

Gurcharan Sakizzie
Professor Fillmore
ENGL 1010
December 12, 2022

The Man Who Sold His World

I stared at him, that man in camouflage fatigues in front of me. Stared at him, the tired soldier in the mirror. Watched his nametape rise and fall on his chest as he breathed.

I've got nothing. All I have to do is write down some thoughts about how I write and why I write that way... and I've got nothing.

I picked up my clipboard, a caricature of the same soldier staring up at me from the third panel, the nametape on his chest pointed out by a floating arrow, the label at the end of the arrow reading 'nametag.' I stepped out of the latrine and back into the real world, the one where I needed to talk to supply about getting a new jacket, the one where I needed to report back to work at midnight, the one where this stack of twenty sheets of paper on a clipboard sat covered in the words of a motivated writer who taunted me through the echoes of time.

Shit.

The draft was already overdue, the final version was coming up in less than two days, and the only thing I had was this stack of printouts of old homework assignments sparsely decorated with handwritten notes about the way those words were written. That student had at least managed to get something on the paper.

I flipped through the notes I'd taken, praying to see some through line between a black and white comic, a bright purple PowerPoint presentation, and a soulless essay titled 'Examination of *Bad Indian*.'

'Personality.' Is that anything?

Maybe it was. The thing most strongly tying these three things together was that they were all written by the same person, just on different days and in different ways. Personality, from a guy who couldn't seem to settle on what his is.

I looked at the comic again. Read the text above the artwork:

"Name's Sakizzie. Rhymes with 'Easy.'"

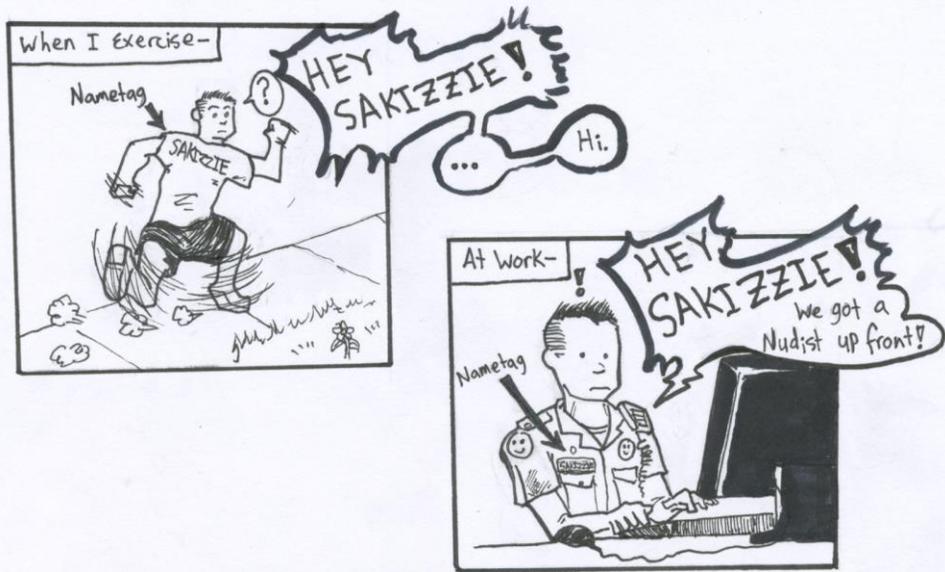
Not great grammatically, but I suppose authentic to how I speak.

"The real trick to remembering my name is to just look for it on my outfit. It's almost always written down somewhere on my clothes so people can holler at me unexpectedly."

A bit of a deflection, but when the only trick you can come up with as a mnemonic device for your name is 'Rhymes with Easy,' you adapt.

"Somehow I always forget it's there and still end up getting surprised."

You also don't take yourself too seriously. So when the opportunity comes up to poke fun at the fact that you've got a hard name to remember, you make it count through repetition.



I was pretty happy with what I'd drawn – the joke shared a little bit by referencing my silly workout clothes, my day job, my second job, all labeling me by name.



Yet people still get it wrong, even when I'm literally wearing my identity on my chest and forehead. So identifying myself by name is less important than establishing a presence of personality... here by taking a pointless little aside in the lower right of the page to allude to how I dress off duty.

I pulled out my pen and started tapping the notes I'd made in the margins. 'Repetition-Rhetorical device?' 'Humorous aside.' 'Visual engagement to hold attention.' I flipped the page over and looked at the corresponding scribbles on the other pages. My Flash Narrative, *The Journey of a Thousand Miles*. Right at the top, "Focused on the mundane." "Not great at titles." So far not really any overlap with the comic.

"Repetition with Variation" sat on the left side, with arrows pointing to the underlined line

“...Back then I was lonely. Real lonely, damn lonely, – the kind of lonely that might drive a man to do something silly, like take up golf... or old hobbies.”

...and a single line of action description later, its echo-

“It was hot. Real hot, damn hot – the kind of hot that would have been a bit much in August and was downright unwarranted for early October.”

Those lines had started out life as a silly idea, a play on a Robin Williams bit I half-remembered but which turned out to be so poorly recalled it turned out to be original content after all. Then they ended up being a tool to describe my character’s emotional state and correlate it with the state of his environment.

I looked back up at the title of my narrative as I settled back on the old government blue-cushioned chair at the breakroom table, back in the company of a few other soldiers who were poring over dozens of pages of paperwork.

I guess I use a lot of quotes. Maybe there’s something to be pulled from that.

I blew a silent sigh out the side of my lips and slid the clipboard into my backpack. I had my own packet of forms to fill out.

Hours later it turned out there was indeed something to be pulled from that. I looked up from the officer’s station and around my unit, glancing up at the secured cells surrounding me to make sure there were no nasty surprises to be seen since my last walkabout. Still just two rows of sleeping bodies, and one very sleepy inmate using the toilet. We made eye contact. His gaze shot over to the wall. Mine shot back down to my notes.

Quotes- or variations on quotes (parody/paraphrase/reference) useful as hooks/introductory lead ins. Good because it establishes a baseline of familiarity. Bad because no ethos appeal. Fun. Lazy?

I reached down to my cargo pocket and pulled out a pen. Radio static crackled next to my ear as I clicked the pen open. I waited a moment, but the static burst cut out without any words coming over the air. Hot mic. I cleared my throat and tried to write. The phone rang. I picked it up.

“Sakizzie, what are you doing?”

I grinned. I knew that voice.

“Doin’ homework, Sarge.” I said

“Since when is watching Netflix homework?”

I frowned, looking up at the Canvas site pulled up on my computer screen, then over my shoulder at the camera I knew Wash was looking at the feed from. I thought about telling it straight. Then I thought again.

“Since I became a film student again, that’s when!” I chuckled into the receiver.

“Bullshit, you’re not in film school, ha ha. I guess you’re not watching Netflix, but it sure looks like you’re not doing much. How are you, Skee?”

“You got me. I’m not a film student, I’m an animation student. I’m good though! Just stumbling through this essay.”

“Wait, you really are studying animation? How did I not know that?”

I shrugged. Sgt. Wash didn’t bother waiting for a reply.

“Well anyway, I just wanted to give you a hard time and see how you’re doing. I’ll let you get back to your homework now.”

“Hey, I appreciate it- good to hear from you. Have a good night, Sarge.”

“You too, Skee.”

The line went dead. I dropped the handset back on the receiver.