

## WRITING DAY ONE

It's been challenging getting out of bed in the mornings.

Perhaps because it's colder than it has been and the warmth of my blanket is too inviting.

But I know that's not it.

The tightened knot in the pit of my stomach tells me otherwise. My heart thuds hard with each beat in my chest as the thoughts pour in accompanied by crippling emotions right on their heels, all of it signaling that my old pals fear and doubt have returned with paralyzing effect.

And here I thought those two assholes had gotten the message while I was in India —

“You're not welcome here.”

Yet they've weaseled their way back into my heart to cuddle me in their arms causing my motivation to wane more than wax as of late.

My vision for the future of who I want to be and what I want to do is much foggier than days prior.

I could say I feel adrift. I could say I've lost faith. And that may very well be the case, but I honestly don't care.

I just want someone to tell me that it's okay.

Without judgment.

Without the desire to change it or fix it.

“It's okay to not feel okay,” they would say. “It's okay to feel stressed or anxious or blah. To start the day as a struggle. To desire avoidance of the menial task at hand. Don't think,” they say. “Just breathe.”

When you accept your non-peace, it becomes peace.

I've remembered this passage since the first moment I read it and find it to be truer with each passing day.

Acceptance and gratitude have been my two biggest allies of late.

Acceptance of what is.

Gratitude for what has and will come.

Does that mean being grateful for the struggle?

In part, yes.

At the temazcal (aka sweat lodge) this past weekend, when I was completely enclosed in heat and darkness, I heard the words uttered, “Suffering is your power.”

So if I accept my circumstance along with the debilitating thoughts and emotions that inevitably come nestled up next to it, what can I do?

Use it as a creative cocoon perhaps.

Write. Read. Meditate. Create.

Or do none of it, as the voice says, and just breathe.

There is no right choice here.

But I will choose one nevertheless.

— Writing Day One

## WRITING DAY TWO

Hope is an interesting concept.

Elusive and ethereal, it hangs in the balance, teetering precariously on the edge.

Reach for it too quickly and it falls away from our grasp.

Coax it gently and it leans in — tantalizingly so — offering but a glimpse before disappearing at the final moment.

Hope, it seems, is not so easily caught nor suade by fleeting whims or wants.

The only option then, despite the rationale against it, is to simply let go — to surrender the desire to hold it in an iron fist or tempt it with vows of compromise of trinkets we're willing to exchange.

Hope exists and with certainty. It is there for the taking \*if\* we choose not to take it at all.

A paradox of illogical promise.

To sit.

To be.

To let go.

— Writing Day Two

## WRITING DAY THREE

Community. Family. Society.

Why do we gather in cities, towns and villages, forming groups, neighborhoods and cultures, versus dispersing ourselves individually across the horizon?

Shared resources? Sure.

Security? Of course.

Safety? Without a doubt.

But this is why we gather. Not necessarily why we choose to stay.

The simplest answer is we do it for connection. To feel part of something by sharing the experience of who we are and what our lives mean with those around us — and, in turn, having them do the same.

We don't desire to feel alone, to be cut off from the rest of the world, but instead to flourish with others by our side. We long to be understood, to know what it's like to see ourselves in one another, to grow, to learn, to be comforted, to feel that deep essence of unexplainable relation.

We stay together for all these reasons so we can reach out time and time again, hold hands, and embrace the richness of the moment not by ourselves, but with one another.

Because if we know one permeable truth about life, it is this:

It's better together.

— Writing Day Three

## WRITING DAY FOUR

We have seen great changes in the world these days. Changes that frighten us, that hinder us, that bind us in place.

Wisdom tells us —

Uncertainty has a purpose.

The unknown can be a gift.

But how can we appreciate the shifting sands beneath our feet when we desire most to walk on solid ground?

I do not have an answer.

But through my travels, I have learned that what we tie ourselves to is a choice, whether it be cosmically ethereal or a tangibility we hold in our hands.

The pillars we build for ourselves and our loved ones, the anchors that keep us steady in raging waters, these we define.

Writing is certainly one such thing for me.

But there are others. They exist for each of us. Of this, I have no doubt.

Finding them, however, discovering what they are and what they mean, is a much different task altogether.

Luckily we have a guide in this. A place to begin our search.

Among the shifting sands.

Amidst the raging waters.

In the unknown.

— Writing Day Four

## WRITING DAY FIVE

Emotions are perhaps the most confusing aspect of being human. They shift, they swirl, they mix together in a myriad of intensities roiling inside us.

We can experience multiple emotions in a single moment, causing chaos in what we actually feel.

Excitement or trepidation?

Joy or euphoria?

Love or desire?

