

Deadline

Saturday, 27 days to submission deadline.

The wife saunters into *my* writing room (*her* kitchen) chewing cuddishly on a piece of vegemite toast.

“Whatcha doing?”

“I’m writing a short story for a writers festival.”

“Oh yeah, what’s it about?”

“Well, the theme they’ve given is ‘footprints in the sand’, but I’ve decided to turn it into a subversive look at how arbitrary-”

Is all I manage, before she turns a lazy circle and saunters back out again.

Sunday, 26 days to deadline.

My writing room smells of bacon, the wife is sitting at the island bench crunching on a carbonized rasher.

“Still writing your little story hmm...”

I give her my side-eye, one brow raised, to show how much I appreciate her choice of phrasing, and then ignore the bejesus out of her in retaliation.

Tap, tap, tap, spacebar, tap-

“How many words is it supposed to be?”

“A thousand,” I shoot hoping she’ll lose interest because the fire has come on me and I’m in really in the *Zone*.

Tap-tap-tap, spacebar-tap, spacebar-tap-

“How many have you done?”

“686.” I blurt, breaking out in a *Zone* induced fever. My fingers blur across the keyboard.

“Tap-tap-tappity-tap, spacebar-tap, spacebar-tap, spacebar-tap-

“What’s it about again?”

I sigh a sigh that sounds a lot like a death-rattle and fight the urge to headbutt the monitor. From past experience I know that resistance is useless, either out of boredom or more likely sheer spite, she means to talk. I can feel the *Zone* rolling over onto its back and curling up its legs. Very well. Against my better judgment and general policy, I hit the save icon and swivel around to engage my wife in conversation.

“Well...as I’ve said, the theme is; ‘Footprints in the sand’ but what I’ve done, is to cleverly subvert-”

“Oooh that’s right,” she groans, and taking up her plate of bacon, leaves the room. I give my first sigh a run for its money and then switch off the PC. At least I’m all but finished...

Tuesday, 10 days to deadline.

The wife enters spooning dry Milo out of a cup that’s about 10% milk. I crack the tab on an energy drink.

“You finished that story yet.”

“Almost.”

“How many words now.”

“686”

“That’s what you said last time.

“Don’t worry I’ve got plenty of time to finish, hell I might even have time to write another one.”

“Can I read it?”

I spray Red bull from my nostrils all over the monitor.

“No! you can’t read my first draft, I sputter in horror, “That would be like...like...eating a chicken before it’s been cooked...no before its even been slaughtered, wait no, it’s actually more like a complete and utter violation of everything that’s-“

She shakes her head and walks off rolling her eyes, while I hug the screen protectively to my chest.

Wednesday, 9 days to deadline.

The wife walks in eating the ears out of a chocolate Easter bunny “Whatcha doing?” she asks over the crinkling tinfoil.

“I’m watching a YouTube, this thing about ketogenics.”

“What?”

“Intermittent fasting, they reckon if-”

“You finished that story yet?”

“I’ll get to it, you can’t just vomit out good quality prose on demand you know, it’s only when the muse comes upon you that-”

On her way out of the room she lets out what can only be described as a derisive fart, going so far as to shake the leg of her tracksuit pants mid-stride, to aid it’s release through the ankle elastic.

Thursday, 8 days to deadline.

“You finished that story yet?”

“What? Ahhh...no, I haven’t had time.”

“You just had 5 days off work.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know, I had to do that thing in the garden.”

“What thing?”

“...I’ll finish it tomorrow.”

Friday, 7 days to deadline.

“Did you finish your story?”

“I’m doing it tomorrow.”

Saturday

“Did you finish your story?”

“Tomorrow.”

Sunday

“Did you finish your story?”

“Tomor-”

Monday

The wife walks into the tv room, with a giant bag of low-fat veggie chips.

“What are you doing in here?”

“What, oh, I’m re-watching Game of thrones, I’m up to season 3, King Joffrey has just-“

“Aren’t you supposed to be finishing your story?”

“Yeah but-“

“Get out, I’m going to binge watch Beverly Hills 90210.”

Tuesday

“Have you finished that bloody story yet?”

“What story...Oh shit!” I say as I fall off the edge of the chaise lounge.

Wednesday

“You’re still writing? Surely you’ve finished that subversive thing by now!”

“What? No, scrapped that one, the one I’m working on now is much better.”

“*What!*”

Thursday, 1 Day to deadline.

“Done!” I exclaim.

“About time,” says the wife, “Done what?”

“My 1000-word short story of course! I bet you thought I couldn’t do it didn’t you…”

It’s difficult to mix the smugness of achievement with the unjust cruelty of having to live with a faithless spouse, but I feel like I nail it.

“Is it any good?”

“Is it any good...is it any good? It’s damn near brilliant!”

“How many words is it?”

“Let’s see, it’s 2836.”

“That’s too many.”

“Well yes, but I’ll shave it down, it’s what’s known in the industry as killing your darlings.” I say with authority.

Friday, 9am, 0 days to deadline.

The wife enters *my* writing room (*her* kitchen) in her pyjamas, sipping from a goldfish bowl sized glass of red wine.

“Did you kill your darlings?”

“I did, all the way down to exactly 1000 words. A good writer can do that you know!”

“Is it any good?”

“Is it any good...is, *it* any, good?”

I stare at her in silence for several seconds, and then collapse sobbing into the keyboard.

“It’s shit! Absolute shit...doesn’t even make any sense anymore!”

The wife takes another sip from her aquarium.

“Should have just written about what an idiot you are when you try and write something.”

I slowly raise my head. My eyebrows lift. I raise a tentative forefinger...”

“...No, that’s patently ridiculous.” I say.