Full disclosure, I still have not directed anything. I was on set for a friend’s film this past weekend and I am writing about that experience. I have been on sets before but this is the first time that I wasn’t a Production Assistant. On this production I was the Script Supervisor so I got to work very closely to the Director and Assistant Director. I was privy to a lot of behind the behind the scenes and there were some highs and some lows and many lessons in between to take away as a future director. Lessons of that exact creative spirit that was discussed in the chapter and lessons about physical perseverance.

One of the things that I saw firsthand was the tensions between the Director and Assistant Director. I went in to this production with the understanding that there are natural tensions between these two positions. Not in a creative sense, they often have a similar vision, but in a sheer purpose sense. The Director wants to shoot everything in the script, especially when he wrote it, and the Assistant Director wants to make sure that everyone gets lunch, rest, and that we stay on schedule. It was a three day shoot and the first day went terribly late and the second day was a repeat of that. All of that led to an eventful third day that culminated in the AD leaving the set early without saying anything. Moving forward the lesson I learned is to always keep ultimate clarity. At the start of each day a discussion should be had between all above the line positions to make sure that everyone is on the same page. There was some lack of communication that led to the increasing tensions.

Another lesson learned from the relationship between the Director and the AD is that much like in business that it’s okay to have tensions, they are natural, but they need to be contained. Having a friendly and united front is key to keep morale high amongst the cast and crew. That was a discussion that the director and I had because they struggled to keep their discord private. As somewhat of a third party I was around for the angst and was able to discuss with each of them how their actions were affecting everyone else. Discussions like these need to happen behind closed doors and not out in the view of the public so everyone can stay as focused as possible on doing their job to the best of their ability.

I’ve always heard the mantra to prepare for the worst when shooting a film. We are to expect delays, forgotten lines, destroyed props. Believe in Murphy’s Law. This production was a perfect example of just that. We were always behind schedule and mostly because it took too long to move the camera. I don’t think the director accurately scheduled for location changes because of how long it took for the camera to often be broken down and reconfigured at the new spot. The lesson I learned is to expect things to go poorly but to have a backup plan. Know, if needed, what needs to be cut whether it be dialogue or an entire scene. Understand how long it takes for cameras to move and for action sequences to be orchestrated on location in relation to camera movement.

All in all it was a great experience that came with lessons based on both the good and the bad. I learned many things to do and many things not to do and that type of experience can’t be taught in a textbook or perceived from a behind the scenes featurette. This tangible experience will live with me for quite some time and hopefully make me a better director in the future.