

# ADD by Jeff Wincek

I've been sitting here trying to think of a killer story idea, but...nothing. I got nothing. My mind, my imagination jumps and leaps. My brain sizzles. It's burning to ash. My thoughts are all over the place. It's not that I don't have ideas. It's that I have too many ideas. I need one idea. Focus on ONE idea. FO-cus...FO-cus... It becomes my mantra. FO-cus...FO-cus... There's a scratching at the window just to my right.

The squirrel. Hi, squirrel! I wonder if I should name you? Chip? That's for a chipmunk... Sheldon? Shelly? Nah. Maybe name you later... Uh... You're probably hungry. He watches me. I should throw some peanuts out there, feed you. It's a commitment I made, I guess. He counts on me. Now that I started this. Feeding him. It's winter. Cold. Well, not as cold as it was back home in Chicago. I have to laugh when people here complain about how cold it is. "You want COLD," I want to say, "I'll tell you about COLD!" But it's wet today. Sloppy. A high fog. A mist/drizzle hybrid. Mizzle? Yes, "mizzle." Mizzle's not pleasant. Where are the peanuts? Pantry? Yes...

I spill the bag of peanuts. "Spill the peanuts..." Intersesting. Like "spill the beans." I make a note, stick it in my wallet. "It's so distracting here," I grumble, as I clean up the scattered nuts. Maybe I should go to the library? But that's an hour travel time, at least. Nah. I'll just throw some peanuts at the squirrel, to the squirrel... then shut the curtains. No more squirrel.

I'm procrastinating. Again. I've been through this before. Is that redundant? I know what I have to do. I have to... I have to get everything planned, mapped. I have to get everything laid out. An outline of the job at hand. THIS job at hand. Oooo kayyyy. Paper, pens. Laptop... Make some notes. Post-its! I pull out a pad. After a few seconds, Post-it notes cover the flat-screen facing me. Blank. Yellow. Post-it notes.

I arrange the notes. Rearrange the notes. I stare at what faces me.

A happy face faces me. I made a happy face.

Coffee...That would be nice. I'll make some coffee... I wonder if there's enough half and half? I check the fridge. Yes. Half and half...

I make coffee. And I think as I make the coffee. Coffee from bag into French press. Water on stove. Think. Water boils. More thinking. I do my best thinking when I distract myself. Coffee steeps in the press. And there it is: An idea. Flimsy, maybe, but an idea.

Back at my desk. Moving furiously, the desk gets arranged, ordered, the idea mapped, prioritized, listed, outlined with Roman numerals, indexed and bulleted by steps to follow... I compile my list, but then I hear a "ding" from downstairs.

Was that the dryer? The laundry's dry. I should unload the dryer before the shirts get wrinkled. I head to the garage, to the laundry room. I remember I need hangers. I come back. I get hangers. I head back down to the garage. I remember the laundry bag. I...etc.

OK, Laundry's folded. Put away. Done. Where's my list? I misplaced the list. Dammit! Where's the freaking list? UM... Check the laundry room. Back downstairs. Not there. Check under the folded shirts... Under shirts folded in half. Half and half. I made coffee... I go to the kitchen.

What did I come in here for? I can't remember. Lunch? I'm am a bit peckish. I'll grill a panini. Bread, turkey, mayonnaise, Swiss, sweet pickle strips. NO lettuce, never lettuce. I think about the story I don't have as the sandwich toasts. My eyes wander around the kitchen. What's that? By the sink, near the coffee press... near the now cold coffee... the list!

OK. I have the list. What was the idea? Shit... What was the idea? Retrace your steps...I made coffee, folded...

I look at the kitchen clock: the cat clock with the swinging tail and the googlie eyes: 1:00. It's FOUR O'CLOCK! Omygod! SHIT! OK. Shit! Back to my desk. List in hand. I hate this list. I crumple the list.

Stream of consciousness. That was one of the exercises, right? I try that. I start writing. I write my name. It's like Jack Nicholson in that movie...what was it? Oh, yeah, The Shining... "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy..." I write "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" for two full pages. Still nothing. I try writing "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," in couplets... in quatrains... It makes a really dull poem.

Something scratches at the window. The squirrel.

I pull back the drapes. Hello, squirrel! He, definitely "he," looks at me kind of accusingly. It's creepy. "Where's my food?" I can almost hear the thoughts behind his round, black eyes. Shiny eyes, shiny as black glass beads. Glistening. Cryptic. I like that word, "cryptic." I wonder what it's like to be you...

I stare at the squirrel. Thoughts slide up and down my unconscious, like beads on an abacus. A sum is totaled. "Huh," I say to myself, as a bright flash (figuratively) goes off in my head.

I go back to my desk. I begin to write...

"The afternoon is gray with a sloppy, mizzling rain. The high fog throws everything into soft focus. This San Francisco winter, though not as cold as winters Ash had experienced in Chicago, somehow feel just as chill and dank. He's hungry. His day is filled with a search for food. The handouts, when they come, if they come, barely get him through his days on the

street... and the nights... He passes his nights alone in the park, curled up around himself, shivering and wet from the damp... He keeps that memory buried. He can't bear examining his desperate situation. A thought bubbles up, "A cup of coffee, that would be nice."