



Writer's Block

Clare Fisher

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I would Doom and Gloom whenever the 'whatever' that makes me write dried up. I would throw extravagant internal tantrums that would manifest, externally, as a surface irritation whose origins were inexplicable. I could not write, I would never write again, etc.

At some point, the Doom would fade enough for me to jump back into whatever I'd been trying to write before it began. But my characters were just words. And my words: just other people's, only clumsier, less necessary, more shameful. And me: not a person, just a vessel whose emptiness would without doubt last forever. Thus would begin *Doom: The Sequel*.

I weathered this cycle many, many times. Sometimes it lasted a few days; other times it would bloom into a low-level depression that lasted for months. I'd be lying if I said I'm now completely free of such cycles; I'm not.

What I am, however, is able to recognise them for what they are: my body's way of telling me to just. Bloody. Stop.

Stop.

There.



That wasn't so bad, was it?

Was it?

I often wait too long to stop; I rarely do so until I'm so tired or have such a bad headache or other ache that I can't *not*. Once I do, however, I can't explain what I was so afraid of. Stopping when you need to stop feels good.

By stopping I mean not only not-writing but not fretting about not writing. I mean sleeping. I mean cooking and eating proper meals, I mean long purposeless walks and time spent with close friends and films and music. I mean doing the life admin and the housework that writing-me ignored.

At some point in the midst of this not-writing, I'll start to hunger for words. Not my own – not yet – but other people's. I'll open and close various books until I find the one that satisfies: maybe a short story collection I've forgotten I love or a novel I bought from a charity shop several years ago but haven't read yet. I won't compare these books to my own writing, I won't mine them for techniques; I'll just enjoy them for what they are. I don't even care that I'm not a writer any more: I'm just so happy to be a person having fun.

It's usually a few days later that it creeps back. The ache. The itch. the idea. The 'whatever' that makes me write because I can't not.