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Self-Reflection Essay — Constance After Dark

I’d sound overly dramatic by stating that my honors project was “a culmination of my college experience,” and yet, that hackneyed sentiment is exactly true, so I’ll open with it. I don’t entirely mean it in an artsy, metaphorical kind of way, but I also mean it in a literal sense. My story was about what I know best at this point in my life: university. The importance of friendship. Being dealt difficult circumstances, and figuring out how to deal with it. All of that good stuff. But, I’m getting ahead of myself— I’m viewing this self-reflective essay as a chance to look back on the process of writing these episodes, discuss which lessons it taught me, and address the problems I solved along the way. I’ll write about the method in which I came up with my ideas, how the work changed from the proposal to its various drafts, and what I think the future of this work will be.

In my honors project, a gang of rogue Zippies (yes—Zippy the Kangaroo—the University of Akron mascot) bullies and attacks the fictional Constance College mascot, Khaki the Kangaroo, for being a direct rip-off of our beloved marsupial. That part of the story is not based on any real-life experience. Everything else, to some degree, is. Many of the most outlandish things that happen — things that seem to serve as a device of “Ah, that’s in there for the sake of the story,” are drenched in reality, albeit exaggerated for comedic or dramatic effect. Cassidy discovering her ADHD; her becoming infatuated with Brooks’ dad; Guy’s tragic backstory; and Brooks confusing Jenny’s sexual orientation; these are all great examples of things that I’ve seen happen in real life that I chose to write about. Not all of these things relate to me, but rather, this is a comic recollection of various events cobbled together, jacked up to be sensational enough for television. This is what I mean by it being “a culmination of my college experience.”

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1 This self-reflection essay explores only half of this idea; the other half is explored in my critical influences essay, in which I detail how I came to writing screenplays in the first place.
experience.” I say this, but especially if you know me well, please don’t use my acknowledgement of the events being personal to me as a reason to start psychoanalyzing Constance After Dark, because I am not famous enough for that yet.

To launch into my next point, I’ll zoom in on the title of the work: Constance After Dark. Constance, Ohio, is not a real place — and fortunately, for the sake of our state’s reputation, there is no Constance College. However, somewhere in the world, there is a city named Constance… in the south of Germany, on the border of Switzerland, is a beautiful little beach town named after the lake it sits on: Constance, Germany.

I studied abroad in that town, at the University of Konstanz, for thirteen months, and I wrote most of my honors project while I was there. My belief going into my study abroad was that the emotional rollercoaster would give me something to write about, and I found my hypothesis to be correct— thrust out of my comfort zone, I encountered countless situations that I never would have come across at home. I heard hundreds of stories from my friends hailing from all over the globe, and listening to so many adventures (and having a few of my own) was the perfect environment for the development of my writing chops. As for the other part of the title, the After Dark portion, well— that was a stupid play on words. The student television show that sent me down the path of pursuing comedy—where I was writing, shooting, editing and directing comedy shorts—is titled Akron After Hours. I also just ended up being lucky that most of the crazy stuff that happens in Constance After Dark occurs at night, because when submitting this project, my plan actually changed drastically from my initial pitch to the first draft.

I still have my honors project proposal, so it’s humbling to look back and see how naïve I was. In my proposal I stated I’d be “writing a collection of four-to-six scripts in the sketch comedy genre, aiming to create 20 pages of content.” For the finished product, I wrote three
scripts, not in the sketch comedy genre, and the final page count total is almost 80 pages. I am happy with how everything turned out, however, how I got from my initial idea to where I ended up was a matter of troubleshooting and problem-solving through my starting concept.

The first problem was that writing these screenplays gave me a stress migraine and a half. I was writing the longest creative work I’d ever attempted up to that point while also knowing that my academic fate was looming over my head—if my scripts sucked, I might have had to drop out of the honors college, which would’ve been disastrous for my self-esteem, but also my academic career. I knew I couldn’t simply conjure quality creative work through sheer force of will—that’s just not how it works—but what spurred me out of that horrific creative paralysis was a shift in mindset. I realized that, at the end of the day, whether good or bad, I just needed to get something down on the page; then, I could revise until I felt happy with it. That was the best thing I could do. That was the only thing I could do.

