



DEAR FRIEND,

Do you like
Rupert
Holmes? I do,
and unironically. I know

his songs are often quite silly, occasionally incredibly mundane (*Lunch Hour*, anybody?!), and sometimes so ultra-cinematic that it's tricky to find the right situation in which to listen to them (a prime example of this is his song about a tropical cocktail, which I'm sure you've heard before). I especially like his song *The Place Where Failure Goes* because of its choice of topic—it poignantly talks about the afterlife of creative disappointments.

I've never really wanted to give my own non-success much thought, but I do perpetually feel the weight of my half-finished projects that have accumulated over the years. Right now I recall an unfinished knitted sock somewhere on my shelf, some randomly shaped pieces of plywood in a bag under the bed (a symptom of a not-fully-crafted plan to start making abstract *Hampelmans*), and a half-painted clay figurine intended for a friend's birthday that was in May. I may know where they're stored physically, but I have trouble pinning them down mentally and fear what they might say about me, if given a voice. Perhaps they linger on in some dark place, akin to Gollum, resenting me for their unfulfilled state?

My latest creative failure has to do with writing. I've never really had a connection with the practice of laying out my intimate thoughts and feelings on paper, aside from a few failed attempts at keeping a journal. Looking back, I've realised that in those instances I wrote with the possibility of someone reading my diary, which resulted in a toned-down version of events and feelings. I usually got bored of keeping a diary on the second day or so, since listing my daily activities was not the most intriguing pursuit. Thus I've ended up with a collection of notebooks, filled only until the third page and then left untouched. They are a constant reminder of my inability to finish things, and for some reason, I can't bring myself to tear out the used pages and repurpose the notebooks. Perhaps I keep them for the purposes of intimidation, sort of like a head on a spike? In any case, this *memento mori* of all my unfinished creative projects is a fitting reminder of my habit of procrastination.

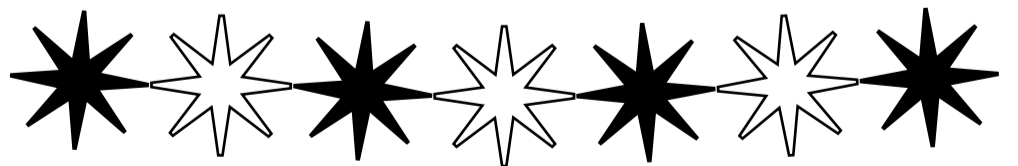
A while back I encountered Julia Cameron's book *The Artist's Way*. Have you heard of it, or maybe even worked through it? In short, it is a self help book intended for everyone within the creative field, originally published in the 1990s. When I first skimmed it, I figured that it needs a type of focus and follow-through for which I need to prepare in advance. The book is comprised of reading chapters, a daily writing exercise, a weekly creative assignment and a list of smaller tasks, all of which requires at least an hour-long commitment every day for three months. It seemed like serious business, and I wanted to approach it without setting myself up for failure. My first instinct, brought forth also by the aforementioned unfinished notebooks, was to invite friends to take part with me. I always feel more responsible when others are involved and there is someone to report to, so I talked my husband Oskar into joining me.

As you've probably already realised, we sort of failed in this undertaking. My approach to getting things done reminds me of the story from Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, where Venus sets up four near-impossible assignments for her future daughter-in-law, Psyche. Psyche sets out to fulfil these duties, but breaks down every time, halfway into solving them. When she's asked to sort a pile of seeds or gather wool from the Golden Fleece, she lays down, starts to cry and wishes to die. Yet every time mythical forces, such as tiny ants or a talking reed plant, help her out and suggest the smartest choice of action. Us mortals don't always have mythical beings around to help us with the task at hand like she did, but I do find it amusing that there exists such a deeply relatable mythical character, sort of like a procrastinator-goddess.

Much like her, some days it just didn't feel right to continue with the book or to start writing, so I put off the assignments until the next week. The biggest struggle throughout was the daily monster-exercise—the backbone of the program—known as *morning pages*, where three pages' worth of text is to be handwritten every morning, before doing anything else. We bought new, proper-looking notebooks and decided to keep with it, no matter what. But as you know, one does not change their whole way of operating in the course of one day, and neither did we. What actually started was a long, exhausting process of trial and error, with stretches of self-loathing and eventual self-acceptance. This on-again, off-again approach to the program probably didn't do it justice, but I'm glad to turn back to writing every once in a while. I grew to really love the freedom of filling pages with text and never looking at them again. It worked wonders on the inner critic who is normally pointing fingers at everything I do, the main culprit of this postponing life-style. I also started noticing some very welcome changes—I got increasingly fed up with complaining about the same things over and over, which, in turn, urged me to solve my issues even if just to avoid ever writing about them again.

So, after writing about knitting my sister-in-law a scarf for Christmas for the millionth time, I began with my current project—a corgi-patterned scarf that takes about a month's worth of mornings to make. It's quite a cheerful project and has helped me regain confidence in my ability to complete things. Perhaps when it's done I'll return to the morning writing practice again, until another project comes to mind that I feel determined enough to undertake.

To come back to the song once more, I am kind of heart-warmed by the line: "This is where all the might-have-beens triumph and forgive". I hope my own projects are this understanding.



BEST WISHES!
LOORE VIRES