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*Writing the University Cover Letter*

I suppose my writing process begins with the most basic necessity: the idea. Usually, if I have an idea, it will just be the essence of a situation, and I have to write until I figure out where it is going. In that sense, I would call my usual process a bit more organic, or even meandering, if you will. In this particular case, however, I had a clear vision of my beginning, ending, and at least one of my characters. Therefore the construction of a “middle” was required, and because of the cause-and-effect, back and forth, Spy vs. Spy nature of the narrative, so was the construction of the dreaded thing I tend to avoid at all cost: an outline. Crafting the plot through this outline process was the most challenging aspect of this project, as I am much more language than action oriented. (Two of my favorite authors are Virginia Woolf and Henry James, which may give some sense of how optional I consider an actual plot to be.) But the script required pragmatism, so an outline was slowly crafted and annotated with snatches of dialogue and action, and eventually became what I consider my first draft.

There was much to consider, from the practical and plot-specific – the feasibility of the acts of one-upmanship between two ten-year-olds, as I envisioned it as a live-action short and did not want it to be too cartoony – to the character driven, and all these concerns were addressed through the continuous editing process. The outline and subsequent first full version of the script were both hand written, edited numerous times during the writing process, and edited further when finally transposed to the computer. In this sense, I don’t consider the first typed version of the script the “first” draft because I do not necessarily work in drafts. The finished outline was an implosion of red ink that might have equated to three drafts alone. After the outline, I wrote the script out, action and dialogue, by hand, making adjustments along the way. Here I ran into another issue. I have written a few scripts before, but they were for more sitcomsque or commercial-driven projects, and the visuals were never of any concern; however, as a photographer, I am also rather visually oriented. Also, my primary form is prose with semi-coherent run-on sentences, and the script format requires a deft hand in crafting short sentences, which is a bit of a challenge for me. With this script, these two idiosyncrasies converged, and I had trouble discerning how detailed the action should be, both in terms of tone and my own personal autonomy. The story itself is so action-oriented that it necessitated the high action-to-dialogue ratio, but beyond that some images appeared to me so clearly that it was all I could do not to include my own camera angles. The action description needed to not be so mired in detail that it became a Eugene O’Neill play, yet I wanted to have the reader see the visual I saw. Hopefully I managed to strike a balance between descriptive and perfunctory.

In the transition to the computer, still more changes were made—an adversary of sorts was created, and numerous cuts were made to simplify the action. After work shopping this version in class, I made a few more edits, giving the adversary more prominence, adding a bit more to the final confrontation, editing a few lines of dialogue, and finished my final draft. I tried to keep the whole process as organic as possible and hopefully created something that, while not intellectually deep, is enjoyable to read.