

# Brick by Brick



**Dream Job Recipe  
in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Aero Wong**

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## Table of Contents

A Nobody .....	3
Press the Send Button .....	7
Ask Good Questions .....	12
Be Patient.....	16
Avoid the College. Learn the Knowledge.....	17
Follow Eminem's Pace.....	19
Nightmare.....	23
Transform Your Dream into a Website .....	25
Unless You Want to Support a Good Cause, Don't Work for Free .....	27
Back to the Stage.....	29
Round Final. Fight!.....	31
Sorry - Wood Egg Writers Chosen.....	34
My Favorite Fable (塞翁失馬) .....	36
A Writer - This is Who I Want to Be .....	38
About the Cover .....	39
Credits – Tweety C. and Aouda L. ....	40

## A Nobody

“As you think, so shall you become.”

- Bruce Lee

Have you ever dreamed of working for a dream company? This company does not necessarily have to be the gigantic Google. This company does not necessarily have to be the money fountain either. Yet, you are still burying your head into your work, because the value of the company totally aligns with yours.

Have you ever dreamed of working for a hero who you truly admire? This hero can be a person who you dream of meeting in person. Even all you might get from him is a handshake, a hug or simply just a picture with him, it makes your day.

Have you ever dreamed of working for a project which stretches the borderline of your comfort zone? You put your head down, all in, take it as your only shot in life and still worry about the quality of your work.

If you have dreamed about all these, read on.

I have been that person. I have a dream. I don't want to die with deep-rooted belief that I can make a positive impact in the universe. I need money to survive, but I also need a dream to live by. Without a dream, I would rather die. So, I took a step to realize my dream.

Sounds grandiose, huh? Everyone wants to live by their dreams, but I don't have a fancy background at all. I am a NOBODY. I grew up living in a public house<sup>1</sup>. All of the fancy mansions I have ever been and jealous of most of the time, belonged to my classmates' parents or my friends' relatives. I grew up studying in traditional public schools. I never went to Ivy League. I graduated in a state university and majored in economics. While everyone was talking about their favorite major subjects, I chose economics under the impact of my background - shortage of money. I went to the state university because of the relatively low tuition fee. I majored in economics because again the relatively low tuition fee. I wouldn't have enough money to support myself, if I go for a major which needs fancy equipment. I simply couldn't afford it. All I want was to graduate from college and raise my

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<sup>1</sup> Public housing in Hong Kong is a set of mass housing programmes through which the Government of Hong Kong provides affordable housing for lower-income families.

family. I still remember it when I left Hong Kong and went to the United States for my final year of college. HKD 120,000 was all I have in my bank account.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them came from my personal saving.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of them came from my family, a blessing for my promising future, they count on me. In those 9 months of study, I legitimately chose spring and summer semesters. As summer semester could save me a hell lot of money. Plus, I could make my time most effective. I could take as many credits as I like.

In those 9 months, the campus restaurant became my friend. I had my minimum wage salary and free meals there. Usually I would have 2 meals, sometime up to 3 meals at the restaurant a day.

Thanks God. I made it. I finally graduated. I still remember the day of my graduation ceremony. It was in July. It was snowing. Everyone was frozen to death. Despite of the coldness, I was overjoyed. I believed that a bright future was waiting for me. But the snow seemed telling me a brutal hard fact upfront - life wouldn't be that easy - which I wasn't aware of at that point. I wasn't aware of how ordinary I am. I was a total NOBODY, after all the hardship. I was one of the thousand commodities manufactured by the college, the biggest factory, in the world.

After getting back from the United States, with full of pride and hope, I was eager to find a job which could make me a millionaire. Hundreds, if not thousands, of resumes rolled out from my email box, "Inbox: 0" was what I saw everyday. Doubts started to kick in. Anxiety was growing to a point which my parents would notice. I kept telling myself. God's delay is not God's denial. Finally an international company, Wall Street Journal, waved hand at me. I got an opportunity for interview. Once again, I was all in. I unleashed my potential to the max. Hell yeah, I got a second round of interview. I still remember the face of the manager in the interview. He was an Indian who speaks in American accent. His face is still crystal clear in my mind, every time I think of this interview. Because I'd never forget that he talked to me in a very sincere way. "Hey NOBODY, I like you. You're charming. You're clever. You're well prepared. But your English is not fluent enough to get in this international company." Simply put, I blew it. I was devastated. I'd never forget this lesson - I suck in English. As I am a difficult person, I swore to myself that I'll elevate my English up to a level in which that I could write a book. A seed was planted in my head years ago. Luckily I still survive and reach you out via English now.

Self-doubt? Anxiety? Panic? You name it. I experienced all these after the Wall Street Journal interview. I was afraid of being jobless. All I wanted was a job after all these emotional storms. I didn't care what the job nature was. The financial pressure pushed me to face the reality. I became an accounting clerk of a local restaurant. My first job after graduating from college. Ah, the memories. My first nine-to-five job: a white collar worker sat his ass at the office all day long spending time in exchange for precious cash. Experience earned. As an accounting clerk, I did the invoices for my accounting manager. That was work that any ordinary with no brain damage could do. Nine hours of work per day, I quickly realized the experienced manager's method to survive in the society - pretending to be a good employee. Finishing the work as fast as possible and pretending to work still, while having fun with her own computer, were the keys. I was a fast learner spending only three hours to finish the goddamn invoices since day 1. So, I stole six hours of my labor time from the company and did something I love - reading. Pretending to be a hard worker, I covered a book underneath the piles of invoice. I enjoyed doing this for two months and finally was discovered by the manager. I was fired in a record of two months, leaving with a piece of advice that forever changed my life afterwards – “your personality obviously doesn't fit in the accounting job.” After years of denying myself as a failure who got fired by a jerk, I eventually have the courage to publicly tell the truth in front of my readers. In fact, I took the advice very seriously and had a job for real work later on.

