

So as you know, if you read every week, I'm on vacation in Detroit for the holidays. I'm literally writing this the day before Thanksgiving, while in bed, right before going to lunch and the movies with friends.

When I lived in Detroit, I used to go to T.G.I. Friday's with my dad every Saturday for lunch. You do that for many many years and you get to know a bartender or two. One of these bartenders was Terry. I liked Terry a lot. One of the nicest guys I ever met and the best part...he wanted to be a screenwriter.

Every Saturday we'd have a bad ass conversation or two about movies or screenwriting or whatever. He'd ask me questions he always wanted to know answers to.

I moved down to Ohio to start film school but still went to Friday's when I went home. Terry was obviously still interested what I was doing and what I was learning in film school.

It had been awhile since I had been back and hadn't seen Terry in a while. My dad still hit Friday's every Saturday though but hadn't seen Terry in a while.

One day he decided to ask where Terry was...

I still remember the phone call.

If Terry had died from an accident or by some sort of disease, it would have been sad but not horrible. The fact is, Terry didn't die from either of those things.

Terry died by being a nice guy.

Like I said before, Terry was one of the nicest guys I had ever met. Well, there was a girl who was one of the waitresses. Rema. She had gotten herself into a pretty shitty relationship. He was pretty violent and took it out on her all the time.

Finally, after the encouragement of her friends and family, she decided to leave him. She had nowhere to go and needed a place to sleep. Terry offered her his place to stay until she could figure out her next move. From what I understand, he even gave her his bed and slept on the couch.

One night, after work, they pulled into Terry's apartment complex. They never even made it out of the car.

The boyfriend had tracked Rema down and found out she was staying with another guy. He waited for them in the shadows and as soon as they pulled up he opened fire, killing both of them instantly.

All Terry was doing was just being a nice guy and all Rema was doing was trying to better her life.

How fucked is that?

The people at Friday's planted a tree in the parking lot and put a little stone memorial in their honor. Last year when I went home for Thanksgiving I decided to start a new tradition. I left a pen in the dirt in honor of Terry and his goal of being a writer.

This year was no different. I went to visit the memorial and I'm happy to say, that through all the snow, the rain, the wind...that pen is still there.

Now, it's joined by another.

Okay, on to less depressing stuff.

People always say write what you know but a lot of people misinterpret that statement. I've heard screenwriting prof's apply that very literally.

Which is a little hard to do.

Just because I have never been married, doesn't mean I can't have a married couple in my script. Just because I've never had kids, doesn't mean I can't have a kid in my script.

And the best argument of all: Just because I haven't killed anyone, doesn't mean can't write about murder.

What? Does my screenwriting professor really want me to kill a hobo tonight? Is he going to help? What's the best way to do it?

Anyway, the way I interpret "write what you know," is write about the things you see. Write about how you feel about them. Always be a witness to everything around you.

Last night we went to a REALLY classy restaurant. The couple at the table next to us were definitely out of place. They just didn't fit.

How did we know this? First clue: the way they were dressed. As soon as we walked in and were seated I glanced over. He was in slacks and a button up. No tie. No jacket. That tells me that he probably doesn't own a suit and rarely has to get dressed up. I worked enough in retail to know the type. He was totally a jeans and t-shirt guy and probably felt really uncomfortable.

She was dressed appropriately, but it didn't look like it came with any brand name attached (not that it matters, just pointing out she was clueless too.)

While we had dinner he caught bits and pieces of their conversation.

They were celebrating their three year anniversary.

This was the first time they had ever been to a restaurant of such high caliber.

She literally sounded like Jennifer Tilly.

They had NO idea what to do, how to act or what they were eating.

And then there are certain assumptions that can be made like...yeah, that dude TOTALLY got laid that night.

Even though we were there to have a great time TOGETHER, we still had fun paying attention to the world around us. We made up stories about them and totally had new characters to write about.

Now, writing what you know does not mean “I have a wacky family that would totally make a good movie.”

NO!

No one cares.

I promise you.

I have a totally fucked up family, not the one I get to see tomorrow for Thanksgiving, but yeah, PLENTY to write about.

But why?

Who cares?

I’ve never had any desire to EVER write the story of my family. BUT, characters that have some similar traits have entered into my scripts from time to time.

And THAT’S writing what you know.

BUT, if anyone’s up for killing a hobo...let me know. Probably gonna need a lawyer too. So you best be rich. Or maybe you’re one of those uber-rich guys that knows where we can hunt human’s for sport in Europe somewhere.

Dibs on the crossbow!

Have a great holiday people and eat lots of food.

Till next week...