

Copyright
by
Jacob Terrence Farmer
2014

**The Report Committee for Jacob Terrence Farmer
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

The Development of “Standby”

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Richard Lewis

Cynthia A. McCreery

The Development of “Standby”

by

Jacob Terrence Farmer, B.S.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2014

Abstract

The Development of “Standby”

Jacob Terrence Farmer, MFA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisor: Richard Lewis

This report describes the evolution of the television pilot for the half-hour comedy series *Standby*. It documents the idea’s initial conception, through its various outline and draft stages, and finally to its successful completion for thesis consideration. In addition, the report looks ahead to the future of the project, as well as traces the writer’s growth both before and during his time in the MFA Screenwriting program.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: A Pause, Before We Start.....	1
Chapter Two: Cyborgs in Airports	4
Chapter Three: Two Disclosures	7
Chapter Four: Bad Feature, Decent Episode	9
Chapter Five: "Cheers," in an Airport (and other Shows Not Named "Wings") ...	12
Chapter Six: How to Successfully Acquire a Rejection Letter.....	13
Chapter Seven: A First Outline, a New Direction	14
Chapter Eight: It's Called "Standby"	18
Chapter Nine: Write What You Know, Part One	19
Chapter Ten: Write What You Know, Part Two	22
Chapter Eleven: The Chicken or the Character?	25
Chapter Twelve: How to Successfully Acquire an Acceptance Letter.....	27
Chapter Thirteen: Sturdy Seconds	28
Chapter Fourteen: Screenwriting is a Puzzle.....	30
Chapter Fifteen: Looking Ahead	31
Chapter Sixteen: A Summation	32
Appendix A: Initial Pitch	35
Appendix B: Short Rough Outline	39
Appendix C: Early Character Blurbs with Casting Ideas	47
Appendix D: Series Bible	50
Appendix E: A Comparison of Two Teasers.....	63
Bibliography	74

Chapter One: A Pause, Before We Start

Just what is this thing you are about to read? An account? A report? A memoir? A story? A formality? I'm still trying to figure it out. Like any well-schooled screenwriter, I decided I needed to do some research before I could truly begin the task at hand. So I went to the past for inspiration, in hopes of gaining some footing.

In other words: I read old reports.

I'm still on shaky ground.

Each report I read had its own pros and cons. Some were chronological, going from Point A (the conception of the idea) to Point B (the thesis completion). These were logical, but not without the occasional dive into sterility. Others rambled, taking journeys and asides well outside of the expressed parameters. And yet these tangents were often the most enjoyable segments.

I also like tangents.

For example, as I type this, I can't help but look out the window of my new third-floor apartment that I can't presently afford. Across the street, there's a circular mansion that sits atop a Hollywood hill. It's framed perfectly in my window, looking down upon all the other mansions below it. It is a bastion of excellence. A shining example of what must surely be possible in this World of Film and Television.

I say these things to myself. It motivates me.

I get an itch. I google my street address. I locate the mansion in question.

I read about its owner.

He invented a tool belt.

Like I said, shaky ground.

As expected, most of the reports I read came with the requisite amount of self-deprecation necessary for any work about another work written by the writer who wrote both works. Others were filled with a tinge of delusion or, to put it lightly, a pledge that, if the thesis in question isn't living proof that they have arrived as professional writers, the report will surely stand to promise that such greatness is on the way.

I stand to make no promises here. And yet I am excited about what's on the horizon as I continue my screenwriting career. Is it possible to be confidently self-deprecating? Or maybe self-deprecatingly confident is the ideal. Either way, I'm sure this report will contain its fair share of tangents and sterile moments, moments of grandeur and times of unnecessary criticism.

Weather through, dear reader.

Or maybe this report is simply a summation. A summation of all the things I stated in the beginning. Part account, part story, part memoir, (certainly some formality). It will tell the tale of where I was when I started this project (sitting at the gate of an airport) and where I'm going to be as soon as I finish this report (again, most likely sitting at the gate of an airport).

I know there's more to it than that. I know I've gotten somewhere.

The following pages will attempt to successfully explain (a confident promise) the process that lead me from the idea's conception, through its various iterations, and finally to its current state (logic and order), while hopefully (self-deprecation) providing insight

into my development as a writer while at the University of Texas at Austin. (Tangents included.)

Chapter Two: Cyborgs in Airports

My friend once told me humans were cyborgs. He wrote about it on our website. It wasn't his original idea, but the writing was good. You can do that with ideas, if the writing is good. I've learned over the last few years that you can do it with screenplays, too. In some ways, it's the rule. Just as long as it's a mashup. Screenwriters love mashups.

Example: I was emailing said friend when I first got the inspiration for the project that would later become *Standby* and the subject of this report.

Me: I've got an idea for a show.

Friend: Tell me about it.

Me: It's a comedy, thirty minutes, set in an airport with a bunch of crazy characters.

Friend: I don't know, man, seems okay. But what's the hook?

Me: It's basically *30 Rock* in an *Airport*.

Friend: Oh yeah, I can see it. Comedy, thirty minutes. Set in an airport. Crazy characters. Cool idea.

Me: Exactly.

That's how it began. More specifically, it began while I was sitting in the Barbara Jordan Terminal at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport on the morning of February 7th, 2014, about to fly to Tampa, Florida to spend a pre-Valentine's weekend with my girlfriend. How do I remember this? I searched my Gmail. (My friend was right; we humans are cyborgs.)

This is what I typed to him that morning, verbatim, and I'm proud that the core idea has, thus far, stayed intact:

“Let’s write a sitcom-y, *30 Rock*-ish, Office-y comedy that takes place in an airport. Could be funny. Maybe in Austin. A well of material. Just think of how many weirdos roll through airports. Jaded airport musicians, bartenders, TSA security, etc. Just weird folks. Maybe a new airport director comes in. The show could revolve around the issue of the week, terrorist scare, bad weather, etc... Then of course the relationships, crushes. Maybe the airport is new, or something. Thoughts?”

The “let’s write” part was just a courtesy; we haven’t written anything together in years, and never a screenplay, but his response, as far as I could gather via email, was favorable.

His response (return courtesies included):

“Yea it sounds like a good setting for a sitcom. What do we do?”

What we (meaning I) did was sit on the idea for a while. I don’t have a written or digital account to back this up, but I’m pretty sure I talked to my girlfriend about it, as well as fellow MFA Student Phil Hoover. The response wasn’t negative.

It seemed like a start. An idea that I was genuinely interested in pursuing. The inciting incident, if you will (obligatory lame screenwriting joke), of this documented journey. The only problem was that I was already well into the spring semester of my second year. There simply wouldn’t be a lot of time to start. Not only that, but the time was rapidly approaching where I would have to choose a script and committee for my

thesis project. Since I had yet to write a single line for my airport idea, the possibility of working on it in the near future was out the window.

So what did I do?

I got on the plane to Florida, and forgot about the whole thing.

Chapter Three: Two Disclosures

Disclosure: In the beginning of my still infant screenwriting career, I never really considered writing for television. The show that would become my greatest model for *Standby*, *30 Rock*, wasn't even on my radar for the bulk of its successful run. My friend (yep, same one) loved it, and would watch episode after episode while sitting on the couch in his sweatpants. For me, there were too many episodes. I didn't have the time. I needed to be doing things, writing things, experiencing.

What was I doing, you ask? I can't remember; it probably wasn't important.

I should have been watching *30 Rock*.

Double disclosure: My writing "origin story" is probably so cliché that countless guys anywhere from the age of thirteen to thirty-five have no doubt experienced it exactly as I have. That alone may make it worth telling. It begins like this:

Summer. The year is 2002. It's two o'clock in the morning, and we still have another day left on the free Starz/Showtime/Skinemax preview. I should be asleep, but instead I'm surfing through the channels, hoping to get lucky with anything I wouldn't be able to catch with regular cable.

These are strange and restless times for the adolescent me. I'm looking for something interesting. Dying to discover something unique. Not long ago I had realized HOT 104.9 wasn't the best place to learn about the legends of music (sorry Sísqó). Now I know about Steve Miller Band and REO Speedwagon (my musical awareness must begin somewhere). I'm sure it is only a matter of time before a major breakthrough

occurs, and I am starting to develop the undeniable feeling that I am on the verge of a series of great truths.

As it turns out, I am.

Two funny looking characters appear on the screen, a guy and a girl. They are sitting across from each other at a diner. I notice they have funny accents, too. That's enough for thirteen-year-old me, so I keep watching. They're having small talk, but it's not your normal Let's Get To Know You.

They're talking about robbing restaurants.

Not just any restaurant, I realize, but the one they are sitting in.

Holy crap, says the thirteen-year-old me. *Isn't that dangerous? Why are they so cool about it? Also, I love their accents.*

Within seconds the goofy couple pull their guns out, and before Dick Dale can hit the first note of his iconic surf rock riff, I'm already hooked.

The movie was, of course, *Pulp Fiction*. I had never seen anything like it. It blew me away. It wasn't *Casablanca*, or *Citizen Kane* (again, we must start somewhere), but I knew right then and there on that futon couch: the first great truth had been revealed.

I wanted to write movies.

Ten years later, I would finally write one.

Chapter Four: Bad Feature, Decent Episode

Two developments during that 2014 spring semester would cause the untitled “Airport Project” to hop back into the forefront of my mind.