My parents started to ease their tension. Since I had a job, at the very least. If you ask any Chinese parents what they want their children would be in the future, they will tell you “Be a good person. Be healthy. Be happy. That's it.” My parents are no exception. In their eyes, I am forever their child. I don't need to grow up as long as I am safe and sound and still living. After I was fired from the restaurant, I got hired as a financial consultant in a financial institution. I lied to my parents, girlfriend and myself that I changed job to pursue real work. Giving advice and deceiving my clients, I worked as a commission-based financial advisor. I managed their assets from the perspective of my own interest, instead of theirs. Financial planning, asset management, retirement planning... I used a number of industry jargons to legally con them into buying investment from my company. I was happy and passed the probation in three months by achieving the sales target. Yet, the motto says “Money can't buy happiness.” I started to feel guilty. My performance dropped gradually because I didn't need as much money than before. After a full year beating up myself, I found that my performance was below average. Meanwhile, financial crisis swiped all over the globe in the year of 2008. Lots of people were forced to leave the financial industry. Perfect. I had an undeniable

excuse for my failure. It was the fault of U.S. government. Not mine. Once again, I left.

In the next 5 years, I accepted and quitted jobs for pursuing my dream. A dream that I was unable to see clearly at the beginning of my career. I no longer worked only for the money. I read tons of personal development books and looked for role models around the world who could inspire me. I lived modestly and spent a big chunk of my salary on buying books and attending courses that could nurture my mind. Along the way, as a NOBODY, I got to my role models, knocking their doors, and tapping their brains. In the past, I always thought all these role models were unreachable as if they were living on the top of the mountain. Funny enough - the fact is they're not. Just like the sun in mid noon, shining all by itself, vibrating the entire universe with its lights, blocking out every dark particles, they are warm as the sunrise in the early morning. In the journey of reaching out to those role models, the one who inspired me the most was Derek Sivers. Interested in how a Hong Kong 20ish NOBODY met his role model? Turn to next page and read on....

## Press the Send Button

“Nothing happens unless first a dream.”

- Carl Sandburg

With a dream to be an author someday in the future, I am a book lover. I read a lot of books. I fall in love with books and become a book addict. Reading becomes my second life. I read in the morning, before going to work; I read on the bus, while traveling to work; I read at night, before going to bed. If you come to me and talk about books, we could rap about books the entire day.

By reading, I gain tremendous amount of knowledge. And most surprisingly, I make friends with numerous famous authors. You might wonder how can I make friends with them. It is easy – to read. Every good writer writes as he talks. He tries to communicate with you in his own words expressing his thought. This is an interactive process which he uses his words to engage with you. Every single word earns its place. He puts all of his effort to open up himself. Being naked and showing you the vulnerability which he doesn't do to a Hi - Bye friend. Once you read a book, if you like the author and want to be friend with him. You can. Before choosing who deserves to be in your world, the author makes the gentle gesture to you first. He knows he might suffer from rejection which ruins his day, making him unable to fall into sleep at night. Giving him a hug and sharing what you think of his writing are the greatest rewards of his. Without this kind of speechless communication, a book can't be done. So, here I am. I am shameless to claim I am a good writer too. I might not have the proper grammar and fancy words. But my intention is crystal clear: share what I have. This is what a friend does to a friend. Isn't it?

In the ocean of good writers, I swim in their words and get to know their minds. Occasionally, one out of ten, his performance is too amazing to a point that I can't even take my eyes off for a second until the curtain is down. Sometimes, a short show, which I don't expect much from the singer, is able to turn my world upside down. With only few chapters and less than a hundred pages, he might be capable of splashing the pool in my backyard.

On the stage, dancing and singing, he is the king of the world. In the first song, you think that he is doing his best. He could no way to do another great song like



this. Somehow the next song sneaks in at the end of the first song. The second song comes in as a mix! He just doesn't want to let you stop. You start to gear down and act like a silly kid and scream at the top of your lung. You keep screaming until you realize that you haven't yet had dinner, and you are feeling hungry. But the hunger for food is no bigger than the hunger for good songs. You just keep screaming and think that you have never seen a great performance like this. The king keeps singing and singing till the last song. Your brain spins and becomes totally blank. You scream to a point that you don't realize your sore throat. You can't say a word. But you don't want to let go of your hero. You run to the stage front and shake hand with him. Or at best, you take a picture with him.

I have been doing this for years in my reading journey. If I read an extraordinary book which can make my world upside down, I will contact the author and ask for help.

So, story began. I contacted all of my favorite authors in every possible way. Fastest form as email. Slowest form as snail mail. Direct way as a phone call. Indirect way as referral. I would try all these to reach out my favorite authors.

As you can imagine, famous authors are basically celebrities. As they sing on the stage, you could only immerse yourself with his echoes down at the auditorium, even you are standing and screaming at the front row. However, among all these crazy fans, being one of them, you could always spot some of them are lucky enough to have that slight handshake with spotlight which makes the day. Looking at the hateful competitors, my jealousy grew as an action signal, why can't I be the one who have that goddamn handshake? I asked myself what is the difference between us. The answer is nothing. The stranger and me are both just a nobody. Both of us deserve to pursue our dreams. We are no difference. The only difference is that he takes INITIATIVE and ACTION.

Along the way going after my role models, I have always seen this hateful competitor. "Why is he able to make it, instead of me?" I kept asking. INITIATIVE. Without it, you go nowhere, you will become another nobody and slowly die, stepping into the grave with [mountain quilt](#) after decades, and asking the question you should have asked a few decades earlier: why don't I take INITIATIVE and ACTION?

So, I took both INITIATIVE and ACTION.

Here comes my hero: Derek Sivers. He isn't a nobody. He has been creating legend after legend all these years. I don't want to talk too much about him. Because he is too famous in the musician, entrepreneur and writer world. If you haven't heard of his name, shame on you. Google his name: Derek Sivers. You'll see tons of information about him. If you want to know him in a more direct way, go to his blog: [sivers.org](http://sivers.org).

As a 20ish nobody, I got by but somehow stuck. I made enough money from a job I didn't really love. I felt like a walking dead. I constantly asked myself this question: how can I turn things around?

