

Ejaculation

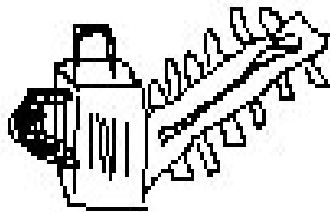
It occurred to me as I was swigging a can of Dr. Pepper with my roommates the other day, that I've been completely preoccupied with the wrong thing ever since I entered school almost four years ago. This entire time I have been trying to hone my craft, to master writing techniques--in short--to write the best story possible.

And for what? Every endeavor has gotten me a binder full of critiques on how "you could have done *this* better," and "I don't understand the flagrant use of commas," and "*that* character wasn't 'believable' enough." Now, what exactly is "believable?"

Franklin, a man in one of my stories, wakes up one morning and leaves his house to pick up a loaf of bread down at the corner store.

Believable.

On his way to the store, Franklin runs into one of his neighbors. Six months ago this particular neighbor borrowed a hedge trimmer from him. It is a nice hedge trimmer, not the kind that one buys at a discount store.



This is a hedge trimmer.

This hedge trimmer was purchased at Sears-Roebuck and given to Franklin for his 52nd birthday. Franklin would like his hedge trimmer back because his hedges are beginning to look a little unkempt and he likes to look nice for the rest of the neighborhood. But his neighbor, who also likes to look nice for the rest of the neighborhood, and hasn't gotten around to trimming his hedges either, tells Franklin that he can't get the hedge trimmer today, but he will have it back to Franklin by the end of the week.

Believable.

Franklin, satisfied that within the week he will have his hedge trimmer back, continues down the street to buy a loaf of bread. While crossing the street to the opposite corner he gets hit by a Mack truck. This really does a number on his internal plumbing and scrambles his circuits to the point of collapse. Franklin dies with a strange smile on his face, right there on the macadam in the middle of the intersection.

Believable

What the people gathering around Franklin don't know is that the instant before he is hit he is transported off of this planet and trillions of light-years away to the planet Grigmigaderm. On this planet he is placed into a large preserve populated with other species from around the universe, though mostly human. The Grigmigadermians closely resemble earth elephants and occasionally cavort through the preserve on the backs of large vehicles and shoot at the humans, Franklin included, with immense rifles. Franklin manages to survive countless assaults by hiding behind the unruly and unkempt hedges that are found throughout the preserve.

After many years on Grigmigaderm, Franklin is finally allowed to retire and is informed that he will be sent back to his home planet at the exact time of his departure, having not aged a day since he was captured. Franklin finds himself back in the middle of the street, having not yet been hit by the Mack truck. He decides that he is going to let his neighbor keep the hedge trimmer, since he has

acquired an appreciation for large, untrimmed hedges. A split second later, he's smashed to paste by the truck. Pity there weren't any hedges around.

Believable? I think so, but most do not.

So what do you do if every time you try to write the best story possible, you are rudely shot down by your writing brethren. Simple: go the other route. Write the worst story possible. This way, criticism turns into complement. When the papers come back and in the margin of one is written, "I really don't understand fourth person narration, and you didn't even name any of the characters and I'm not sure if they were even in the story. Needs work." you can pat yourself on the back, knowing you did a good job.

However, as I got into this particular style, I realized that it was becoming increasingly difficult to write a bad story. One can only sprinkle so many commas on a page before one runs out of letters to place them between. Then, I had a striking revelation: I had set the bar too high.

Of course.

By setting out to write the worst story possible I was--in essence--writing the best worst story ever. This frustrated me to no end; I had come full circle and was right back where I started, but I had been doing well so far. My critiques had never been more full of question marks and frustrated underlinings.

I needed something terrible, something truly awful, yet at the same time, not too bad. The key would be to strike a happy medium between the two extremes. On the one hand, I had to write a bad story. On the other hand, if I put too much effort into the story, then it might be too bad, therefore actually making it good again. And on the other hand, an undertaking like this risked the ultimate insult, dare I say it, "cult" status amongst the writing program (I saw that happen once, but that's a tale for another day).

I decided to make the story short. A small space would not give me my normal opportunities to properly build frustration in the reader, not develop the characters, and not tie the plot together at the end, but it would save me from writing too much.

For the characters I also minimized the amount of thought involved. Gary, a classic, was a fine choice as the protagonist. I created Gary a few years ago and he's been a constant fixture in my stories ever since. He is never the main character, just the occasional walk-on role, if you know what I mean. Gary works for Fed-Ex and he could easily be mistaken for a bumbling idiot, but he's far from that. Gary's IQ is up near genius level. However, sadly, he has absolutely no social skills, and no ambition to speak of. His parents didn't encourage him that much when he was a child, they just sat around the house all day ordering things off *The Home Shopping Network*. Gary became the laziest kid in school and when he was finally kicked out of his parents' house at the tender age of thirty-two, he got a job doing the only work he'd ever known: parcel delivery.

Normally, I'd need a few more characters to round out the story like this, but I can easily forgo them. That's the beauty of writing a bad story, I don't need to advance the plot or create conflict or anything. If I really need to I'll just add a cheesy love interest. She'll be a plain, uninteresting girl to save on description--daughter of a claims adjuster and a receptionist.

I'd write more about my plans for the story, but a brilliantly bad idea just came to me and honestly, I'm trying to end this thing as fast as I can. So here goes...

The most mediocre story ever...

Gary was born, Gary died, and a lot happened in between.