

## **The First Two Pages of “Go West” by Robert J. Randisi**

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An Essay by Robert J. Randisi

I had a revelation in a movie theater when I was 15. I saw the movie *Harper*, and from that day on I was determined to be writing private eye fiction for a living by the time I turned thirty. (I did it.)

Jump ahead fifty-five years. I was invited to write a short story based on a Marx Brothers movie. I ended up with *Go West*. And because the story had to do with a movie, I decided to have my character experience his own revelation in the theater.

I believe the first two pages of anything—short story or novel—should be informative. So, combining that belief with the “revelation,” you not only meet my character, pulp writer Eddie Quince, but with the first line of the story, you realize what he is up against.

“The Marx Brothers stole my story.”

After this revelation Quince must decide what to do about the situation and how to prove his claim.

My feeling about these first two pages is that I’ve given the reader both my character, and his conundrum. Hopefully, as a result of these pages, the reader won’t be able to resist reading the remainder of the story.

## THE FIRST TWO PAGES OF “GO WEST”

### 1

The Marx Brothers stole my story.

Of course, I didn't know that when I went to the Walker Theater to see their latest film, *GO WEST*.

Of course, I didn't know that when I went to the theater with my buddy, Artie Dolan. He was trying to break in as a journalist, working for *The New York Herald Tribune* as a copy boy. It was only while watching that it began to dawn on me. By the end of the movie I was both flattered, and livid.

My name's Edward Quince, although most times I'm called Eddie. I've been scraping by in the pulps for about ten years. Only because I write so many stories. The editors know they can call me on a moment's notice, and I'll deliver. Not that they pay any extra for that.

“Are you sure?” he asked, as we left the Walker Theater on 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Brooklyn. “You can't go around accusin' the Marx Brothers of somethin' like that.”

“It wouldn't be them I was accusing,” I said, “it'd be the screenwriter.”

“I didn't notice his name,” Artie said.

“I did. It's Brecher, Irving S. Brecher. I think he wrote one of their other movies, also.”

“Pizza?” Artie said, as we came to Joe's Pizza Parlor.

“Yeah.”

We went inside, got a slice each had a coke, then sat at a table.

“So how sure are you?” Artie asked.

“The mine in the movie is called ‘Dead Man's Gulch,’” I said. “I did a story eight years ago in *Ace High Western Magazine*. It was before I decided to just do crime and mystery stories. It was called ‘Dead Man's Gulch.’”

“Okay, there must've been a lot of Dead Man's Gulch's in the old west. Anythin' else?”

“A few things,” I said. “It had to do with a stolen deed.”

“Again, wasn't there a lot of that goin' around, then?” Artie asked.

I bit into my pizza, fought with a long string of cheese, and then chewed. I took my time, so I could think.

“This is gonna bother you, ain’t it?” he asked.

“I can’t help it.”

“Maybe you should talk to somebody about it,” Artie offered.

“One of your other writer friends who’ve maybe been through somethin’ like this?”

“I’ve got an AFG luncheon tomorrow at Rosoff’s,” I said.

A bunch of pulp writers usually met once a week at Rosoff’s on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street. They called the group the America Fiction Guild. There were quite a few guys like me, who were barely making a living writing for the pulps, but every once in a while some of the better known guys showed up.

“Good,” Artie said, “talk to somebody there before you do somethin’, uh . . .”

“ . . .stupid?”

He bit into his pizza.

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Of Robert J. Randisi, *Booklist* said he “ may be one of the last true pulp writers. ” He has been published in the western, mystery, private eye, horror, science fiction and action/adventure genres, and has written close to 700 books, 60+ short stories, 1 screenplay, and edited over 35 anthologies. In 2009 he received “The Eye,” the Life Achievement award from The Private Eye Writers of America. In 2016 he was presented the Peacemaker Life Achievement award by the Western Fictioneers. And also in 2016 he received the John Sigenthaler Legends Award at Killer Nashville, for humanitarian work. In 2017 he was presented with the Derringer Award for Life Achievement by the Short Fiction Mystery Society.