

But what is wrong, with saying such a thing as *I don't want to work*?

I can only write when I'm trapped, he told you. What do you mean? Well, he said, like on a train or a plane. If there's nowhere else to go. Physically trapped.

There are some kinds of work you can understand. When you were a teenager you worked summers at a horse farm. You were promised lots of riding but in reality it was a lot of gardening. Looking back, it wasn't so bad. You pulled the weeds, swept them, and then they were gone. You haven't ever slept as deeply at night as you did, then.

Oh, he said, so you mean work as in *labour*? But there are different kinds of labour. You said that reading and writing didn't feel like pulling weeds. It lacked, you know, that sweet soreness, that deep rest after. I don't know, he said, it does make me hungry. By your distinction, he continued, work must be something you don't want to do. Certainly, you told him, otherwise it would be called *play*.

The road stretched out before you. It was getting darker outside, dusky, and your eyes felt heavy. There were dead bugs stuck to the windshield, flecks of grey; you hadn't noticed them before. Is this work, he asked, the driving? You pulled the handle and fluid spread thickly across the window, soon washed clean by the windshield wipers. It's starting to feel like it, you said. This is play, he said, remember what we've got waiting for us at the end.

It's something in between, you said quietly, the interminable journey from work to play.

You were both quiet for a while. The interminable journey from work to play. It stretched out like the road, with nothing visible below the horizon, or above. And yet, and yet ... a promised destination. He fiddled with the radio, moving between a traffic report to country music.

A lot of the time I don't want to write, you told him. Also I get paid for it, so I guess by that definition it is work. You're lucky, he said, or would you rather be pulling weeds? You shrugged. You wouldn't mind a garden. In the city the two of you lived in a flat like a small box, filled with all the things you had accumulated over the years, things you couldn't get rid of. Furniture, plants, food, clothes, toiletries. Once you tried growing tomatoes out of a window box, but the

squirrels got in and ate all the seeds. You'd left the window open too, so when you came into the living room in the morning and saw the table covered with soil you thought you were hallucinating. You'd stared up at the ceiling for a long time, wondering where the dirt had come from. The thing is, you hadn't been disturbed to see it there. It had felt like some kind of blessing.

You were going to the farm that your friends moved to a couple of years ago. At first they had split their time between the city and the farm, but now they'd had a baby and she just lived on the farm. He was a musician and toured a lot. What about what she did, he asked you, surely that was work? I don't know, you said, and then quickly, not that being a mother isn't hard work. What we need is a distinction, between *Work* with a capital-W and work as in, I've got to do some work around the house. A non-hierarchical distinction, of course.

I can get behind that, he said. So then, you said, I don't want to Work anymore. Other than writing, your job was data entry. You worked for a bloodwork lab and input patient data into the computer. It made your eyes blurry. Sometimes it did feel like pulling weeds. But surely, you said, there is no one who wants to capital-W Work?

I think we're going in circles, he said. You pulled the car gently over onto the shoulder. My eyes hurt, you said, do you think you could drive for a little bit?

He worked in finance. He didn't want to do it, but usually he told people he liked his job. People thought he made a lot of money but he didn't, really, not enough to get out of the little box that they lived in. Not yet, at least. But in his work, at least, there was always the promise of wealth, glowing in the distance like a brightly-coloured fishing lure. He got out of the passenger side and watched you as you walked around the front of the car. I love you, he said, I want to make more money so that you don't have to work. You laughed as you both got back in the car. Silly, you said, that's not what I meant.

You turned the radio off once he started driving. I just want to hear how quiet it is, you said and you were right. The farther away from the city you got, the less cars there were. For brief stretches, the two of you felt like you were the only people left in the world. You shut your eyes

and leaned your head against the window, listening to the sound of the wheels spinning across the road. If there was no money, you said softly, then maybe there would be no Work. But there would be enough, enough of everything else, surely.

Working in finance also involved a lot of inputting numbers into a computer. Often he thought, what if it all stopped working, all at the same time, all the computers, the internet. What would we do then? But to him this thought wasn't scary. It felt a little like hope. When he thought of this he felt like you did, when you saw that soil all over the table and thought, for a moment, that it had come from the sky.