Week One Day One:

A list of names:

Steven Green, Mike Meyers, Phillip Mccloud, Daniel Macinson, Olivia Richardson, Shawna Kane, David masters, Shill Drab, Congruent Virtue, Felicity Yung, Minh Ng, Conrad Versatile, Dave Hutchinson\*, Nora Phillips, Donna Barber, Bert Muller, Swan Donson, Eric Yi Tan, Chill Latisha, Zao Long, Lom Numming, Minty Love, Shawna Umbapu, Ung Drassil, Mathilda Brown, Donovan Saul, Phillip Ip, Ip Sun Ma, Fernando De La Bellatisimma, Jochen Kraus, Dave Fletcher, Hun Mola, Ulaissi Nabuto, Moran Tam, Faruk Iben Rasim, Summer Thompson, Dana White, Rochanita Felissius Montegeau De Antonios, Numenaria Illegepha, Sum Dorrow, Juanita Borrows, Nagashima An, Ann Mercury, Martin Mons, Kelly Silence, Monmart Buso, Claude Juteau, Billy Gorbachov, Felix Eisner

* Do some names suggest characters? Have a look!

Week One Day Two:

* Do your warm-up and planning – jumping right into writing is ridiculous

Words I like/dislike

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Words I like: | Words I dislike |
| Convoluted | Ex Machina |
| Enigma | Pointless |
| Fantastic | Aloof |
| Awesome | Ikea |
| Hermit | Moist |
| Board | Spoiled |
| Draconian | Glee |
| Mentality | A-Anything (Amarital, Asexual, etc.) |
| Spontaneity | Potential |
| Fabulous | Weeping |
| Bullocks | Should’ve |
| Slimy | Baby |
| Bestowed | Cry-baby |
| Developing | Prim (Prim and proper) |
| Bookworm | SUP (stand up paddling) |
| Devoid | Sublime |
| Encompassing | Empire |
| Engraved |  |
| Entombed |  |
| Yawp |  |
| Peddling (Peddler) |  |
| Feat |  |
| Beast |  |
| Space |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Are there any themes? Anything in common to the words?

Week One Day Three:

* Lists are a creative minds best friends
  + It’s easier to find twelve ideas to solve a problem in the story than it is to find one
  + Fill a barrel with stuff – can be good, can be bad ones, jokes, parody, deliberately shit ideas, etc.
  + Shove the cow in the bed!
  + Creativity is a rescue puppy

List of problems of a fictional character:

* Is sick and the cure is locked in a deserted hospital
* Is afraid of people but has to convince a crowd to do something
* On a spaceship and can’t get the food doo-hicky to work
* In an office, struggling with a concept they should’ve known already
* Is a dog, and cannot stop smelling things
* Is a human and cannot stop smelling things
* Too many unread books
* Someone replaced a semicolon with a Greek comma in their code
* Trying to make art but has no inspiration
* Wrestling with getting a team of employees to think for themselves
* A button which should do something but does everything but what it’s meant to do
* All screens are blank
* The box is just waaaaaaay too big
* Lost the keys to the spaceship
* Returning home to find all of their stuff are now painted pink
* Running around in circles and don’t know why
* Phones are magically losing signal around them
* Supermarket has ran out of milk
* Supermarket apparently never had milk
* The coffee is TOO STRONG and now they can’t stop jittering
* Need to tell a patient that they will not make it
* Need to tell a patient they will make it, but without X
* Trying to return a book, but the librarians won’t accept the book until it is returned?
* Please log in to log out
* The pact with the devil is expiring
* Need to explain to people that they love ducks. As a pet, you sick bastards
* Has to get super drunk by midnight or else
* Must talk to the very beautiful stranger, but the ugly friend is distracting
* Antenna stuck in butt – how do you get it out?
* Is super powerful and is bored as a result

Week One Day Four:

* One or two memorable details about a character make a scene pop much more

List physical character descriptions – everything that makes a character unique:

* Has a tattoo of five points on his hand between the thumb and index finger
* Always carries a Chess piece – rook, specifically
* Piercing through the top of their left cheek
* Poses riddles
* Auburn Hair
* Has one hand
* Heterochromia
* Slouching, making them shorter than they are
* A blue hand
* An inexpensive watch
* A ridiculous hat
* Leaf green eyebrows
* Tattoos of fangs near the corners of the mouth
* Extends their vowels
* Always wearing one green item – no more, no less
* Electrodes under skin
* Cyborg eye
* Smart earring
* Circular jaw
* Augmented skirt
* Necklace which changes colour
* Fidgeting with their fingers
* Book with gibberish
* Oversized cat-ear headphones
* A duckling foot tattoo
* Tribal markings below the neck
* Magnetic piercing in the thumb and middle finger
* Answers with a question
* An odd way of pronouncing the letter D
* Taller than you’d think
* Hair is not black
* Six fingers
* Beard colour mismatched to the rest of his hair

