

A Year of Weekly Stories

By Mohammad Khan

I have been writing weekly short stories for a year now to get better at writing and communicating what I see in my head. At the end of the year, I've realized it's become something more of than simply improving my communication skills.

The initial weeks were the hardest stretch for me. It was difficult getting into the flow of plotting stories on a weekly basis while taking classes. After a while, writing stories became a bit spontaneous, like jazz or improv. Some stories were bursts of creative fervor at the last second. While most were grueling battles of developing storylines and the approaching time limit.

At first the stories I wrote were attempts to write what I've wanted to see on screen. Artistic takes and perspectives on generic stories and generic tropes. During the later stories, I explored more of myself and fused the characters with exaggerated aspects of my own personality. Then I began expanding into genres that pushed my creative skills. Having friends provide certain aspects of a story and my job is to weave them together.

I have noticed along the way, creators care more for their characters than their fans ever will. Even if it's a bad story, I've cared about the characters and genuinely desired for them to improve. That being said, it's quite easy to fall into a god complex when creating any story. You control the lives of the characters and you dictate the terms, silently pulling the strings. With that power, anyone can succumb to the hubris. However, with one quick reality check from life reminds that you are in a story of your own, and you are no puppeteer.

The beauty of stories is the insight into other lives and exploring who we could be. That's what I enjoy about writing these stories. I get to explore different aspects of myself and imagine how others live. I explore events of my own life from different perspectives.

I've realized that writing good stories often comes from watching people. Their idiosyncrasies, stutters, and habits they do unconsciously are often building blocks to compelling stories. The biting of your lips, the stoic answer, glimpses of an unseen world and life. Good stories are good because we identify with them easily. We see them around us all the time and in our own lives.

Examine your life through a narrative lens, you'll notice how life parallels story & how viewing your life through a narrative lens is fulfilling and insightful. It's the details that make it alluring. The word choices, the flicker of expressions, the decisions people make reveal their inner story, and all their stories are worth telling. Then you realize, everyone's story is as intricate and dull as yours. It's the choices that matter, not the events. It's the choices that make characters compelling. Your characters can grow to reflect yourself. Many of the greatest stories were based on personal events and self-reflection. No matter how the events in a story turn out, all good stories have character growth.

Looking back in my life, I remember many foreshadowing moments and moments of growth. The moments that didn't make sense in the moment, but make sense in hindsight. Remembering that there's always room for growth gives me hope that life can be better, I can be better.

Writing provides an introspective lens on your own life. You see how you've changed over time. You might be more calm or more angry. More happy or more sad. More grateful or more depressed. However, like in all great stories, there is growth. I hope there's growth in your story.

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