It's easy to lose yourself in the research and never get around to actually putting words down on paper. That "working" for her meant doing the reading and thinking that comes easily, naturally, and pleasurably. But that wasn't getting journal articles or book proposals written. I convinced Chris that she could get away with not schlepping her stuff by using a writer's trick. When you get to a part where you need to look up specific facts or flesh out more research, instead of giving up and heading back to the familiar comfort of the library, you write CHECK in the text and keep plowing on. Going back later and actually checking things can be a satisfying task, like washing the dishes after a good meal.

I also convinced her that business is one of the tics of academic life. Professors are always too busy. But carrying out time for writing is essential to productivity.

We've been here for two and a half hours. We took a short break to eat and talk a bit. She showed me what she had so far. It's looking good. I asked if it was OK if I wrote about her. "Soar," she said, "You can say that, when faced with the prospect of a writing date, I had a panic attack." Chris knows she's not the only one who feels that way. For an academic, going to work means many things. Filling up a day with productive activity is not hard, but the work is also not always visible; committing to spend three hours doing nothing but writing means that by the time we leave, we will have something to show for it.

Today, at the end of our first date, Chris has a detailed outline and a good start on a journal article. I have still unwashed hair and the first draft of a column. I'm looking forward to our next date.

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