Week One Day Five

* Battle Pagoda, Floor one, room five!
* Nonfiction for content, fiction for style
* Read books which could be like your own. Either It’ll be a relief cause it’s different than yours, or it’s a warning cause you’ve both gone for clichés

Books I always wanted to read and never read:

* Otherlands series
* Ringworld Series
* Barsoom Series
* Asimov’s Nightfall
* The grapes of Wrath
* For whom the bells toll
* Scott Pilgrim Vs the World series
* V for Vendetta
* H. P. Lovecraft books (the real ones, not the shit homages)
* Four Hour Series
* Zero to One
* Meditations by Marcus Aurelius
* Machiavelli’s The Prince
* Shakespeare! At least the big five!
* Batman the Killing Joke
* Gone with the wind
* Pride Prejudice and Zombies
* The aliens are coming!
* The sirens of Titan
* Slaughter house 5
* Cat’s Cradle
* Nudge
* Decisive
* Curious
* The pillars of happiness (Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu)
* ALL THE PRATCHET NOVELS!
* Asimov’s less known stuff
* The Gernsback continuum
* Red Mars Blue Mars Green Mars
* A song of ice and fire (game of thrones stuff)
* Uncle Tom’s tent
* Frankenstein
* Dracula
* Atlas Shrugged
* The great Gatsby
* Guns Germs and Steel (!)
* Nassim Taleb’s books (Black Swan, Anti-Fragile, etc.)

Week One Day Six

* What self delusion would drive you to write a novel? WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
  + Most people would never feel this since they would NEVER EVEN TRY doing it
  + I have every right to try and tell stories, and try and fuck things up and learn
* Lists are useful! Do them! (If they are really useful)

Interesting objects in the protagonist’s bag:

* Assorted hardware components and broken printed boards
* An old well-read cooking book stained in various colors
* A micro verse, filled with shining stars and swirling nebulas
* A rubber ducky, dressed like a British cop
* A voodoo doll with red hair, several holes, and LUKE cut into its chest
* A faded red wrench with a twisted head
* A small colored mirror with ridiculously sharp protrusions shaped like cat ears
* A bag full of teeth, some white, some yellow, other in various different colors
* Magic components – herbs, powders in sacks, bats wings, etc.
* A knife, rusting at the hilt and in generally poor condition, with the emblem of a koi on it
* A folded scarf with a dragon imprint, rugged and full of holes
* A well maintained wooden staircase leading down into darkness
* A brass knuckle, adorned with the teeth and jaw of a serial killer
* A blue fountain pen, adorned with actual gold
* A burnt half of a picture, of the protagonist next to what seems like another person
* A drawing of a lake in black and white, unsigned
* A car battery hooked by various wires to different parts of the bag
* An envelope, torn on the side, marked by a lipstick kiss and stained with a dark substance
* Several border collie puppies, playing with miniature sheep
* The ocean, vast and swirling, it’s depths as unrevealing as the depths of space

Week Two Day One

* Write about whatever you like….. (dear god)
  + If you’re slowing down, it’s not because you’re running out of stuff – it’s because you’re filtering
  + Risk something today – experiment! Let the puppy ruuuuuuuun
  + Try not to take refuge in Parody

Third person narrator I guess. That’s the thing I’ll use for this story. I hope it’ll make sense in the end. You’ll see. Until then, I was sitting in my room – or, more likely, the similie of my room – and enjoying the view. Life is good – I was powerful, known, influential even, and all this inside this little haven I carved with blood (mostly others) and sweat (mostly cold) and tears (entirely virtual ones). IT was my throne, my grand palace, this tiny, tiny room in the center of the Metropolis. Its name is long gone to the archives of who gives a fuck, but it is all that the world is today. At least, all that matters of the world today. It is the shining, glistening heart of the entire virtual world known as Otherworld 1. Otherworld 1 was the first virtual world created – ran entirely on the cloud, for seamless integration into your life – with the explicit purpose of being the last haven of humanity. Let’s face it, dear reader, even if you’re not living in this world, yours is probably shit. I mean, when was the lasts time you did something great? Dangerous? EXPLOSIVE? When was the last time your heart was beating not due to the adrenaline rush that is brought by stress, but because you’ve done something truly fantastic? When was the last time you’ve given your tired comrades a rousing speech, to try and lift their spirits for one last charge into enemy fire? When was the last time you’ve led an entire country into victory? Have closed a deal or played political games or even perhaps killed somebody? I bet never. Yet I did. This is how I got to the center of Metropolis – by being the very best. OR, at least, so I lie to myself often. In fact, I’m somewhat average – just lucky. Lucky to be at the right place at the right time.

