



K I N G D O M *of* I N K

Pernell Quilon

Creative Copywriter, Memoir Ghostwriter,
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hourly: \$65

Pernell Quilon is a copywriter, ghostwriter, and gay man based in Los Angeles. He was recently a writer/illustrator for the cult-favorite newsletter Today in Tabs—his daily cartoons were shouted out in The Atlantic. Before he peaked, he worked in creative development for unscripted series with MTV, Snapchat's Vertical Networks, and Scout Productions (of "Queer Eye" fame). He also wrote for Brother, a millennial lifestyle brand with over 20 million Snapchat subscribers, and is a contributing author to their HarperCollins-published book How To Not Be A Dick.

Heartfelt stories with a kick are Pernell's biggest passion. Are you looking for writing that will make your audience laugh/cry/roll in their graves? Hit him up. From his reality TV era, he learned to: get to the dark meat of every story in seconds, morph any idea into a strong pitch, and break down a C-stand in 20 seconds or less.

When Pernell isn't writing, he's on Zillow looking up homes in distant cities—no reason.



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California Gurl

(Memoir Excerpt)

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The street lights surrounding Pershing Square glimmered as I walked out of the City Year office in downtown Los Angeles that night. It was after 8 p.m. I wasn't getting any overtime, but that did not matter to me. Leaving the office that late made me feel important. I was just like all the other people heading home from their downtown offices. Except instead of a briefcase, I had two file boxes of learning materials for 32 sixth graders. And also I was eighteen years old.

I performatively sighed and looked around to see if anyone heard me, but there was no one else in front of the City National Bank building. I dragged my feet on the pavement and turned the corner onto 5th Street back to my car. Even though I was soooo important, I had no assigned parking space and still had to park on the street.

I opened the side door of my van and loaded the boxes into the backseat. In my peripheral, just a few meters away, I saw someone walking towards me. I turned my head to her. She was wearing basketball shorts, a dark jacket with her hood on, and her hair was in a long ponytail.

"Hey, do you have some change for the bus?" she called out.

"Sorry," I replied. I slid the side door shut.

"Well, can you give me a ride?"

She looked at the empty passenger seat in my van.

"I'm just down the street," she said.

I looked at her face again. She had dark circles under her eyes and frown lines that framed her lips. But she didn't seem at all threatening, like America Ferrera

in the Disney Channel original movie Gotta Kick It Up. Her ponytail was a deep auburn, a really nice color.

"Please dude," she begged. "I just want to get home. You'd be really helping me out."

My dad's voice rang in my head; whenever we went on road trips and saw someone on the side of the road, he would point at them and tell me to never pick them up.

But when I looked at her, all I could think about was me. I was having a bad time in this city and I desperately needed a miracle. Maybe if I showed some kindness and helped someone else out, I would have that energy returned to me. Good things happen to kind and honest people. That's like, the whole point of Cinderella, right? And I myself didn't have my van in Los Angeles for a long time, so I understood not having a car in this city was tough. Plus, she did say it was just down the street...

"Okay," I said. "I'll take you home."

I unlocked the van and motioned toward the passenger door.

"Sorry about hesitating," I said as I got into my van. "The big city does that to people."

She laughed. It sounded forced.

"You got that right." She slammed the door shut.

See! Take that dad! This lady gets me.

I turned the ignition key and the van sputtered to life. "So where am I taking you?"

"That way," she said, pointing towards the freeway.

Perfect. She was just on the other side. As a new driver in Los Angeles, I did not like getting on the freeway. It scared me. It seemed like everybody driving on it was mad or in a hurry.

I clicked my seatbelt into place. She did not even reach for hers.

"So where are you from?" she asked as the van pulled away from the curb.
"Because you said L.A. changes people."

"I'm from a city at the bottom of Texas," I said. I could hear the smile in my own voice. Talking about my hometown got me like that. "Edinburg, Texas. It's a bordertown."

"Wow, that's cool. So up there, you're going to turn right onto the freeway?"

"Oh." I turned my blinker on.

That's weird. She said she was just down the street. Maybe we were taking a shortcut.

I turned onto the ramp and looped around the Staples Center, merging onto the 110 freeway. She leaned forward and turned the A/C onto 'medium'. I only let friends control the air in my car. And I didn't even know her.