The second major problem was that I modeled my honors project after my sketch comedy group at Akron. This wasn’t a bad idea on paper, but I found rather quickly that sketch comedy is something you can’t do while locked up in a tower by yourself. I acknowledged in my initial proposal that I would be lonely while writing these scripts since I wouldn’t have a team anymore, and while that did end up being true, I also underestimated how vital collaboration is in the sketch comedy genre. I desperately tried to figure out how my sketch ideas would work and how I’d write them, but I only found myself locked in the deep, dark dungeon that is writer’s block. Without having a consistent group of co-writers to bounce of—it without being able to picture in my head who was going to play who, and how the antics in my scripts would make my teammates laugh—I failed to make writing short, self-contained sketches work.
My third problem was that this project was my first real shot at long-form creative content. It didn’t feel satisfying to resolve to writing a few three-to-five page sketches in my normal style and call it a day. That didn’t feel right. I knew in my heart that I had a story to tell, and so I did — even if that meant doubling past the project’s minimum word requirement, finishing at ~13,000 words.

My solution to these issues was that instead of creating new characters and locations for each concept (as you would for a sketch), I would develop a few central characters to ground everything. Since I didn’t have my Akron After Hours teammates to help me come up with funny situations, I could create imaginary friends instead… With this in mind, the next logical step was figuring out how the characters would be linked together. That didn’t take long. They could all be affiliated with the same school, school being something I was very, very familiar with². And finally, since I already submitted my project proposal—titled Constance After Dark—without actually knowing what I would write about, I had to fit the word “Constance” into the story somehow. And thus, Constance, Ohio and Constance College were born. As a side note, an idea I had that I rejected early on was that I could have written the story about a student studying abroad, but that would have been far too on the nose for me. And besides— while I did know the German system after being there for a while, I didn’t know it in and out the same way I did the American one, so I decided it would be wise to use what I learned in Germany to better contextualize my own education and lifestyle growing up in the States.

And so, after sitting on a park bench in Germany for hours at a time, index cards in hand, holding my breath in desperate hope against all hope to come up with decent ideas, I solved the initial creative issues I had and was able to start writing and developing what could now be recognized as Constance After Dark. It was extremely satisfying to figure out who Brooks,

² Of the few holy commandments in writing, “Write What Thoust Knows” might be one of them.
Cassidy, Jenny, Dr. Mars, and Guy were, and as I discovered these people, story beats came to me and ideas started springing up left and right faster than I could scribble the script out. These characters are an amalgamation of real-life people I met, many of whom I met while abroad; and so, my life as an exchange student infused into my writing in more ways than one. At Konstanz Universität, finding myself in the center of a vibrant and diverse international community was no doubt a boon to my writing.

I also had a blast getting my hands dirty into the nitty gritty technical details of screenplay writing. A projected goal in my honors proposal was to learn proper screenplay format, and by stealing my friend’s copy of *The Hollywood Standard: The Complete Guide to Script Format* ³, I became comfortable with writing screenplays in a way that I never had before. I’d written many sketches for *Akron After Hours*, but I hadn’t really paid attention to proper formatting. Having an excuse to learn this for my honors project felt liberating, as now, I can write well-formatted scripts and show them to others without feeling embarrassed about style mistakes.

To my relief, through learning screenplay formatting and solving my creative hold-ups, in the early middle part of the writing process, I found my groove, and I was digging myself out of the hole I was in. There was one major disaster in my first draft, though, one that my friend Kyle Timas (a longtime *Akron After Hours* collaborator) helped me sort out.