The Center of Metropolis has the most expensive real-estate in the world (hehe) – If I work a very – VERY – good job anywhere, and save all of my money every month, I could use all the money saved that month to buy one meter. One. Square. Meter. In center Metropolis. Even not really a good meter. A shitty meter, on the outskirts, really borderline neighborhoods near the suburbs (Ew). This place, this tiny shelter which cost more than most castles and some countries in Africa was given to me by Grandfather. Not my actual grandfather, he died before I was born, I mean The Grandfather – the Emperor, the ruler, the master of the Thousand planet imperium of Otherworld 1. He though I was spunky and funny. I was smart, and kniving, and he knew – so, when

Week Two Day Two

* Go for little walks – it’s useful for writers
  + Be in an environment you’re not usually in

Free write – Keep going, try not to stop. If you’re stuck switch voices, scenes, fall back on lists, work on the muscle – train the puppy.

As the leaves fall down all around, the squirrels running up and down the trees all around the autumnal cemetery, carrying nuts, seeds of spring, and the souls of the dead, you notice one particularly large squirrel – a golden chestnut squirrel, with shiny eyes and a large, fluffy tail – beconing to you.

You look around to see if you’re alone and see no-one – not a soul, in fact. You approach the odd squirrel, and it rushes ahead, down the path, and stops. Looking back at you, seemingly calling out to you to follow it. As you begin to follow it you notice a glint of green in one of its rather large ears, and are surprised to see that it is an earring – a silver earing with a jade stone embedded in its midst. The squirrel ducks into a small hole near one of the tombstones at the cemetery, and you come to a halt – the hole is obviously too small for you, and odd as it might be to have a ridiculously beautiful squirrel run ahead of you and wear an earring, you cannot fit in the tiny hole through which it just ran. Or can you? You go down on all four, peering around to make sure no one sees you in this moment of silliness, and try to fit a hand into the hold. Your hand fits a little past the wrist, yet no more. No, you cannot fit in there. What were you thinking? As you stand up a soft chuckle makes you turn around, only to see the squirrel standing on top of one of the other tombstones, looking around innocently and pretending not to have noticed you sticking your hand into a grave.

The squirrel beacons and you follow – this time towards a large, basalt mausoleum with giant columns and towering arches. It is far bigger than necessary, and you are certain you’ve never seen it before. You’ve been visiting the cemetery pretty regularly since your parents have died, but have never noticed this freakishly large structure, apparently in the middle of the cemetery. Yet as you look around, you can find no other graves, just a path leading back through the trees – a forest, now? – and the squirrel, it’s tail held high, its earring glinting in the soft light of the setting sun, standing near the door to the mausoleum. You approach hesitantly, concerned the mysterious squirrel is messing with you again, yet this time you notice it is different – the door to the giant pitch black basalt structure is opened just a crack, and surprisingly warm air is flowing out of it.

* The squirrel is turning into a man, the squirrels are Psychopomps (New word! Woohoo!), guides to the dead, is the reader dead? Etc.

Week Two Day Three

Another free write..... yaaaay

* The Muse?
  + Exists if it helps you that it exists

POV of a lamp in a hotel. Cause why the fuck not.

Few ever consider the stuff which surrounds them. We live in boxes, wether rooms or offices or gyms or cars, we’re trapping ourselves willingly in a box for most of our lives without care for anything else. Yet we share these boxes with people, animals, and so called stuff, without giving it a second thought. I am one of those.... “stuff”.

I sit on a table on a desk in one of those boxes, and I glow when asked. More like, commanded, but to us it makes little difference. I was here before you, and when you will be gone I will probably still be in this box. Many people come and go through this box of mine. Sometimes alone, sometimes in pairs, sometimes with smaller people, and rarely they start alone and then someone joins them. These occasions are the most exciting, because the change in the composition of the room changes everything for me. The pattern shifts in an unexpected way, life takes a sudden twist. It’s nice to see them, usually happy.

I remember distinctly group of people. They were two tall ones, and two small ones, and they brought a glow of their own – one like me. It was small and colorful, not as large and majestic as I, yet in its own way it was adorable and unique. Its glow was softer than mine, lower, smaller, as if meant for a child. Indeed, the little people seem to like it a lot. Are they children? Are people children born smaller? People seem to change, since I see some of the people who visit my box visiting again, looking a little different each time, but I don’t think that the change is so dramatic. I’ve never seen a group of people coming and going, with one of them stretching or contracting. It’s odd, but so are people. The small glow was very kind – it said it is with these people all the time, in their box. Specifically with the small people. It glows for them, and they are happy. Sounds like a calm life, but so monotonous – it would drive me up the wall, which I hope would be kind enough not to be too weird about it.