"Let me know when I should exit."

"Yeah, yeah. Just keep going."

The white noise of the air conditioning was the appropriate amount of conversation to me.

She broke it with her next question.

"So, do you have a girlfriend?"

My fingers tightened around the steering wheel.

"No. I'm just focusing on myself right now. I'm not interested in dating."

"Word." She put her hands up to the back of her head and undid her ponytail, brushing the full length of it with her fingers in front of her. The auburn hair grazed my right arm as it fell back.

"So what are you looking for?" she asked. I glanced at her. She was staring right at me.

My eyes darted back to the road.

"What are you talking about?"

"What do you want?" Her palm touched my right thigh. I flinched.

"Oh no, I'm not... I just want to drop you off."

She pulled back and leaned against the passenger door.

Three exits later, she lifted her hand again.

"Get off here."

The tick of my right blinker echoed in the van. The air was still on too.

We turned into a neighborhood off of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The street lights hanging above gave the dark asphalt and pale sidewalks an orange hue. There were no porch lights on. Nobody else was in the street.

"Here's good," she said.

I slowed the car and stopped in the middle of the street, relieved that there was a destination and that the ride was finally coming to an end. I put the car in park and unlocked the door. I waited for her to get out of the van. But she didn't.

"So, you got any cash on you?" she asked again.

I looked around us one more time. There was no one else on the street.

"No. I don't. I already gave you a ride."

"Well, let me just repay you for giving me a ride."

I feigned a polite laugh. "You really don't have to --"

"No no, let me just get my homeboy -- "

She leaned over to me and pushed my car horn. A deep honk cut through the silent street. She pushed the horn again. I had been willing to overlook her touching my A/C, but this... this was different. I wanted to believe that she was good. But she had pressed my horn. Who does that? And she was calling someone else to come to the car.

Why?

I couldn't ignore the signs anymore.

I could be in danger.

Okay dad, you were right!

My eyes darted from house to house.

Which one was her accomplice going to bust out of?

Was there more than one person?

Were they going to hurt me?

"Please," I stammered. "Get out of my car."

"Come on," she chuckled. "I know you can help. I need stuff for my baby. Diapers cost a lot."

"I said I don't have anything."

"I know you got something in here." She clicked the glove compartment. It popped open.

I slammed it back shut. "Get out!!!"

She tore through the side pocket of the van and the center aisle between us. Instinct kicked in and my body pushed itself back into action. I threw myself over her, pulled on the handle of the passenger door, and nudged it open. She pushed me off and slammed the door shut.

Something silver glistened in her hand. Was that a pocket knife?

She jutted the silver object towards me.

I slapped her hand away.

"Back up!" she yelled.

I froze.

She opened the glove compartment again, her eyes and knife still pointed at me. She pulled out 2 five dollar bills, my cash stash for parking lot fees.

I cursed myself internally. I had taken kung fu lessons up until the sixth grade but now when I really needed it, I froze. I didn't know how to protect myself. I never even got my black belt. I stopped at brown. Her focus shifted as she rummaged through the mess of my glove compartment. Thank God I never cleaned it out.

This was my chance.

I lunged for her left hand and tried to pry the pocket knife out of it. I decided I was not going to get stabbed that night. I was still a virgin. I hadn't even had my first kiss yet!

I continued to wrestle with her right hand, but looked up. I realized No one else had come out yet. If she wasn't going to get out, I at least had to get out of there.

With my left hand, I shifted the car back into drive. I slammed my right foot to the pedal. But before my foot made full contact, she threw the van back into 'park'. The van roared helplessly in place and the tires burned the asphalt.

I moved quickly. I leaned over her once more, flung the passenger door back open, picked up my legs, leaned against my door, landed my feet against her left arm, and pushed with all the strength in my legs. Her hands grabbed at my legs as I pushed her out. I kicked them away. As soon as she fell out of the car and onto the street, I threw the van back into drive. I slammed on the acceleration. The van kicked forward and the passenger door ricocheted shut. I sped away.

I panted as I drove down Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Was I supposed to pull over? Should I call the police? What the fuck was I even going to say?