While I did decide to make the transition from sketches to a continuous story, I did not do it gracefully. This was a direct symptom of my project’s problematic origins— what I’d written was far too long and interconnected to be considered sketch comedy, so it was floating around in this weird purgatorial space existing between formats. Kyle told me that my first draft felt like it was stuck between wanting to be a movie and wanting to be a show, so he advised that, whether

³ I borrowed my friend's book and took it with me to Germany without asking him.
it be an episodic TV series, or a film, I should decide what I want it to be so that it had a clearer identity. So I had to ask myself, did I want this to be a film, or did I want it to be a show?

I thought about this for a while, and I concluded that this is the type of story that I’d want to see as a series one day. Two out of the three episodes I wrote were about the length of the average television script, and I ruminated that these characters had a lot of opportunity in them, opportunity beyond what a movie could offer with a limited 90-to-120 minute timespan. I was going for a sitcom vibe in my style of writing, so focusing on molding it into a sitcom format felt like the right move. In addition to that, while writing the scripts, I kept coming up with more characters I could add to the show and new story arcs for the leads… What I had written as my honors project ended up being a few episodes in a show that, in my head, was much longer, and I’d imagined an abundance of character growth in-between the starting and ending points of each script. Considering all that, a satisfying conclusion settled into my mind: these were episodes, not acts. I beefed up the script by adding the second half of Act I to include the Khaki subplot, as this was not in the original draft. Then, with three ~25 ish page scripts, I had laid all the groundwork for this to be considered my first “television pilot,” complete with the beginning, middle and end of the first season.

Yet, while I’ve alluded to it thus far, I’ll now come face-to-face with the biggest flaw of my project. In my head, I have character growth plotted out, but in the scripts I’ve presented, readers see the results of these changes instead of the processes. In my mind, I’ve filled in the blanks about what Brooks, Guy, Jenny and Cassidy have done and how they’ve changed throughout the semester, but it is not the fault of my readers for finding some character moments unbelievable. Some things are left implied and not on the page, and not in a good way. If I ever turn this project into something bigger, I know that there are major changes I’ll have to engineer.
Because I decided to go with the television route, this honors project serves as a skeleton of a work instead of its full body.

With that said, what’s next for Constance After Dark? I don’t know. It will probably collect dust for a few years. I wrote in my honors proposal that I hoped that my finished product could be filmed one day, and while that would be incredible to see, if the scripts never see the light of day, I won’t count that as a loss; the experience of writing it was what I gained here. As a writer, it’s the nature of the beast to write things that will only ever be read by a handful of people: the life of a scribbler is a life of rejection, and trying to convince other people that your ideas are worth reading. I don’t know what’s in store for my future, but, genuinely, the process of writing this honors project gave me the confidence to know that I should double down on making my dream of being a television writer come true. I’d never been put under so much pressure for a creative project before, but here I managed to prove to myself that I didn’t fold under the stress: I buckled down and shattered all expectations in terms of what I thought I could deliver. The story isn’t perfect: it’s far, far from it, but I did manage to deliver something funny, featuring a couple memorable characters⁴, and with a few messages I wanted to share with the world. That’s good enough for me. I didn’t write 13,000 words because Kyle, my honors sponsor Juan, or anyone else told me to. I wrote 13,000 words because I cared.

I just hope that one day, some exec or producer might also care about something I write. That’s the name of the game, I guess.

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⁴ Guy and Dr. Mars were the reader favorites.
As an English major, I have spent the majority of my undergrad analyzing, discussing and writing about literary prose. That is to be expected. This, however, is not an essay about literary prose, for the most part — it is an essay about how my literary studies led to my love for film and the screenplay; or, in other words, how and why I had the idea of writing three pilot episodes for a comedy series as my honors project, and which influences led me to this point.

To understand how I ended up as a screenplay writer, first we must indulge in what may initially seem like a digression, but I promise, it’s not. Something I’ve had to come to terms with throughout my four and a half years of university is my need to work with other people. This may sound strange — social interaction is a basic human necessity — but for most of my life I was very shy and reserved, and I preferred working by myself because it was easier than having to worry about social pressures. I grew weary of being lonely, though, because I had mixed up the truth — social anxiety — with a lie I told myself, that I had an inherent need to be and to work by myself. College taught me that working with others in dynamic social settings is actually one of my greatest strengths, not one of my weaknesses. I realized that, while I do love literature, studying it is isolating work that requires a great deal of silent concentration, of sitting and writing alone. I know myself well enough now to understand that if my workday consisted primarily of reading and/or sitting behind a computer screen, I would wither into dust. I am lucky that early in my studies (as a sophomore), a light bulb went off for me.