We talked a lot, the little glow and I. Apparently he’s seen many such boxes, in many different times, but always with the same people. Our difference was stark – the little glow seeing many boxes with the same people, and I many people with the same box. How could the little glow stand it?

Week Two Day Four

* Place to the side the internal critic/editor, and let the puppy roam
  + An internal critic is awesome and is super useful – in specific times
* Writers have permission to do the weird stuff (you might see things as they aren’t usually are)

Free write – again. Today I will try to write something unfiltered entirely, or something I will actively be embarrassed in. Not the goal, the goal is a free write, but I’m feeling off so... here it goes.

A late night drive. Tim Clare is driving while I’m writing, so that’s the first thing that pops to my mind. IT is a somewhat interesting parabole to my current situation – life’s moody and messy, looking and feeling like you do at night – somewhat dirty, smelly, and maybe in a *soar* need of sitting down somewhere and just going the fuck to sleep hoping tomorrow would be better.

I’ll be brutally honest here. I hate myself. A lot. Sometimes more than others, but mostly I don’t like myself. I know I have promise, and am somewhat smart, yet I constantly fail at everything. Like a night drive that never ends. Always smelly, always a mess, with a significant stubble, but remembering that you were once clean and shaven and happy and nice smelling, and life was not too complex. Yes, I am demanding a lot from myself, but it oly makes sense. I HAVE to prove to me, above everyone else, that I don’t really suck. I mean, I’m a failure at almost everything I tried doing – I barely passed my degree, didn’t do well at school, traditionally bad with women, am a bad engineer and scientist and everything I presume and constantly lie to people I am. That is such a shame, but I cannot help my self. It feels like I’m constantly letting everyone down, always, non-stop, and even myself, but there is nothing to be done about it. “Sit and do stuff better” is usually what I get, but that’s not how things work, that’s not how any of that work. What, you can’t lift a weight, so lifting a much heavier weight would suddenly cure it? I. HATE. MYSELF. Most of the time. Sometimes, I think I might be crazy. Or, well, not completely crazy, but somewhat unhinged. If I ever go to a shrink, I’m probably not coming out the same door, is what I’m saying. I’m talking to myself sometimes, and I’m weird, and awkward at many times and to be fair I suck at almost anything. I pick something up and give it up immidietly, and recently I can’t even cry properly – I can’t let that part of me that was so easy to access a few years ago roam free. I am stuck in this sort of comfortable middle of the road and I’m anxious about everything and GOD DO I HATE MYSELF.

Now, the bad part is that I know. I know this doesn’t make any sense. But I have become so good at lying to everyone about everything that I’m also successful at lying to myself about how great and loved and successful I am without having any evidence to support it. It feels terrible. I am actually anxious that the podcast limit of ten minutes would be reached before I get this nonsense off my chest. Dear god, what a nightmare. I...... I just don’t know. It’s tough. I know I’m smart and special, but I also know that I’m not smart and not special and that this knowledge that’s engrained in the back of my head that I am is false and I don’t deserve anything because in all honesty, I kinda suck.

Yeah, it doesn’t make any sense. But neither do my life. I hope that by putting it all down here it will all go away now. But to be honest, I don’t know. Is pushing myself really that good? Is it possible? Is it worth anything at all? I mean, as a result of doing all these stuff over the years I am – what? A pathetic excuse of a man, cowardly, not manly in the eyes of my girlfriend (she might be able to lie to herself, but not to me. It is important to her and I do not deliver on this bit), a failure in almost every task I undertake, yet I still somehow stick with it. I know, all the big shots of the past say that this is normal and leaning into uncomfortable areas is super important and useful, but I..... just don’t see it. Yeah, I finished engineering university with the odds stacked against me and I’ve tried all these things I know I’d suck at, which is sort of good? Maybe? Maybe my grace is that I’ll be forgotten within a week after I die, which would perhaps be a blessing. Better than go down in history as a man who failed a fuck-ton of stuff. But maybe not being rememberd is a good thing. Maybe just..... letting go. Accepting that I am average and nothing special and running with it. not expecting anything, just doing the bare minimum, and passing life until I’m gone. Maybe. It is kind of pretentious writing it all down here, “pouring my heart on the page” and all, but fuck. I’m almost crying. Just at the back of my eyes, that silent pressure that aaaaaalmost the dam is broken and the tears would flow. But I can’t. I don’t deserve to cry. I’ll pull through. Maybe someday it’ll all pay off in some weird way. Maybe not. Probably not. But I will try. I am afraid. So. Afraid. Afraid I’ll try all these things and would just turn out as a failure as an old man, someone who wasted his life on presumptions that he was worth anything and spent his entire life on so called “get rich quick” schemes and cutting corners. I am not a good man, or a valuable man in any way. I just..... well, kind of suck. In everything I do. That’s my super power – I am consistently bad at a lot of things. Maybe that’s good? Probably not. Oh well. Wish I could say I am feeling better now, but I’m not, really. Maybe a little. The pressure in the chest is still there, but now at least it feels like the rest of me is empty. Maybe that’s also a good idea. Being empty all the time. Maybe going back to those days where feelings were easy and well connected is a trerrible idea and perhaps just ignoring them would be for the best. We’ll see. There’s very little I can do about it, anyway. Just.... try. Do my best, and just – and I apologise for the cliché – keep swimming. Maybe I’ll drown. But maybe........