The first was that I was slogging through a feature that was simultaneously slipping away with each passing moment. *The Outhouse Gang*, a young-adult drama set in a 1950s southern boys’ home about a rebellious orphan who teams with an imaginative schizophrenic in order to escape its hellish grounds. Simple enough, right? At least it fits into a logline. The problem was I had so many ideas, so many directions I was being pulled in, and each workshop threw me on another course, another avenue with which to attack what had started as a simple “prison” story. For example, at any given time I had one or more of the following elements in play:

A. Multiple timelines (they were going to converge at the end of the second act and culminate in an awesome, ground shaking revelation a la *True Detective*).

B. A completely tangential procedural mystery (also probably inspired by *True Detective*).

C. Supernatural elements. Was something otherworldly going on at this school? Or was this just the kids’ way of coping?

D. Comedy. Not a lot. But this is an abusive boys’ home we’re talking about here.

E. All of this with the backdrop of a racially divided South.

Yeah.

But I was really going for it. I had a story to tell.

It was, simply, a mess.

As the time to choose my thesis grew near, I was faced with a dilemma: what script do I choose? The thought of continuing *The Outhouse Gang* into the summer seemed unappetizing, at best. There was a story in there, somewhere deep inside, but I needed a break.

I thought back to the previous two features I had written in the program. *The Runners*, a farcical action comedy. A fun experiment, to be sure, but not a likely candidate. And then there was *Jumping Off*, an ultra low-concept dramedy (I guess?) about a college kid who sleeps with his middle-aged realtor. Yikes. I entered grad school with the goal of trying as many genres as I could, and damn if I wasn't giving it my best.

Still, the cold hard fact remained: I needed a thesis.

Luckily, a promising development was emerging from another class. Professor Cindy McCreery, along with veteran showrunner Scott Shepherd, were running their second edition of *The Writer's Room*, a class designed to have each student write their own episode for an original television series. The first year had been a great learning experience, and had planted the seed for television writing in my mind. This class, however, solidified it. The structure, the act breaks, the need to leave a cliffhanger every ten minutes. It all appealed to me. And there was also the tone of this particular series, playful, action-packed, and suspenseful, with a nice dollop of cheesy romance on top.

The teenage me was screaming. *What are you doing? You're supposed to be writing the next Boogie Nights. The next Blade Runner. The movies that made you want to be involved in movies in the first place. Are you starting to crack?*

I told the teenage me to shut up.

There was something about this medium and style that made sense at the time, and still does. It felt right up my alley. And there was also the obvious benefit of length. I could quickly crank out a draft, receive feedback, and get started again on the next, each time knowing I was at least making progress. With each successive version, I found myself more and more engaged with making it as good as possible. I could see the pieces fitting into the puzzle.

And slowly, that half-baked comedy idea was coming back into my mind.

I made a mental note: start watching *30 Rock*.

I had a thirty-minute airport comedy to write.

Chapter Five: *Cheers*, in an Airport (and other Shows Not Named *Wings*)

“Why hasn’t there been a comedy set in an airport?” I asked, trying to hide my excitement.

Across from me sat Richard Lewis, my future supervisor.

“I’m not sure,” he said, interested enough for me to continue with my idea.

And so I did. I think we were grinning. I’m not sure if this is actually true, but I’d like to pretend we both knew we were on to something.

Fortunately, neither of us at the time thought of the obvious. *Wings*, the popular 90s sitcom, *was* set in an airport. I had even gone so far as to describe in an email to Cindy McCreery that my airport idea could function as a modern-day *Cheers*, only in an airport. *Wings* was, unbeknownst to me at the time, created by the same wizards who developed *Cheers*. Not only that, but *Wings* exists in the same fictional universe as *Cheers*, and characters often make appearances at the airport.

This oversight aside, my idea wasn’t going to be *Wings*. Really, it wasn’t going to be *Cheers*, either. It was going to try to follow in the footsteps of *30 Rock* and *Parks and Recreation*. An office-based comedy. Set in an airport. With the backdrop of Austin, Texas to provide flavor and eccentricity.

A month had gone by and I was still excited by the premise.

And I still needed a story.

Chapter Six: How to Successfully Acquire a Rejection Letter

Remember when I said it took ten years from the moment I decided I wanted to write movies to the time I actually tried to write one?

Once upon a time, I applied to graduate film school without having ever written a script. I did, however, have a decent first draft of a George Saunders-esque short story, and figured I was as prepared as any to enter the wonderful world of screenwriting. I even went the extra mile by dividing my story into three sections, or “acts,” and was confident the selection committee would pick up on this as a sure sign of my knowledge of structure. I submitted my sample and waited anxiously for the letter to arrive. I even told a few people about my little secret.

The ending to this story is obvious, and I had to have seen it coming. I kept the rejection letter, anyway, as a reminder to keep doing the things I wanted to do in life, and to please, please, start actually doing them.

The school was in Boston. Boston is really cold. I probably wouldn't have liked it.

I can live with that.

Chapter Seven: A First Outline, A New Direction

I read once that Elmore Leonard said he tried to skip the boring parts of his stories so he could get to the scenes people would care about.

Flash forward to May 15th, 2014. I'm sitting with Richard and Cindy, my fully formed thesis committee. They have in their hands a copy of my original pitch (Appendix A) and my first rough outline (Appendix B). The show: *Austin National International*, a thirty-minute airport comedy. Along with the same basic premise I had for months, there was also a new twist I was excited about.

Recall that I tried to fit *True Detective* into my young-adult boys' home drama. It's a tendency I have. I try to include (mostly unconsciously, I think) the elements of shows that appeal to me at the time.

The element I was trying to incorporate into my airport pilot was a variation of *Portlandia's* skits; little vignettes that could operate outside the plot and (hopefully) be funny. You can probably guess, I was watching a lot of *Portlandia* at the time.

Those skits were the first to go, and never made it into any draft.

The second, and much more critical observation, was that I was lacking inherent conflict.

Conflict. The most important word, maybe, in all of dramatic writing. The reason people read, tune in, pay ten bucks to sit in a sticky carpeted chair. And I didn't have it. Naturally, I was all ears, and grateful that Richard and Cindy had their thinking caps on.

Problem One. The jaded new airport director, Dan Evers, the guy I thought would grow to love the airport and break out of his funk with the help of his eccentric employees, was, in a word, boring.

Problem Two. In the main conflict of the pilot, Dan tries to navigate through a series of weather delays. He is largely unsuccessful (there's not a lot you can do with weather delays), but proves he can be a good guy by delaying a flight even further in order allow a couple on the brink of breaking up to reconcile.

I think there might be two problems in here. The first is that the idea of weather delays doesn't really lend itself to concrete problems that are solvable. Not to mention that weather typically corrects itself, and there isn't much one man can do to ease the situation. Which is why I latched onto the personal story of the couple on the verge of breaking up. The only issue was these characters weren't major to the series. In fact, I really had no intention of keeping them around for other episodes.

For comparison, let's look back at *Cheers*, the show that this show swears it doesn't want to be. In the pilot, bartender and protagonist Sam befriends a patron named Diane who is passing time at the bar while she waits for her much older fiancé to return. Throughout the course of the episode, we learn that Diane has doubts about her upcoming marriage. By the end of the episode, her fears are confirmed, and her fiancé abandons her. But noble Sam offers her a job as a cocktail waitress, and Diane reluctantly agrees.

A fantastic television relationship has just been forged.

Consider this: What if Sam doesn't offer her the job, and we never see Diane again? Where do we find the inherent conflict for *Cheers*?

That's basically what I was doing in my pilot outline, introducing two characters into the main plot that would be gone by the time the second episode rolls around.

Richard immediately suggested I scrap the whole storyline.

In grad school, you learn to not be precious about ideas. Especially bad ones.

Back to conflict. More specifically, *inherent* conflict. It had to exist within the core cast of characters. Neither Cindy nor Richard was really on board with the jaded new airport director, but there was something about his back-story that seemed to catch their attention: he was a former high-profile congressman who fell from grace in an embarrassing scandal (yet to be determined). Richard called back on a popular and successful show as a loose model. *30 Rock*.

Of course, I thought. *30 Rock*. That's what I wanted this show to be all along!

30 Rock in an *airport*. The mashup.

I made a note to myself: You seriously better start watching more *30 Rock*.

The central conflict at the start of *30 Rock* is between Liz Lemon and Jack Donaghy. Liz is the showrunner, Jack is the newly hired Development Exec, brought on to rebrand the show. Liz, obviously, doesn't want the show to be rebranded.

It's an excellent dynamic. They are opposites, yet they complement each other. There is sexual tension. Most importantly, there is inherent conflict.

So how do I do that with my idea?

The brainstorm started. What if there was an airport director, still Dan Evers, but he *loved* his job. And he loved Austin. Better yet, what if he wasn't the director at all, but the assistant director. The director has just stepped down (or died) and Dan assumes

it is his turn to finally realize his lifelong dream of being an airport director. Now we have goals, motivation, desire.

The brainstorm continued. What if we kept the high-profile congressman who fell from grace via an embarrassing scandal, and made him another character other than Dan? What happens to those people? Sometimes they step down, and are placed into other positions. Airports are largely funded and influenced by their state and local governments. What if working at an airport was not a reward for this person, but a censure? A punishment. What if this person was nothing like Dan, more like his antithesis? And, what if this person came out of nowhere and took Dan's job. How would Dan feel? Would he quit? Or would his passion for the airport override his feelings of betrayal?

It was a start. There was tension.

What if this congressman wasn't a man at all, but a woman? Bingo. More tension.

The central conflict was forming.

Chapter Eight: It's Called *Standby*

Richard was looking at me. He had just asked a question, and was hoping I'd fill in the blanks. I couldn't; the brainstorm had left me excited, but a bit exhausted.