I put my head down and hustled in a corporate job. I worked really hard as a copywriter in a digital marketing company. In the probation period, I worked up to 60+ hours a week. I put my best in the job, but I didn't feel happy at all. I had a sense that I am a stupid hamster running on a treadmill - running to nowhere.

Another great book I read - The Secret - taught me a lesson: the power of mind. If you pay attention to something badly enough, you will realize it - no matter it is something good or bad. "How can I turn things around?" is a question I constantly asked all these years. How could I escape from the running treadmill and grow my wings and fly to my promised land? The picture of me flying over the sky was so vivid. I was flying with ecstasy in the cloud, even though I was actually a stupid hamster in reality. Suddenly, the breeze turned to strong wind after heavy rain. Hong Kong was experiencing a typhoon which was strong enough to give me an unexpected day-off. Yeah.

After waking up and checking my iPhone to ensure I don't have to work, I looked at the ceiling and asked myself this question again: how can I turn things around? I was a hamster taking a rest in my cave instead of the treadmill. As usual, I jumped into the ocean of books. I held the Kindle at my hand and flipped through the list of books. Anything You Want, written by my hero Derek, caught my eyeballs. I read again the book and felt resilient as the last hundred times. In fact, I bought both the electronic and audio version for this book. I can't remember how many times I read and listened to this book. Few hundred times, at the very least.

[No "yes." Either "HELL YEAH!" or "no."](#)

You can use this same rule on yourself if you're often over-committed or too scattered. If you're not saying "HELL YEAH!" about something, say "no." When

deciding whether to do something, if you feel anything less than “Wow! That would be amazing! Absolutely! Hell yeah!!” - then say “no.” When you say no to most things, you leave room in your life to throw yourself completely into that rare thing that makes you say “HELL YEAH!” Every event you get invited to. Every request to start a new project. If you’re not saying “Hell Yeah” about it, say “no.” We’re all busy. We’ve all taken on too much. Saying yes to less is the way out.

Sounds familiar to you, huh? Sounds sophisticated, huh? This was something I want to share with you. This was something I learn from my hero Derek Sivers’s book - [Anything You Want](#).

If you learn something from someone who wishes to awaken the giant within you, but you don’t apply it in your life, that person would feel sad. I feel the same way Derek does. Ask this question more often “Is this a Hell Yeah in action?”. You will achieve inner peace like a saint. I had this feeling after I learned this simple trick. I automatically say “no” to numerous requests from the outside world and left room to throw myself completely into this rare thing that makes me say “Hell Yeah!”

I have been stuck with this question “How can I turn things around?” for too long. I kept looking for an answer with faith. Failed and failed again. I have done a thousand things in the way that Thomas Edison did with the invention of light bulb. I failed a thousand times with a thousand different methods. Was I devastated? Yes, I was. But the wisdom of Thomas Edison was telling me that 1,000 failures equal to 1,000 data I could tweak. You’ll finally turn that bulb on with light which you have dreamed of, if you insist.

“How can I turn things around?” led to 1,001 attempts to turn the bulb on and a more brilliant question “What if I ask my hero for advice?” Just one piece of valuable advice from a big time stud is far better than thousands of worthless advice. But I was timid still, even after contacting different authors for thousand times. Derek is not the one standing on the top of the mountain, but is flying above the cloud. It was like going after my dream girl, I could feel the butterflies flew in my stomach. Luckily I learned another lesson from the book of another big time stud Tim Ferris. I’ll repeat something you might consider tattooing on forehead: what we fear doing most is usually what we most need to do. That phone call, that conversation, that email, whatever the action might be - it is the fear of unknown outcomes that prevents us from doing what we need to do. I realized these butterflies were the action signals to me. Furthermore, I asked an even better question “Is it a Hell Yeah in action?” The answer was a no brainer.

So I thought long and hard to come up a nobody scenario with an open-ended question and put together in a thoughtful email.

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To: derek@sivers.org.

From: nobody@20ish.org

Subject: Hell Yeah! Derek

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And pressed the send button which could change my life later.....

## Ask Good Questions

“He who asks questions cannot avoid the answers”

- Cameroon Proverb

I once read a ridiculous question on Yahoo! Answers. The question went like this: Can you lose your virginity if you fall? My friend and I have been debating about it because I fell yesterday and I think I lost virginity.

A netizen replied with generosity. The answer went like this: Unless you're falling into a vagina or onto a penis, no.

There are good and bad versions of all things: good book, bad book; good movie; bad movie; and yes, good question and bad question. If you email me with the above question, I won't divert you to Yahoo! Answers. I will tick your email and click “delete” instead.

Don't do this to your favorite authors. They're all busy working on something important to the world. They are spending time to make a dent in the universe. He would only talk about the virginity thing to his daughter and make sure his daughter won't marry a guy who asks this stupid question.

My first email to Derek went like this:

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Hi Derek,

Before asking you for a piece of advice, I want to say that I love your voice!

I ran into you when I heard the one-hour-conversation you did with Ramit Sethi talking about the story of CD Baby. It was really an interesting story you definitely need to share to the rest of the world. I listened to it again and again - at least thirty times. After repeating that many times, I already wanted to drop you a say-hello-email. But I had no idea what I want to talk to you at that point. So I wait...

Until recently, I found you have a new book released!! So the first action I made, of course, was to buy your audible book!! As I am still an English learner, so I bought the e-book from Amazon too. To make sure that I won't miss any message you strived to let me know. One more thing I want to highlight that your - Hell Yeah philosophy - drove me to buy your book immediately. Normally I would read the sample book before I actually spend my hard-earned cash on certain books. But the author is Derek Sivers, I felt really comfortable with you and trusted that Anything You Want must be a great book. Hence, the first time in my e-book life, I bought a book with an exception! Anything you want had a Hell Yeah feeling in action!

Today I had an unexpected day-off because of the typhoon. I could pause my busy life and took a step back to see what I am actually doing with it. I found I lost my way somehow. Last Tuesday was the end of probation for my new job as a copywriter in a digital marketing company, but I didn't feel happy at all. Even though the job, at the beginning, sounded interesting to me, the fact is it wasn't. During the probation, I did the exact same - wrong - thing you mentioned in your book, constantly promoting some products or services won't work for other companies. As I always thought I am able to flip the sticks around, I convinced my manager and boss to shift me to the projects I liked. I did it. But the worse came after, those so-called fine-with-me-projects suck too. I was completely overwhelmed....

