasons but the most obvious one would be because I feel the need to. But I use the word “need” in a far greater context than most. Everyone *needs* something at some point in their life. It is a shame that most needs go unfulfilled for entire lifetimes. A damn shame. I guess you could say that I am one of the few that has always had my needs met. Most of them, most of the time. And when I don’t have them met I usually do without them. But I guess we all do without them when we have to.

I don’t know if I am trying to glamorize such a thing or not. But suppose I am. The whole of human history is nothing but one great struggle after another. There are of course patches of splendor but there always appears to be more struggle than splendor. That seems to be what we are used to. That seems to be what motivates us. That seems to be what unites us as a species. But you don’t have to take my word for it. Just look it up for yourself and eventually you’ll see what I see.

I believe I have always been a writer because my tendency to analyze and re-analyze reality is a trait that is so ingrained in every layer of my subconscious and conscious being that to think otherwise would be like giving up oxygen. Literally and figuratively.

Sometimes I take a quick glance at myself in the mirror and notice very little. Sometimes I take a long look at myself in the mirror and notice every little detail. But not just the superficial ones. If I stare close enough I can see the tiny cracks and passageways that allow my skin to be so adaptable. And I don’t mean wrinkles. But if it is easier to think of them as wrinkles then so be it. Granted, I am far from what society considers to be “old” but I have always considered society to be far from what I consider to be helpful. That is the truth. The truth and nothing but the truth shall set you free.

At one point I did think of myself as a musician. Mostly between the year 2003-2006. That is what I like to refer to as my music period. As soon as I got through with the debacle that is high school, I moved down to sunny Florida. Partly because I wanted a change of scenery but mostly because I *needed* a change of scenery. I instantly agreed to help my Mom drive down there when she made the suggestion. It wasn’t a hard decision to make. I didn’t want to leave the city where my friends and family lived but I knew they would still be there when I returned. After a short farewell party, I waved bye to an unanswered semi-love letter I had written and an unfulfilled need to create awesome music.

Once I arrived in Florida and settled in somewhat I began soaking up the atmosphere and connecting with a variety of musicians and bands. The first two bands I auditioned for didn’t go over so well but I didn’t care because I was still receiving regular calls from plenty of bands and

musicians looking for guitar players. The majority of musicians I met were also from other parts of the country. Like me, they too *needed* a change of scenery.

A couple of months went by before I met and auditioned for two guys looking to start up an original band. Sean was the singer and Anthony was the drummer. Anthony seemed to be struggling with an identity complex of some kind when I met him because he wanted to play guitar but he had been playing drums effectively since the age of 9. Now that I think about it, Anthony pretty much struggled with that same identity complex for the entire time that we were a cohesive band unit. It's actually what eventually split us into three aimless musicians. And I say three because we never had a permanent bassist for more than a few months at a time. Mostly because each bass player felt like they *needed* a change of scenery.

The next couple of years were filled with late night gigs, all day writing/recording sessions and regular orders from McDonald's dollar menu. If anyone or anything tried to slow us down we'd usually just ignore it. And there were a lot of insistent obstacles. Music is what we were passionate about, music is what we thrived on, and music is what made everything else tolerable for us.

A friend of mine once asked me to describe to him in great detail what it is like to perform on a stage in front of a crowd of people. He assumed that it must be nerve-wracking but I assured him it's not. I then told him that there really is no correct way to describe it. It's not at all like anything that most people experience. If it were then everyone would have already experienced it. That's probably what makes it such an experience. Most experiences tend to be experiences that people rarely get to experience. So, based on my own experience, the only succinct way I can describe it is by an example of a memory of mine.

While setting up for our very first show, I kept trying to downplay my excitement so that I could remain calm and focused. There weren't very many people in attendance but that was to be expected at our first gig. As soon as I took my guitar out of its case and leaned it up against my amp it fell over and hit the floor with an alarming THUD. I quickly picked it up and set it back in the same position but it quickly fell back to the floor, its own position. Finally, I just picked it up, plugged it in and waited patiently for Anthony to give the queue. He tapped his drumsticks four times and we all automatically switched into rock out mode. We went through our entire set of eleven original songs without even one minor mistake or technical malfunction. I remember not even having to think about what I was playing. After a while my hands and fingers just instinctively knew what to do. The music became me and I became the music. We all became the music. There was no longer a separation between each of us. We allowed ourselves to be fully embraced and enveloped by the vibrant tones and rocking rhythms we were creating.

