

In the League of Extraordinary Matrix Hulks

by Laura Preble

I just spent the weekend in the hospital. There was no internet. I did not have my computer, or even a book. So, I watched TV. To be specific, I watched the following: The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, all three Matrix movies, the Hulk (Jennifer Connelly and Eric Bana), and an encore presentation of The Hulk because I missed half of it running between my bed and the bathroom.

Why this relates to writing is because I got a chance to study story structure, character development, and writing of dialogue in an intense boot camp laced with orange jello and intravenous drugs. What I discovered is that many Hollywood stories have very predictable dialogue, conflict, and even laughable conflict and complications. Oddly, the Hulk was the best of this batch of movies, probably because Ang Lee directed it and at least it had pretty jazzy cinematography. The other three largely featured stuff blowing up and people dodging bullets.

I'm at sort of a crossroads in my writing life. At the moment, this blog is the only thing that I really, really want to write. I had convinced myself the YA was my genre, because I work with high school students and I know them well. But I don't feel connected to that writing...I feel that I'm doing it simply because it makes sense to do it. I do feel proud of the books I've produced, but there is a lack of spark there, no real fire to continue. And I think that fire is essential for a writer. The fire drives all explorers, whether it be Neo looking for Zion, or the Hulk looking for a better-fitting speedo (and right now I will just say that this detail bothered me to no end. How can a normal-sized man go from being 5' 8 to being 20 feet tall, and

his underwear doesn't rip? What the hell is he wearing? Sorry. I digress.)

Back to the fire thing. I really have zero fire right now for YA. I have some excitement for another project I'm doing, but I'm not working on it. I just don't feel like it. So what does this mean? All I want to write about is writing.

I feel like the Hulk. He was a normal dude with green-tinged rage issues. When he was truly himself, and true to himself, nobody liked him. He was a threat, an outcast, a monster. I feel like that in my writing life. My shorts have not expanded properly, and my complexion is mossy. I'm busting to get out, to change, but I don't know what I'd even change into.

I need to relight my fire. Someone sent me an email the other day that said when things become uncomfortable or unpleasant, it's God (or the universe, or the aliens) pushing you in a new direction. I feel pushed, I surely do. I just don't know which direction to go. If you have a map, or a super-stretchy speedo for a 20-foot Hulk, please contact me. I'd love to move forward without ripping my shorts.