So my question is: what would Derek Sivers think and do if he faces a situation like this?

I think you must have gone through situation like this when you were 20ish, still living in Woodstock, New York producing other people's record. The financial pressure, the growing responsibilities, and you name it, etc.

Looking forward to your reply. Have a blessed day!

- *Nobody*

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I was a nobody without the wisdom of Derek Sivers. This was a question I cannot answer myself. If I have the ability to answer this question, positive impact in my life will be almost guaranteed. It's always OK to ask for help, but make sure not to be the man who you won't let you daughter get married with.

A day later, after asking the good question and hoping the best to happen, I looked up to the sky. That was a cloudy day with a few rain patches. With the audacity of hope, I was not afraid of the raindrops. "What the worst could happen?" I thought. Running back to the treadmill and being a hamster. So, first thing first, I was thinking about what to eat for breakfast. Taking cheese as breakfast was no better deal for a hamster. While imagining my favorite cheese and looking at the sky, I saw something abnormal happen. A cheese emerged from the shapeless cloud. It was not only in a cheese shape, but was also yellow in color! Within one day, my hero's reply dropped from the sky!

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Hi *Nobody* -

Thank you! Where are you? What is your main language?

Without knowing the details of your situation, my best advice is this:

Work with the existing job, and make the best of it for now. Think of lessons you can learn in this job. Everything is practice for something else. There's something you are learning now that you will be able to use in the future.

Then... while you are doing this.... at the same time.... start doing something else on the side that is your real dream-come-true.

Maybe it's pursuing a new skill, or a new job, or starting a company, or something else. But begin it on the side. This will be your real love.

Keep improving it, keep finding ways to make it valuable enough to other people that they are happy to pay you for it.

Then eventually, if you keep improving, this side-love will make enough money for it to become your main job, and then you can quit the job you don't love.

- Derek Sivers

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Frankly speaking, after reading the email, I didn't know concretely what the next step should be. But I felt resilient. I listened to my hero's advice and got back to where I was: the treadmill. Making the best of it. Pursuing my dream and running

on the treadmill simultaneously. Along the way, something magical happened, I started to love my shitty job which I thought was a dead end. I thought of the lessons I learned from the job and realized everything was practice for something else. There were something I learned that could be used in the future. English? Online knowledge? Entrepreneurship? I have been learning too much in these few years. I couldn't name them all, but they set the stage for my dream job later.....



## Be Patient

“A man who is master of patience is a master of everything else”

- George Savile

E.L. Doctorow once said that “writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.” You don’t have to see where you’re going, you don’t have to see your destination or everything along the way. You just have to see two to three feet ahead of you. This is right up there with the best advice about writing, or life, I have ever heard.

Your life isn’t a one-click action, so is your dream. Initiative is necessary, as it is the foundation of your dream castle in your promised land. The promised land is your own acre. As long as you don’t hurt anyone, you really get to act with your acre as you please. Knowing that you have a ballpark and solid foundation, you’re in the ready-set-go mode. It doesn’t mean anything if you don’t take actions to realize it. It is a vision in your head. You could brag about it all the time, to your friends or to your family. They might be impressed by your great dream. But, after several years, they will regard you as some kind of cowards who dream big, but never take - actions.

So, now you have a vision. You have your dream castle in your mind. You sometimes see it whenever you blink or sometime you do not. It is still a dream in your head. You can’t realize your dream by simply pressing that send button. Yes, it takes courage to take that first step which followed by thousands of steps down the road to the finish line.

Then you might wonder “where to start?” The ballpark is too big. Here is the tip, start anywhere that captures your attention. As long as you’re in your own acre, you won’t go wrong. Let’s build it brick by brick.

Being an author in the 21st century needs more than 26 alphabets. Where do I find my agent? Where do I publish my book? What should be the content for my book? The list of questions goes on and on. I can’t have all the answers at once. I need to answer it one by one.

## Avoid the College. Learn the Knowledge.

“Self-education is, I firmly believe, the only kind of education there is”

- Issac Asimov

I hate people conning me into something that they didn't do. Authenticity is what I need, which always requires proven facts to back up. In my English writer journey, I only took up the predecessors who are successful authors. About other wannabe's experiences, they do not deserve my time.

In my skills-to-learn-to-be-an-author list in this 21st century, the most fundamental skill, my first step before jumping on the ladder towards my dream is – writing. When you're holding this book, going through hundred thousands of my thoughts and words, I was secretly learning in my bedroom. Learning through by my own self.

Being a cheap bastard, who is always looking for the most cost-effective way to realize the unambiguous dream, first thing first, I looked through scope of rifle - successful authors.

My friend, Julien Breteau, recommended two books, “Bird by Bird” and “On Writing,” which both once read by the New York Times Best Selling Author – Tim Ferris. Before Tim Ferris wrote his first Best Selling book, The 4 Hour Workweek, “Bird by Bird” and “On Writing” were his bibles. So, I did the same - to acquire the necessary writing skills to express my thoughts as clear as I could in words, to touch your souls.

I used to cheat in most of my English classes. The truth is... I suck in grammar. In order to have my precious readers – you – to have a better understanding of a nobody's life, I learned grammar from an iPhone app: Grammar Girl, which was recommended by another successful author - Chris Guillbeau - in his book. On top of that, I begged my fiancée to be my personal editor and help me with the grammar.

I had a blog that I update once a week. By brain dumping, I threw all of my thoughts over the table and constructed it in a way that could trigger your coherence. Before releasing every blog post, my fiancée edits it. She has been

getting amazing grades in English classes throughout her life without cheating. Godsend.

I was learning from the best of the best without going to Ivy leagues. Meanwhile, I kept contacting other successful authors and asked for mentorship. Eventually I found out that all the good writers are self-made. They all have very critical eyes on their own work and learn by themselves.