"Think about it," he said. "It's a story about a guy who just got passed for the job of his dreams."

"Right." I said. "The job of his dreams. A story. A guy." I had nothing to add.

"We're in an airport. What happens to people at airports?"

"Airports. People. Airports. Things happening."

"They get put on..."

He was going to have to take this thing the whole way.

"Standby," he said. "They get put on standby. Dan has just been put on a professional and deeply personal standby. That's the name of your show."

"That's pretty good," I said.

"That's why you hired me."

From that point on, the show would be known as *Standby*.

Chapter Nine: Write What You Know, Part One

Sometimes when you're writing something, you start thinking of other things. Sometimes those things have to do with writing, too. And sometimes, if you think hard enough, you can even connect what you started thinking about with what you were trying to write in the first place. Case in point. While writing the paragraph you are reading, I started thinking of this:

Write What You Know.

We've all heard it a million times. I used to think it was an overstated commandment, at best, and probably still do. I shudder to think what our collective film and literary history would consist of if we had all adhered to that basic rule.

I won't hypothesize.

What I realize now that I didn't when I entered this program is that, while writing what you know might not necessarily make what you a better writer, it will give you a better chance at writing better. I used to think that I didn't need to write what I knew. And I was positive I wasn't doing it.

In truth, I *was* writing what I knew. And that's basically *all* I was writing.

Ten years after I saw *Pulp Fiction* and decided I wanted to write movies, I finally wrote a script. It was about as far away from Quentin Tarantino as one could get. I didn't think of it then, but it's probably because I didn't know anything that Quentin Tarantino knew. I wasn't from L.A., I had never worked in a video store, and I had yet to discover Elmore Leonard.

The script I wrote was about a teenage kid who decides to honor his dead stepmother's birthday by delivering her ashes to her hometown beach in Florida. A series of events in the first act results in his estranged father, step-grandmother, and best friend joining him for the ride. It's a road trip movie. Things happen, people come together. Everyone grows. I won't discuss its merits here. The point is that I had created a story from a world I thought I knew nothing about. My stepmother wasn't dead. I don't even have a stepmother. My father wasn't gay, to my knowledge (the father in the story is), and my grandmother wasn't bipolar (again, to my knowledge).

Regardless of whether or not the script makes for a viable, low-budget, indie-roadtrip comedy, I still look back on it with fond memories. It rings true to me. I wanted to tell a rounded story about complex characters, and I think I gave it an honest go.

In the previously mentioned *The Outhouse Gang*, I knew even less of the world. Nothing about boys' homes, relatively little of the 1950s. I figured I knew the South well enough, having spent most of my life in the panhandle of Florida, but most of my reference points for the script were other movies from the period.

If I compare the two scripts, I feel very little connection, at this point, to *The Outhouse Gang*. I do, however, still feel a connection to that little roadtrip story.

So what was different?

The main difference, as I realize now, was that that first script was written almost entirely from what I knew.

A. It's true, my stepmother (that I've never had) wasn't dead. At the time, however, I had recently experienced the passing of my beloved aunt. I was living in New

York City, where she and my uncle also lived, and I witnessed first hand the pain that my uncle was going through. The sadness and grief of a marriage and life being cut way too short.

B. In high school, one of my best friend's uncles bravely decided to come out after years of marriage. He was a traditional Baptist-raised Southern man. Naturally, the family was shocked. The kids took to it the hardest. More confusion than anything. My friend would talk to me about it, how everyone was adapting.

His uncle was a great guy, caught in a difficult situation.

C. I'm not close with anyone who has bipolar disorder, but I know a little of its symptoms and the complications it causes for both the sufferer and the loved ones around him or her. I am in no way claiming to be an expert in clinical psychology, but I did receive my B.S. in psychology. At one time I even flirted with the idea of medical school.

It goes on and on. Buddy, the father and co-protagonist, used to be a football star. I had my college football dreams cut short due to arthritis. Billy and Chris, the son and his best friend, were written using parts of my past or the kids I knew in high school. In the script, they travel to Florida. Again, I was raised in Florida.

I was writing what I knew. And nothing else.

Chapter Ten: Write What You Know, Part Two

Did you really think I was going to say all that in the last chapter without attempting to connect it with what I was trying to write in the first place?

Here it goes.

Originally, I had conceived of *Standby* taking place in Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Partly because it was where I thought of the idea, but also because it seemed like a unique setting for a show. If it was going to be set primarily in an airport, why not have it in Austin's?

ABIA is not like any other airport I have seen and, I think, a pretty interesting place. For starters, it only consists of one terminal, making it the second smallest airport I've been in (Tallahassee Regional being the smallest). This makes the potential world of the show easier to wrap my head around, as opposed to the sprawling LAX. More importantly, ABIA strives to rid of the normal, generic, and corporate nature that exists in many major hubs. For example, most of the restaurants and bars at ABIA are airport versions of local Austin favorites, not international chains. Barbecue, breakfast tacos, local coffee. It's all at ABIA. And then there's the live music. Austin likes to refer to itself as the "Live Music Capital of the World." At ABIA they have multiples concerts and performances each and every day.

It made sense, why not have it in Austin's Airport?

Somehow, a little trip home for my sister's wedding reception had me reconsidering things.

I had recently been sent off to write the first draft of the pilot for the show now known as *Standby*. After arriving to Tallahassee Regional Airport, I started thinking. Why not have the show be set in an even smaller airport than ABIA, in a town that no one outside the region knows anything about? Believe it or not, but I thought I was drawing from the precedent set with the fictional city in *Parks and Recreation* and Scranton, Pennsylvania in *The Office*. It could be an “Everytown,” your neighborhood regional airport.

I went into the first draft with this mindset. And immediately ran into problems. If this weren't going to be Austin, would it still have Austin elements? Barbecue, tacos, hipsters, government, music. If not, what would my new city consist of? I decided to keep most of the Austin elements, but tone it down. And then I gave the city a completely made up and vaguely Native American sounding name. It would stand as a placeholder until I really figured out what this fictional, Everytown was all about.

Basically, the setting would exist in this first draft as a question: should I go back to Austin, or go full on with the new city?

When I finished the draft, it was clear that this fictional city needed to be addressed sooner rather than later. At the moment, what this city was, essentially, was a less interesting Austin. And this less interesting fake Austin was affecting the plot.

Everything, *everything*, is connected. That's not philosophy. It just succinctly explains the challenge of screenwriting.

My city needed more personality, more energy, more character.

The thesis committee was in total agreement with this. A fictional city is one thing, but don't make a fictional city loosely based on a more generic and less interesting version of a real city.

Again, it made sense, why not have it in Austin's Airport?

I went into the second draft with the mission to do just that. It was, after all, one of the best assets I had. I had lived in Austin for two years. I knew the places, had met a decent amount of people, and had plenty of experience with the airport. Much more than that fictional city I was trying to construct.

What does all this mean?

I was learning to appreciate the concept of writing what you know.

Chapter Eleven: The Chicken or the Character?

I had the location. Austin, Texas. I knew where the show would take place. Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Now I just needed to hone the plot and hammer down these characters.

Not the easiest thing to do.

Every script, I've realized, is different.

That's what I've learned over the last two years. More specifically, and kidding aside, I've learned that every script I've written has presented its own challenges. Sometimes it's plot, other times it's character, setting, or motivation. It's always something. For me, the challenge on *Standby* has, during all stages, been plot. It's a bit ironic to me; I truly thought going into it that the plot would be the easiest component. After all, so many things *happen* at airports. So many ridiculous, frustrating, hilarious, irritating, and just plain strange things happen. It wouldn't be hard to structure a plot around one of those things.

A low voice echoes out in some foggy corner of my brain.

Character drives plot.

Ah, yes, character, the reason why people tune in every week, especially to a comedy. The laughs, sure, but really it's about the characters. Jerry, Michael, Liz, Leslie. I just threw out four first names, and I'm guessing the average American would be able to correctly match at least two of them to their corresponding shows.

In order to reinforce this idea on characters, let me return briefly to these things that *happen* at airports. They are, in a word, incidents. Incidents occur all the time, and

then life (usually) goes on. Incidents happen every day. Every hour. Every minute. As humans, we can attempt to attribute a logic and meaning to it, but only in *Groundhog Day* can stepping in a puddle of water really hold any significance. In reality, it just sucks, and it hurts our feelings. And then we have to cope.

But in the screenwriting world, everything should have significance. Every action or reaction should hold meaning. It should inform the character. And the character should make decisions based on these moments, or incidents, that occur during the life of a script. For *Standby*, I had all these incidents in my head about what could happen in an airport. But I needed them to have significance. I needed, desperately, to further develop these characters, so they would be able to drive the plot. Of course, this would start at the top. I would begin with Dan and the congresswoman who has just arrived to soil his little dreams. Lisa Smith-Lopez, the Viper of Congress.

Chapter Twelve: How to Successfully Acquire an Acceptance Letter

Once upon a time, many moons after being denied acceptance into film school, I tried again.

And got accepted. What was my secret?

I wrote a script.

The lesson being: If you want to write, start writing now. If nothing else happens, you'll at least be writing. Which, if you really wanted to do it in the first place, should provide you some solace.

If not, you can always invent a tool belt and live in a circular mansion atop the Hollywood Hills.

Chapter Thirteen: Sturdy Seconds

After workshopping for two years, the best thing to me is going into a situation already knowing exactly what I need to do, and then having the people around me confirm it. Sounds like a dream, right?

