

It was such a simple idea, the kind bandied about after a semi-sloppy consumption of good pinot noir.

“Hey, let’s write a web series.” My guess is many of you have also had this darling little notion float through your brain followed by the exclamation, “Oh why not?” Perhaps you have just finished a production, perhaps it was remarkably easy and left you full of self satisfaction having answered the creative urge and followed it to its completion. Good for you. But for those out there who had less than an ideal time, possibly experiencing a few blunders and missteps along the way, this is for you.

Like the two super heroes in our web series, we (my producer partner and I) entered into the project with shiny optimism. Things fell magically into place. The script fleshed out, our cast was set, and the best news of all was our DP. He was recommended by a friend and if that wasn’t amazing enough, he offered to do both the DP and editing for half of his normal cost. We had hit the mother lode.

“He’s eccentric, I want to warn you, but really talented,” we were cautioned. Who cares? He’s giving us so much, we rationalized. Mistake numero uno. You do get what you pay for.

DP Dave knew this buxom model, Tanya, and he decided she should be in our project. DP Dave was hot for Tanya and thought it would be a swell addition to have her sitting by the pool, nearly naked. We didn’t write any characters wearing bikinis. The story takes place in Ohio, in late October, in an office building. This important narrative fact did not thwart his horny efforts. At every production meeting he piped in “Well, in the first scene, when you guys are talking about saving the world, etc, we could pan over and let the camera linger on Tanya, lying on a chaise lounge, in a crocheted bikini.” Uh huh. Because that makes sense. We trusted this was somehow normal DP/ editor quirkiness. We chose to find it amusing, even giving him a little disaster nickname: Typhoon Dave. His suggestions to have bikini girl in our project became more and more insistent. Back and forth we fought, the storminess of our meetings ever growing. We felt caught, trapped, as we needed him and the shoot was in 3 days. Time for negotiation.

“About Tanya, Dave,” we gently opened the conversation. “As two well educated and liberal women we are totally comfortable about adding the superfluous, sexually inappropriate, and nonsensical tits and ass shot, but with one small caveat: You also will be wearing a bikini. Fair is fair.” We tried to make light of it, even suggesting a nice J. Crew navy two piece we thought would look rather comely on his narrow hips, expecting the three of us to laugh uproariously at the whole idea and finally put it to rest. With a wallop, our plan backfired.

The day before our scheduled sixteen hour shoot, our lets-call- it- what- it- is- perverted DP freaked out, claiming his “anxiety disorder” rendered him useless and he could not make the shoot. His deprived bikini addiction nearly destroyed our filming, the filming that had been carefully scheduled around six actors, a private home, and countless hours of pre-production work. Pretty sure this is when we opened our first bottle of wine.

Luckily, the storm abated. We found someone else in four hours. Phew. This guy was great. Filming was finished and our zippy sense of enthusiasm was back in tact. We believed the worst had come and gone. Mistake numero two-o.

Meet Andrew, our graphics guy. Had a face like a cabbage patch doll and a demeanor like a catholic school boy. He was also recommended to us, a sure guarantee he would be terrific. Two months into the project our cherubic ever so solicitous boy morphed into the *bad seed*. We should have seen it coming; we should have noticed the tiny tremble in the leaves, dog's ears at full salute, the menacing air of electricity in the wind- foreboding. "Typhoon Andrew," as we soon renamed him- was paid a hefty deposit to make a seventeen second opening graphic. We wanted elaborate animation, a galactic size story with globes spinning, firecrackers, and exploding stars. This was our maiden voyage into film making and it needed to be impressive, we directed him.

"For your paltry budget you get six seconds and a whirling sun." Our spirits were deflated, but we assumed he knew what was best. After all, he was the professional and we were the newbies. Ok, we'll roll with it. Though we specifically re-addressed our simplified vision for the graphics, he delivered instead pictures of two homely women in orange jump suits tumbling out of the sun. The two of us looked like *Beevis and Butthead*, only uglier. Communication was beyond Typhoon Andrew's skill set. Undaunted, we stayed the course. More re-directing. Now his mood was dyspeptic, curiously hazy, and unfocused. We chose to overlook that, artists can be so moody, and comforted our fears. He promised to deliver by said due date. The weeks whirred by- no Andrew. The deadline came and left. No Andrew. He held our graphics ransom, showering us with lame excuses, and cancelling every single meeting. Had he been kidnapped? Was he in the hospital? Our conclusions: Typhoon Andrew was possibly stoned, conveniently amnesiac, and living in an invisible home with an invisible address with a phone he never answered or had lost or was stolen.

Three months past deadline and we were feeling hopelessly defeated. We had lost our editor, our graphics, and several hundred dollars seemed to be fatefully misplaced, and we had no idea what the hell to do.

With the bold stupidity that only comes with abject desperation and foolish inexperience, we decided to do the editing ourselves. "How hard can it be?" And with that phrase, we added crisp kindling to the flickering embers of logic. Did we learn nothing thus far?

Editing- rather the process of **learning how to edit**- is a lot like passing a kidney stone. Passing a kidney stone is much more fun.

Stacking, cross dissolve, we discovered Ken Burns in the I-Movie docket. We made sweet love to his transitions. Circle open, no, circle close. Cube it! We feasted like rabid pirates on the possibilities of finishing this on our own. Who needs an editor? We can figure this out. If we survived this far, nothing can halt our mission. Add this! No, try this! So what if we had no idea what we were doing? Something artful was happening. Our hands were twitching as they touched the I-movie screen. We were ship wrecked survivors drunk on adding more sound effects, more cross dissolve, more cow bell. Eureka, we were doing it. Editing, magic making, brilliance. The finish line was near. Victory! We congratulated ourselves on our amazing work. Until we watched it. O-my- God. It was manic, sloppy, and not the least bit funny. Horrified, we had somehow made our precious, hard fought eighteen minutes into a amateurish cacophony of gook. It looked so much worse, effectively killing off what little hope we clutched that this was not one huge waste of our time. I finally called a computer tutor, one I knew. One I trusted. A woman.

“I can help you.” And she did. Like a surgeon on a mission, she cut and pasted, salvaged and bandaged, and resuscitated our film back to life.

We call her coast guard Carol. She saved the day. Phew.

-by Amy Lloyd

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