Until we are able to sift through what we feel in the stillness, talk it through with a trusted confidante, and/or embrace a cathartic process, it will remain a mystery.

To compound this effort, our emotions are so attached to our thoughts that it can be near impossible to navigate such a tangled web with the work required to understand and process what we are feeling being an overwhelming internal feat.

The result of doing so, however, is change.

The result of not is stasis.

And sometimes, despite what we know is best, our greatest emotion is the desire to remain precisely where we are. To hold onto our inner whirlwind like the security blanket of a child.

Because without what has become familiar to feel, a great existential question looms in the forefront of our being —

Who am I?

When perhaps the better question all along has been —

Who am I not?

— Writing Day Five

## WRITING DAY SIX

Writing is a process, arduous and draining at times, cathartic and euphoric in other moments.

It isn't just putting words on a page. It is unveiling pieces of yourself splayed out for any and all to read.

Like any creative art, it requires you to open your self-made doors and go to places within yourself that you'd rather avoid in search of the right words — while being willing to fail repeatedly in this endeavor.

From what I understand, it is no different for any who are doing what they believe they are supposed to, whether it is viewed as a calling, a destiny or a choice.

And just like any process, any journey, we do not know where it will ultimately guide us. We must simply put one foot forward each and every day that we are able to.

That is, in part, what these daily writings are for me.

Let's see where they lead.

— Writing Day Six

## WRITING DAY SEVEN

Ghosts of the past linger along the seams of our vision, reminding us of who we used to be, what we now miss and those we have lost along the way.

If we close our eyes long enough, we can see these spectral remembrances standing before us, with outstretched hands and longing eyes, begging us to come back, to return to what once was.

This is a facade. Smoke and mirrors on a stage. A mirage in the barren wasteland.

We know that the river of time, in all its wisdom, continually moves forward, nudging us along its current — for it understands that the past too has a strong pull.

And though we may desire against all hope and will to reverse the river's flow, we cannot.

I say thank the great universe above that this is so. For the path forward is a blessing.

Yes, we stumble. We fall. We lay on the ground, bloodied and bruised, feeling all the edges along the jagged pieces of our broken hearts.

Yet time is there by our side, to whisper gently in our souls, comforting us with words that tell us it wasn't always like this and won't be forever after if we can, with eyes forward, take but a step.

First, however, we must to do the one thing that seems impossible at the time — what nothing and no one can do for us — spoken to each in worded whispers by time itself.

Get up, my friend.

Get up.

— Writing Day Seven

## WRITING DAY EIGHT

The inspiration isn't flowing today. The words aren't coming forth, but instead remain stuck somewhere in the creative ether.

It seems the muse is busy or perhaps taking a much needed break. Maybe she slept in late and is scurrying about frantically to make her regularly scheduled visits to her most loyal followers.

Or it's me.

Maybe I'm too busy in my head and heart for the words to flow. Perhaps I'm the one in need of a break or my creative spirit is still sleeping, waiting to wake at some other predetermined moment.

It matters not the reason for the result remains the same.

Words fail to fall to page.

Ink remains unpenning on paper.

This is part of the creative process, I remind myself. The uninspired moments are as much a part of the journey as any, perhaps more so.

The task before me though, before all of us, does not change — continue the creative endeavor.

To write, paint, dance, explore, all in an effort to push forward, telling the muse that she is welcome to visit whenever she's available next.

But we are ready now.

And we aren't going to wait.

— Writing Day Eight

## WRITING DAY NINE

It is a strange to have pieces of myself spread throughout the corners of the world, parts that were found in some of the most unlikely of places.

The thing is I can't always take those pieces with me, at least not wholly and fully. They exist and will remain precisely where they were first discovered.

In Paris, inspiration.

In Chiang Mai, community.

In India, heart.

It does not mean I am empty inside nor do I feel fractured or unfilled. These pieces must exist outside of me for they offer something that I can't experience otherwise —

Connection.

For despite current global circumstances, I believe the option to return to these places at some point will be available so that I may hold these pieces within me once again.

It is comforting to think of this possibility as a homecoming of sorts.

A return to a familiar place and a familiar self.

And whether it's in the current moment or only in the fondest of memories, I long to reconnect to these pieces of my world — and hope that they too feel the same.

— Writing Day Nine

## WRITING DAY TEN

I'm sitting in the car heading to meet a friend for coffee and a catch-up conversation, all the while trying to pay attention to the scenery while I type this, seeing if I spot anything new, something I haven't seen before.

You can walk the same path a hundred times and have as many different experiences. Or the reverse: the same experience repeated over and over again despite differing locations.

The choice is ours as to which.