Most of the time, that didn't happen. Either I wasn't sure where I needed to go with the script in question or, if I was, I would get wildly different suggestions for how to fix it. It makes sense. We're all completely different writers, and people. And screenwriting is not yet an official science.

Sometimes writing is listening. Listening to yourself, and to those around you. (Sometimes writing is not listening, but that's probably a more advanced stage. First you have to learn how to listen.)

For the second draft of my thesis, the listening was made easy. The feedback coming my way was simple: more Austin, more characterization, and more laughs. I knew this, and was already brainstorming for how to achieve it.

I couldn't wait to write the second draft.

Here are a few of the changes I made that immediately strengthened my pilot:

A. In the first draft I decided to hold back on the scandal that caused Lisa Smith-Lopez to take the job as airport director. Part of this was that I hadn't figured it out yet, but another part was that I thought it could make for a cool second episode. Wouldn't people buy into the mystery and want to watch the second episode to find out what happened? As I wrote, I realized that explaining the scandal as early as possible in the pilot would help in a number of ways. First, it would help to characterize Lisa. Second,

it would help drive the plot. Third, it would provide a number of opportunities for jokes. A three-in-one solution. Richard and Cindy had the same thought, and I set out to make it happen in the second draft.

B. The second change is tied to the first. In the first draft, Lisa and her assistant, Andi, arrive in Austin with an agenda; they know exactly how they want to change the airport. My thought process was that this would put the ball in Dan's court. How would he react? What decisions would he make? Dan has always been the relative straight man in the world of *Standby*. He's the nice guy, the guy who tries to do right. Plus, he's the protagonist. My idea concerning Lisa was a start, maybe even decent first draft stuff, but it didn't make total sense for the character that Lisa was supposed to be, and the situation she was in. Lisa has been censured. She has fallen from grace. She is, to borrow from Richard Lewis, hanging on to an "emergency parachute." She needs to *not* know what she's doing. In not knowing, she does or says something to start the conflict for Dan and the entire episode. It was a small change that trickled down in a major way. Plot points that I had in the first draft were altered slightly, but they gained more logic. And they were simplified.

C. Now that the plot was stronger, and the characters more defined, the next major change was to amplify. I needed to spice things up wherever possible. This meant more Austin, more "weird," more jokes. It also meant even more thought into character. And the more I thought about who each person was, the more he or she actually determined the scene.

Chapter Fourteen: Screenwriting is a Puzzle

Screenwriting is a puzzle. It is the hardest puzzle I have ever tried to put together. It's one of those impossible puzzles that have thousands of pieces and they are all just slight variations of the same color. Sometimes it's a puzzle that doesn't even have all of the puzzle pieces inside the box.

That, folks, is one hell of a puzzle.

I don't even like puzzles.

Somehow, I love screenwriting.

Chapter Fifteen: Looking Ahead

As I look back at where this pilot script started, where it's gone, and where it's going, I can't help but be excited. The characters continue to become more original, more unique, more strange. They still have a ways to go, but they are starting to develop their voices. With the second draft completed, I now look to make the characters, and the story surrounding them, even better.

It starts with Lisa. She must become more likable. There should be more empathy involved. We don't have to always support her methods (she is a fierce, Dallas-based, red-blooded Texan), but we should empathize to an extent with the situation she is in.

Next on the agenda is making every character truly count. That starts with a personal challenge: how can I fashion each character so that there is potential conflict and comedy in relation to another character. Some ideas are already brewing in this department.

It must be stated that I am grateful for having a thesis committee that was both encouraging and seemingly enthusiastic enough in the project to give me valuable and constructive feedback. I was flattered when they took the time to provide a detailed prescription that would make the scene or the character fully realized. I'd like to think their investment was, in some way, a small endorsement of the original concept that I brought to them. It goes without saying that their guidance has helped to take this project to the next level.

Chapter Sixteen: A Summation

All the way back in the first chapter I predicted I would be sitting at the gate of an airport as I finished this report. I lied. I'm actually in a plane. Okay, it wasn't really a lie, I just miscalculated how long it would take me to finish this thing. Still, a plane is close enough to a gate to continue the metaphor of a journey or coming full circle or however one would like to represent the growth that has been made by the writer in question. That writer being me. A summation of this growth follows:

When I entered the MFA Screenwriting Program at the University of Texas at Austin, I already felt like I had won. That reads cheesy to me, but I knew this was what I wanted to do, and I was thrilled to just be there. I vividly remember getting the acceptance email from Char. I was coincidentally in Austin at the time for work, and it made the news seem all the more important and telling. It seemed like a sign.

I had known for a couple years by that point that screenwriting was something I wanted to seriously pursue. It was a way to get into the world of film I loved so much, especially since I had more experience in writing than anything else related to the profession. I had moved to New York to see what I could get involved in and whom I could meet, but after a year I still felt like I needed to benefit from a structured environment that would force me to do the thing that I love. That may seem odd, but I was no stranger to being forced to do something I loved: I grew up playing sports. It's just how I'm wired. When I got the acceptance email from UT, in a city I was always intrigued by (though admittedly for musical reasons), it was a no brainer. I was in.

My hope was this: I would graduate in two years with the same passion that I had at the onset, but with the accrued knowledge and portfolio only possible from a complete devotion to screenwriting. Either that, or I would realize it wasn't for me.

I have since moved to Los Angeles. To that end, Mission Success.

Upon arrival to Austin there was, of course, an acclimation period. Deadlines forced me to write high volume, which is what I was most looking forward to, but it came with a Catch 22. I often felt like I was bringing in sections that I wouldn't have shown anyone otherwise. That's not me being shy, it's just that I knew I didn't have a lot of the issues figured out to the point where I felt I could go no further without another opinion. This, in part, resulted in premature changes, wrong turns, and more than a few dead ends.

What am I really trying to say? Writing is listening (and not listening). And deadlines.

I was (and am) still learning.

Let's take a more concrete approach.

Three features. Two specs for two original television series. One spec for an existing television series. Two original pilots. All written either as part of a class or during summer months. All in various stages of completion, mind you, but it's a great start.

Outside of the screenwriting core curriculum, I was able to produce a short comedy skit, serve as the best boy electric for Steve Mims' SXSW film, *Arlo and Julie*, and grip on a number of graduate films and thesis productions. I also had the opportunity

to continue my interest in fiction writing as I participated in a graduate fiction workshop in the English Department.

Serving as a teaching assistant was an invaluable opportunity. First, it allowed me to reinforce what I was learning every time I sat in front of a group of undergrads. Second, it gave me experience in a field I could see myself pursuing at some point down the line.

I am confident that there is little chance I could have enjoyed the same sweeping production that I had in this program if I had kept doing what I was doing before this. And I haven't even mentioned the connections and friends I've met over this period. Writers, directors, cinematographers, producers, etcetera. I am also happy to say I have gained more than one mentor and a few people with whom I am excited to continue working in the near future.

In summation: I am ready for the next chapter, and consider it an honor to have cut my teeth at UT.

Real time update: I have landed and am back in another gate for my layover. All is well. The report will end as it rightly should. In an airport. Writing about an airport. Writing about what all this means to be writing in an airport about writing about an airport. And other things.

Mainly, to simply be writing.

Appendix A: Initial Pitch

30-MINUTE TV PILOT

WORKING TITLE: AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL

JACOB FARMER

THE WORLD

AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL takes place within the confines of the airport itself, and will explore the unique parts that make up the large-scale organism that is a major airport. *ANI* will also act in some ways as a "bizarro-world" Austin, taking the stereotypes and extremes of Austin trends and behavior and having fun with them in an airport setting. This will be done somewhat in the vein of *Portlandia*.

So, on one level, the world of *ANI* is an airport that anyone who has traveled via plane can relate to, from the weather delays, to security scares, to dirty bathrooms, strange people, annoying kids, etcetera. What happens in *ANI* is most likely something you have either experienced, witnessed, or heard about (and would hate if it happened to you).

On another level, *ANI* is a microcosm of Austin itself -- ten-gallon hats, tattoos, tortillas, hipsters, hippies, country music, blues, drunks, you name it. It is a world you either know well, are curious about, or are inclined to laugh at.

THE CHARACTERS

The show will take advantage of the myriad of travelers who walk through the doors on any given day, but the main characters are those who unfortunately have to spend every day inside these walls. Some of them include:

(Those without names will soon have them)

DAN EVERS - approaching 40, good-looking but should take better care of himself. Loves alcohol, although it has contributed to many of his downfalls - divorce with wife, fired from his congressman position. He is highly skilled and perfect for the job as *ANI* director, but needs to turn things around fast. In a word, Jaded. Needs a major kick in the ass. Hopefully his new position will provide that.

BETTY BLANKS - Late 30s, singer-songwriter. Had a crossover folk hit in the early 2000s, and has basically been riding

that wave to bankruptcy ever since. Only steady gig is in the atrium at ANI.

TSA SECURITY AGENT - 40s, takes his job very seriously. The kind of guy who creates lame jingles to explain the rules and regulations of carry-on items. Really big and fat.

BARTENDER - 20s, female, working class, sexy. Has big dreams, wants to go to law school, but first she's just trying to pay her way through community college. And help pay her and her mother's rent. Prone to violent outbursts.

JANITOR - 60s, he's seen everything. Seriously. A very strange man. Either really wise or crazy, depending on the day.

And others to be further developed:

FAST FOOD CASHIER
GATE ATTENDANT
FREQUENT FLYER
ETC...

