

When the Train Crashes

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You are not a writer; you only pretend you are. You pretend you believe the people who tell you you're one-of-a-kind, but deep down you know that every person on this planet has a mother, brother, teacher, friend, dog—someone who thinks they're one-of-a-kind in their own oh-so-special way, and that even if all that uniqueness did exist, it would just cancel out. You pretend you're a writer, but you struggled through this simple sentence word by word, letter by letter, struggled to combine your abstract, nonsensical thoughts into something that's barely legible. Who are you kidding? You are not a writer. Put the pen down, close the document—it's blank, anyway—and delete all those useless notes defiled with useless ideas that will never take you anywhere. Put the pen down and walk away because you are not a writer. Walk back to the TV and distract yourself by feeling sorry for the family whose house burned down, or pick up the phone and scroll-and-scroll-and-scroll and feel relieved that you aren't the person who's humiliating themselves by—God forbid—having a good time posting silly videos on the internet. Anything to derail the train of thought speeding endlessly through the darkest tunnel, to make you forget that You. Are. Not. A. Writer. You're nothing but a liar who talks a lot of big talk, and now you've dug yourself down deep into a grave with all that big talk. The only way to climb out of that grave is by building a ladder from the words your foggy brain can't produce even though it runs-and-runs-and-runs like a hamster on a wheel, going fast but going nowhere. And now the train has hit the wall at the dead end of that tunnel, and now the engine is on fire, and now the smoke is everywhere, everywhere, smothering any seedling that might have blossomed into a page, a paragraph, or even a single word. Think about all those people you're letting down; think about how humiliated you'll be when you're old and gray and frail and you haven't managed to sell a single copy of a single book, haven't managed to publish a single word; think about your lost legacy—your lost immortality. Think-and-think-and-think until the clouds roll over and the sun shines through and the flowers bloom and the train is chugging along and the words are coming quickly—and you are a writer. You are a writer who understands that there's no such thing as one-of-a-kind, and that maybe that's a good thing. After all, if everyone was one-of-a-kind, if you were one-of-a-kind, no one else in the world would be interested in what you have to say; and you have so many things to say, so many important things about the world, and other people, and even yourself. And now you have a story, and now there are people who find strength and community in your story—in you. And now you are a writer, and so much more.