

Each day is a mix of stress, disconnect, and rushing. No time in the morning. No presence in the afternoon. No connection in the night. I can write, I have written, I know how to write. I know how to be in the moment, grounded, to put words to paper, fingers to keys, thoughts to words, but I cannot manifest it. Spring of this year feels like it was a hundred years ago, last week feels separated by a bridge measured in months. *Two pages, thoughts to words to paper*, but there's no time, no consistency, no connection, no presence, no moment. "Blank", "Nothing", "Tired" - simple prompts to help work through the moments and periods of inconsistency, the stumbling, the lack of habit. *Blank* - and I freeze. *Nothing* - and I feel the same. *Tired* - and words are taken from my throat, replaced with a thoughtless need for more caffeine than one should have. Four o'clock hits and I am reminded of every last thing I need to do - but I just feel paralyzed. *Two pages, thoughts to words to paper*.

A mental parasite that exists as an all knowing prophet in my mind maliciously tells me that I'm special. It wants to get something from me that I can never give it, lest I lose far too much of myself. But then I wonder if maybe I am. Morning pages, poetry, stories, photography, painting, **art** - things that are grounding moments that connect us with the world around us. But have you ever sat outside at night and stared at the stars? Felt the cold air on your skin and let the cool light of a full moon overwhelm you and beg you to give in to the underlying feral nature of man? Joined in with a pack of coyotes - howling in return - entirely on impulse, guided by feeling and not by thought, only to hear every neighboring pack erupt into a manic frenzy - a frenzy that you too are feeling? *Two pages, thoughts to words to paper* - The moon demands thoughts be supplanted by a feeling within us that is older than humanity, the wind is a language in and of itself that has no words, the coyotes have no need for paper. In that moment I am present, alive, and human. Presence requires participation, life requires sensation, and to be human requires giving in. What is more grounding, connecting, freeing, and experiencing than cutting out the filters that we place in our mind? Composing a photo, scratching words, contextualizing our reality is a disconnect. You are no longer intimate with the wind, a member of the coyote pack, or giving yourself over to the moon. *Two pages, thoughts to words to paper*.

Insecure elitists, the revered dead, concepts, tercets, couplets, rhyming schemes, names, styles, and aesthetics. Standards, requirements, expectations, and false mentors enforced on a species that struggles to exist in a society built by narcissists and designed to stomp out life. Art comes from within, an expression of the self, an expression of the psychic conflict that we all endure. *Five Seven Five*. If art comes from within, then why are there standards? Why are there grades? What is good art? What is bad art? How can one judge another's expression? What does it mean to be a student of being human? *Five Seven Five*. There is something alive in all of us that demands to be heard, that we try to shape *thoughts to words to paper* - when they just need to screamed. But can't that be poetry?

A mental parasite that exists as a pool of black sludge in my mind kindly informs me there's no point. It wants something from me that I can never give it, lest I become nothing more than the remnants of a cicada's husk. Sometimes it's hard to ignore but ignoring it is never an option. To use it's black bile as ink in a pen and psychically cut it down to size - through *five seven five*.

I sit awake at two in the morning - cycling the same five songs, considering the last bit of euphoria that calls to me. "Why should I sleep?" I ask as my brain surges another wave of

melatonin. "Do I really have to?" In defiance of supposed better judgment, I press play on a playlist that's fraught with memories, but none of them come - even though maybe I want them to.

We are all a story, a wellspring of experiences, life, thoughts, and feelings. *I want to sink under water* - and those thoughts a six word short story. If every moment is ripe with potential for a story, then what makes it compelling? The image? The implication? The discourse? *I want to sink under water* - How do I know what's compelling or good or implied or evocative? Is this not just the desire to be remembered, to etch ourselves into history - our shared history or just the memory of another? To embrace fantasy and escape from reality for just a few moments? *I want to sink under water* - I could step outside right now, walk under the stars in any direction until I succumb to exhaustion. In the morning I would have a story about an aimless walk, but the difference between a wellness check and a tearful gasp is in the intimate details, like the soft rustling of leaves by an unseen creature, familiar daylight trees illuminated in black and white, or the tingling on your spine and tensing of muscles when the night is suddenly silent.

A mental parasite that exists as an all consuming light in my mind excitedly shouts about untold possibilities. It wants something from me that I can never give it, lest I become so enthralled I can never come back. A night so long I saw the sun, shaking and sick from impulse after impulse as light softly drifted through the window. Exhaustion is such a wonderful feeling but I'm possessed by memories of music and lights, speeding on hot asphalt, rushing to kiss a new and barely known lover overjoyed with my unfamiliar enthusiasm, and staring with wonder into the dark woods considering why they seem to beckon to me. What respite sleep can offer us when we embrace it. What hell we live when we reject it.

We were gifted the curse of knowledge - to be self aware in a chaotic world with no answers. We are desperate to escape our nature because we are terrified of what that means. So we create structure to separate ourselves, build religions to explain, and make art to cope - all in response to the horror of living. Does the moon know the beauty of the shadow it casts during an eclipse? Do the birds understand the wonder of boundless freedom through flight? I want to know - why am I here? Not in this class, but in this world. In a concrete building, surrounded by pavement, in a city constructed to serve capital, in a country that enforces its will on the globe with the most destructive tools of war known to man. Why am I not a leech in the muck of a pond? A bird soaring in the sky, defying the shackles of gravity? The world is ending, yet the neurosis of society demand that we continue down a path of normalcy in the face of death. Are we not insane? *Thoughts to words to paper* - We should all get lost in something. *Five Seven Five* - What are the standards to being human? *I want to sink under water* - I am in mo(u)rning. In a world of overly produced content - not art - designed to steal our attention from us for profit, that is greedily copyrighted to restrict us from our base nature of sharing, embracing the insanity of being human is a relief. These poems are not for fame, these stories are just for sharing, these pages are an exercise for the self and not a self-help book.

Dear Alan Watts / *You are the universe experiencing itself* / What a beautiful thought
I am a moth in a cocoon / And all I want / Is to be one with the moon
But all I can do / Is try to stay myself / And be with you
[Moon of my night, light of my life]