

Last week's article seemed to be a hit with everyone and I got more than a few requests asking for more specific things including big chunks of action and dialog. I'm going to save action for next week and tackle dialog the week after. This week I want to share a couple of stories with you that I think you'll find beneficial.

I have a colleague that works at another company that sent over a script for me to read this week. The script, as far as we know, is set up at Fox.

He said, and I quote: "You're going to love the writing! It's one of the best scripts I've read in a while. People around town are raving about it."

I said fine, looking forward to it. So I get the script, check the page count and settle in for a "good read."

I never made it past the first paragraph. Here's why:

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN EVERYTOWN, U.S.A. – DAY

A WHITE CHRYSLER MINIVAN cruises through SUBURBAN EVERYTOWN, USA. Look, there's a Wal-Mart. Over there, a Rite Aid. A strip mall. An Applebee's. Bed Bath & Beyond. Home Depot. Wendy's. Chevron. THE REAL WORLD.

Can anyone tell me why I would be greatly annoyed with this? This is the START of the script. Literally from FADE IN:.

So why am I annoyed? Let's take a look.

First you're going to start your script out with "EXT. SUBURBAN EVERYTOWN, U.S.A. – DAY."

Okay, I can let this one go. I always believe that it's better to just pick a town which represents what you're going for, but that's fine. It is what it is.

But then, the writer goes on to say: "A WHITE CHRYSLER MINIVAN cruises though SUBURBAN EVERYTOWN, USA."

Um, shit, really? I was pretty sure the minivan was going to end up cruising through Gotham City. You already set the setting, why are you repeating yourself? There's no need.

Then they write: "Look, there's a Wal-Mart."

"Look, there's..." is commentating on your own script. You're not a tour guide, you're a writer. Paint a picture...hold that thought because I'm going to come back to "painting a picture."

The writer then goes on to name every fucking cliché "Everytown staple" in the book. Guess what? I'm not an idiot. I know what an "Suburban Everytown" looks like. In fact, isn't that why you used

“Suburban EVERYtown” to describe your setting? Every...meaning everyone is the same. If you’ve seen one you’ve seen them all...so why then, are you describing it?

You’ve already painted the picture with your scene heading. I read that and go, “Okay, suburbs...got it” and move on. That’s why we choose the words we use, to put images in the readers mind.

Now let’s say, just to play devil’s advocate, that this writer wanted to convey the opening of the movie as a montage of suburban life. I would suggest writing it like this:

FADE IN:

EXT: SUBURBAN EVERYTOWN, U.S.A. – DAY

A WHITE CHRYSLER MINIVAN cruises through the streets. It passes all of the usual suspects:

A Wal-Mart.

A stripmall.

Wendy’s...etc...

Boom. In and out and it feels more like a montage of images rather than “Hey, you’re an idiot so let me describe what an EVERYtown looks like!”

Now, before you jump into my shit for being so critical, let me stop you. I already know what you’re going to say...

“But Manny, you said it was set up at Fox and everyone loves it. Even your friend said it was some of the best writing he’s read! What the fuck?”

Exactly. What the fuck?

If this is some of the best writing he’s read, then what’s the shit that’s worse? That means that there is SO much horrible shit, floating around town, that execs can’t even tell when the writer is calling them a moron any more.

SO, here’s what I’m trying to convey to YOU. DO NOT SETTLE! Why do you want to be THIS guy? Be better than him. Write something that’s going to get people excited. Don’t just sit there and repeat yourself and assume that the person reading your script isn’t a total fucking moron. Come on people, be better. All I’m saying.

Now, onto a fucktarded moment of mine. THIS, is total shitty writing by the way. This is a great story about character introduction and how IMPORTANT it is.

So as you know I am currently working on a script with a producer. In that script there is a bad ass female character that plays the love interest but can also handle her own.

I wanted to try and convey her sexiness by being a little cheeky with my description. It also sort of fit the tone of the script anyway. I knew, when I was writing it, that it wasn't the best, but I did it anyway just to push through. It was just a first vomit draft anyway...no biggie.

Here's the character description I wrote:

**The source of the voice makes her way to down the ramp. This is JANE PARKER. The only way to describe Jane is to say that if Lara Croft and Angelina Jolie had a baby together, Jane would still be able to kick that kids ass and look hotter doing it.**

Totally shit writing. I cringe reading it now. Whatever, moving on. Here's the point of the story.

So I turn the draft in and one of the notes I get is that this section HAS to go. I agree, no biggie. Then, one other note I get is that he absolutely hates Jane. Like, with a passion. I was taken aback a little bit as I thought I had written a pretty sweet character.

Then I got to thinking...maybe it was my shitty character description that had put a negative connotation in his head.

So I went back and changed the description to this:

**The source of the voice makes her way to down the ramp. This is JANE PARKER, a bad ass through and through. Holstered guns rest on her hips as she swaggers. Every step oozes with sexuality but also with a confidence that puts fear into you.**

Not the greatest and it still needs work, BUT it's not as cheesy and horrible as the first attempt. Now, here's the funny thing: I didn't change a single word of anything she does or says in the script (with the exception of some parts that were discussed that needed to be changed.)

Handed in pages.

This is the response I got...

"I love what you did with Jane! Complete 180...that's what I was looking for!"

TA DA! Answer found.

You put a bad taste in people's mouths and it'll stay there through the entire script. They won't necessarily KNOW WHY there's a bad taste...but you'll implant it. That's obviously something that you want to avoid, right?

This shit happens and the more aware of it, the more you'll stop doing it and catapult yourself into a higher degree of writing.

Till next week...