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## Block

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## Block

*Magic*, she calls it:

Writing.

Fresh out of magic, she sits in front of her keyboard and thinks of the worlds she can shape, the personalities she can sculpt, the destinies she can carve. She suffers that paradoxical ailment common to magekind: doubt of one's own power/fear of one's own power.

1:00 AM.

Caffeine jitters from an eggnog latte and a quarter of an espresso brownie four hours ago. She is mentally extolling the joys of sleep, which she craves. But she is a mage and the need to *shape* is greater than the need to sleep, and her stomach is empty for the feel of computer keys under moving fingers.

(Wistfully, she contemplates a piece of leftover pizza.)

She makes a few attempts. False alarms. There's no *energy* behind the creations, and they topple over like straw dolls that have been made to stand up -- no life. She needs inspiration, and so she makes her way silently to her bedroom to find Neil Gaiman's Smoke and Mirrors, flips through the pages, hopes to find inspiration from her favorite of master magicians. Illusionist extraordinaire.

She finds nothing for herself but a feeling of gross inadequacy.

(A track from *Requiem for a Dream* plays in her mind. Violin and cello, backed by orchestra. Dark, but moving. Cue the mental image: shadowed city side street on a cold windy night, man with his hands in his pockets, hunkered, walking. Midnight music. Vampire music.)

Sternly, she reprimands herself:

*Write the story only **you** can write.*

*Write in the voice that is **yours**.*

My magic is my own.

Gods, I'm hungry.

She closes her eyes. The second hand of a clock ticks. It's loud, she notes.

1:30 AM.

She finds the leftover pizza and a piece of salmon from last night's

dinner (which, left in the micro too long, hisses at her), and downs both with a glass of vanilla soymilk. The shakiness abates a little. Blearily, she looks at the clock and questions her sanity -- staying up until two o'clock just to write.

Her mind begins to shut down. She's a night person, exhausted by activities of day.

*Magic*, she thinks. Creation is on her mind.

Dreamworlds --

Sleep brings --

-- dreams --

Screw writing. Create through your dreams while you sleep.

Not quite coherent. Slipping away.

Magic does this to you.

No, not magic. Obsession.

*Slipping away.*

She thinks of chaos. She thinks of people as characters -- characters as people. She thinks of connections. Of a ship at harbor, a fresh fish stand, that track from *Requiem*, of word play and a salty wooden boardwalk.

Limp. Feeling rag doll. Wrists loll.

She tastes the concept of *story* on her tongue -- deep, full of space, complex, spiced with characters. Full-bodied, yet light, airy. Flavorful, but not too rich. *Texture*. It would be nice to cook some of that up.

But, she thinks, Neil Gaiman can keep his illusions. Right now I need some sleep.

A wand, after all, is no good if you can't hold it up. The mage that quakes before the power of her own doubt needs sleep.

Dreams suggest possibilities. She can use some of those.

Dream magic tonight, then.

*Writing* will be left for tomorrow.

2:00 AM.

incoherent she trundles to bed