

**O**ne morning in the shower a thought takes shape under the water drumming on your scalp....

What if you recast everything in second person? Let the generic "you" morph into the personal, particular "you?" That would suggest, paradoxically, more of the universality you're aiming for and you think is justified... even though what you're recounting is undeniably individual, autobiographical. It would provide a certain remove from your own experience. A sliver of objectivity.

In the "I" convention the author is other. The reader remains separate, outside, passively regaled by someone apart who's relating their idiosyncratic thoughts and experiences (the unisex "their"). In the "you" construction (it's too infrequent in literature to be styled a convention), reader and author are fused. The former might never have done anything remotely like what the latter is ascribing to them (that's the unisex third person plural again), although almost surely they have done something at least recognizably similar. They might never have felt at all the same way (emotionally, philosophically, politically). But that knowing, familiar, maybe accusatory "you" sucks the reader inside the author's skin.

And writing in second person is different. (Less so than you thought, originally.)

You've already begun the writer's obligatory cancer memoir. The first sentence gives you your cue:

*"When you look between your legs and the toilet bowl is crimson...."  
You're off and running.*



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