

Peter's Office

by Adam Sifre

This is Peter's office. The room is small, and the wood paneling is painted white. Light colors, Peter has been told, make a room appear larger. There are a few pictures on the wall. Aside from his wheeled, office chair, there are only two pieces of furniture. The larger of the two desks is a cheap, pressed wood monstrosity, stained to trick the eye into believing it is mahogany. This desk is Peter's working desk - home to his computer, printer and a small stack of reference books that help writers sound authentic when writing crime novels, murder scenes, and romance. The chair he uses is small, on wheels and upholstered in inexpensive light brown leather.

Less than a foot above his monitor, hanging on the wall is a small framed painting. It is a watercolour depicting an empty beach chair facing a calm sea. The sky is a pale pink, or perhaps purple. Peter argues about this with himself when he can't think of what to write next, which is often. The painting is what passes for a window here. The glass in the frame is dusty, but Peter never notices.

Two other pictures are displayed on Peter's white, wood-paneled walls. One is a picture of his mother. The frame appears to be made of the same same faux mahogany as Peter's desk. It was taken at a small park, not too far from Peter's house. The grass is dotted with tiny purple flowers. Peter does not know what they are called. His mother is wearing a yellow print dress and smiling. It is the same picture that appears on the book jackets of her last two novels.

The other picture is a pencil sketch of Coney Island, showing a Ferris wheel with a lemonade stand and crowd in the foreground. Peter purchased the sketch from a street vendor who had approached him outside of a coffee shop. He made the purchase more out of embarrassment and obligation, than appreciation for the art. The man was persistent and Peter is not fond of confrontation.

The second desk in Peter's office is much smaller. It looks as if it belongs in a school — an underfunded school. There is no chair for this desk. In the beginning, Peter imagined he would just wheel back and forth across the room, ping ponging from desk to desk. The thought held an appeal to him, a promise of action. But he never does.

A chairless desk is like a smile with a front tooth missing, he thinks. I should write that down.

There are two items on this second, desk. An unopened ream of white bond paper, and a vintage Royal American typewriter, circa 1930s. The Royal American is gunmetal black and silver/gray. Even the “Royal” logo, with the R's foreleg extending beneath and cradling the letters O,Y,A and L, is stained dark silver. The keys are round, and you can see the thin metal arms underneath each one; small black circles with faded white letters stamped on each one. The only color to be found on the entire contraption is the ribbon. The bottom half is bright red and stands out like a neon sign.

Peter found it online months ago. On Ebay or Craigslist — he does not remember. The typewriter is Peter's silent declaration. It is his way of putting his money where his mouth is. This is where rubber meets road. This is Peter really *committing*. He loves it. At least he loves the *idea* of it. That is, most of him loves the idea of it. Part of him, though, fears that the Royal American, like the water color painting, has proven to be only a distraction.

There is a small closet here, as well. An identification card on a long cloth loop, hangs on the doorknob. “Writers Digest 2015.” Long ago and far away. The door is painted white, like the walls, and stays firmly closed.

And so, this Peter's office.

