

A Ten-Minute Response to a Question About Writer's Block

Let me get this straight. You want me to write for 10 minutes about writer's block. The irony in that prompt is so thick I could cut it with...cut it with.....I could cut it with a witty metaphor. What if I had writer's block right now? What if I couldn't come up with a single elegant image to define the misery of needing to flex my fingers to type this and watching them curled and frozen like a corpse in mid-rigor mortis?

Writer's block is unpredictable. It comes on when and how it wishes. It's not always the result of stress or procrastination. I can't overcome it by finding inspiration. For me, over-inspiration is usually the issue. I don't feel drained of creative thought when I experience writer's block, I am saturated with it to the point of rupture. It reminds me of when the upstairs plumbing sprung a leak. The water penetrated the drywall of the first floor ceiling, creating a massive, sagging bulge of pressure just above the leather sofa.

Writer's block is that, except if the bulge was full of noisy, fluttering pigeons instead of water. I step out into Creation and see the flash of sunlight glinting off a cheerful yellow door on some neighbor's Craftsman era bungalow. I hear a parliamentary debate about a birdish crisis in the nearest sycamore. The explosion of color, sound, grief, and baby strollers that splashes around me fills up the creative storehouse to overflowing. I want to write it all, but not like projectile vomit. I want to articulate it, to make it all wise and wonderful. I can't write it all.

So I write nothing. I turn on Netflix and watch the Shawshank Redemption for the hundredth time. I hear Morgan Freeman say, "I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams." And I think, "Man, I wish I could write something like that."