HOW THE SEASON WORKS

The first season will follow Dan Evers as he transitions from a once high-profile congressman and current unemployed to an airport director at Austin National International. After a Texas tycoon opens his private, brand new, state-of-the-art airport in Austin, the government-run ANI committee hires Dan to help turn the struggling airport into a destination that can compete with its new rival. Dan must handle the day-to-day issues that constantly surface in an airport, as well as fight to improve the facilities and infrastructure. It won't be easy, especially with Dan's past troubles lingering in the background. Despite this, he has the skill set to succeed, and was given the job as a bit of a favor by one of his old buddies, who currently serves on the committee.

For reference, here are some of the roles and responsibilities of an airport director, which can serve as possible episode ideas:

1. Point of contact for government agencies
2. Budget maintenance
3. Aircraft maintenance
4. Aviation Regulation compliance
5. Public relations

- a. Talk to television or newspaper outlets
 - b. Press conferences
 - c. Report weather delays, cancellations, crashes, violations of national security
6. Plan new developments
 7. Purchase equipment

We will also follow the other main characters and their stories. If there's a common theme, it's of people who hate working at an airport and would like to succeed in a setting outside of an airport. Season One will track their ups and downs, relationships, rivalries, and crushes.

HOW AN EPISODE WORKS

If there is anything I don't want this show to be, it's *Wings*. The hilarity that ensues on a day-to-day basis inside an airport, and the people that cause this, should be featured in each episode. Having said that, there will always be a main A-story, which will focus on the weekly issue at the airport, and how Dan handles it.

As B-stories, I see a series of vignettes that can operate outside of the larger plot. Sometimes they will be related thematically to the episode at large, but often I think they can function very much in the way *Portlandia's* skits function. Little slices that capture something either unique to the airport setting or to the people of Austin. These vignettes will be accompanied by Title Cards that name the skit or situation. I think this will help keep the structure from becoming limited, and will ultimately allow writers to write comedic sketches that aren't hamstrung by the main plot. It works well in *Portlandia* and I think it could work here as well.

TONE

Brooklyn Nine Nine, The Office, Parks and Rec, Portlandia.

Not afraid to be strange or silly.

PILOT IDEAS

On his first day as director, Dan has to navigate around the most dreaded two words in the Airport Lexicon: "Weather Delays."

Dan's first day as Airport Director turns into a nightmare when a terrorist threat endangers not only his job but also everyone in the airport.

Appendix B: Short Rough Outline

AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL

Written by

Jacob Farmer

OUTLINE

TEASER:

EXT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - MORNING

We can tell from the dark clouds that a major storm is brewing.

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - MORNING

We watch as a young and totally in love couple part ways. The woman is heading off to a new job, the man staying behind. Over tears they confirm their everlasting vows of love and commitment.

PULL BACK to reveal DAN EVERS, good-looking but hung-over, with a five-o'clock shadow, and getting closer and closer to the "downhill" side of adulthood. He's been listening to the whole convo.

The couple looks at him, offended and embarrassed, and Dan lays out the prognosis of their relationship, and it's pretty bleak.

Before the couple can respond, three MEN IN SUITS introduce themselves to Dan, and the four of them continue through the airport, where they bypass security and pass by...

(Unnamed characters will soon have names)

TSA SECURITY AGENT -- takes his job very seriously, creates songs and jingles to explain rules and regulations; very tall and large...

... And into a LARGE ATRIUM. To their right, a STAGE, and on it -

BETTY BLANKS, a singer-songwriter who had a big crossover hit in the early 2000s, and has been on a decline ever since.

Along the tour we walk by a BAR and see the BARTENDER -- MARIA DELGADO -- young, female, a wild-card who dreams of bigger and better things.

We make our way down a TERMINAL passing all the sights you might expect to find -- crying kids, Strange people, someone complaining about flight statuses. It looks hellish.

At the end of the terminal, the Men In Suits stop, and look at Dan. One of them says, "Welcome aboard, Director." Dan tries his best to smile through his fear and hangover.

ACT I:

INT. SECURITY CHECK - DAY

(I envision these skits being played by some of the main actors in the show, but dressed up in different attire, wigs, etc. Right now they are more scenarios than anything sufficiently planned out.)

SKIT: "THE CARRY-ON PART 1"

Synopsis: A would be PASSENGER becomes severely annoyed when the WOMAN in front of him keeps pulling out more and more items from her carry-on. Items in the baby stroller too, and out of every strange orifice you can think of. The passenger engages the woman to hurry up (he's running late), but to no avail. When the items become stranger and stranger, with no end in sight, the passenger attempts to run by security, and is tackled to the ground.

INT. DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dan is shown his new office by one of the Men In Suits. His name is LES, and it becomes clear that the two are friends. Through their convo we learn a bit about Dan's past -- former young hot-shot congressman, battled alcohol and a fair share of embarrassing scandals. We learn that Les vouched for Dan to get this job, both to get him on track, and because he is uniquely qualified to succeed. Still, the leash is short, and Dan will be watched closely on his first day.

INT. BAR - DAY

Dan is at the bar. Meets Betty and Maria. Dan recognizes Betty, brings up her old hit -- it's a sore subject. Dan tries to put some charm on Maria, but she recognizes him -- that sleazy ex-congressman. Not off to such a great start. Dan intros himself as the new Director. They respond: "Why the hell are you having a drink?" Good question.

INT. DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dan learns that a massive storm is heading directly towards Austin -- Weather Delays are expected, and many flights are on the verge of being delayed or cancelled.

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - DAY

TRAVELERS are already freaking about the weather delay. Dan locates one in particular who is crying. He tries to reassure her -- But it's the young woman from the teaser. She calls him a jerk and walks away, tears streaming down her face.

Whoops.

ACT II:

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - DAY

And it's becoming pandemonium inside the airport. Dan calls Les, tells him that a bunch of flights are being delayed or cancelled. Les tells him to use that old politician charm. "That's why you're here."

INT. GATE HELP DESK - DAY

SKIT: "STANDBY"

A WOMAN has to deal with a ridiculous maze of regulations, conditions, exceptions, and barriers to getting on another flight so she won't miss her meeting.

She goes toe-to-toe with the ATTENDANT, who is a mix or incompetent and asshole. Finally they agree to a possible standby situation, if the person scheduled to board doesn't show up. The woman counts down the minutes -- Success!...

Until a CASUAL BUSINESSDUDE walks up to board the plane.

Even though he's a couple seconds late, he is able to board.

INT. BAR - DAY

Dan goes back to the bar. Betty and Maria aren't thrilled about it. He wants help -- what should I do? He decides with the help of Maria that people love free drinks, and from Betty that people like to be distracted.

Through the P.A. System, Dan announces free drinks at the bar and a special concert with superstar Betty Blanks. Dan mentions her old hit as the selling point. Bad idea, Dan.

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - DAY

People rush to the bar for their drinks and watch as Betty tries to put on a show. Betty is upset, she'd rather be an unknown airport musician than have to rely on her old hit -- a song she doesn't even like.

INT. JUICE FIELD - DAY

SKIT: At the Juice Field stand in the airport, a seven-year-old granola kid and his hippie grandmother try to decide what special juice smoothie to order. Unfortunately, the young boy has an extensive list of bizarre allergies and specific taste preferences.

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - DAY

Dan runs into the Young Woman again. He tries to tell her that he only said what he said because he's been there before -- if anything, he's helping her (We learn pretty early that Dan has a very pessimistic view on relationships, maybe even people in general). She tells him not to worry, she just called her boyfriend and they are breaking up. "You were right." Now Dan really feels like a dick.

Meanwhile...

AT THE BAR

A line is stretching around the corner. Maria is super pissed.

AT THE STAGE

Betty is getting heckled by the drunk crowd, who ask her to play that one famous song. She refuses, and they heckle some more.

Dan's little idea has just made things worse.

ACT III:

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - DAY

Dan asks Betty for some help -- this place is a zoo, he can't keep it under control. Betty -- having just endured a nightmare of a concert -- really lays into Dan. Lays down his faults. "You're an asshole. You've ruined everyone's day here, and you probably couldn't help a single person if you tried."

Dan lets this sink in. Gets an idea...

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - DAY

Dan searches frantically for the Young Woman. Through the P.A. System, we learn that weather is starting to clear up, and flights may resume shortly.

Dan finds the Young Woman. He comes clean -- explains he's a jaded asshole and that he should know that not everyone is the same. What's important is that you try the best you can and don't let anyone try to persuade you otherwise. If it works, it works, if it doesn't, at least you tried.

Dan tells her to go home to her boyfriend and reconcile. The flight will be delayed for a while anyway.

She thanks him, turns to go, but then we find out the plane has just landed and the flight is scheduled to leave in 20 minutes. Dan tells her to go anyway -- he's got an idea.

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - LATER

Betty is carrying her guitar, on her way out of the airport. Along the way, she hears a commotion, sees Dan surrounded by angry passengers. Out of curiosity, she approaches...

Dan is being yelled at for delaying the flight himself. He's taking it in stride -- the man is used to shouldering scrutiny and blame from his old politician days.

In the distance, the Young Couple comes running up. She tells Dan that the Young Man has decided to come with her -- they are gonna give it a go. Dan smiles, and Betty is impressed.

Dan reopens the flight -- and the couple goes on their merry way, ready for whatever comes next.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

SKIT: "THE CARRY-ON PART 2"

SECURITY asks the Passenger to remove his belongings. Ironically, he has a strange amount of them himself. Hidden in very weird places, too. He tries to defend himself, but the objects keep coming, and some of them are rather incriminating.

The skit takes a weird turn when we learn that the passenger is actually wearing a mask and is somebody else (insert somebody famous for a cameo).

