

## **The White Page**

# 1

## A Requiem

I know this blank page well.

It's stood between expression and myself many a' time. I have stared into its whiteness and it has stared back into mine. It defaces my ideas and disfigures my confidence. It has stopped me from being a writer.

Yet, I am a writer. I identify as a writer. I am a thinker. I am mostly a thinker. I am a thinker who has written, but never produced. Never have I produced true ideas. Never have I produced the ideas I've intended to. I am a writer who responds and analyzes and interprets and recalls and writes. I am not a writer who has felt and experienced and remembered, and wanted. I am not the writer that I read before bed, for I have not truly written. My writing is valueless, purposeless, and senseless to me. My writing is not true. It is not genuine.

I am a writer with a lost purpose—a writer writing for purpose.

## 2

### Remembrance

As I'm staring at this blank page before me, I am reminded of my child-self that hated writing. I was ten years old and writing, for me, was a painful, arduous task that I resolved by having my mother do for me. I would lie, cradled between my mom and the arm of the off-white, canvas-covered chaise in my parents' white bedroom, sleepily suggesting short phrases that she would paraphrase and write into the spiral bound notebook that I used for class at the time. She was the writer I was the thinker, and together we worked to put an end to blank, white pages.

I learned the mechanics of writing as I progressed into high school. At some point between my freshman and sophomore years, I learned appropriate grammar and structure rules, though I was awful at that as well. My father was my savior then. I did my best to respond to the prompt in a cohesive manner, and he would restructure and revise everything I had written in order to meet academic expectations. The two of us would sit on the same white chaise and discuss the errors I had made. He, with his penciled notations in the margins, would teach me everything that I had done wrong, as a coach would with his quarterback. I made it my goal to have no errors.

I listened to my dad and trusted him.

At the age of seventeen, my father had moved from his hometown of Isfahan, Iran to Ann Arbor, Michigan in order to pursue an education at the University of Michigan. At the time, he knew little English. He was required to pass the TOEFL before enrolling as a student at the university, and had therefore learned English in exactly the way it was intended by academia to be learned. He was a master of textbook English and it was evident. I recall leaving the house with a friend on a summer night in high school as my mom called out, "Drive safe, Cam!" My dad, recoiling, glared at her, saying, "Safe-ly, Paula. It's an adverb."

Then, at sixteen, motivations changed. I felt stress for the first time. I felt tired and I felt the world moving around me. My acne medications—for a very severe ("cystic") type of acne—were intended to restore my diminishing self-confidence, but with academics and after-school involvements piling up, I felt vulnerable.

It was then that I discovered emotion.

I wasn't depressed. I simply thought about things I had never given much thought to before. Emotions, like parents to a young child, were something that I had lived with my whole life and had accepted without thought. Things changed for me: my mind began to wander; I did more thinking at night. I would lie in bed, regurgitating the day's conversations, playing them back one way and another, trying to remember the precise wording that had caused them to resonate so heavily in my mind. *Did she say this or did she say that? He said this, but maybe he meant that. What if she meant this instead? What did I say?* But rather than succumbing to the mental tumult these thoughts presented, I dissected and learned from them. I opened my mind to thought.

And when—as a freshman in college—I learned to read like a writer, I learned to translate my thoughts into produce. I learned how to write and I learned how others wrote. Through reading, I learned how others thought. I fell in love with words and with word play. I fell in love with emotional expression through words. My favorite lines in books became those that are so raw that they can only be tangible to the mind of the writer, like Kerouac's in *On the Road*:

Soon it got dusk, a grapy dusk, a purple dusk over tangerine groves and long melon fields; the sun the color of pressed grapes, slashed with burgundy red, the fields the color of love and Spanish mysteries.

I would give anything to see that sunset.

### 3

#### Why I Write

*“Fields the color of love and Spanish mysteries.”*

The image resonates in my mind. It resonates with the day’s conversations and with adverbs. With images of me and my mom and the white chase, with football coaches and Iran and penciled margins, with Jack Kerouac, and with summer nights in high school.

Writing is a requiem to the self. It’s a calling to the part of us that is dead, to the part of us that is lost. Writing is a remembrance, a search through past experience for innate purpose. It pulls from resonating images to construct meaning. It’s an assault on blank, white pages and tumultuous thought.

I may never find purpose in the infinity of words and sentences.

Yet, I write.