I've tried my hand at the practice of mindfulness, of putting past and future to the side in pursuit of fully embracing the moment. With moderate success, I can say two things about it.

It works. It's not easy.

The thoughts in our head pull at us constantly, begging that we pay attention to them rather than the experience before us like a needy child behaving poorly when not getting enough attention.

And just like a parent dealing with said child, our thoughts require an equal measure of control, understanding and patience.

Rome, after all, wasn't built in a day and neither was inner peace. Though I think the construction of the Italian capital was the easier of the two.

— Writing Day Ten

## WRITING DAY ELEVEN

Friday night and I'm on a bus to Guanajuato, Mexico with a few friends for a weekend birthday celebration (not mine. I'm a June baby). The bus was a solid hour late arriving at the terminal so we are still riding when we would have already been at our AirBnB and headed to dinner. A minor inconvenience in the greater scheme of things.

Such is life.

Such is travel.

And the unplanned road.

If I think back to how many times my travels have deviated from the original intent, I would struggle to recall them all.

Yes, things can go as planned. Yes, all can line up perfectly in sequence and timing. And yes, we may even give ourselves a pat on the back, thinking that our logistics and organizational skills made it happen despite the will of the universe.

But I think we know this is a rare occurrence. Life seldomly commits to our plan and even less so allows for no detours or unforeseen events to lie along our path.

This, it appears, is part of what makes it fun. It's a key ingredient in the cocktail of adventure. Because let's face it, the movie isn't as good the second time around since we know what will happen.

I am sure my group of five will get to our destination and plans will continue at a different time than we had anticipated, but all will ultimately happen as it should. And when we look back on our trip in the days and weeks to come, I am equally confident that the memories won't include what time we did what or whether everything was fully aligned with our expectations.

It will just be faces full of smiles that we were able to have the adventure at all.

— Writing Day Eleven

## WRITING DAY TWELVE

Taken from writing a few months back. Dusted off. And perhaps even more relevant today.

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“It is difficult, but not impossible.”

The words I once heard echo in my mind.

Adjusting to life in Goa, India (after five months locked down in Rishikesh) has been a process.

On one end I am absolutely loving the chill and relaxed vibes, feeling settled in my sanctuary home. Having been able to explore Delhi for a few days and then North Goa, I am returning a bit to “normal life,” though that thought is somewhat terrifying to me.

On the other side of things, I am adjusting to this new version of myself, having undergone a great deal of change during my time in India, feeling the effects and coming to realizations of what it all means and who I want to be going forward.

The process of any evolution — learning to keep the parts you want and let go of that which no longer serves you.

I find routine to be my greatest ally in this. Focusing on what I want to accomplish in the next three months, knowing that the time will undoubtedly pass by much quicker than I can anticipate.

To help in my efforts, the pros of South Goa are many.

A little home that acts as a respite from the outside world.

A small and welcoming community.

The beach just minutes away with ocean waves that provide a sense of tranquility when the chaos within becomes too reckless to manage.

An easy and simple way of life where many places are closed, thereby removing distraction from the day.

As for daily endeavors, there is of course writing in which I am fully into the editing phase of my current novel, piecing it back together after fully dissecting it for organization and structure. Being back in a proper gym has been equally important for internal stability and strength as much as the physical component. I have missed this aspect of my life and have found myself diving into it with renewed passion and dedication.

As a counter, if I had to name one thing on my heart-mind right now, it would be a feeling of loss in being unable to keep the tight relationships I have created in balance with this version of my life. I have forged such unique bonds through shared experiences, conversations and circumstances that it is near impossible to maintain them all as I would like.

In this I have had but one choice —

Acceptance.

To relinquish the expectation that these connections must and should remain in the same form as they were, and instead replace it with the belief that they will continue forth despite the trials of time and distance.

It requires me to surrender to the way of things, to embrace the new now and view it as an opportunity to let things flow just like the waters of the ocean not five minutes from my little Goan home.

It is a task I have struggled with for much of my life. One I know all too well.

But I hold faith that this too can change for a little echo reminds me —

“It is difficult, but not impossible.”

— Writing Day Twelve

## WRITING DAY THIRTEEN

If Mexico has taught me anything it's that life unfolds at its own pace and despite our best efforts, it can't be rushed, compromised or negotiated with.

I never expected to be in Mexico after India, but life has shifted from "Where do I want to go next?" to "Where can I go now?"

It seems Mexico was the answer to the latter question. And although — all things being equal — it wouldn't have necessarily been the answer to the former query, life had other plans. Better plans perhaps.

This is where the trust comes in. To take the step through the fog. To believe that my feet will connect with solid ground. To not stand idly by while time moves forward and the world spins on.