During the pandemic, in a reading assignment I had for an asynchronous class (Critical Reading & Writing), I came across the short story “The Golden Age of Television,” by Karl Taro Greenfeld, within the *Pushcart Prize XLV: Best of the Small Presses 2021* anthology. This narrative led me to the career aspirations I’m pursuing to this day; setting out to be a television
writer didn’t happen overnight, but this was the first domino in a chain of fascinating discoveries I made based on coming across this piece of fiction.

Greenfeld’s story details a disillusioned, unnamed narrator working in a writers’ room getting hooked on gambling and narcotics, watching his charismatic addict roommate die from cancer, failing to competently write an episode for his show, and then going into rehab. The tale ends with the narrator getting hired onto a new show, receiving a pay raise, relapsing and getting back on his oxycodone habit, and proclaiming “I went nowhere, gained nothing, didn’t change or improve my being and consciousness in any way, and certainly didn’t learn a damn thing” (Greenfeld 188). However, to me the meaning of the story is less important than what happens in the scenes where Greenfeld describes the process of making scripted television: the writers’ room is portrayed as an “ongoing verbal puzzle that circled around and around . . . it [isn’t] writing, not in any sense of typing words onto a page” (Greenfeld 181-182). I was intrigued. It would be a lie to say I’d never been interested in film before, but this was my first peek into watching the sausage get made in TV. The idea of having a job where you can sit in a room with other writers and talk about a show all day to “break” the story together excited me immensely: it combined what I loved about literature studies and writing with my need for collaboration, community and creation. My capstone paper for Critical Reading & Writing was to analyze a story we read from the Pushcart Anthology and to create an annotated bibliography for it, so naturally I chose the Greenfeld story.

To find sources for my story, I looked up interviews on YouTube of industry veterans explaining how writers’ rooms worked. The videos opened my eyes to a new and exciting world of writing, cementing my intrigue. In the video “Life of a Television Writer Working on a TV Writing Staff” from YouTube channel Film Courage, writer John Truby explains, working in a
writers’ room is similar to “working in a band. These [writers] are some of the best story people working in the world, and when you are in a room with these kind of people, at that kind of quality, and it’s all working well, it’s writer’s heaven” (2:47 - 3:09). The idea of working in sync with hotshot writers more talented than myself was an attractive prospect, and I hoped that in the future, if I ever made it into a writers’ room, some of that genius might rub off onto me.

I couldn’t find any books about TV writing for my paper, but I did find an account of a screenplay writer working in the film industry, Adventures in the Screen Trade, by William Goldman. Goldman’s book, while being a near-useless source for my CR&W paper, absolutely blew me away. Goldman possesses a razor-sharp wit and a candid, conversational style, a style that I’ve tried to emulate in my own writing. To possess a genuinely down-to-earth and colloquial voice in writing is unique, I think, and it’s something that when writing essays or discussion posts for classes, my peers and professors have noted in my work. Adventures in the Screen Trade had me turn page after page in pursuit of Hollywood behind-the-scenes gossip, but also included in my copy the book is the full screenplay of Goldman’s Oscar-winning screenplay Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, my first taste of reading the screenplay format. I would also later turn to read some of Goldman’s work as a novelist, namely, The Princess Bride, which I prefer to the Goldman’s own film adaption, in part because the book is much darker. In all Goldman’s work exists an anger beneath the surface, and the characters in his stories—including himself, in The Princess Bride’s novel—usually don’t get what they want, but if they do, it comes at a great sacrifice. He writes in the Princess Bride,

Look. (Grownups skip this paragraph.) I’m not about to tell you this book has a tragic ending . . . there’s a lot of bad stuff coming, torture you’ve already been prepared for, but there’s worse. There’s death coming up, and you better understand this . . . the wrong
people die, some of them, and the reason is this; life is not fair. Forget all the garbage your parents put out. Remember Morgenstern. You’ll be a lot happier. (210)

And he is right. The wrong people do die. The last page of the novel had my jaw on the floor. (If you’ve read it, you know.)