Maybe not. We’ll see.

I’ll probably drown though.

Fuck. What was that? Where did that come from?

Super dark.

Well, but when you put a mask on for so long, you forget who you are beneath and all that. Mask on. Show time.

Week Two Day Five

* Freewrites are bad – but interestingly bad. Disastrously bad.
* History of the runestaff (?) – simple, paper thin plot, characters are 2d, mostly bullshit, but is constructive reading
* Your imagination is both silly and holy
* Treat you imagination like you do your favorite Pokemon

Adapted, modulated free-write. Pick a name from the name list (Nagashima An) and they’re doing the writing today. They’re writing to Conrad Vasil with a strong emotion. Improvise!

Dear Conrad,

I don’t even know what I’m writing to you for. I told you I’m sorry. It doesn’t matter much now, I know, but still – I’m sorry. In fact, no, you should be sorry, you fuck. It was your fault. I know, a war and all, but still – you knew. You bloody well knew about Omaha, and you. Did. Nothing. So yeah, I couldn’t save him, but you fucking well knew and you let him die because..... of what? What is it that you thought? You left the day before Omaha, and you never answer any of these letter, but seriously, if you see this, know that fuck YOU. And I’m sorry.

It wasn’t easy, you know. It was rather chaotic, and it was not an easy time for anyone – especially for us on the east coast. The fallout was bad, but the shells were worse because they could stop but didn’t. You remember. At least, I hope you do. Why did you leave....?

It wasn’t easy to find him. He was next to her, all the time, so when I found her.... I found him. It was tough to carry him back, but it was even harder to carry her. She was so light, so easy, but it was so, so hard to carry her. I couldn’t stop crying. I stopped. Twice. A few times. I couldn’t. It was.... too much. She was so young. So beautiful. Her hair...... the crinkle in the edge of her eyes..... she was so small. So light. And of course he was there. With her, until the last moment. Or maybe he arrived later. You didn’t care, you never cared, you probably don’t even care now, even if you get this. But they were together, and he was not alone. Maybe she was. Maybe she was there first. She left last. As I carried her. Not you. Me. No parent should do this.

And if anyone should, it should have been you. Or at least, us. I don’t know what got them – the shells, the fallout, the fuckers.... But getting them back was tough. What I did with them is non of your business. But he got a tree, and she a flower, and I’ll be going to visit so very often. Every birthday, and every holiday.

Why did you leave? Was it someone else that forced you? Was it the war? Or did you just want to run? The responsibility too great, the pain too big? You just took a train and left. I didn’t even know until a week later when we got the last bill in the mail, after the card was cancelled and you vanished off the face of the fucking earth into the new union. I know that’s now how it’s called, but that’s what it is, and we all know it. It’s just a new fucking soviet union, and it doesn’t matter how they brand it.

I miss you. I hate you. You are ridiculous, and absurd, and pathetic. And yet it was so hard to bury them. Both of them. So small.

The tree and flower will wait for you.

An

Week Two Day Six

* A free-write is a weapon against procrastination
* Writer’s usually give the advice they wish they’d follow
* Ways to utilize the weapon:
  + Write first thing in the morning (Tim’s never done it) (Funny AF episode, 05:40)
  + A great way to find out what you already know but haven’t figured out yet
    - Take 10-20 minutes, switch to a free-write, and see what you get out of it
    - “What would be stupid if it happened right now?”
* Free-writes make your life better because it is better to have some writing then nothing and is the perfect answer to having no idea what to write or no time or whatever
* The stories you have to tell and the characters, themes, and experiences you can write about are SO important. They really are. Dickins was great, but he’s dead – so it’s only us left.

Final free-write (This is a useful technique, but tough af)

Object: A micro verse, filled with shining stars and swirling nebulas Emotion: Awe

She opened har bag, whispering softly a command word. As he looked inside, he saw the bag’s content shift suddenly – no more assorted toiletries and day to day objects, but a microverse – all bright stars and swirling nebulas, glowing softly into infinity inside this small bag.