I was pretty disappointed when it came to an end but I somehow anticipated it in the beginning. I tend to anticipate a lot of things and most of the things that I anticipate do manifest quite effortlessly. I won't get into much more detail about the split up because I prefer to hang on to that memory even more than the memory of rocking out on stage. Or perhaps, just as much.

After we parted ways, I hung around Florida for a month or so before finally returning home. There was a voice inside me telling me not to leave but I had no choice but to return. A couple days passed and I quickly slipped back into my original state of semi-apathy. Some people who know me are always commenting on how apathetic I tend to behave. But that's only because they think they know me. The people who truly know me know well enough to leave me to my own thoughts.

Between the years 2006-2008 I reconciled with myself as much as possible by working, walking and writing. I was employed by a call center in which I had to deal with malicious customer complaints and unwarranted insults from strangers over the phone. Sure, I was making a steady income but the stress and lack of passion was just too potent for me to ignore. I quickly yearned for the days when I was a starving musician. I honestly do not know how people are able to remain in slavish employment for years and years. I've often wondered about what possible masterpieces we are all missing out on because someone is forced to stifle their innate creative nature. I can't be the only one who has wondered this. Yet the majority insists on supporting an archaic system.

I floundered from one call center to another until I became numb to all material gains. There was no difference between them. Just a lot of cleverly disguised promises. Then, one day I drove right past the building that was to become my tomb and never looked back. There was no need to even second guess my choice. I didn't have the words to put to it at the time but deep down I knew that I wasn't meant to remain employed by any one person or company. Just like no person is meant to be owned by any one person or company. We belong to ourselves! We belong to each other! We belong to the universe!

Some months went by as I lived off my meager savings and whatever personal belongings I could sell. I tried several times to sit down and write something, anything. I wanted to convey all that I had experienced so far but nothing but gibberish flowed out from my pen. I tried rewriting the gibberish into a series of poems but then it just looked like poetic gibberish. Now I realize that it was because I still had more to experience.

A whole year went by and before I knew it I had turned 26. I had also spent the last of my savings and was considering returning to some kind of indentured employment. That is when I suddenly developed an interest in art. Abstract art, landscape art, modern art, sketch art and

the entirety of art history. I tried my hand at painting with watercolors and was satisfied with the few abstract pieces I had created. Then I enrolled in some online college courses and applied for a student loan. The classes were simple enough but I detested the way everyone was bragging about higher learning and all that jazz. But that never mattered much to me anyhow.

It was the loan money that was of great significance to me. Not just because I needed it but because I knew it would allow me to further explore my newly blossomed passion for art. The day that the loan check arrived it was one of the coldest days on record. It also happened to be the day that a ravenous blizzard had consumed the city. I remember slowly walking out to the mailbox, snowflakes whipping against my face. I was then overcome with an image of myself freezing in place before I could open the envelope. But I didn't and I was pretty glad I didn't.

I immediately drove to the bank with my Dad, deposited half of the check and received the other half in cash. When I got back home I speed dialed the number to Dominoe's pizza and ordered three large pizzas with loads of toppings. Thus, effectively ending my diet of ramen noodles and peanut butter sandwiches. I ate myself into a coma and slept for what seemed like an eternity.

When I awoke, I felt replenished and reinvigorated. I no longer cared about what I went through in the past and I decided to try my hand at deciphering that poetic gibberish I had written a year and a half ago. And it turned out that it was no longer the gibberish I mistook it for but rather an interesting glimpse into the psyche of a starved artist.

And so... the path of a starving artist opened up before me. Of course, it did take a while for me to blow through the loan money and officially become a starving artist but it did manifest like all other things had manifested.

I made sure to buy the best quality paints, brushes, canvas and drawing supplies. It wasn't long before I was experimenting with different techniques and styles. I tried applying big globs of paint and I tried applying very subtle hues of color. I painted and painted and painted all through winter. I even sold some of what I created. A few cents here, a few dollars there. I didn't care about the money I received. I was happy to have found something to surrender my whole essence to. A few friends of mine tried to tell me not to spend so much time painting by myself but I just thanked them for their concern and brushed them aside. What did they know? They were still governed by their wallet not their heart.