Among my many wishful moments, I do wonder what will come next. What does life have in store? Who will I meet? What events will happen? Which struggles will I face and (fingers crossed) overcome?

Those answers I cannot know.

And perhaps that is for the best which makes me consider that maybe the aforementioned fog of life has a purpose — to keep us from looking too far forward and instead remain focused on the more relevant step ahead.

If that's the case, then here's hoping we all land with sure footing and a smile to match.

— Writing Day Thirteen

## WRITING DAY FOURTEEN

It's Friday night and I'm sitting in my favorite coffee shop in Queretaro — Casa Apothecarius, located in the historical center of the city.

I'm reading about writing, actually writing, and doing a fair bit of procrastination which is something all writers seem to excel at. It's important to be aware of your talents after all.

I gravitate to this particular coffee shop for a number of reasons.

Relaxed and quiet atmosphere.

Quality coffee.

Unique architecture and vibe.

Warm and welcoming staff.

This is my checklist for a good coffee shop and, consequently, place for writing. Casa Apothecarius meets the full criteria.

As I previously wrote, during my years of travel I have felt there are pieces of myself scattered throughout the world. This is in part due to the locations I have been fortunate enough to visit, both intentionally and by happenstance.

It's made me realize how important places are — places that welcome you, comfort you, move and inspire you. Places that make you feel alive and ones can call home if just for an evening.

Find the right place and it can change your mood, your perspective or the course of your day.

Stay there long enough and it can change everything else too.

— Writing Day Fourteen

## WRITING DAY FIFTEEN

It's Sunday afternoon. The sun is shining, the wind is a soft cool through the open doors of Black Juice & Coffee Lab, and the vibe throughout the city center is chill and relaxed.

A beautiful day by any standards.

A lot of be grateful for.

I had brunch with friends followed by coffee afterwards, an afternoon filled with good conversation and a sharing of ideas. Inspiring stuff no doubt as I feel more energized now than when I first awoke this morning, sluggishly making my way out of bed.

As much as I've talked about the importance of time and place, it is equally so for who you share those elements with — the company you keep, as the saying goes.

It's important to have people who “get” you, ones who understand what you think and feel without having to explain the how and why — people who effectively speak your language. It opens the door for a different degree of interaction, one which leaves you with excitement for the possibilities of what may come next.

This is what is referred to as a tribe. A community of like-minded and like-hearted people, a level beyond mere friendship.

It's people who support you with a genuine interest and care for your well-being, characterized by simple conversations in which all who are present feel valued, seen and heard. People who encourage your strengths and reveal your blind spots without pointing to them as deficiencies. Those who by their very presence allow you to see a brighter place in the world.

It doesn't take much to do this.

A few words.

A simple gesture.

A shared experience over a cup of coffee.

It happens naturally without force or effort — because you're with the right people.

And that I've found makes all the difference.

— Writing Day Fifteen

## WRITING DAY SIXTEEN

One thing I've noticed quickly about Mexico is the sound.

It's loud.

There's no other way to describe it.

From cafes and restaurants to random noises on the street, my ears are constantly in use. It's normal for people to talk and laugh loudly, for musicians to play their instruments of choice despite your preference for distance or volume, for barking dogs and car radios to be heard at all hours of the night.

Locals seem unfazed by the sounds, going about their conversations and daily business without so much as a glance.

My conclusion is that noise is part of the Mexican culture, a norm of life.

This isn't a negative — though it can make finding a sanctuary of peace and quiet challenging at times — but instead serves as a reminder that I am not alone or isolated, that the world is alive and life is being lived at each moment.

I try to remember this as I go about my life here in Mexico.

To embrace the version that exists before me.

To feel apart and not separate.

To adapt and enjoy.

A good lesson, I'd wager, for any time and any place — one I plan to do my best and carry forward in the days to come.

— Writing Day Sixteen

## WRITING DAY SEVENTEEN

### PART 1 of 2

It is all too common to feel that we are supposed to be at some other point in our lives. That we have not lived up to our potential, taken too many wrong turns, ultimately fallen short and have subsequently been left behind.

“You should be further along,” the voice in our head whispers, as though it has any idea what ‘further along’ means.

This misguided belief, if adopted, inevitably brings about a host of emotions.

Regret. Shame. Guilt. To name a few.

Every person on the planet is going through some version of this life right now — and for many it isn’t the kind they would like or prefer or wish for.

But it is the one that is here before us.

In that, we have little choice.

What we do have a choice in is how we deal with it.

Do we listen to the voice that says we aren’t good enough? The one that seems so damn sure it has it all figured out but hides the keys to the kingdom between its lies?