“Ho – Ly – Shit” he said, breathlessly. “What the... who.... did you....?” she smirked, and looked into the bag “Yeah, built it myself. It started as a simple bag of holding from the old days, but I thought it could be done in a far cooler way. Speaking of” She straightened up, and in a pompous royal tone said “Observe!”. Her hand reached into the bag, as she tapped several stars in a specific sequence. Each star hummed softly when touched, and glowed slightly brighter. As she completed what seemed like a constellation in the bag, the microverse swirled in the bag, seemingly zooming on one specific star system and one specific star and one specific planet and one specific continent and one specific house and suddenly her bag was showing the inside of a miniature rustic wooden cabin full of random stuff. Her bag did not seem to show the cabin – it was the cabin. She reached in, moving objects around like a giant playing with a doll-house, and pulled out the cat-eared mirror. “Found it” she exclaimed, and closed the bag. “No no no no no no” he said, grabbing her bag and opening it again, only to find the same assorted miscelennia in every woman’s purse. “How do you call it up again?” he asked, opening and shutting the bag several times in disbelief. “How did you code it? Is it infinite? It can’t be infinite! It’s too big! The simulation can never handle so many-“ she snatched her bag back and slapped his hand playfully “One, you never snatch a ladys purse unless you wish to have a missile up your ass. Two, it’s not infinite – it’s just a different way of presenting an n-dimensional space. Simply a pretty GUI to something”

* It’s not assumed that this exercise is easy, it’s completely normal for it to be hard

Week Three Day One

* This week - Mask work
* Today’s mask: A scientist, a caricature of a scientist. Alien, green, lab coat. Gentle smile, calm eyes- four eyes. Posture slightly bent, hands have four fingers each. The head is oval in shape, with two bone protrusions extruding from his eyebrows up to about 15 cm above his head. It might not be a he, but is what we perceive as slightly masculine. Skinny, in his lab full of instruments. Not all knowing, yet proud of his limited ignorance.
* My side is me, they’re side is them. Dialogue!

Ahh... it’s been a very long time since we saw a new alien – or is this the word you’d use?

Umm.... yes? Maybe?

Well I’m just excited to meet you. first contact is such an honor, but is also a major responsibility to do it right – terrible terrible wars could start by an improper first contact. What is your name? Or do you even have names as individuals, or are you a swarm? Oh my, is it ok, to ask you for a name?

It is, and we have individual names. Mine is Gil, and it is a pleasure to meet you. Do you have individual names?

Yes, though my name might be best saved for later. Is there a name by which you’d like to call me, to ease this conversation?

Would it be ok to call you Franklin?

For now that will do. A pleasure, Gil, I am Franklin. How do you do?

How come we can communicate?

You might understand this as telepathy – I cannot read your mind, but I can transmit a series of signals which your mind would interpret as a language you know, and I can understand how your mind would form a language and in return read it

So.... you can read minds

Well, to be fair, no – but we can sort of understand how language centers work, and have built machinery to allow us to communicate directly to and from them. I believe we are lucky that our correction algorithms are working on new minds as well.

How many are there?

Of what?

Of you

Well, not a lot – but we are spread out rather thinly, like you

How do you know?

I assume. We haven’t seen your kind before, so it’s all just fancy guess work. Did I get it right?

Week Three Day Two

* Approximately 30,000 words before a made-up character is automated enough to “exist on it’s own”

My name is senator Tiberious Maximus, speaker of the senate of the people of Rome.

I am alive, still, in the memory of my people. It is not an easy thing to bear, no simple feat or burden. I live in the flesh and blood of the nation that has sprouted out of the 2000 years of turmoil which have been the property of the nation that is now Italy, the successor to my beloved Rome. I live in it’s soul and in it’s road and in its fields and in its people as I live in its laws. I was a lawmaker, and my laws were often passed. Not always, mind you, but often enough to be renowned as a good, or at least decent, senator. It was a tough job, but someone had to do it. Had a few slaves in my time, but still – that was the life then and those were the customs.

I am made immortal by my work, and I am here to warn you. The value of good work done cannot be underestimated, yet can be easily overestimated – you are you, and in this world many things are not known to us. Maybe tomorrow war would engulf the world, or a minor change somewhere would change your life forever. I see that you deal with philosophy and science. Good. A man is worthy of such pursuits. However a small change in the weirdest of places might stir you completely away from this path you have chosen. Or, as it seems, ws chosen for you. I understand your pain – a senator was a glorious job, but not one I wished. I missed the frolicking and the dancing and the love and the fun that comes with a simpler, easier life. Living in my towers of marble and the halls of debate, where my wit was tested against those of the best Rome had to offer were interesting, yet not liberating. And I see you are in a similar position.