I think part of the reason I connect Goldman and his stories so much is that part of his worldview can be seen in my own writing, however, while Goldman tends to end his stories in bleak obliteration, in most of my works I trend towards bittersweet. My characters do sometimes get what they want or come to the realization they need to, but it often comes at a cost. The closing lines of my script are upbeat in tone, but this is in contrast to the complications occurring in the preceding pages. Guy doesn’t get into Constance College even after all his efforts, Brooks is victim to a cruel prank and wake-up call conducted by his friend, none of the characters end up together romantically (a sitcom / slice of life staple), and Jenny decides to leave her life at Constance behind so that she can live up to her potential. But that’s life. Life is hard, and complicated, and you don’t always get what you want, which is Goldman’s assertion; mine is all that but with the caveat that I believe that having friends you can laugh and talk with is what gets you through the tough times, and that’s why my script ends the way it does, with the friends sitting and chatting together in the warm glow of the restaurant despite all they’ve been through. Goldman and myself both having a sad outlook on the world, perhaps the biggest difference between us is his belief5 that “it [is] not possible for two people to truly know each other. No matter how close the husband and wife, the father and son, the lover and beloved, we are locked inside ourselves” (285). To some degree I think he’s right, but it’s a downer to live your life that way. I know this because I have. I write what I write because I believe in human connection.

5 This was his conviction when writing Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, in which Butch and Cassidy both die in a shoot-out with the Bolivian police as the ending of the film, but Goldman implies in Adventures in the Screen Trade that his opinion about ultimate loneliness may have changed since he wrote the screenplay for Butch.
As for genre, Goldman primarily wrote action adventure stories and thrillers. I gravitate towards comedy. I always have, and I think I always will; it’s hard-wired into my personality to seek attention through laughter, and making a fool of myself was the only thing I was especially good at as a performer. The biggest influence on my sense of humor is Monty Python and the Holy Grail. I first watched it in 9th grade band class, and it was an instant classic for me. A satire of Arthurian legend, the silly, fourth-wall-breaking, absurdist humor had me cackling as a 14-year-old boy, and it does in equal measure (if not more) now. My friends and I loved the movie so much that for our capstone 10th grade Honors English project, we created a film parody of a book we read in the course, Into Thin Air, while blatantly ripping off the style of The Holy Grail.6

The biggest lesson I took away from the film is the comedic principle I observed of characters taking themselves seriously within an absurd situation. Raw silliness in itself doesn’t guarantee humor: what makes silliness funny is that the players in the sketches are convinced of what they’re doing. In the sketches, each player, within their defined characteristics, act in a realistic enough manner to make the audience believe that what they’re doing is, if not reasonable, at least understandable. The unreality or absurdity injected into each scenario is what creates the humor, but a basis of realism is needed. Humor where the players are detached from how people would really act gets tiresome quickly, and that is a lesson that I think I learned from the Monty Python troupe — comedy is humanity, and that much of humor comes from some level of a breakage of social norms in a manner that touches upon some inner truth. Throughout the film, the Pythons stretch this to its limits, but it is always kept within good taste.

