

Writing for Christ

Making Shapely Fiction - Jerome Stern

Specimen Lesson 7/19/2019

Write a story telling one anecdote about a memorable character that reveals the true character of the person on the cultural, social, and psychological side.

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“Dying to Live”

Slamming my 1983 primer black Dodge Ram's driver door as hard as I could felt so good, after those doctor's tests with cold floors and insanely large needles. The loud metallic crack of the door striker not lining up and the force of it finding the well worn path to closing could be heard inside. I watched as the nurse at the closed glass window jumped thinking someone shot at her. The smile I wielded instead was much worse.

The steering wheel melted under the rage of my Indian burns of yanks and hard inputs to the manual steering, as I drove without a care of life or death, intent on my destination. The Nockamixon State Park Dam was the end destination; I needed to pick up my best friend, Jeremy, enroute. He would understand, he would jump. He hated his life just as much as I do.

As the bald rear tires found nothing to grab, the truck slid into the grass. The brakes did not like the weight given, but I did try to stop before running into Jeremy's dad's precious lawn. Who cares, we will be gone soon. The gunshot sounded again, as I saw Jeremy come out of the house eating an oatmeal cookie. “Hey Ryan, wha...” was all I heard as his cookie was stuffed into his mouth, the fourth gunshot for the day fired. He knew better than to ask, didn't he?

Jeremy never grabbed for the oh shit handles and that is why I wanted him to go with me. He truly did not care if he lived or died, and today was the day we would test it. We rode in tire screeching, gravel sliding, truck careening silence. He was on board so far. Soon, the gate to the tower was in front of Black Beauty. The old Ram has plowed down many gates with no trespassing signs, that this one did not even stand a chance. The chain link gate was merely a deterrent for two men of intent; easily overcome. Our heads smashed into the steel roof, as the seat belts jostled on their mounts, not securing us as mom's would like. I could not help but smile, the same as before, that evil smile of being on a hell bent mission. Glancing over, as tree branches smashed into the door mirrors and fenders, I thought I saw the same grin on him.

Black beauty stopped just short of the concrete walkway leading to the area's tallest dam tower. One gunshot fired, looking back, Jeremy was still in the truck. He had no grin anymore.

He knew we were here to dive off the tower. The stories of teens dying here each year numbered in the twenties. Just a week before, the last report read, "The current at the bottom is a killer." That is when I decided to jump and do my friend the favor of taking him with me.

I walked down the concrete walkway, banging the hand rails, screaming at the top of my lungs, "COME ON!!" Jeremy finally came to the edge of the walkway, after I was halfway up the tower. Climbing the steel rebar ladder, I wondered if he was ever going to come see this, and I was glad to see him emerge below. I looked down to see him, he was looking up, about to actually ask me. He knew better right?

Instead, the sound of his Merrell hiking boots rang true, as he came up the ladder behind me. I looked out over the lake, then the water flow below. The water was at 24 foot and it went to 68 foot before the tower we climbed rose. Yep this was it, my way out. Jeremy was now looking down and suddenly asked "Doctor visit that bad?"

I punched him in the chest, saying "Cancer can't kill me, you know that, how many things have we jumped and lived?" He lost count on his left hand and started to grin as he realized we lived through more death jumps than anyone. "So you in?"

The next two hours of silence was terrible, the sun was setting and yet, he did not answer just looked out, then down, then at me, then at his boots. He was scared, he would not admit it though, he was not dying with lymph node cancer like I was. He really was there just to say good-bye to me...

With a berserker yell, I ran full force at him, bearing my shoulder low and wrapping my arms around him just like the coach taught us. The way down gave me enough time to scream "sorry" and him yell "I am not."

As we hit the water the sound of the world stopped. The breath of life forced to leave, the feeling of anger cooled as the depths raced by. The sting of the impact of the water making my lungs inhale, this was it. The end.

"I hate you forever," were the first words I spoke when I awoke on the shore. Jeremy had pulled me out and drug me to land and brought me back. We drove back in silence, wet, in silent tears.

The last words I heard two years later in the hospital bed, as I passed were, "I love you forever."