You could be a great philosopher, young one – and you are young. You could be many things, yet it seems like your sphere is closing and breaking out of it would be a terrible burden. Yet you must. Expand your sphere at all costs, if not break out of it entirely. The dreams of your childhood yet live, and your hopes for a better future would not come to be unless you pursue them. Is now a good time? Probably not. But is ever a good time? You can wait a year or two, but why wait until you are something? What makes you ready for a war or a debate or a great adventure? The consent of others? Or something from within you?

I suggest that you are ready. You aree ready for whichever task you deam worthy of pursuing. You might succeed, and you might fail. In all honesty, you will probably fail. But learn from my mistakes – do not choose the easy choice. Do not accept a life of comfort, because the comfortable bed is the one that is hardest to rise from. Accept a life of adversity, and of fighting, and of clawing your mark on the world. Be brave.

Week Three Day Three

Let me tell you what I did. It was what everyone would do in my place. It wasn’t easy, mind you. It was tough. As fuck.

I was one of the soldiers who ran through this pathetic country like a knife through water. Completely and utterly unstoppable. And they didn’t even try – they basically gave up and gave us the damn place. A beautiful place, with spas and fields and ancient beautiful cities… and they just put their bloody tail between their legs and whimpered and gave up. Not a hint of struggle. I mean, come one! At least something! I don’t want to believe the stories about us being better and superior to everyone, but we literally just fought a bunch of Polish cavalry and now this….? Or was it the other way around? I don’t remember, it was too long ago.

Everyone back home – and here – keep telling us how glorious we are. How great. How fucking superior. We are the best of the best, and it’s scientific! There’s science to back it up! We ARE genetically better!

….But it can’t be true, I thought, can it? Or at least, I hoped. But when we stormed in here, and country after country after country, with proud traditions and long histories, just…. whimpered and surrendered…. I mean, it can’t be true, can it? We cant REALLY be better than them? At least, not so much better. This is ridiculous.

I was part of the occupying force stationed here, on this very hill, when there wasn’t much here yet. A bunch of hovels, and our tank battalion. I still remember the lovely autumn. How beautiful this place was, and how it pissed me off to think how easily they just gave it up.

There was a girl. A woman, almost. She was trying to convince the officers to issue a permit for her and her family to leave this area, to “visit their grandmother”. Trying to run away, of course. And the officers had fun with her. Too much fun.

I don’t know her name. I just remember her face. Her slowly decaying face. Slightly less glowing every time she walked out of our camp, her step not quite regular. And it was horrible. We are supposed to be fighting fierce foes and unroot the corruption and weakness that holds these damn countries.

So one night, on her way out, her legs shaking, on the verge of tears, I approached her. Fear was obvious in her. I gave her my medals – two, all silver and gold – and a signed permit which I stole and signed in the CO’s handwriting. She and her family made it across the border, or so I choose to believe.

Me? I was found out, of course. We’re very effective motherfuckers. I was court-martialed. And I was shot. Was it worth it? Maybe. But it had to be done.

Week Three Day Four

* We’re taking notes – from DEMONS!
* The demon tasked with preventing the “Patient” (me) from writing

Dear Melechiazeval,

Your patient is seemingly an easy one, yet he is unpredictable. His whim to be accepted to that program in Canada, curse that happy place, might be a powerful drive which you must cut short. If the Canadian program is eliminated from his life, all will return to normal and your life would be easy once more.

If I understood your letter correctly, he is driven by pride, it seems, and wishes to write not for any noble cause but simply to have been published to push the Canadians further. You can easily play on that – encourage such thoughts and patterns of pride, hinting to your patient that he is great and cunning and powerful and allowing him to tighten the web of lies around him until he is immobile. If he is certain that there is no need for him to write the novel since he is so great, then presto – he would not write.

However, as mentioned, your patient is unpredictable, making him slightly more challenging than simply that. Since any small mishap might unbalance him and send him into introspection, out of which he would come out determined to write with such ferocity that would be hard to stop. So the easy course of encouraging pride is a dangerous gambit: easy to implement, powerful, but not sustainable. To sustain a long aversion to writing you must take on the role of his critic and encourage him to criticize himself. If he is too busy thinking about what to write and if whatever he writes is good, he’ll never get any writing done.

We are racing against the clock here. If he manages to complete a novel then he has won and stopping him from writing another would be a lot of work for you (not to mention mountains of paperwork). So, try to push the buttons of pride – encourage his thoughts that he is good enough so that he does not need to write anything, while simultainously encouraging his internal critic to shred everything he might accidentally write. This dual vice would incapacitate him for long enough for the Canadians to answer, and no matter what their answer was we win – If they accept, it plays into his pride that he does not need to write a novel because he’s great and wonderful, and if they do not, then he plays into the critic’s hand.

