



A Day in the Life

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AS THE YEAR TURNS to 2021, you find yourself at a creative crossroads. You've spent over a decade trying to get into radio drama. Spent thousands of hours writing spec scripts. Developed relationships with producers. At one point you even had a meeting at broadcasting house. What a day that was. Several months of rewrites followed then — well... it was close, but no cigar.

Some years ago you had a few novels published. The last one hit the shelves in 2007. You got some good reviews. Even some *great* reviews — that one in the *Guardian*, the big article on UK writers in *Asimov's*. But there were some pretty shit reviews, too, and of course it's these that you focus on. You understand that this is due to the negativity bias, and is a survival trick — but that doesn't help. And ultimately those books didn't sell that well, so you now have a track record as a writer with mixed reviews and unimpressive sales. Your once-upon-a-time agent told you just that.

You wrote another novel. The development of a short story that was nominated for an award. Your agent got excited about it, or at least said he was, and offered it to some of the major London publishers. Over the course of a few months they all turned it down, albeit with positive polite comments. The agent gradually lost interest and stopped replying to emails. Eventually you ended the relationship. It's not me, it's you.

Newly single and feeling quite liberated, you pitched the novel to a few people yourself. But in the end you couldn't give it away.



Every time you began a new project you'd think *Maybe this will be the one*, dangling your own hopeful carrot. But then the disappointment would come once more. The failure, the frustration, the depression. Over the past twelve years, sales of a few short stories have earned you a total of three hundred and ninety-eight pounds and twenty-four pence. So as you now stand at the crossroads and wonder which path to take, your writing is limited to morning pages, upon which you dump your subconscious, confident in the knowledge that no one will read it.

As you write this, you haven't written anything creative for over six months — the longest break since you started writing back in the early nineties. You can't help but wonder whether perhaps you're just not that good. Maybe you should stick to expressing your creativity in the garden. No more spec scripts. No more pitches. No more writing.

But while on one hand that's appealing, you know there's something missing.

And then you learn that the guy who commissioned those few short stories over the years, the ones that kept you going, has become editor of a magazine you've always wanted to be published in. And it fires up your creative juices. Not because you think your friendship will make a difference, but — well, just because.

Within hours you've pulled something from your projects folder that might have potential. You dangle the carrot of hope once more, and you're a writer again. And suddenly the day feels different.