Without going to one of the Ivy Leagues, check out my costs of self-learning:

1./ Borrow “On Writing” from a public library  
cost: USD 0

2./ Buy “Bird by Bird” ebook from Amazon  
cost: USD 11.99

3./ Buy iPhone app “Grammar Girl”  
cost: HKD 15.00 (approximately in USD 1.99)

4./ Contact successful authors to tap their brain.  
cost: USD 0

5./ A private and personal editor<sup>2</sup>  
cost: USD 0 (you could have one in Elance by hourly rate USD 10)

6./ A dedicated and burning passion for self-education  
cost: priceless

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<sup>2</sup> To make things clear, I’m referring to my fiancée, not the official editor of this book.

## Follow Eminem's Pace

“Look, if you had one shot, or one opportunity,  
to seize everything you ever wanted.

One moment.

Would you capture it, or just let it slip, yo?”

- Eminem

I don't care if you like the God of rap or not. I don't care if you like Hip Hop or not. There are certainly things you could learn from Eminem. Let's enter Eminem's life: his humble background, before he made his name, before he became the God of rap. Let's peel off the excessive fame of his life like an onion until he appears as a nobody like you and me.

Another nobody's life - Marshal Bruce Mathers III was born on the 17th October 1972, Kansas City, Missouri, USA. Son of a fifteen-year-old mother at the time of his birth and a father who left six months later who never returned, Marshall spent his early childhood being shoved back and forth from Kansas City and Detroit. He settled on the Eastside of Detroit when he was 12. Switching schools every two to three months made it difficult for him to make friends, graduate and to stay out of trouble. Failing at the 9th grade three times until finally dropping out, he said he wasn't stupid. He said he was not interested in school because all he wanted to do was rap.

Marshall listened to his heart and took the initiative. He started pursuing rapping seriously at the age of 14. That was the time when he began performing rap in the basement of his high school friend's home. When he was 17, he eventually made a name for himself - Eminem.<sup>3</sup> But the Hip-Hop community back then, belonged to the black, no room for the white ...

How difficult was it for a white guy to stand out in a black community? As you can imagine, that could be as difficult as Obama's victory in 2008 U.S. presidential election. But he did it. Although at that time rap music was almost exclusively produced by black people, Eminem, who has pale white skin and bright blue eyes, nevertheless entered the Detroit rap scene as a frequent competitor in rap battles.

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<sup>3</sup> Marshall Bruce Mathers III. [Internet]. 2014. The Biography.com website. Available from: <http://www.biography.com/people/eminem-9542093> [Accessed 04 May 2014].

Eminem had a distinct and unrealistic dream. Along the way, there was no romance at all. In his early school life, he got beaten up by other kids all the time. "Beat up in the bathroom. Beat up in the hallways. Shoved into lockers." He remembered.

In the pursuit of rapping career, he has been working odd jobs to make ends meet while participating in rap battles and desperately attempting to land a record contract. Meanwhile, his daughter was born. But he didn't even have the money to buy diapers for pampering. When the opportunity came, he geared up and fought. Period.

"You better lose yourself in the music.

The moment, you own it, you better never let it go.

You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow.

This opportunity comes once in a lifetime, yo"

- Eminem

Being another nobody in this universe, I had my own moment as Eminem's. My moment came when the time I was working as a copywriter in a digital marketing company. Life was crazy. 60+ hours working time per week. In the fast - spinning treadmill, with the dream of running to freedom, I always tried to put a little leg on the ground while running in the spinning treadmill. Chances were I got burned often. Numerous scars were left on my body. Hard lessons learned. But every time I fell and then stood up again. I became stronger.

Despite being a poor 20ish, my love to my fiancée is non-negotiable. I made a promise to myself - I would make a lifetime memory for our upcoming wedding. We planned to have a pre-wedding shoots overseas. Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Singapore were our destinations.

I have been following Derek's blog for a few years. Knowing that he's living in Singapore, I carefully crafted him an email four months before the trip. I tried to be enthusiastic. I tried to use no extra word. I tried to impress Derek in a way that he couldn't refuse a young man who fell in love with him.

I waited. I tried to be patient. I knew hero like him must be busy. Then, something [magical happened](#). I couldn't believe that Derek replied me the next day! He was so nice again telling me he would love to meet me if he would be in Singapore during the period of my trip. WOW! I felt like I was having the whole world.

One month before my trip, I emailed Derek again to make sure he would be there. Unfortunately, he told me he would be in New Zealand for a few months of solitude, programming. Ouch..... I was really disappointed. I stood the pain to tell myself that hero like him must be working on something important to the world. I shouldn't bother him and should move on with my life. If we were destined to meet, we'll finally see each other. Then I took a deep breath, turned on the computer and typed the saddest email I've ever typed.

--

Hi Derek -

That's totally fine.

We'll meet up someday.

Sounds like you're getting back to productive mode.

Wish everything is running fine ;)

Keep in touch! Please do the same.

Have a wonderful day!!

- *Nobody*

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So, that was it. I felt relieved. I told myself I wouldn't regret. Because I did something I've always wanted to do. The world is not against you, but it wouldn't line up all the pins either. I have faith that we'll meet someday.

June is the birth month of my fiancée. In late June, we will be in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and then Singapore, shooting the best pictures of our lives, having fun in the Universal Studio and articulating a lifetime memory for ourselves. I was utterly happy and looking forward to that, hoping the best to happen.

In the same month, I received an email. Head title went like this: Hong Kong Startup Guide 2013. Hiring for 2014. It was from Derek! My hero was hiring for his new company - [WoodEgg](#)! It's a series of 16 books about starting and growing a business in 16 countries. Haven't I always wanted to work with a role model I admire? How could I let it slip away? I remember the email came to my inbox on Saturday. I spent the entire weekend of solitude in my brother's office, crafting the best resume I've ever had in life. After an Olympic athlete of researching and consolidating, finally I came up with an email attaching a pdf file which talked itself - who the hell I am and why you should hire me. I was extremely nervous before

pressing the send button. I was afraid that my pitching was not perfect enough. I was afraid that I made some stupid mistakes. I was afraid for no reason. I was simply afraid.