INT. AUSTIN NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL - DAY

Dan listens on the phone as Les congratulates him on a great first day. He steps...

OUTSIDE

and sees Betty. She asks him why he did that for the young couple. He says he took her advice and challenge -- He decided to help one person.

For a second she's impressed, but he reveals he's not sure if he meant what he said or not. Impressed no more.

Dan asks if she wants to get a drink. She says no, gets into her taxi.

As the taxi rolls away, Dan cracks a smile...

END EPISODE

Appendix C: Early Character Blurbs with Casting Ideas

Standby Cast List **The Baker's Dozen**

Dan Evers: (Will Forte/Jason Sedakis)

38 -- Assistant Airport Director; play by the rules, get rewarded mindset. But - rational, knows airport world in and out. And the people who make it tick. Has a crush on Betty Blanks.

Lisa Smith-Lopez: (Wanda Sykes)

52 - New Airport Director; former Congresswoman. Do whatever it takes attitude. Hired after scandal doomed her run for Senator. Last name is from her Ex-husband, refuses to change it for political reasons. Goal is to get back into the political world. Wants to cut budget. Understands the adage: "Perception is everything." Learned it the hard way. Wants to install new X-Ray Machine.

Andrea "Andy" Franklin:

Lisa's Right-hand woman - long speculated to be hired as a result of Lisa's interest in winning over the LGBT and Black community, simultaneously. Often put on disaster control. No nonsense. Speaks her mind.

Betty Blanks: (Rashida Jones)

Had a crossover folk hit in 2001. Has been riding that wave to bankruptcy ever since. Stubborn. A serious case of stage fright ruined her career.

Nick Chung: (Kevin Jeong)

TSA Security Officer. Thorn in Dan's (and everyone's) side. Takes abilities and responsibilities way too far. Wannabe police officer, couldn't cut it there, so became TSA Officer instead. Thinks Betty Blanks likes him. Loves his job.

Vanessa Delgado: (Stephanie Beatriz)

Bartender. Hard to get a read on. She's a Wild-card. Dreams of being a model. Superstitious.

Landon "Flash" Johnson: (Jay Pharoah)

Gate Attendant. Former college basketball player at UT (or equivalent university). Has been trying to court Vanessa for months.

Orange: (Aubrey Plaza)

Fast-food Employee at Hog's Breath BBQ Stand -- Hipster/vegan/green/anything-else you can categorize. Hates her job, and really anything. Has new obsession/ hatred from week to week.

Mohammed "Moe" Hamid: (Aziz Ansari)

Tries to go by Moe. Ultra-conservative. Excellent track record and pilot. Always gets a "random" screening. Always in a bad mood. Ancestors from India, but he's third-generation US Citizen.

Cam Cousins: (David Koechner)

Oil Tycoon and frequent flyer. Alcoholic. Good-natured. Politically incorrect.

Regina Williams:

Runs Air Traffic Control Tower. A true Texan. Ex-Marine. Prone to nervous outbreaks.

Mr. Stickley:

Janitor. Been working longer than anyone. Strange. Rumored to live in the airport.

Frank Gold:

Member of the Airport Commission. Political pushover.

Appendix D: Series Bible

Standby

A Comedy Series

Jacob Farmer

The Bible

August 2014

Table of Contents

THE MISSION3

OVERVIEW4

AUSTIN-BERGSTROM: IS THIS REALLY AN AIRPORT?5

LOCATIONS6

MEET THE CREW7

HOW THE SHOW WORKS11

SEASON ONE STORY ARCS13

EPISODE ONE13

EPISODE TWO13



The Mission

STANDBY will incorporate the best elements of modern comedies like 30 ROCK, THE OFFICE, and PARKS AND RECREATION, while putting its own fresh characters in a setting that is long overdue for a satisfying show: an airport. Add in the flavor of Austin, Texas, the unique town rapidly growing in both population and national appeal, and you have the perfect ingredients for a popular and well-liked series for television.

Overview

“It’s time to go to the airport!”

That simple statement is enough to conjure up quite the range of emotions: excitement, stress, trepidation, anxiety, heart pounding anticipation. A mixture “Oh Shits” and “Hell Yeahs” exploding in your mind at exactly the same time. We’ve probably said it to someone in a frantic rush, and heard it being yelled to us dozens of times.

And yet, for most of us, the airport is really just a means to an end; a necessary evil that must be endured in order to make that exciting new job interview, visit that brother, go on that long awaited honeymoon. It is sometimes hell, most times passable, and, if you’re lucky, even enjoyable (though it’s probably because you spent your layover at the bar, shame on you). Regardless, once you exit that plane, grab your luggage, complain to your driver about the toddler that *wouldn’t stop* kicking your seat, the airport is quickly out of your mind. The means has reached its end.

But what if the means had no end?

That is, what if the airport was in fact the destination?

What if you went to the airport every day because it was your job?

STANDBY is a thirty minute network-style comedy that explores that very thought. It offers access and insight into the very unique world that is an airport – the parts, the process, and the bureaucracy that keeps it all together. Most importantly, it is about the PEOPLE, those brave souls who choose to come to work at the same place where two million Americans go daily in hopes of flying away as quickly as possible.

Set at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in Austin, Texas, STANDBY will not only provide a humorous look into the daily shenanigans of an airport, but it will also use Austin’s unique location as its backdrop. In that sense, STANDBY will function first and foremost as an office-based comedy set in an airport and, secondly, as a microcosm of Austin itself, utilizing its rich culture and eccentric nature for added flavor. Not quite a love letter to the rapidly growing Texas city, but a tongue-in-cheek (and genuine) appreciation for the place that pledges to keep itself weird.

Welcome to the world of STANDBY. Enjoy the trip.

Austin-Bergstrom: Is This Really An Airport?

If you've ever been to Austin's airport, known as Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (or simply ABIA), you probably noticed a distinct feeling not present in most sterile and sprawling major hubs (think LAX or, god forbid, Newark Liberty). In the center of the Barbara Jordan Terminal, just past the TSA station, is Ray Benson's Roadhouse, a fully functional live music stage. Surrounding it is a picnic area with barbecue stands and a bar. Going left or right from there will take you to airport versions of many local Austin favorites, from Amy's Ice-Cream to Maudie's Tex Mex.

ABIA strives to make itself a genuine slice of the city, or "Austin's Front Door," and that's actually what you get: barbecue, Tex-Mex, live music, UT sports, local coffee, etc. Combine that with the people, from tattooed hipsters to ten-gallon hats, and you've got a strange and eclectic setting with which to build a show.



Locations

Here is a sample of locations (some real, others inspired by) that will be featured on STANDBY:

1) Inside Airport:

Ray Benson's Roadhouse (music venue)

Earl Campbell's Sports Bar

Hog's Breath BBQ Stand

TSA Security Stations

Various Gates, Waiting Areas

2) Also, STANDBY should take advantage of locations outside of ABIA, when necessary and when tied to the plot. For example:

Franklin's Barbecue

Barton Springs

Food Trucks

South Congress

Texas State Capitol

Music Festivals (Austin City Limits, Fun Fun Fun Fest)

Meet the Crew

DAN EVERS – Assistant Director, and hero of the show

Dan Evers is a true Austinite, born and bred. He cherishes his morning breakfast tacos, loves supporting his neighborhood co-op, and still considers himself keen on the local music scene. His father was a well-respected session guitarist in the area, so naturally he grew up listening to local heroes like Stevie Ray Vaughn and Willie Nelson. He even thought of following in his father's footsteps, but it was a little science fair project in fifth grade that sealed his professional fate forever. Dan made a rocket-powered Boeing 777 replica. He didn't win (the Boeing barely made it off the ground), but from that point on Dan had one passion: airplanes. After making his way through the Department of Transportation and into ABIA, Dan's hard work paid off when he was appointed Assistant Director at the airport. It's a title he's had for three years, and since the current Director just passed away, Dan can only assume he's about to have his lifelong dream realized...

Dan's love life never really hit the "mature" stage. He's had his fair share of relationships, but nothing that culminated with him getting down on one knee. He'd probably blame it on his love for work, or his parents' rocky breakup, and this is partially true. Still, Dan needs to learn to open up a little more in the emotional department. He is obviously attracted to his longtime friend Betty Blanks, but will he ever get the guts to just go for it?

LISA SMITH-LOPEZ – Director, and unlikely hero in her own right

Some call her the Viper of Capitol Hill. Others, the Catholic Chameleon. One thing is certain; Forty-five-year-old Lisa Smith-Lopez is a political powerhouse. Raised outside of Dallas, young Lisa grew up on meat and potatoes and the mentality that the world was hers for the taking. Lisa was the kind of girl who got chosen before boys during pickup football games, and wasn't afraid to lower her shoulder. Don't be fooled though, she was also quite the beauty, as her high school homecoming queen pictures can attest. In college, she used this unique blend of charm and strength to move up the ranks of student government. After graduating, her professional career skyrocketed. In just a few short years she went from state representative to a member of U.S. Congress. Some bitter good ol' boys (and girls) believed her ascension was, in part, due to alleged promiscuity inside the capitol walls, but Lisa would be the first to explain, "you can only screw your way to the middle. After that it's all skill and God's grace." Besides, as soon as she arrived in Congress, Lisa met Texas Senator Rick Lopez, and before long the country's most formidable political duo was formed. Marriage followed, and Lisa was quickly groomed for a Senate run. Total domination was finally within her grasp...