Or do we instead accept that we, like everyone here before us and those to come after, are just trying our best to figure out this mysterious thing called life and that perhaps there is no “further along” or “left behind” — but only where we are.

Right here.

Right now.

In this moment.

I for one opt for the second option and hope that you do as well.

If not, then perhaps I’ll see you “further along” the path of life, though it’s doubtful that such a place even exists.

— Writing Day Seventeen

## WRITING DAY EIGHTEEN

### PART 2 of 2

While celebrating Thanksgiving dinner with friends in Mexico City, we went around the table to share something we've read, thought about or realized recently.

I considered my answer, trying to come up with a nugget to offer, some gem worth contributing.

I suppose the main insight I've had in this time is that while there is connection in what we are all experiencing — from our highs to our lows — there is an uncomfortableness being around “negative” emotions.

We often want to make someone feel better, encouraging them to change their experience of the moment, because we ourselves don't know how to sit in the presence of it. We opt instead to “ask them to be different” (subconsciously sometimes) because deep down we are unable to hold the required space within own selves.

We believe the flowing sea of emotions serves no purpose and therefore should be regulated.

I disagree.

What I've come to understand is there is value and wonder in the full spectrum of human emotion and all of what we feel is part of a process of change.

My encouragement then is for each of us to go through our own version of the process, whatever we deem that to be, and permit others to do the same without judgment or expectation.

Understand that what is needed is necessary.

Don't shy away from it or urge it to conform to something more palatable for yourself or another.

Instead — Own it. Allow it. Embrace it.

If you're heartbroken, be heartbroken.

If you're joyful, be joyful.

Frustrated. Apathetic. Inspired. Feel it without hindrance.

It is all part of the journey of being human.

And that journey — by its very nature — is beautiful.

— Writing Day Eighteen

## WRITING DAY NINETEEN

When it comes to purpose and destiny and one's calling, the road is not an easy one.

Nor is it meant to be.

It is filled with unsure steps along stumbling stones by fretful travelers and troubled souls through frightful nights and darkened days.

To be clear, there are moments of great inspiration and joyful glee to be had, but these are in undemanding times, when our gait is light and our laughter merry.

These are not what hinder — and certainly not what ultimately stop us in our pursuits.

I guess it begs the question why so much strife and difficulty if this is what we are “supposed” to do?

Because in the greater vision of the universe, the only gift it will give is the opportunity, not the prize. And it won't hand it to you with your next handful of popcorn while sitting on the couch scrolling through Netflix.

It wants to know how badly \*you\* want it.

Are you willing to start?

Are you willing finish?

Are you willing to get up and do the work when everything inside you begs otherwise?

It wants to know:

Will you walk the path when you no longer believe in it — when fear and doubt have sunk their bared teeth deeply into your heart?

Or will you shrink away, shrugging further beneath the covers of your bed, drifting off to a dreamless slumber all while secretly hoping that when you wake the choice before you has already been made without your consent?

It's easier to blame anything or everything else rather than ourselves after all.

But the universe knows better.

And so when the time is right, it places the choice gently before us once again, waiting patiently for us to pick it up without our knowledge, perhaps along with a handful of popcorn while sitting on the couch scrolling through Netflix.

— Writing Day Nineteen

## WRITING DAY TWENTY

The last three months in Mexico, my time since leaving India, have required an adjustment to my current version of life, one that admittedly has been a struggle for me to adapt to.

Finding my footing here, developing a semblance of a routine, has been challenging to say the least.

My mind wanders throughout the day, my heart looking to the horizon. Sleep doesn't come as easily as it has in days past. Thoughts come and go, fleeting and flirting with ideas of what's happening in the world and what's happening inside myself.

There are few answers I have found so far.

But one I can relay is that everything that occurs is part of the journey. From the highs and lows to the smiles, tears and unexpected events in between — all of it is part of the experience.

And what I am finding more so every day is that experience is up to us. We determine if it has meaning, if our moments have purpose.

I am coming to grips with the understanding that whatever it is we are doing — from building a life of intention to striving to make it through the day without falling apart — all of it is a process.

Creating yourself is a process.

Forgiving yourself is a process.

Destroying yourself? A process, albeit sometimes an overly efficient one.

Step upon step, moment to moment, from what is to what can be, life is a process.

You can't rush it. You can't force it to be something that it's not. You have to work with it — a partnership if you will, between you and the universe.

This is a concept that can easily be overshadowed by the intensity of our desire to make something of ourselves and our lives.

It is something that takes time.

And practice.

For it too is a process.

— Writing Day Twenty

*David N Carson*  
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