A few days later, I still received nothing from Derek nor his company. I started to think there might be some other outstanding candidates so that Derek wasn't hiring me. I have already done the best I could. I wouldn't regret.

Eventually, 5 days after my email sent, an email came to my inbox. Derek said I have done an excellent job of introducing myself. But he thought I was better fit to be a researcher than a manager for his company. He asked about my thought. At that point, I was thinking how dumb this question was. Derek simply didn't know how bad I wanted to work with him. I would take on any role he assigned me, as long as I am building something valuable with him. I said YES. Hell Yeah! was in action again.

## Nightmare

“God’s delay is not God’s denial”

- Ephesians 1:11

Please notice. I was not hired yet at that moment. The hiring process just took off. A hiring manager stepped in to test every aspect of me to ensure I was the perfect fit for the company. Somehow I felt fearless, even though someone was trying to push me off the ground. I really thought that I already had the dream job at that point.

Fast forward to the end of hiring process. Along the way, I stood up and fought for the things I wanted. I believed a happy ending was waiting on the finish line. I died trying to the last second of race. This was an email I got:

--

Hi *Nobody* -

First of all, thank you again for your interest in Wood Egg.

After a long discussion with Derek and many quite difficult decisions on my part we have decided on someone else for the researcher position.

You should know that it came down to the wire. If something doesn't work out with our 2014 class of researchers I hope you'll be available to save the day. And if not, no hard feelings.

Thanks again. It was great chatting with you on Skype and I know you'll do great things.

- Hiring Manager

---

I really wanted to cry. (At the time I was typing that I really wanted to cry, I thought my English is not good enough to express how depressed I was.) I didn't know what to do. I felt like I was the dumbest guy in the world.



After an entire day of sadness, I went to bed, putting on the eye cover and forcing myself to sleep. I talked to myself, "After waking up the next morning, I would be a phoenix reborn." I needed to let go of everything. But I couldn't. I couldn't sleep until 01:00 am. (Usually I fall into sleep at 11:30 pm.) I realized I needed to make my last pitch. Otherwise, I couldn't loosen myself. I was still in a tense mode. I was the fighter at the still-fighting-not-giving-up stage. If my rival didn't knock me off totally, I will fight until the last breath.

This was the final punch to my face:

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Hi *Nobody* -

Sorry. I really do appreciate that, but at this time we're happy with our Hong Kong researchers.

- Hiring Manager

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At last, I admitted the fact that I lost. I left the stage with peace. I finally got back to my normal life. It was like a dream. I woke up and got back to reality. But deep down in my soul, I still believe in dreams. I still believed that I can be Anything I Want as long as I am willing to take action on it until I realize it, no matter what.....

## Transform Your Dream into a Website

“We cannot be sure of having something to live for unless we are willing to die for it.”

- Ernesto Guevara

The Anything You Want conviction drove me to the world full of possibilities. I read Derek's blog again. His blog remained as insightful as always. I still love his words. I still love his writing. I still love his being. I admire him as a good writer. All of a sudden, a light bulb went off in my head. Why couldn't I be a writer like Derek?

I've always had a thought sits at the back of my head: someday in the future I will be an author. But I didn't know where to start and what to write. So I started a blog - [One Way Ticket to Future](#) - to create an archive to showcase my writing to Derek that I have the ability to co-write a book with him.

Using Weebly and building a blog, [learning English and writing in second language](#), all of these were not fancy. Your 18-year-old cousin has the ability to do the same. But only one out of ten would do this because of this four-letter name: FEAR. The fear of unknown. The fear of failure. The fear of humiliation. The list of different types of fear is infinitely long and diverse. It is easy to do all the work at your bedroom and brag about it to your friends. You can say whatever you like as long as they don't see it. Building a website, facing the whole world is a totally different case. You need to get on the stage to confront all the netizens in the earth.

But I know that, at the very least, there is an audience who will notice my performance. Since I took the courage to turn my hero, who always performs on the stage, into an audience.

Do you have some weird hobbies you would only do at your home and make sure nobody is around beforehand? Yes, I do. I like to dance or sing or practice karate kick when no one is around. Sometime I do the Harlem Shake like a crazy monkey dancing. Sometime I rap Eminem's Lose Yourself like a thick tongue vibrating. Sometime I do the sidekick like a mechanic robot moving. What if you need to do all these among the crowd in a public place such as a mall? Even though you know that you are a nobody, no one would care what the hell you are doing with

your Harlem Shake, you are afraid, still. Building a website is just another step you will take to fully commit yourself to your dream. Eventually, you'll notice that you get used to perform in a public place. The fact is that you are just a nobody that [no paparazzi is interested](#).

## Unless You Want to Support a Good Cause, Don't Work for Free

“Men live by intervals of reasons under the sovereignty of humor and passion”

- Sir Thomas Browne

Along the way, I was not only blogging to showcase my writing skill, but also volunteering to do the research work for the Hong Kong Startup Guide 2014. I interviewed investors, authors, anyone who could bring insights for this book. I told everyone I trust that I was doing a volunteer work for my hero and his company.

At the beginning of September, I promised myself I would email Derek again with my contribution to his vision. If he finds my volunteer research work valuable, he may hire me as a writer. That would be great. If he thinks my work is useless and dump it, I will be grateful still. It's because even he wouldn't give me the job, he has already given me a dream by inspiration. I thought this is exactly what role model means - a person regard by others, especially young people, as an example to follow.

With the experience of burning my little legs numerous time, the lessons taught me not only how to do a marathon in life but also time management.

Here shares my lesson learned: kills the obsolete notion of time management, once and for all. Time management used to teach us how to maximize every second we spend in the galaxy, at the meantime, neglecting the fact that prioritization is more important. Running faster at the spinning treadmill doesn't make you fly to the promised land - where your own dream castle located.

Putting my head down 60+ hours per week and adding one more volunteer job on the side, money became a trivial factor.

Instead of asking how much should I get out of this project, I asked myself “Am I supporting a good cause or gaining experience from a specific person?” The answer turned out to be YES to both of them. Not even an either-or answer.