And then she caught Lopez with his pants down (and someone else on the receiving end). Naturally, Lisa would respond, not with a divorce, but by engaging in her own torrid affair. Unfortunately, this would be caught on camera (whips, cocaine, and all), and just like that Lisa's dreams had burst into flames. A censure immediately followed. Senate run down the drain...

But maybe there's a silver lining. The Director at ABIA just passed away. A job that her political sway would easily allow her to attain. It could be a way to lay low, to rebuild her image, and stay out of the headlines. It only means going to Austin, a place that, to her, spits in the face of everything that is great about Texas. And then there's Dan Evers, the man who thinks the job is his.

BETTY BLANKS – Airport Musician

Betty burst onto the scene with a crossover folk hit at the end of the millennium, and seemed destined for stardom. A few stints at the Lilith Fair festival helped to assure her rise as one of the country's best new songwriters. And then something strange happened. Betty stopped touring, stopped making appearances on talk shows. Stopped recording albums. She went home, back to Austin, and lived a quiet life outside of the press. In truth, Betty had been turned off by all of the manufactured marketing that her new position dictated. She just wanted to make music, not stare at Jay Leno's chin for an hour. Eventually, that's exactly what she did, when she accepted a steady job as the featured act of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Her old friend, Dan, had offered the job to her, and it seemed like the perfect fit. These days, most people that walk by her stage don't know her as the former star, but the cute woman who plays at the airport. And that's just fine with Betty.

Betty has known Dan since grade school. They've had moments here and there, but nothing really ever became of it. Betty would probably give Dan a shot if he asked, but at this point she is totally content with being his friend. She views herself as a sister to him.

ANDY FRANKLIN – Lisa's Assistant

Meet Lisa's assistant and former intern, Andy Franklin. He's young (twenty-six), gorgeous, and dumb as rocks. Oh, and remember that affair that Lisa had to get back at her hubby? Yep, that's this guy. So why is he still around? Hard to say. Some think it's because he has the inside dirt on Lisa, and is using it to keep his position. Others wonder if Lisa is holding on to him to make it appear like this was more than just a vengeful affair, perhaps even love. Whatever the case, Andy remains by her side as she transitions to making the move into Austin.

LANDON “FLASH” JOHNSON – Delta Gate Attendant

Flash used to be a star point guard at the University of Houston. Now, he’s the new gate attendant for Delta. Quite the transition. It’s his first day on the job, and he’s nervous as hell. This is nothing like the court, where he could easily dissect each situation, splitting the defense with a perfect pass into the paint, or a quick drive to the lane. No, things at ABIA are unpredictable, and strange as hell. It’s a whole new world for him, and one he needs to learn fast.

NICK CHUNG – TSA Officer

TSA Officer. Of the worst kind. The supreme abuser of an already nebulous power, Officer Chung is the kind of guy who makes annoying jingles about unacceptable carryon items. Chung’s first dream was to be a police officer. When that didn’t pan out, he turned to the next best “badge,” the TSA. One thing is sure, though, he loves his job. Whether it’s your grandma or your two-year-old, Chung won’t let anyone slide. So open up that bottle of milk, kid, because there could be an act of terrorism inside.

VANESSA DELGADO – Bartender

Vanessa is the bartender at Earl Campbell’s Sports Bar. She dreams of becoming a model, but right now she’s just trying to pay her way through community college. Sexy, but hard to read, Vanessa will soon attract the eyes of the young Flash.

MOHAMMED “MOE” HAMID – Pilot

Moe (please don’t call him Mohammed, he hates it) Hamid is as American as they come. Raised in Louisiana, Moe grew up helping his dad with the shrimping business. On Sundays, the Hamid family would attend their neighborhood Baptist Church. Now, Moe is a pilot for American Airlines. A veteran of seventeen years, Moe has an excellent track record. He is, however, prone to nervous outbursts, which he blames on his new baby, he and his wife’s third.

ORANGE – BBQ Stand Employee

Orange (we don’t know her last name, she wouldn’t say) is the kind of hipster who finds a new thing to hate each week. It gets kind of confusing, especially when she goes from staunch veganism to the Paleo diet in the blink of an eye. Orange works at the Hog’s Breath BBQ Stand by the Roadhouse Stage. She used to date Stevie, the guy at The Stuck Pig next door, but then he got “creepy.” So it goes...

FRANK GOLD – ABIA Council Member

Frank Gold is one of the main council members at ABIA. His job duties include hiring the new president, and being a liaison between the airport and the government. In short, he is a political pushover, and this plays perfectly into Lisa's hands.

CAM COUSINS – Frequent Flyer

Frequent flyer, frequent drunk. Well-connected tycoon, and a fun-natured good ol' boy.

REGINA WILLIAMS – Air Traffic Control

Runs "The Tower." Ex-Marine. Definitely a few loose screws.

MR. STICKLEY -- Janitor

Been working at ABIA longer than anyone. Strange guy. Rumored to live in the airport. Either really wise or just plain crazy, depending on the day.

How The Show Works

DISCLAIMER: STANDBY IS NOT WINGS. Nor does it want to be. This is not a knock on WINGS, or any 90s sitcom for that matter. However, what WINGS didn't capitalize on is exactly what STANDBY intends to. The unpredictability, the stress, the mayhem, the melting pot, the general strangeness that is an airport. Weather delays, bomb threats, equipment malfunctions, incompetence (on all sides), and on and on and on. If you've seen it happen, it should show up on STANDBY. That woman who acted like her baby died because she missed a flight. It will be on STANDBY. The famous person who created a mob because he walked through the terminal. On STANDBY. The horror stories your flight attendant wife told you over TV Dinners. On STANDBY. An airport is a never ending well of material, and STANDBY desires to capitalize on it.

Having said all that, the show is, first and foremost, about the CHARACTERS. People we can empathize with, even if we can't always relate to them. STANDBY owes to shows like PARKS AND REC, and 30 ROCK. It would not be possible without these trailblazers, and yet an office-based comedy set in an airport now feels like a no brainer.

How the Season Works:

STANDBY will follow its cast of characters as they navigate through the world of ABIA, and around each other. Dan Evers is our main focal point. He is the man whose career was put on hold (or standby, if you will), and we will track him as he struggles with working for his new boss, Lisa, while also gunning for another shot at Director. Dan's professional goal is to become Director, and this should always be on his mind.

Our secondary (but still major) focal point will be Lisa, whose professional ascent was also put on standby. Lisa was great as a political personality, but now she is in unknown territory. How do her skills translate, if at all, to the world of ABIA? How will she mesh with Dan, an Austin local who doesn't quite drink her dominating cup of tea? And how can she position herself for another run at Senate?

These two characters should be in opposition during much of the first season. They will be antitheses, but will learn to come together when it matters most. They will even complement each other, utilizing each other's strengths.

We will also track the relationships of each character. Will Dan go for Betty? Is Betty even interested? And what about Lisa? Is she still with her assistant Andy? And is there some odd sexual tension brewing between her and Dan? How does Betty feel about this? Or Andy?

This doesn't even include the secondary characters. Many conflicts to work with.

How an Episode Works:

Of course, STANDBY is a thirty-minute comedy designed for TV, and each story should provide a sense of closure. To that end, each episode of STANDBY will usually take place over the course of a single day, beginning with a problem or issue that must be solved before that day's end. And since we are in ABIA, which consists of just one terminal, issues will be manageable and easy to wrap your head around. This will allow for a few surprises and twists, but mainly the opportunity for satisfying situational comedy.

A typical episode of STANDBY will quickly establish the issue at hand (an XRAY malfunction, a Pop Star's arrival) and then will unfold as Dan and Lisa take the necessary steps to solve the problem, albeit with more than one mishap along the way.

B Stories will concern our minor characters, and may be related to the main A Story. If, for example, there is a security issue, Officer Chung will be featured. Or, if a famous Country Legend rolls into town, it would make sense for Betty to be in the mix.

B (and/or C) Stories may often have their own independent storyline, and can instead be connected to the theme of the episode.

In summary, each episode will bring about a conflict and then end with some sort of resolution, but the ongoing conflict and desires of Dan, Lisa, and the others will be intertwined throughout the entire series. In the same way that THE OFFICE used the relationship of Pam and Jim to keep viewers invested, STANDBY will use the relationships and goals of Dan and Co to propel the series.

Season One Story Arcs

The first season of STANDBY will answer these questions:

- 1) How will Dan cope with being passed over for Director at ABIA? Will he choose to co-exist with Lisa, and will they be able to keep the airport from imploding?
- 2) Will Lisa be able to transition from political powerhouse to Airport Director? Will her skills translate? Or will her familiar methods create more problems than solutions?
- 3) What happens with Dan and Betty? Will Dan recognize that he does in fact have feelings for her? And does the arrival of Lisa provide an unexpected spark or complication in the dynamic?
- 4) With the surprising hire of Lisa Smith-Lopez as Airport Director, a woman with no prior experience in airports, ABIA has come under scrutiny from the FAA. With Big Brother now watching over their shoulders, can Dan and Lisa operate successfully as a team, or will they self-destruct?

EPISODE 101: PILOT

Dan Evers has been waiting for this moment his entire life: he is about to be named the new director at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. But when former Congresswoman Lisa Smith-Lopez has her name announced instead, will Dan stick around, or choose to leave his passion behind? And what is a congresswoman doing running an airport anyway?

EPISODE 102: THE FALLOUT

Dan and Lisa survived their first day working together, but now they have someone watching over their shoulders, the FAA. News of Lisa's bizarre sex scandal has created quite the ruckus, and now the FAA wants to make sure her hire is legitimate. With "Big Brother" looking on, Dan and Lisa must figure out how to handle the arrival of the country's biggest pop superstar, Adam Levine, who just so happened to have a fling with Betty back in the day.

