

7. Everyone is born creative; everyone is given a box of crayons in kindergarten.

Then when you hit puberty they take the crayons away and replace them with dry, uninspiring books on algebra, history, etc. Being suddenly hit years later with the “creative bug” is just a wee voice telling you, “I’d like my crayons back, please.”

SO YOU’VE GOT THE ITCH TO DO SOMETHING.

Write a screenplay, start a painting, write a book, turn your recipe for fudge brownies into a proper business, build a better mousetrap, whatever. You don’t know where the itch came from, it’s almost like it just arrived on your doorstep, uninvited. Until

EVERYONE IS BORN CREATIVE

now you were quite happy holding down a real job, being a regular person . . .

Until now.

You don't know if you're any good or not, but you think you could be. And the idea terrifies you. The problem is, even if you are good, you know nothing about this kind of business. You don't know any publishers or agents or venture capitalists or any of these fancy-shmancy kind of folk. You have a friend who's got a cousin in California who's into this kind of stuff, but you haven't talked to your friend for over two years . . .

Besides, if you write a book, what if you can't find a publisher? If you invent a new piece of world-changing software, what if you can't find a financial backer? If you write a screenplay, what if you can't find a producer? And what if the producer turns out to be a crook? You've always worked hard your whole life, you'll be damned if you'll put all that effort into something if there ain't no pot of gold at the end of this dumb-ass rainbow . . .

Heh. That's not your wee voice asking for the crayons back. That's your other voice, your adult voice, your boring and tedious voice trying to find a way to get the wee crayon voice to shut the hell up.

Your wee voice doesn't want you to sell something. Your wee voice wants you to make something. There's a big difference. Your wee voice doesn't give a damn about publishers, venture capitalists, or Hollywood producers.

Go ahead and make something. Make something really

IGNORE EVERYBODY

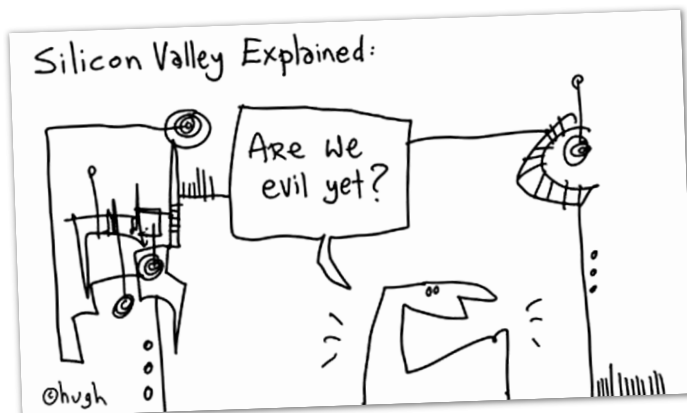
special. Make something amazing that will really blow the mind of anybody who sees it.

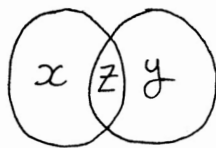
If you try to make something just to fit your uninformed view of some hypothetical market, you will fail. If you make something special and powerful and honest and true, you will succeed.

The wee voice didn't show up because it decided you need more money, or you need to hang out with movie stars. Your wee voice came back because your soul somehow depends on it. There's something you haven't said, something you haven't done, some light that needs to be switched on, and it needs to be taken care of. Now.

So you have to listen to the wee voice or it will die . . . taking a big chunk of you along with it.

They're only crayons. You didn't fear them in kindergarten, why fear them now?





x: his lies.
y: her drinking.
z: our amusement.

8. Keep your day job.

I'm not just saying that for the usual reason—that is, because I think your idea will fail. I'm saying it because to suddenly quit one's job in a big ol' creative drama-queen moment is always, always, always in direct conflict with what I call "The Sex & Cash Theory."

THE SEX & CASH THEORY

The creative person basically has two kinds of jobs: One is the sexy, creative kind. Second is the kind that pays the bills. Sometimes the task at hand covers both bases, but not often. This tense duality will always play center stage. It will never be transcended.

A good example is Phil, a New York photographer friend of mine. He does really wild stuff for the small, hipster magazines—

it pays virtually nothing, but it allows him to build his portfolio. Then he'll leverage that to go off and shoot some retail catalogues for a while. Nothing too exciting, but it pays the bills.

Another example is somebody like Martin Amis, the bestselling British author. He writes "serious" novels, but also supplements his income by writing the occasional newspaper article for the London papers, or making the occasional television appearance (novel royalties are generally pathetic—even rock stars like Amis aren't immune).

Or actors. One year John Travolta will be in an ultrahip flick like *Pulp Fiction* ("Sex"), another he'll be in some forgettable, big-budget thriller like *Broken Arrow* ("Cash").

Or painters. You spend one month painting blue pictures because that's the color the celebrity collectors are buying this season ("Cash"), you spend the next month painting red pictures because secretly you despise the color blue and love the color red ("Sex").

Or geeks. You spend your weekdays writing code for a faceless corporation ("Cash"), then you spend your evenings and weekends writing anarchic, weird computer games to amuse your techie friends ("Sex").

It's balancing the need to make a good living while still maintaining one's creative sovereignty. My MO is drawing cartoons and writing in my blog ("Sex"), coupled with my day job. (See tip # 3 for more details on the latter.)

I'm thinking about the young writer who has to wait tables to

IGNORE EVERYBODY

pay the bills, in spite of her writing appearing in all the cool and hip magazines . . . who dreams of one day not having her life divided so harshly.

Well, over time the “harshly” bit might go away, but not the “divided.”

This tense duality will always play center stage. It will never be transcended.

And nobody is immune. Not the struggling waiter, nor the movie star.

As soon as you accept this, I mean really accept this, for some reason your career starts moving ahead faster. I don’t know why this happens. It’s the people who refuse to cleave their lives this way—who just want to start Day One by quitting their current crappy day job and moving straight on over to bestselling author—well, they never make it.

Anyway, it’s called “The Sex & Cash Theory.” Keep it under your pillow.



Anywhere that has a lot of cute, smart, young, successful, sexy women who want to fuck is going to be expensive.