Why was it important to answer this question before rolling the ball? Because money alone was not the source of personal power to wake you up before dawn and work near midnight, on top of 60+ hours treadmill work. It was not sustainable,

unless you have a good cause to support. Only passion, instead of money or any other thing, could take the role to fuel your Ferrari engine up and running all day long.

So I dug my question and soul even deeper. "Am I willing to work for free for my hero and his company?" The answer was a very obvious Hell Yeah! which came before my analysis. I listened to my heart. The analysis later on turned out to be just a weapon to persuade people to give me a hand on the volunteer work. I convinced the entrepreneurs, investors, government officials, authors, etc. by saying:

--

Hi my friend -

I am volunteering to do the research work for my hero - Derek Sivers. Derek Sivers was the founder of [CDBaby](#) and sold this company in 2008 for 22 US million dollars. After 10 years of building a legend, he didn't become a millionaire. Because he [gave away his company to charity](#).

Lately, he starts another startup - [Wood Egg](#). This is an e-book and on-going project which helps foreign entrepreneurs to establish new businesses in 16 countries. Hong Kong, 1 of those 16 countries, is where my research focusing on. I am utterly happy to have a chance to work for this project.

One of my tasks is to interview a government official who works with small business or economic development. Ask about incentives, current developments, departments to know, and any advice.

Is it OK if I have an informal interview with you which takes no longer than an hour?

- *Nobody*

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## Back to the Stage

“The true measure of success is how many times you can bounce back from failure.”

- Stephen Richards

In September, [by being proactive](#), I came back to the Wood Egg stage with a blog and a set of volunteer research work. I asked the hiring manager and Derek for a different role: writer. As a fair competition, I had Derek’s permission to enroll in the fight tournament with English words, instead of fists.

With an entry URL to a written test, a username and a password, I stepped in Wood Egg again. As a first time fighter in writing, I read the rules of the game carefully and made sure I won’t miss any necessary information.

“Make the best answers you can to those two questions. Add any information or insights you have. Whatever it takes to make the best answer.”

As a veteran exam taker in the Hong Kong traditional education system, I understood right away the questions set were not restricted by formal answers. In fact, it didn’t have formal answers at all. They were open ended and - brilliant. The creator of these two questions was sophisticated. Instead of locking you in a box, he gave you the playground larger than an auditorium. You’re not fighting with other writers word by word. You won’t even touch their body or pull their hair. All you had to do is to express yourself in a way that combine the vision of Wood Egg and yours. Explore the creativity in your subconscious mind and link them seamlessly to factual based knowledge. By convergence, all the writers were Mixed Martial Artist who did performance show. Instead of fighting with each other, we listened to the music and immersed ourselves with our own movement. Our performance was no right-or-wrong scenario. It was OK to do a punch in Tai Chi. It was OK to do a side kick in Muay Thai Boxing. It was OK to create Jeet Kune Do as Bruce Lee did.

So, I got on the stage. The spotlight was on me. “Are you nervous?” My left brain asked my right brain. “I’m not nervous. I’m excited. I’m just going to have fun and let the rest follow.” I answered as I am the dominator with two sides of brain. I

finished the test and sent Derek a quick email to make sure that he received my video tape of performance.

A day later, I got the following response.

--

Hi *Nobody* -

Looks great! Very very good job. More news soon.

- Derek Sivers

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After reading this email, an image which vanished years ago appeared. I remember when I still was an elementary school kid, I joined numerous swimming competitions. I won a lot of them but also lost a lot of them. No matter I won or lost the competition, I felt tremendous relief after touching the timeboard. Because I knew I wouldn't regret. I gave all in. I won the competition in a sense that I was competing with myself. The medals to me were nothing.

## Round Final. Fight!

“A consistent man believe in destiny, a capricious man in chance”

- Benjamin Disraeli

--

Hi *Nobody* -

Thank you for doing the test essays for the Wood Egg writing project.

I liked your two answers enough that I'd like to move on to "Round 2" of the interview. I've narrowed it down to the top 2-3 people per-country, and need to make my final decision by next week.

But first, I need to tell you that this Wood Egg writing project just got a lot more interesting.

While reading everyone's test essays last week, I realized I was wrong. I thought the writer's job was just to take the info supplied by the researchers, and put it into clear wording for the book. But many of the writers did so much better than that. So I realized my mistake, and have re-defined the role.

Now instead of you needing to stick to the research, the research is just there to support you.

If you think the research is missing something, you can add it.

If you think the research is wrong, you can ignore it.

If you think the research is giving so much information that it's making a boring answer, you can skip it.

Your goal is to make the best possible answer to each question, by any means necessary. Do whatever you can to make it clear and helpful to the reader.

**WHY AM I TELLING YOU THIS?**

Because not everybody realized they could do this! While reviewing everyone's test-essay submissions, it felt unfair to judge one over another because one



person realized they could break the "rules" of the job definition as it was described last month, and another one didn't.

So... I'd like to do one more test essay, having said all this.

Please go back to:

<https://woodegg.com/wt/>

USERNAME: nobody@20ish.org

PASSWORD: xxxxxx

There will be one more question waiting for you there. Deadline by the end of this weekend (the 22nd) please.

Make sure to read the HELP link in the top menu bar, if you didn't before.

#### WRITING GUIDELINES:

Please aim to be clear, interesting, and insightful.

CLEAR: See

[http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Clear,\\_Concise,\\_and\\_Direct\\_Sentences.pdf](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Clear,_Concise,_and_Direct_Sentences.pdf)

INTERESTING: Skip the completely obvious. Minds close when they read an obvious sentence like "Every business needs banking, and small businesses are no exception." or "In the end, the choice is yours. It depends on your needs."

INSIGHTFUL: There's plenty of free "Guide to Doing Business" information from governments and banks. This book should go beyond the basics, and get to the deeper insights that are usually not said, and often only learned from real experience and reflection.

