

Hey peeps!

Gonna kinda cheat this week and share with you a couple of emails I got this week. The first comes from Karen who, like many of you should, has taken my advice:

Hi Manny,

I love your column and appreciate the time you take to help out those of us trying to break into the business. I particularly love your advice on what not to do when you get an opportunity to meet with mucky-mucks.

I'm a fairly new screenwriter in New York, and have been working hard to master the craft for about three years. My goal is to get a job in TV at the staff table. I've applied for the network fellowships and workshops, but know what a long shot it is. Everyone has told me that I have to be in LA to work in TV, and I have taken this advice to heart. I definitely don't want to die without at least giving it a chance.

A few months ago you mentioned the "living in LA" question in your column, and said something like -- if you're married, and your spouse doesn't want to move, leave him. Although I know you were joking, I agree that there are worse reasons for separation! In my case it is not only my husband, but also my two teenagers who have no desire to be in LA. I am making preparations to move out there on my own in the fall and give it a shot. If it works, I'll bring them out there, if not I'll come home. I've worked too hard and love this too much not to take a shot.

My question is, other than the usual approach of meeting everyone possible and attending networking events, do you have any particular advice to hit the ground running? Since I'm leaving my family to pursue my dream, I want to make the best possible use of my time.

Once again, thank you for your time and attention. I'd love to buy you a drink sometime to show my gratitude and shoot the breeze.

Trying hard not to be a fucktard,

Now, although I'm very proud of Karen, I do want to say I'm not about breaking up families...although I know it seems that way. Every situation is different and in a perfect scenario you can move out here AND keep your family dynamic in tact.

That being said, I want to throw out a call to all of you. Let's show Karen a warm LA welcome. She wants to network and meet people, so let's make it happen people. She's leaving her FAMILY for this shit. Let's show her that it's gonna be worth it!

Next up, another soul who needs some help...this one comes from Marie who wrote me in a frenzy and I feel like her story is definitely one that needs to be shared.

Dear Manny,

*Once again you have hit me where it hurts, and so I figure I'd better ask for your advice in the hopes of extricating myself from a possible pile of s**t from acting like a triple f***tard.*

First, the set-up:

I attended a local industry info session and at the cocktail party afterwards, I flitted around looking for more info from people whose names had been mentioned. Whilst waiting to speak to Person A, I stepped into the little cocktail group around him and while Person A was talking to B, I struck up a conversation with C while her husband D turned to talk to E.

I mentioned to C that I was a screenwriter and we talked about how important lighting was to a movie (I thought her hubby might have been a DP). Anyhow, we exchanged cards and I discovered she was a line producer.

Call to Adventure:

Next day, I get an email from Producer D (aka "husband D" above) with his IMDb Pro link asking me for a one-page on all of my finished screenplays. I panicked because I have 5 completed screenplays, but only one of them is ready to "go out", IMHO. So I stalled by sending Producer D the loglines and asking if any of those loglines were of interest.

Producer D wrote back asking for 1-page synopses on all of them. So I sent one synopsis per day (as I wrote them round the clock). Time

elapsed: one week.

1st Turning Point:

Producer D requests the full screenplay for the locally set Romeo & Juliet story (called So Hard to Love), explaining he's turning down the others because he's looking for locally shot thrillers. (The others are set in faraway places.) I panicked. Time elapsed: about a week and a half.

Did I mention I was in a state of panic? When I opened up SHL again, for the first time in many years, I re-discovered that I had left SHL in the middle of a re-write because I had been diverted by a request to adapt a novel to screenplay.

*Here is where I may have gotten truly, horribly f***tardy: I wrote back to Producer D saying I wanted to tweak and polish SHL before I sent it to him. Did he have a deadline?*

No reply.

Act 2 Part 1

A family emergency cropped up that required 4 days to resolve. On top of that...

I re-outlined So Hard to Love (SHL) to play up the thriller aspect, but try as I might I could not turn my little ol' Romeo & Juliet Romantic Drama into a roller coaster Thriller.

After 2 weeks of panicked silence on my part, I sent Producer D a short note updating him that I was still tweaking and polishing SHL and expected to deliver at the end of the week.

Producer D replies, "Thanks for the update."

I bled sweat and tears, sent it out for feedback, incorporated feedback, still was not 100% happy with it but it was Saturday and I was so sleep deprived I couldn't even see straight anymore (literally) so I registered and submitted it.

*After 4 hours sleep I realized I sent him the wrong version, of course, and spent the rest of Saturday and Sunday agonizing about whether I should re-send the "better" version and risk looking like a double f***tard. I resisted and said, "What will be will be."*

Midpoint High or Low?

On Monday, Producer D writes, "Thanks for this." Total elapsed time from the day we "met": 4.5 weeks.

So you see how your column fit into my tragic story. Now here's where I need your advice...

Act 2 Part 2

Producer D has now had So Hard to Love for 3+ weeks.

*Should I send him a note asking if he's had time to read it yet? Or will that mark me as a triple f****tard that he will prompt him to change his email addy?*

I hope this hasn't been too agonizing for you to read. I probably did EVERYTHING wrong. Nope, wait--I never pitched to him, so I couldn't have done THAT wrong ;-).

*Anyway, should I follow up? Should I wait another week or so? Or have I already f***ed this up beyond redemption and should just fahgeddaboutit?*

**Sigh* I do appreciate what you are trying to help your readers to NOT do stupid things.*

BTW, should I mention that my screenplay that is set in a diamond mine in the Arctic, "Rough Diamonds", could be tweaked to be re-set at a newly opened diamond mine in northern Ontario (which would make it much more "local")?

So to summarize, in case your head is spinning:

- 1) Should I follow up on "So Hard to Love"?*
- 2) Should I offer to tweak "Rough Diamonds"?*

I do hope you'll take pity on another mid-Westerner (could ya tell?) and put me out of my misery! And I do apologize if writing to you has wrecked your day,

First and foremost, guys...I'm here to help YOU. Don't EVER feel like you need to apologize for sending me your problems.

You don't. That's what I'm here for.

Many of you can probably see where the fuck up went, right? Never pitch something that you don't have prepared.

Why?

Cause people might like it and want to see it!

Okay, so that's that. We can't take it back.

So what does she do now?

Nothing.

Don't write, don't ask, don't do anything.

Let it be. The reality is, if the person likes it, they are going to like it. Period. They welcome to you regardless of how they got it.

And the reality of it... we're busy. Just cause we asked to read your script, doesn't mean we're going to sit down and read it right away.

So just do nothing. AND, learn from these mistakes and don't repeat them. Marie is never going to pitch something she doesn't have done again. Right?

Till next week...