By the time spring rolled around I had used up every last sliver of paint at my disposal. I also had stacks and stacks of abstract works taking up space in my not so spacious room. But I still kept at it. I purchased more paints and stayed in my room until I was certain that I had painted all that I could paint in a full 24 hours.

I watched *Pollock* the biographical movie about Jackson Pollock a dozen or so times. Ed Harris directed and starred in it. His portrayal is pretty dead on. I did my best to try and get into the same frame of mind as Pollock but I found it to be far too deconstructive. Then I read up on Vincent Van Gogh and tried applying some of his techniques and brushstrokes. But Van Gogh was indeed one of a kind and anyone who says different doesn't know what the hell they're saying.

I kept experimenting and experimenting with different textures, different brands of paint and different states of mind. Until I finally just stopped. My interest in it didn't stop; I just had to take a break from it. I sold off as much of my work that I could at incredibly low prices. Ebay was a tremendous help to me and an invaluable tool.

I still paint periodically and doodle and sketch but not as furiously as I did during that winter of 2009. All the stars were in perfect alignment that year. Now that I look back on it I believe I took it for granted but I am still very grateful for the experience that it was. I know most people would probably have considered it a "waste of time." But isn't that what we all do every day? Waste time. We just don't like to acknowledge it. If we were to acknowledge it then we'd be openly admitting that life is far more purposeful than we believe. And it is a purpose that cannot be measured by money, politics, war, disease, religion or science. But you don't have to take my word for it. Figure it out for yourself and you'll eventually see what I see.

Another year went by and I kept kidding myself that I was meant to be an abstract artist of some kind. I lived off of whatever paintings I sold online and that wasn't much. I also sold most of the books I had acquired over the years; they had served their purpose. I don't recall exactly when I spent the last of the student loan money but I didn't really take much notice when I did. I made one last attempt at trying to rekindle whatever passion I had left for painting by spending an entire week with just me, my brushes, my paints and a dozen homemade canvasses. I took breaks when I needed to and slept at least 5-6 hours a night. But alas, the end result was not very inspiring. All I had to show for that week were some half-assed paintings of various symbols and shapes. There weren't at all like the pieces I had painted during that winter of 2009. I consoled myself by repeating the words, "It's just part of the process; all part of the process."

I considered throwing them in the dumpster but I knew I'd have been furious with myself if I did. So, I just placed them all in my closet and spent the next month trying to forget about them. The journal entries I had written during that week were also quite sparse and unforgiving. I felt this overwhelming sense of misplaced apathy. I wanted to scream and shout at the top of my lungs but I didn't believe it would help much.

Now that I have revisited the pieces I painted during that week I am able to see that I was really onto something unique. Something that future artists might actually try to emulate some day. It doesn't matter if they continue to go unappreciated during my lifetime. I know what they are worth to me.

It would seem that my own perception of my own creations is constantly at war with itself. Even that cannot escape the eternal struggle of mankind.

Suffice it to say that my artistic endeavors have always been in a constant state of evolution and devolution. I believe that is the way everything is supposed to be. The whole of reality must be allowed to destroy itself gradually and reinvent itself gradually. That is why we exist. That is why we fight with each other. That is why we love each other. That is why we hate each other. That is we laugh with each other. That is why we cry with each other. That is why we rejoice with each other.

We are all playing out the role we were meant to play out. And I speak not from a purely spiritual state but from a purely humanistic state. Everything happens because it is supposed to happen. Every word we speak is a word that was meant to be spoken. Every lie that we tell is a lie that was meant to be told. There is no blame game to play. That game is something that we fabricate in order to keep the darkness at bay. But even the darkness is meant to be the darkness. Without it there would be no light.

Good cannot exist without bad. Right cannot exist without wrong. Up cannot exist without down. Common sense cannot exist without uncommon sense. And I am not choosing sides here. I've never been into choosing sides. I am simply stating the universal truth. But if you do not agree... you are still a part of the universal truth.

I've come across tons of people that do not resonate on the same level as me. That is fine, that is great. Those people were meant to not resonate on the same level as me. If it weren't for those people I would have no clue about my own resonance. I would have no clue about what I am meant to be. But thanks to the constant fluctuation of reality I do know what I meant to be.

I am a writer. I have always been a writer. I will always be a writer.

And if this universal truth were to somehow inexplicably not exist... I would rewrite the entirety of it. Word for word.