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6 My friends and I got a good grade for the project, but I found out that our teacher said to future Honors English classes that she hated our film. I’m proud my comedy career had a controversial start.
One of the finest examples of this principle can be in the scene where King Arthur asks a peasant toiling away in filth a question as to who lives in the castle in the distance, and the peasant, Dennis, bursts into a monologue expositing advanced political economic theory and criticizing the King and the monarchy for being “a self-perpetuating autocracy,” questioning why Arthur claims to be king over all the land despite the fact that his (Dennis’s) group is living in an anarcho-syndicalist commune (The Holy Grail 9:10-12:17). The absurdity of the scene exists in multiple layers: that Dennis is an intelligent political philosopher ranting to the king while he and his fellow peasants wallow in the mud, that Arthur, despite being the king, does not have his authority recognized by his own people, that Dennis is so condescending to his superior (whom he chooses not to recognize), and that when King Arthur describes becoming king through the Lady of the Lake’s divine providence, Dennis makes fun of him by refuting that “strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government” (The Holy Grail 11:18 - 11:28). The whole scene works because the idea of a peasant getting into a confrontational political debate with his monarch is absurd, but the scenario is also human enough to allow the audience to suspend their disbelief. We have all encountered people like Dennis in our lives who are over-eager to relentlessly debate their beliefs, so this scene is an exaggeration of something that is familiar to all of us. Consuming fiction is always an exercise in suspending our disbelief, however, when a story stretches this suspension too far, the writing appears hackneyed, lazy and irritating, all of which are deadly to compelling entertainment.  

Writing good comedy, therefore, is a balance between pushing boundaries of what is acceptable in society and believability while also paying attention to not push it to the point where it becomes out-of-touch with reality.

Having talked at length about prose and film, it is time to turn to the topic of my honors project, television. The show with the greatest influence on my writing easily has to be Dan

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7 Bad writing, however, can be enjoyable if it’s terrible in a spectacular way — see Tommy Wiseau’s The Room.
Harmon’s *Community*, an oddball sitcom featuring the exploits of a group of unlikely friends brought together by a community college Spanish gen ed. *Community* was my most direct influence when writing *Constance After Dark*, as both works follow a cast of misfits navigate through the ups and downs of friendship and college life at imaginary American schools.

*Community* seasons 1-3’s writing is streets ahead of most television: it’s outrageously hilarious, even without mentioning its tendency to bend genre and subvert sitcom clichés. Watching the show, the twists and turns that play out in every episode and its quick-witted humor always invoked my jealousy— I’d never stop asking myself, how did they come up with this stuff? How can I write something that smart, that funny? Dan Harmon’s show is a beacon of inspiration for me, and one that I return to often when I need a reminder of why I want to be a writer.

Far from easy to decide, the best episode of *Community* has to be season 3, episode 4: “Remedial Chaos Theory.” The Spanish study group—Jeff, Britta, Annie, Shirley, Troy, Abed and Pierce—meet at Troy and Abed’s apartment for an evening to hang out, starting the night by playing Yahtzee. When the pizza man rings the doorbell for his delivery, no one wants to answer it, so Jeff comes up with the idea to roll a six-sided die to determine who has to get up, starting from his left. Abed warns Jeff that he will be creating six different timelines by rolling the die, and Jeff retorts sarcastically, dismissing Abed and rolls it anyway. What follows is an exploration of each different “timeline”; many actions and occurrences repeat in each different timeline, but depending on who gets up for the pizza, the events shift ever so slightly as to create a butterfly effect, causing each timeline to have different outcomes for the various plot threads.

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8 This is not just my humble opinion — “Remedial Chaos Theory” is also the only episode in the series to have been recognized by the Academy Awards, in which it received an Emmy nomination for the “Outstanding Writing For a Comedy Series Award” in 2012.
Underlying the episode is a relatable tension, the tension of an awkward or strained meeting with friends or family, and in each timeline we get to see a different argument, touching moment, or reconciliation. In one timeline (referred to in the show and fanbase as the “darkest timeline”), misfortune goes as far as the apartment burning down and Pierce getting shot in a freak accident involving a hidden gun in Annie’s purse (a gun revealed to the viewer in a different timeline.) In each scenario, the audience gets a greater insight into the group of friends and their dysfunctional relationships, and we see secrets revealed, romances blossom (or crumble), and burdens shared, depending on who leaves to get the pizza. The episode ends in the “seventh timeline” (the timeline canonical to the series), in which Abed catches the die before the number is revealed and monologues about the fact that since so much of our lives is dictated by chance, we shouldn’t leave more things up to chaos. He also explains that Jeff is a “conniving sun of a bitch” (“Remedial Chaos Theory,” 17:23-17:25), as there are seven people in the group and only six sides of the Yahtzee die; Jeff rigged the game from the start so that no matter what, he wouldn’t be the one to get the pizza. Jeff, being called out for his scheme, goes to get the pizza, and the episode ends with everyone dancing and singing along to The Police’s “Roxanne;” since, unlike in the other timelines, Jeff wasn’t there to make fun of Britta for singing along. This is easily the happiest timeline.

