

I'm in Love with a Sadist

Josh Kim

I was born to write. As a child, I had a lot to say, but didn't enjoy talking. Writing was the perfect way for me to channel what I was thinking without ever having to open my mouth. One of the first stories I wrote was about a girl who got everything she wished for, but every wish she made went terribly wrong. The story managed to find its way in to my first-grade writing journal and, while impressed, my teacher was disturbed by the dark tone that pervaded the piece; apparently, it's uncharacteristic of a seven-year old to kill his main character at the end of a short story. As time passed on and I wrote more, I found myself winning a number of awards. I graduated from high school with no less than three blue ribbons from the local, annual writing contest and a first prize honor in a poetry competition; I even placed second in a statewide essay contest. I'm good at writing. I belong to writing.

And yet, I have to make a strange confession; I don't enjoy it. It's a terrible thing for a writer to say, but it's the truth. A part of me hates writing, and why shouldn't it? Writing is hard, excruciating, painful – all of the terrible adjectives you can find in the dictionary. It nags and pesters and beats you down until you make it perfect. I cannot begin to count the number of hours I've labored away on single paragraphs, making them flawless, only to come back the next day to a myriad of previously unseen blemishes marring the once-perfect block of text I spent so much of my life writing. It's maddening, and I have no shame in admitting I've screamed out loud at my writing more than once in my life.

Writing makes the writer a slave; it's the master of the writer, not the other way around. It plants an image of what it should look like in the writer's mind, haunting him and making him work tirelessly until the vision is reality. Writing challenges me at every turn, questions my motives and opinions; it makes me insecure. "Does this train of thought really make sense?" it asks. "The wording here is poor, and your intent is unclear," it says. When I'm with it, it consumes me, taking every bit of energy I have, and I'm exhausted after I leave it. It forces me to reevaluate, reconsider, and reflect on everything I do in relation to it. The game of second-guessing never ends. Writing makes me want to cry and scream, patronizing and laughing at me all the while. I think Hemingway put it best when he said, "There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit at a typewriter and bleed." The quote captures my feelings exactly. After I finish writing anything, I'm completely spent mentally and sometimes emotionally – I've been bled dry, sacrificed for my writing's benefit. But, as much as I hate writing, as much as it torments me and makes me want to give up on it for good, I always find myself crawling back. In the midst of all the pain, there's a very sweet pleasure. I hate it, but at the center of my hatred is a love that betters me.

The sadomasochism of the ordeal pushes me past what I thought were limits. "I can't write a 15 page paper," I'll tell myself. "You're right. You're just not good enough," writing will respond. The challenge is issued; the struggle begins. And I fight, and I write, and try my hardest to prove writing wrong. But inevitably, I'll come to a wall, and writing will be there to taunt me. "I told you, you can't do it." Lucky for me, the doubt only fuels my desire to overcome - to find a way around, over, or through the barrier. And, little by little, with every new sentence set in ink, I conquer the tormentor, the master, the writing, myself. With every keystroke or pen mark, I come closer to defeating my opponent and understanding him on a deeper level than before.

Seeing a finished piece of writing; a piece I've struggled with for hours, days, sometimes weeks; a piece that made me feel stupid; a piece that made me question my ability; provides the most euphoric feeling in the world. There's a small moment in that victory where the roles are reversed, where I, the slave, have conquered the master. In my triumph, I know I'm smart enough, and good enough, and worthy of writing. But, the feeling is fleeting, and as soon as I start another piece, I return to submission and writing asserts its dominance. It will always have the advantage in our infinite struggle; it will always end up on top. There's no plateau I can reach where I'm equal to writing. I am Sisyphus, rolling a boulder up a hill and watching it tumble back down for eternity. But I go back to push the stone up the hill again, because I love it - because maybe this time the rock won't roll away.

This love is the reason I chose to pursue the minor. In my admission letter, I talked about wanting to round out my writing. And, to some extent, that's true; I *do* want to make myself a more formidable, knowledgeable writer. But, in that statement, there's an implication of a deeper sentiment. I want to hone my writing ability, because to do so necessitates a richer, fuller appreciation of writing as a whole. The more I know about writing, the closer I bring myself to it. To me, writing is about achieving an honest understanding of something, whether that something is art, politics, or myself. The more I write, the more I discover who I am as a writer. And I am a *writer*, not someone whose interests lay elsewhere who also writes. I write to become better, even if I'm not sure I can. I write to understand writing. I write to understand why I write. And most importantly, I write to understand why I somehow intrinsically know that I am supposed to be a writer, and nothing else.