

ON THE VIRTUES OF NOT WRITING

by

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SETTING — A room in a home.

CHARACTERS — HUSBAND and WIFE.

AT RISE — HUSBAND is staring at a computer screen, forlorn. WIFE looks in.

HUSBAND

(miserable)

Hi.

WIFE

Hooooow's it going?

HUSBAND

("terribly")

Fine.

WIFE

What's the problem?

HUSBAND

(thinking)

"What's the problem..."

WIFE

(peers at screen)

Ah, you're not writing.

HUSBAND

No, the problem is much worse. I have arrived at a terrible truth and it is this: not writing is empirically better than writing.

WIFE

Hmm. I think you mean "subjectively"? It's better for you.

HUSBAND

It's better for everyone! No one has to read what I wrote, and I get to do other things with my time.

WIFE

You mean like video games?

HUSBAND

Sure. Or Netflix, um...

WIFE

Dishes? The kitty litter? Sweep? Vacuum? Mop?

HUSBAND

My god you have an active imagination.

WIFE

If you didn't write, you'd do all of those things? Or, any of them?

HUSBAND

I mean, probably not. But I could.

WIFE

Uh huh.

HUSBAND

But not if I write! If I write—that's it. Nothing else is possible. Maybe not even the writing. Maybe I stare at a blank page all night and that was my evening. I was "writing," sure, it's all part of the "process," sure, but what was actually accomplished? Whereas if I... "washed" these "dishes" of yours—

WIFE

—also yours—

HUSBAND

—then we would have more clean and fewer dirty dishes than before. Effort, applied to time, equaling a concrete result. But if I wrote... who knows what I'd get? Maybe nothing. Maybe worse than nothing.

WIFE

So... then don't.

HUSBAND

How dare you.

WIFE

What??

HUSBAND

This is my dream.

WIFE

Then write!!

HUSBAND

...But I don't want to!

WIFE

...Then don't!!

HUSBAND

And, what, clean our apartment for the rest of my life?? Be some kind of... dish washer? Floor scrubber? No one changed the world doing that!

WIFE

But video games and Netflix—

HUSBAND

Yes, alright, fine. I should just write.

WIFE

Okay.

HUSBAND

...But I don't want to.

WIFE

I could have married a doctor, you know. Or a lawyer.

HUSBAND

You probably should have.

WIFE

Everyone told me to.

HUSBAND

I'm sorry, okay? That is what happens when a warm front meets cold. When... an unstoppable force meets an unmovable object.

(quick beat)

That's not half bad.

(starts typing)

WIFE

So this is like a thunderstorm of indecision? I guess that makes a weird sort of—

HUSBAND

(frustrated)

Look, can you respect my process a little? I am trying to write.

WIFE

(makes unseen murder motions)

Yep. Sorry.

(quick beat)

You know, I think I still have some of those phone numbers—do you mind if I see what some of those guys are up to?

HUSBAND

(distracted, still typing)

That's fine.

WIFE leaves, already on cell phone.

HUSBAND (cont.)

Thanks.

(beat)

I'll wash the next load, okay?

WIFE

(off)

Hi, is this Alfonso? Hey, I— Yes, this is! Weird question: did you ever become a doctor?

(quick beat)

That's fantastic! And you used to dabble in writing a little; did you ever—...?

(quick beat)

Ohhhh gosh, I'm sorry to hear that. But if it's any consolation, I've heard that not writing is empirically better than writing.

(quick beat)

I don't know! Something stupid I heard somewhere. Want to discuss it over dinner?

HUSBAND

(still writing; profoundly satisfied with self)

Definitely on to something here....

END OF PLAY.