Appendix E: A Comparison of Two Teasers

STANDBY

"Pilot"

Written by
Jacob Farmer

ROUGH DRAFT

©2014 Jacob Farmer

STANDBY

Episode I: Pilot

FADE IN ON:

The HORRIFIED FACE of a middle-aged CHINESE WOMAN, screaming in agony from what could only be the death of her lone child.

Two MEN IN SUITS stand at either side, trying desperately but failing to control her primordial screams of loss. She falls to her knees, hands covering her face.

PULL BACK to reveal: No wake, no funeral procession. Just ROWS of bored PEOPLE. Some watching; others showing zero interest, as they work on LAPTOPS or console CRYING BABIES.

LANDON "FLASH" JOHNSON [20s, former college basketball player] jogs over to the woman. He's wearing the familiar uniform and "wings" of a Delta GATE ATTENDANT.

FLASH

Ma'am, you're going to have to stop screaming now -- you're scaring the children...

The Woman barks out something in Chinese, as the two SUITS slink away from the scene, grateful to be relieved.

DAN EVERS [38, good-looking in a casual way] steps next to Landon. He's smart and likable, mainly because he's virtually harmless. The kind of guy who never cusses.

DAN

Landon, what's the problem?

FLASH

She missed her flight.

DAN

Again?

Landon nods.

DAN (CONT'D)

Put her on standby -- and hold her hand next time if you have to.

Landon makes a "what am I gonna get out of this?" face.

DAN (CONT'D)
You still have a thing for Vanessa,
right?

FLASH
You know about that?

DAN
Everyone knows. I'll put in a good
word, but you need to talk to her.

Landon brightens up, then:

FLASH
Hey, today's your big day, isn't
it? Mr. Director.

Dan puts two thumbs up, walks away.

As he walks, the familiar sights of an AIRPORT become clear
around him -- ROLLING LUGGAGE, BEEPING CARTS, PILOTS, etc.

INT. TALLACHEY REGIONAL AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Dan walks through a sizable food court area, past the -

HOG'S BREATH BBQ STAND

and its Hipster employee, ORANGE [20s, hates everything].

DAN
Nice nose-ring Orange. How's the
brisket this morning?

ORANGE
I don't eat animal meat.

DAN
Isn't meat, by definition, the
flesh of an animal?

ORANGE
Whatever.

He gives a friendly smile, continues on.

INT. AIR LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Dan enters, waves to the bartender VANESSA DELGADO [20s, sexy but ice-cold]. She's already serving the early birds.

DAN
Morning, Vanessa.

Dan puts his hand on the back of a man in a ten-gallon hat.

DAN (CONT'D)
Go easy on this guy, will ya? It's only nine.

CAM COUSINS [40s, Texas drawl] turns around. A well-connected tycoon, Cam always has his finger on the pulse.

CAM
And it's Happy Hour in Rome.

DAN
Can't beat that logic... Although I didn't know you had oil buddies in Rome.

CAM
I don't.
(whispers)
Don't tell anybody. Especially my ex-wife.

DAN
Maria?

CAM
No, you can tell her. Just don't tell Susan. She hates Italians.

DAN
Secret's safe with me.
(to Vanessa)
What do you think about Flash?

VANESSA
The Delta attendant? Not interested.

DAN
I hear he has a mean jump shot...

Dan looks down, pulls out his CELL PHONE, answers it.

DAN (CONT'D)

Frank -- Doing just fine. Yes...
Yes, I did get a good night's
sleep. I'll be ready. Okay.

He hangs up the phone, can't hide the huge smile on his face.

VANESSA

When's the announcement?

DAN

Thirty minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

FRANK GOLD [50s] hangs up his CELL PHONE, looks at the woman in front of him. Her name is LISA SMITH-LOPEZ [early 50s, white, strong demeanor]. She doesn't look happy to be there.

LISA

Well...?

FRANK

He has no idea.

ROLL MAIN CREDITS: ESTABLISHING SHOTS of TALLACHEY REGIONAL AIRPORT. STOCK IMAGES of PLANES, and THE CAST at their jobs.

STANDBY

"Pilot"

Written by
Jacob Farmer

FIRST DRAFT

STANDBY

Episode I: Pilot

FADE IN ON:

DAN EVERS (38), SPRINTING down a hallway. A frantic run that would make anyone nervous about its final destination.

He jukes by A WOMAN, spins around two TEENAGERS. Well, almost. He clips one of them in the back of the knee.

Dan trips, stumbles, regains his balance.

TEENAGER

Watch out, ass clown!

He charges on. Sweat dripping out of every pore. Life or death determination. And something else, too. PASSION.

CUT TO:

THE HORRIFIED FACE

Of a middle-aged CHINESE WOMAN, in agony from what could only be the death of her lone child.

Two MEN IN SUITS stand at either side, trying desperately but failing to control her primordial screams of loss. She falls to her knees, hands covering her face.

FROM THE DISTANCE

Dan appears, a heavenly knight in shining armor. He takes off for the final dash. This is what heroes are made of...

Dan makes it to the woman, reaches down, hands out to comfort her. She turns to him; her savior...

SUDDENLY Dan's expression changes, like he's seen this before. There is genuine disappointment on his face.

That's because Dan has seen this before.

PULL BACK to reveal: No funeral, no wake, no dead child. Just ROWS of bored PEOPLE. Some watching; others showing zero interest, as they work on LAPTOPS or console CRYING BABIES.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to AUSTIN-BERGSTROM INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. Home of the BARBARA JORDAN TERMINAL.

Dan stands there, wipes sweat from his face. No longer the hero we thought he was just seconds ago.

The Chinese woman, WANDA, barks out something in Mandarin, as the two MEN IN SUITS slink away, grateful to be relieved.

LANDON "FLASH" JOHNSON [20s] jogs over. Still with the same body from his college basketball days, but now he's wearing the familiar uniform and "wings" of a Delta GATE ATTENDANT.

FLASH
(to Dan, nervously)
She missed her flight.

Dan shakes his head at Wanda.

DAN
Really Wanda? That's the second time this month.

Wanda rolls around the ground, practically convulsing.

DAN (CONT'D)
You're scaring the children.

WANDA
[More Mandarin profanity]

FLASH
I already put her on Standby.

DAN
(to Flash)
First day, right?
(off Flash's cautious nod)
How do you like Austin International?

FLASH
It's... well -- Is it always this strange?

DAN
You'll get used to it.

FLASH
I sure hope so. I'm from Houston.

Dan grins proudly.

DAN
Who knows? Maybe one day, after
you've cut your teeth and paid your
dues, the aviation gods will smile
upon you as they have for me.

It's only now that Flash realizes whom he's talking to.

FLASH
(embarrassed)
Of course. Mr. Evers. When's the
announcement?

DAN
Thirty minutes. And call me Dan.

Flash looks at Dan, holding something in.

DAN (CONT'D)
What?

FLASH
You might want to change your
shirt. Massive pit stains.

Dan notices the stains. Puts his arms tight to his sides.

FLASH (CONT'D)
You also have puddles under the
boob.
(admiring)
Kinda looks like a Boeing jet.

Dan folds his arms across his chest. Then:

DAN
Make sure she makes the next
flight.

FLASH
Yes sir. And congratulations,
Director!

As Dan walks away, the familiar sights of an AIRPORT become
clear around him -- ROLLING LUGGAGE, BEEPING CARTS,
PILOTS...

INT. PRIVATE JET - DAY

FRANK GOLD [50s, ultimate political pushover] looks at the WOMAN across from him. Her name is LISA SMITH-LOPEZ [early 50s, black, a hint of sexiness under a stern lip]. She doesn't look happy to be there.

LISA
Is this really the best idea we have?

FRANK
It's either ABIA or the state lottery which, given your campaign history, wouldn't look good either.

Lisa sighs -- there's no turning back now. She turns to ANDY FRANKLIN, her white, female, and lesbian assistant. (This is open knowledge and not a coincidence; Lisa's sole concern is gaining popularity from every demographic.)

LISA
How many minutes until we hit the shit storm?

ANDY
News outlets are going public within the hour.

Lisa looks out her window.

LISA
I'm talking about Austin.

ANDY
(checking her watch)
Ten minutes.

LISA
Breakfast tacos and assholes. That's what we're walking into, folks. An indiscernible, bearded mix of breakfast tacos and assholes.

ANDY
(excited)
And pedi-cabs. I mean, what a gimmick, right?

Lisa doesn't laugh. Instead looks at Frank.

LISA
Does Dan know what's coming?

FRANK
He has no idea.

LISA
Good. If I'm gonna screw a man, I
prefer if it's from behind.
(beat)
Yes I know that sounds rapey.

ANDY
Sneak attack.

ROLL MAIN CREDITS: ESTABLISHING SHOTS of AUSTIN-BERGSTROM
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. STOCK IMAGES of PLANES. The CAST at
their jobs. And then iconic city sights. FRANKLIN'S
BARBECUE. FOOD TRUCKS. The STATE CAPITOL. SOCO BRIDGE.
BICYCLES. HIPSTERS, SIXTH STREET, all crescendoing into an
undeniable orgy of awesome. Austin.

Bibliography

“Give Me a Ring Sometime.” *Cheers*. NBC, 1982. Television.

“Pilot.” *30 Rock*. NBC, 2006. Television.

Pulp Fiction. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. Miramax Films, 1994. Film.