Besides the humor, the core of the show is watching this Breakfast Club bunch, each dealing with their own unique brand of social dysfunctionality, learning to love each other as friends (and sometimes more than friends) in a shared community. It is this unique balance Harmon strikes between genuine warmth and deconstructive hilarity that connects with me on a deep level and motivates me to write. I said earlier in this paper that one of my core beliefs is that friendship is the point of going on even through a tough world, and Community has
friendship as its heart, despite what its crazy genre-bending episodes might have you believe if
you’re merely looking in from the outside.

*Community*’s melding of memorable characterization, subversive writing and sincerity
about human connection, I did not accomplish in my honors project. I also didn’t write
something half as funny or out-of-the-box as what’s present in *The Holy Grail*, nor could I come
close to William Goldman’s unique charm and wit in his writing style. Maybe I got part of the
way in some regards, but I still have a long way to go when it comes to characterization, story,
joke-writing and the screenplay format. That’s okay though; it’s not important that what I write
be good. It’s just important that I write. All writers, when giving advice to aspiring scribblers,
dispense with the same piece of wisdom but dressed up in their own signature style: they always
tell us that the only way to improve is to just sit down and write. Put in the time, put in the work.
It’s the main message of Stephen King’s *On Writing*, Dan Harmon says something similar, and so
does Goldman.

When reflecting upon the flaws present in my honors project, I also kept in mind that the
works I examined for this paper were created by experienced writers working at the top of their
game. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* released after six years since *Monty Python’s Flying
Circus* debuted; Goldman had decades of novels, screenplays and theatrical scripts under his
built before he wrote *The Princess Bride*’s novel (1973) or his nonfiction accounts of Hollywood
(1983); and Dan Harmon had been in Los Angeles writing for years⁹ before he had his first crack
as a showrunner when he created *Community*. It came as a relief for me when I realized this. In
spite of what I’ve said, I am proud of what I did with my honors project, but I also recognize that
it is a stepping stone in my development as a writer, and that I can’t stop now. There is always

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⁹ Dan Harmon got his start in comedy in a sketch comedy group in Milwaukee; in a way, I also got my start via sketch comedy in the student television program at UA, ZTV, in the show *Akron After Hours*. The work I did in *After Hours* prepared and inspired me to do this honors project.
more to write, and yet there is always the urge for one to do anything on earth besides write.

Despite finding out that my dream job is to work in a writers’ room, I know that to get there, there is a lot of long, lonely, but fulfilling work for me to do, writing spec scripts, reading others’ screenplays and honing my writing chops to where they need to be before I even step foot in LA with an intention to “make it” in Hollywood. And, even if I do achieve my goal of getting into the writers’ room, the struggle of the blank page will always be there once I sit down to write an episode after we’ve broken the story. There IS no shortcut to becoming a writer, and William Goldman puts it best:

Writing is finally about one thing: going into a room alone and doing it . . . And although you are physically by yourself, the haunting Demon never leaves you . . . the knowledge of your own terrible limitations, your hopeless inadequacy, the impossibility of ever getting it right . . . But if you’re a writer, that’s what you must do . . . You tell yourself lies and you force them into belief: Hey, you suckers, I’m going to do it this one time. I’m going to tell you things you never knew. I’ve—got—secrets!” (253-254)

I do have secrets worth sharing. In reading this, maybe you’ve learned some of mine.
Works Cited