Yours truly,

Shebalzeval

Week Three Day Five

* The first thing you do when you put a mask is look around
* Taking on a new identity leads to a new perspective

Today we put on a mask of someone with a different view of the world and look around the world

My mask: A non-technical person who’s body is a well-oiled machine which ticks as clockwork. Why are they here, what do they see, how do they feel?

Well, this feels like a weird place. With all this computer stuff around, the recycled air, the bad posture chairs and the well-crafted prison to your body. I like the silence though – it feels like you’re all very respectful of each other’s brains yet completely neglect your own body.

This is really a comfortable office, which is a very dangerous thing. You can easily slouch in here and do nothing day in and day out. Let your body rot and your hard work melt away. There is everything you need here to be lazy, which is actually very counter-productive – being healthy and on top of your game means usually your brain works better as well. Let this mask fit you better. Such an alien perspective, right? Seeing your surrounding as a jumble of magic and computer stuff and code and post-its and basically what amounts to a very comfortable prison for your body and consequently, your mind.

It feels constricting. It feels like this place would demand a lot of extra work just to keep your body in minimal working condition. And to be fair, I’m here to see what’s up and how to save you. Your body is in a pretty bad shape, and it gets worse the longer you are in this place. You need to find some way to combat it.

Your diet is a good start, you just need to stick to it. Try writing what you’re eating for a week. Also, a little exercise is better than none, so think about what can you do. Either pick up a gym habit, just like you did with writing, or do the gymnastics thingy, or go for walks each day, or whatever – just keep moving.

Maybe leave for work a little earlier and walk from one metro station before when you arrive.

Maybe even consider walking to work once a while – I’m pretty sure the road can be lovely when it’s not super cold. How about it?

Also, take a day later on to fix your working space. Not immediately, I know you’ve got stuff to do, but soon. Damn, this is a long one, isn’t it? Probably because you’re so unused to this point of view. A realistic view of the world and of you. Lovely. But to be fair, don’t be so hard on yourself – your body might lose its elasticity soon, and it seems like it’s already starting. Just..... start. Pick a day, sit down to make a plan, and stick to it.

Week Three Day Six

* Holding back will engage your inner critic – they’re good, but veeeeery late in the process
* It’s better to get your pen moving and cross out stuff later rather that agonizing over decisions later

Drop one of the characters from the past week into a situation – a location where they are to meet someone who they haven’t seen in some time. Appeal to the five senses!

The vast ocean stretched along the horizon like a long stretchy infinite thing of blue and white, the sound of the wave swirling up to his ears like foam and the smell of salt attracted to his nostrils like bees to big, round flowers. The ocean. On a boat, in the middle of the fucking ocean. Why am I doing this, he thought to himself, since there was obviously no plausible reason to be sitting thousands of kilometers from home, on a row boat, in the middle of the ocean. He checked his GNSS watch to make sure the place is right, only to find out that the currents or the wind or the will of fucking fate itself moved him too far south. He cursed very loudly, grabbed the coarse plastic oars, and navigated the boat towards the agreed location.

“Here are the coordinates” said the email, “Be there at 18:00 next Friday. Yes, it’s in the middle of the ocean. No, this isn’t a mistake. Yes, do trust me that I know what I’m doing and wouldn’t have dragged you all the way out there just to mess with you. Though to be fair, that would’ve been a pretty good one if I had”. And here he was, his now long removed shirt tied to his head, his sweat sticky and salty and disgusting. “And now we wait” he said generally to the world a large.

18:00. Something dramatic should happen now, he thought. “Where is the DRAMA?!” he shouted at the waves. They did not answer. Rude things. He leaned back in his row boat, grumbling to himself.

18:05, still nothing. He waited, slowly dozing off. “Maybe this was just something to mess with me” he thought, “and if it is then I’ll be fair, it’s a bloody good on-“ his train of though was interrupted by a bubbling noise a little way off into the distance. He rose, just in time to see the source of the noise break through the surface of the water – an old Russian submarine, black, like a hole cut into the sea broke through, spraying foam and water and noise everywhere. There were no birds, but he could imagine that had there were a few they’d squawk in terror.

* Take long walks, down roads you don’t usually take
* Read a book in the bath....?
* If you’d like to practice writing for your book
  + List of items for characters: Go on etsy and stuff, see clothes and find out stuff
  + Themes from the book: Loss,
  + Channel a minor character like the mask work week
  + However don’t do anything sensible, proper, or grown up

Week Four Day One

This week: Elements of style!