Hi officer, I would like to report a crime. Someone mugged me in my van. Well... is it mugging if it's just \$10? No, she didn't force herself in. I let her in. Because I was giving her a ride. No, I did not know her. I don't think she was a prostitute, no. Because she was wearing basketball shorts. Why was I giving her a ride? Well you see, I'm new here. I'm from Texas... Yes, I'll hold.

I drove back towards Boyle Heights. I felt defeated. But I was still alive. The high-rise buildings of downtown Los Angeles looked down at me. When Lizzie

McGuire gets on the back of a scooter with a stranger, she gets to pretend to be an international pop sensation and performs at The Coliseum in Rome. But when I let a stranger in my car, I get attacked just minutes away from The Coliseum in South Central?

I was clearly not cut out for this city. Maybe I should just go home. I didn't belong here. As I drove down the highway, I imagined what it'd be like if I really did go back to my hometown. I could just bike everywhere. I knew all the roads. I could have dinner every night with friends that understood and loved me. I could move back in with my parents. I would never have to sleep in a bunk bed. I probably would not even have to work. And I would have never been bamboozled by an ill-meaning drifter—my dad would have been there to tell me to not pick her up!

The idea of going home felt easy. It was predictable. It was safe. It would also mean giving up. Moving back to Texas felt like admitting defeat. My dream to be more independent, to carve out a space for myself in this world, to be all of myself, would stay a dream. I'd have to learn to accept that when things got too rough, I chose to run. And was I really willing to do that?

If I was going to stay in Los Angeles, I had to drive faster. I had to keep up. And if I could fight off a knife-wielding possible prostitute in basketball shorts, I could handle the freeway. I wasn't going to take any more shit. I wanted to change.

Los Angeles does that to people.

I had a long road ahead, but if I could fight off a knife-wielding possible prostitute in basketball shorts, then maybe I did have it in me to keep up with this city. I flicked my left blinker on and pushed my foot hard on the gas pedal.

The Beginner's Guide to Anal Sex (from Brother's How To Not Be A Dick: And Other Essential Truths About Work, Sex, Love—And Everything Else That Matters)

Pernell Quilon

You've probably read plenty about the vagina—but what about the butt?

Historically speaking anal sex has gotten the short end of the stick, but not because dudes' dicks were smaller in the 1800s. Instead, it's long been considered taboo—though, thanks to mainstream media, inclusive sex-ed and Nicki Minaj, attitudes have begun to shift. Still, there's a sizeable stigma associated with anal, which means your most pressing questions probably haven't been answered. Until now.

Q: Is everybody having anal without me?

Not yet. Though they're probably at least talking about it.

A 2016 survey of over 3,000 sexually active millennials revealed 35 percent of women and 15 percent of men are engaging in anal sex at least some of the time, while Pornhub data shows that search volume for anal sex videos increased by 120% between 2009 and 2015.

It's really more common than you think. Queer men have been doing it for years, it was commemorated in ancient Greece, and before that, anal apparently inspired a lot of Peruvian pottery; when archaeologists excavated 10,000 pots from the Moche culture between 100 and 800 AD, there were so many depictions of anal sex.

Q: Is it safe?

Yes. But it does require extra precaution. The anus does not self-lubricate and is a lot more prone to tearing. Therefore, there is a higher risk for contracting STIs when partaking in anal sex. It's important to use condoms and a lot of lube.

There's also perfectly healthy bacteria that lives in the anus, though can cause some serious infection in other areas. It's always a good idea to change condoms, especially if you're switching to vaginal sex. (See, it's not just for gay guys!)

Q: Why do people do it?

Why do so many people with lactose intolerance still eat ice cream? It feels good. For men, anal sex allows access to their prostate, which fills with fluid during arousal. Directly massaging the prostate feels great and helps induce an orgasm. While women don't have a prostate, it can still feel good because anal sex stimulates the many nerves of the anus.

Q: Will I encounter poop?

Probably. And that's OK.

If you do come across poop, let your partner know and decide together what to do next. Most bottoms will want to stop and clean up before continuing. Though if you don't care about a little mess, let your bottom know.

Q: Do I have to watch what I eat?

