

Jared Erickson
 Dr. Comer
 En111G
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A Gruesome Reflection

I stand in front of the mirror and see an average fellow, wearing a midnight black suit, an ivory white shirt, and a thin *cravat noir*. I begin to imagine that my clean white shirt actually is stained deep red from the train wreck that was my day. This seems familiar. Perhaps it's from a movie I've seen. Yes, maybe that one about the jewel thieves... Reservoir Dogs. I didn't rob a diamond store today, but that doesn't mean that the events of my life can't go awry. The characters in that film had plans that went faulty, just as I do. They battled through the ultimate question: "What went wrong?" just as I do everyday. As I conduct my daily business, I realize that the storyline of my life is much like the plot of Quentin Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs.

This masterpiece of film noir is about four practitioners of thievery who are hired by mob boss Joe Cabot to rob a diamond store. The four men don't know each other; anonymity is a policy practiced by Cabot on every job. Therefore, the burglars are given phony names: Mr. Blond, the risk-taking criminal; Mr. White, the seasoned veteran; Mr. Pink, the pacing neurotic; and Mr. Orange, the undercover cop. Even though the members of this quartet of gentlemen have never met each other before, they work together to come up with a flawless plan of theft. When the looters go to make the hit, cops ambush them, and the entire caper falls apart. Those who managed to survive ask themselves and those around them, "Was that a (stinking) set up or what?"

When I first watched Reservoir Dogs, I had to do some preliminary legwork, much like Joe Cabot does in the film. It's rated "R" for strong violence and language. In other words, the movie is riddled with a countless amount of "F-bombs," punches, shootouts, and even a scene involving a severed ear. I couldn't watch this picture in broad daylight; Mom and Dad wouldn't approve of it. *What to do, what to do? OK. They usually go to sleep around eleven-thirty, midnight. I'll sneak downstairs, pop in the DVD and turn the volume down to its lowest setting.* As I huddled next to the television set, my head directly adjacent to the speaker, I would frequently mash the "pause" button; I thought I had heard footsteps. *No, stop being paranoid, it's just pipes.* "Play" button.

After one hundred minutes of a screenplay that would enthrall anyone, I watched the words "Written & Directed by Quentin Tarantino" flash onto the screen. Conclusion. The End. *Fin.* Dumbfounded, I watched the list of cast and production members scroll up the screen. Is my life like this? Am I White, Blond, Pink, or Orange?

I haven't pulled a heist lately, but I can almost see myself standing next to Steve Buscemi and Harvey Keitel when I watch the film over and over again. I'm a lot like Blond: he took pleasure from cutting off a cop's ear, sort of how I enjoyed plowing over that squirrel on Bowman Road. Pink had a tendency to be overly paranoid and freaked out; have I mentioned that I lock my doors at stop lights because I think someone's going to carjack my dirty black Chevy Lumina?

White is the oldest of the group; he's been around a long time and he's experienced everything life has to experience. Therefore, he and I have something in common: we've done it all. I guess it could be said that we've been around the block a couple of times, but I don't live in the city, so I won't worry about that. People said I was a teacher's pet in high school (which I was), and Cabot's men called Orange a snitch. Coincidence? I think not. Having analyzed a 1992 gangster classic, I began to ponder how I could apply the wisdom of Mr. Tarantino to my criminal record-free life.

Are there really situations in which an early '90s independent film can offer solid explanations and helpful advice? I can offer several circumstances from my life that answer that question. I remember when I uttered those fateful words:

"LC, will you be my girlfriend?"

"No, I don't want to mess up what we have." *What?* Her friends, my friends, everyone I knew assured me that she would say yes. Why did she say no? The point: a plan can be absolutely flawless on paper, but something's bound to go wrong in real life. My peers can spend the entire day telling me she'll agree, but that doesn't mean she will. Similarly, a handful of unlawful geniuses can rehearse a burglary until it's engrained in their brains, but that doesn't mean it will be a success. It's the minor details that can bring down a major plan, like how it only took a couple of pebbles to topple Goliath.

Walk up to her. Say hello. Ask her if she wants to grab a cup of coffee. Simple. That's not so hard, what's so hard about that? Go up to her. Say hi. Politely inquire if she'd like to go to Cabin Fever. Go do it. Do it right now. I did it. She was busy. Yet again, I found myself feeling like one of Tarantino's creations.

It's hard to say what newfound attitudes I've developed since watching *Reservoir Dogs*. Maybe I've picked up a crook's swagger. Perhaps I wear my black suit more because I like dressing up like the savvy characters from one of my favorite movies. Who knows? Maybe I've even toyed with the idea of stealing something. No, I wouldn't do that; I'm too much like Pink. Regardless of these occurrences, I've learned one fact: Even with hours of preparation, my day could still blow up in my face. I study endlessly for my psychology test, *but the police still ambush me*. Even though I leave fifteen minutes early for my appointment, *I still end up getting shot*. I may develop a flawless strategy for the day ahead of me, but I will always end up at the same place: standing in front of a mirror, wearing a black suit with crimson spots.

