



Written by bubba



In the same day, I found a local writing group to join and had an awkward conversation about conflicting philosophies of writing. Actually, I didn't really think it had anything to do with philosophy, but whatever. I guess that could have been a debate. To me it was about honesty and motive. I guess a discussion about the philosophy in dealing with *those* two things could have been interesting but it never got there. Instead, it was a scratch-the-surface exchange that maybe dug just a little deeper than previous talks of the same topic. Admittedly, I purposefully tried to steer the conversation away from becoming too personal, which was hard. Inside I was teetering on being overly critical, I know that much. Too much. Like the not constructive kind (see: *destructive*). But I self-edited instead, believing I know enough about the circumstances and differences involving the process of both parties (myself and the other) that I shouldn't press.

The whole thing started when I backed away from an offer to get my script **The Vampires of Shadow Ridge** in front of "industry people". I'd been thinking about it for just under two weeks, when I was first approached about the possibility. From the beginning I was fairly certain that handing over something I'd written without being the initiator wasn't something I was interested in. There are a whole variety of reasons why that's the case but I think I can summarize and avoid hurting feelings just by saying that, when it comes to my work, I want to be in the driver's seat. The other part too, though less significant, is that I have been down this road before and haven't considered it to be something useful for me. So I finally had to just say no, which was a gentle no. The reaction I got wasn't surprising – incredulous, I'm being naïve, etc. And I understand that turning down what is reported to be such a scarce opportunity from a friend required that I explain just a little, so I told the truth; here's the summary, on loan from my head and dressed up a bit to be reaffirming to myself:



I've made a commitment to make a change in my life and pursue writing full time. Notice I did not say 'selling writing' full time. That may be the case and it could be a goal but it is not a driving force of mine. 80% of what I write, I hate, which is fine I guess, except that I want to be happy with more than 20% of what I create. I don't need to care about the scarcity of opportunities because where they may lead (i.e. 'the opportunity of what') isn't how I'm motivated. Because I've made a commitment to change gears completely in a couple years, my goal now is to get better – that's it. 'Better' to me means being honest, being eloquent and being interesting...to me. I'm not there yet. I've written eight full-length scripts. Three are ok, four suck and I don't know what one is. But it's appropriate for me to say that I don't think any of them are great. Maybe I have thirty short stories. About half are posted on this site because I like them. The rest? Not so much. Then I have the 'other', which at some point in my life may be the most interesting reservoir of material – that which was created for some other point-in-time purpose. It doesn't fit anywhere. But the point is that I don't want to generate interest in me as a writer until I am comfortable with me as a writer...comfortable with my craft and the body of work I have created thus far. Otherwise I'd feel fraudulent. As a writer, I want to be personal and connected with my true motives...bad, good, constrictive, retentive, etc. If you're an artist then you're an artist regardless of what you can achieve that is publicly acknowledged as "Ah yes...this? This is art." No big secret there. Write something and get it made. Doesn't mean it doesn't suck. Doesn't mean it's personal, artistic or respect worthy. If you create something empty, how do you feel about that? I feel like a failure.

Ok so maybe that's a hard concept for most, especially for those struggling everyday to cast a lure in the pond of the Hollywood filmmaking juggernaut and hoping for a strike. But that's just the difference now, isn't it? I'm not fishing. Like I said, the response wasn't surprising. They said 'a script gets written to be made,

not as an exercise, which of course I found to be incredibly devaluing of the writing process. Several times I had to steer away from getting too personal. I've got personal hooks plenty deep into this person and it's therefore hard for me to disagree about something without digging into other topics. So, like I said, it got publicly filed (wrongfully I think) under *'differences in philosophy'* and that was that. The conversation ended on an implication that we're different yet the same, how I know what the other person feels and thinks about life, love, tragedy, etc. and that we just are pursuing different venues for self-expression. Odd and intriguing, I thought, because I've long felt disconnected from that person's personal process. Different yet different.

But of course the conversation prompted more thinking in me, more clarifying in my head. Check out the difference in thought paradigms I came up with here:



Person 1: *I want to win this fit contest. If I do, it will mean I am fit.*



Person 2: *I want to be fit. If I am, I will win this contest and others.*

It's a perfect contrast of perspective. I would argue that these two people have incredibly different goals and philosophies on achievement. So I'm Person 2 - I wouldn't enter a fit contest just because I'd lost 20 pounds and wanted to prove to others that I could lose more if they'd take a chance on me. That takes luck, something I don't much believe in. Instead, I'd workout until I was the fittest person around and compete with the other people at that same level. But see the goal would still be to be fit, not win a contest, which seems to be an elusive concept for some. I would say that's because they've got the wrong recipe for achievement - too much motivation and meaning resting on the approval, validation and opportunities of the outcome. That's what I'd say. They'd probably disagree. But words are words and behaviors are words too.



In my life, developing a skill at something and getting damn good is how you move forward. It's worked for me. I'm not afraid to publicly compete for anything and I know when my game is good and I know when it needs work. Sports was my entire life for a period of years. During that time, I was all conference, a captain, state champ and a scholarship athlete. Then I stopped because it wasn't important to me any longer and I set my sites on an education. School wasn't important to me when I played sports (I got a .7 GPA and was kicked out of college). When I finally made a decision to get back into school, I got straight A's until I graduated, went to graduate school where I continued my record of perfect grades and was invited to join the Phi Kappa Phi honor society. Then I began working on campaigns as a door-knocker. Since that time I have worked to elect several senior members of congress into office and I have run two presidential battleground states. I don't function at the beck and call or interest of anyone else. The way I go is the way I go and, and the only relevant account of whether or not it is a successful process is mine. Here is my litmus for this week: I just went to New York City to meet with one of the richest men on the planet - invited to give my opinions on a series of things. I'm flying back in two weeks to give more. It could be argued that the way I set up my own opportunities in life works.



Now there's writing. It's a relatively new concept in my life and is only recently a public and very specific goal of mine. So far I've amassed a fair amount of material, had some people say I should be a writer and I've done modestly well in a few writing contests – that's it. Not much. That's it except that I've made a commitment to pursue writing full-time and am making plans over several years to be able to make the shift. I'm not afraid or pressured because the things in life that I've wanted, I've got. It's

because of the way I set myself up, the process and how I compete – within myself, within the world. I'm not mad at anyone for what they have and what I don't; I plot my choices to get me where I want to go and then I get there.



I'm not looking for a new hat to wear this season. My goal is to *be* a writer. I'm looking to connect my core personality with the things I do in life – my writing, my family...me. I don't want to be someone who writes one thing, connects it to an inflated biography that highlights why I should fit into someone else's business and heads out to the world seeking recognition as a writer. That's counterfeit. I want to be an undisputed talent, someone that everybody – most importantly me - agrees is worthy of being labeled 'writer'. I'm not at that level with my writing yet, not to myself, so I don't care about the input and validation of others. But I'm working on it...inside and out. That's what my web sites are; it's me working out. The offline projects that I'm creating are what I'm working *on*. It's the only way I know.

Everything I've done in my life I've done my own way – set a goal, work hard, achieve and move forward. The things I have accomplished in life have come from my mastery of something – essentially, being better than someone else at something or being interesting or good enough in my own rite to warrant forward progress. That's why I don't get afraid of opportunities being "far and few between."

I need to be better. I need to be whole. Am I passing up a once in a lifetime opportunity? Do chances like this really come so few and far between that I'd be an idiot not to take direction from someone who considers themselves an insider? Maybe. But the real answer is that the question doesn't matter...to me. I don't even consider it. A person is motivated from the inside out or the outside in. I'm the former and, as such, the goals of the latter don't apply.



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