It's your body and you can do what you want. With that said, if you know certain foods make your stomach upset, it's probably best to avoid eating these foods hours before receiving anal sex.

If you anticipate having consistent anal sex, it may be a good idea to consider changing aspects of your diet. Red meat, for example, takes a lot of energy for the body to completely digest. A good tip is to increase your overall intake of fiber, through supplements and foods like vegetables, leafy greens, yogurt, fruits, and whole grains as it helps the digestive system.

Q: How can I prepare?

Let's talk douching. Douching is the process of squirting water up your butt and then shooting it out, theoretically cleaning out the inside of your butt. You repeat the process until the water runs clear. There are a few ways to do so and the most common way is through an enema.

To douche or not to douche is completely up to you. That said, you want to minimize the timing of the overall process because you don't want to keep water

sitting up your butt for a long period of time. Good bacteria does exist in your rectum, so health professionals have advised against overdoing it when it comes to douching because excessive douching can harm your rectal lining.

One to two rounds of cleaning should be plenty. And just in case, you can lay down a towel too.

Q: What should I not do?

Don't add unnecessary pressure and tell your bottom to "clean out." It's already a given and telling them to do so will only make them more nervous— nobody likes a nervous bottom... especially nervous bottoms.

If you are the bottom, don't feel pressured to do it. If you know your body is not ready for anal penetration or you're just not in the mood, don't do it. One reason is that you know your body best. The other reason is that if you or your bottom feels tense, then the sex will be a lot less enjoyable.

Q: How do I talk to my partner about it?

Over frozen yogurt.

Top 10 Takeaways from Memoir Writing for An Entire Year (Newsletter Excerpt)

Pernell Quilon

I've been microdosing empathy every Wednesday for over a year thanks to a memoir writing group that I joined last April. The original class was only three weeks, but since we were still stuck at home at the end of it, we decided to keep our group going until "the pandemic ended." Lol.

We are still meeting to this day.

Here are the top 10 lessons I have learned so far from writing my own memoir alongside the same six women for the past year:

1. Writing about myself is as painful as it is cathartic.

When you can write about yourself without judgement, that's when the fun begins.

2. I can't re-write my past, but I can edit the way I look at it.

The story I was telling myself about my own life was just one perspective and it was an outdated one. Returning to my past selves through writing continues to be a chance to look back at my "mistakes" with a compassion and understanding that only time and space can give. Growing up is pretty lit.

3. Memoirs are gateway drugs to worlds I never knew I'd go to.

Through the stories in our group, I've experienced the underground poker scene of Fort Wayne, Indiana, a day in the life of a former assistant to P. Diddy, and the tiresome process of finding a babysitter you can trust to take care of your kids.

4. Empathy for others is great practice for granting empathy to ourselves.

Writers are self-loathing, even when they're extremely talented. Gifting each other feedback each week has helped me to find what I love in others' pieces and notice and love those same things in my own writing.

5. Don't underestimate the social impact of your own story.

Santina, one of the writers in our group, has been in a wheelchair since she was five years old after a car accident left her paralyzed from the waist down. Her perspective is that being in a wheelchair is a lot like being a celebrity; people don't know how to act around you sometimes! Her stories have made me hyper-aware of how much of my own life is not accessible to everyone. My next apartment will be on the first floor. And if it isn't, there has to be an elevator in the building because I want her to come over. Also, I will never use a handicapped bathroom stall if there are others open. I just can't.

6. Show, don't tell.

If you can describe a scene so a reader feels like they're in it, they can make their own judgements. That's always more powerful than telling them how to feel. I'm pretty sure that's why I enjoy this newsletter so much. Clicking a link is like unwrapping a piece of candy. I don't know if I'll like it, but I'm able to make that decision on my own.

7. A shortcut to improving your writing is to read more writing.

8. It's never too late to start a new career path.

9. Having a support group goes a long way.

The accountability of a group of encouraging writers who are going through the same process can make the difference between forever saying, "I'm going to write a book" and "I wrote a book."

10. Writing a book is hard... for everyone.

Unless you're Elmo, apparently. The process of writing continues to be hard, but each of us have dozens of chapters for our memoirs and complete book proposals.

Suck on that, Elmo.

Get in touch with Pernell

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