I'm the target audience, so if it helps, pretend you're writing this just for me: semi-experienced entrepreneur, considering moving to a new country and starting a business there, but has probably never been there beyond a short visit. I (the reader) need to know what to expect, get advice on what to do, and ultimately understand it as deeply as I can, since it might be my new long-term home.

(There are a lot of country-comparison questions because many of the target-market readers already have experience living in Asia, but just not this country.)

OK - any questions? Please ask! I really want to help you get this job.

- Derek Sivers

---

Reading this email, I knew for sure that I am at least the 2-nd runner up. But there was only one champion who deserved the prize to put his name near Derek Sivers to become a co-author with Hong Kong Startup Guide 2014.

Getting to the final round of the interview means I was good, but not great. From good to great, experience counted. But that was not the single factor which would guide me to do a great show. To do a great show, I need to follow my heart.

## Sorry - Wood Egg Writers Chosen

“There is no secret to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, learning from failure.”

- Colin Powell

--

Hi *Nobody* -

Very sorry, but I chose someone else as the writer of the Wood Egg guide.

I'm using this generic form letter to run through my database and make sure I email everyone who applied, but please feel free to reply back now, if you'd like a personal reply with details, or to talk about other options.

These Wood Egg books are an ongoing project I'm going to be doing every year, and I'd like to use different people every year to get different perspectives. So actually this means we're even more likely to work together in the future, if you're still interested.

Plus, I have some other ideas for jobs that are outside the existing roles of Researcher, Writer, and Editor. The ideas aren't fully formed yet, so I don't have specifics, but now's a good time to let me know if you're still interested in working in some other way with Wood Egg in the future. That way, I'll let you know first when something comes up.

Thank you!

- Derek Sivers

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What was the feeling after all these? I am lying to you if I say I was not disappointed. But I know I've done my best at the moment I touched the timeboard and headed up and looked at my time score. No matter how good you perform, there is always someone else better than you. If you want to improve yourself in the life-long journey, instead of being devastated for just a competition, you need to step back and learn - learn from the person who is better than you.

I didn't know who my competitors were, but I was really curious to know who they are and what makes them a better writer.

---

Hi Derek -

Happy to know you chose someone else who is better than me. I really believe that I am the best. That means Wood Egg could have a better growth =]

First and foremost, I want to make a point crystal clear: I'm obsessed with Wood Egg. Please let me know if you have any other plan.

Second of all, can I have some precious comments from an experienced entrepreneur, YOU? I have been chasing Wood Egg since Day 1 of your official launch. I want to know more about my mistakes so that I could improve. Please make it specific. I have been applying for both Researcher and Writer role along the way. What learning could I get from this experience? Please understand that I am not asking for a job at this point. I am asking for advice in life. Both personal and work-related.

Thanks my mentor.

Have a beautiful day!

- *Nobody*

---

After I lost a competition, this was one question I always ask my coach. "What could I do better?" In life and competition, there is no difference.

## My Favorite Fable (塞翁失馬)

A farmer had only one horse. One day, his horse ran away.

His neighbors said, "I'm so sorry. This is such bad news. You must be so upset."  
The man just said, "We'll see."

A few days later, his horse came back with twenty wild horses following.  
The man and his son corralled all 21 horses.

His neighbors said, "Congratulations! This is such good news. You must be so happy!"  
The man just said, "We'll see."

One of the wild horses kicked the man's only son, breaking both his legs.  
His neighbors said, "I'm so sorry. This is such bad news. You must be so upset."  
The man just said, "We'll see."

The country went to war, and every able-bodied young man was drafted to fight.  
The war was terrible and killed every young man, but the farmer's son was spared,  
since his broken legs prevented him from being drafted.

His neighbors said, "Congratulations! This is such good news. You must be so happy!"  
The man just said, "We'll see."

--

Hi *Nobody* -

Actually - now that you got my form letter, I have a special *Nobody*-only offer for you.

First - I want you to know that you ALMOST got the job as writer. Your essays were really really great. It was between you and one other person, and I spent a whole hour on the decision, re-reading hers and yours again and again.

So I have a unique offer for you:

I would like to hire you as a part-time Wood Egg researcher to work with the writer.

Her name is Jacinta Read.

I told her about you already, how great your work is, how you did it anyway even though you weren't hired in June, and how I'm really impressed with you.

She said yes, she'd love to work with you.

So here's how I think it could work:

What do you think?

- Derek Sivers

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So, that was that. I became a Wood Egg Researcher. We'll see.

## A Writer - This is Who I Want to Be

"We are what and where we are because we have first imagined it"

- Donald Curtis

The writer journey that happened in less than a decade was just another *Nobody* story. At the time you are holding this book at your hand, means I have already published this book and become a self-made author. Who do you want to be?

Last but not least, if you are interested in who this *Nobody* is, he loves to be reached out. Understood by lovely reader - you, this silly *Nobody* would love to know you more too. If you read all his past and go this far, email him at [aero@aerowong.com](mailto:aero@aerowong.com) or comment on his blog, [One Way Ticket to Future](#), for any reason. He will love to hear your thought.



## About the Cover

A role model is someone navigates the rapids before you and has a good map for you to follow. Looking at him, learning from him, you'll be able to build your dream castle brick by brick.

Once you realize your dream, don't forget to put a mirror on the wall, you'll see yourself in reflection. You'll no longer see your role model; you've internalized his philosophies.

You are a brand new – YOU.





**Aero Wong**



**Tweety C.**



**Aouda L.**

Aero Wong is a Nobody.

Tweety C., the Editor, is a graduate of English Communication from University of Central Lancashire, UK. She is working under an International Enterprises in her favorite Beauty industry, well utilising her all-round communication skills to make an impact on everyone's lives, hopefully the world. She loves travelling, reading and writing. Freelancing is one of her beloved hobbies. You can reach her at [tweeety.c@gmail.com](mailto:tweeety.c@gmail.com).

Aouda L., the Designer, graduated from Hong Kong Arts Center, The Art School and HKU SPACE Community College. She works as a graphic designer for around 6 years in Hong Kong. She loves any pretty and inspiring things in life. You can reach her at [aoudagraphics@gmail.com](mailto:aoudagraphics@gmail.com).