

JEN

Look, if something's too easy, it's no longer worthwhile or special. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it and who wants to do something that everyone else is doing? You only live once—be original.

Jen and the girl look at one another for a moment.

JEN (CON'T)

Ok. Writing is like dating—success is hard but you won't succeed unless you try. 98% of the time the date's a dud, but there's always that two percent chance you'll meet someone worthwhile and hit it off. Or, in this case, sell your script.


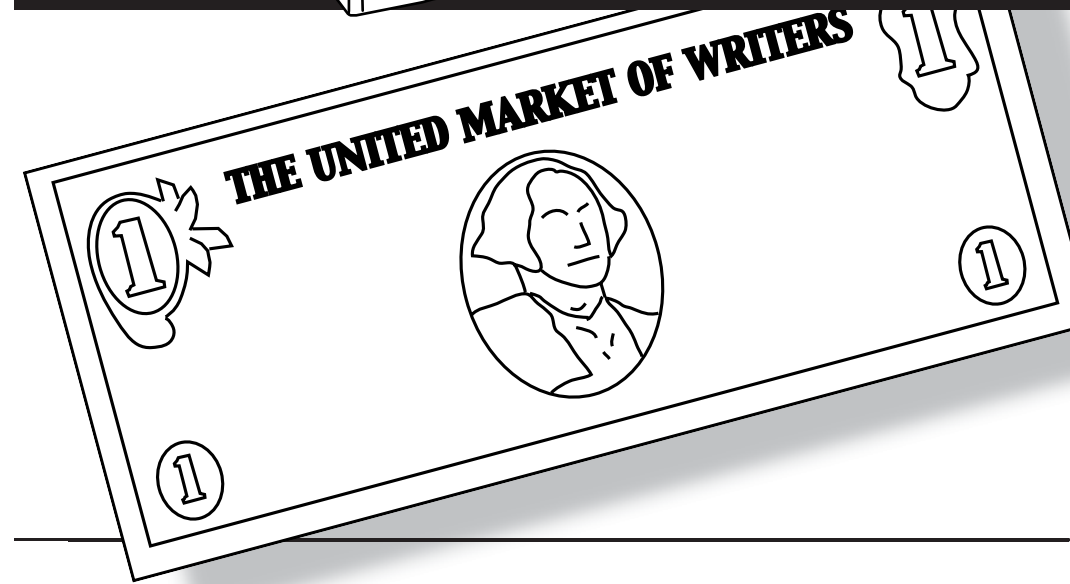
The girl looks puzzled.

JEN (CON'T)

You'll understand when you're older. So you want to be a screenwriter, huh? Want some advice? Make sure you buy enough stamps and always hit spell check. (Beat) More importantly, do you like Woody Allen movies?

FADE TO BLACK

# TONER

## Confessions of an 11-year-old Screenwriter

( A SHORT SCREENPLAY BY JEN JOHANS )

# Confessions of an 11-year-old Screenwriter

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ADULT JEN (V.O.)

A few weeks later that summer, I received correspondence from “Coach.” This time, the response was completely different. I’d received my very first fan letter and the writer was none other than TV and film writer/director/producer Barry Kemp. He said that he’d enjoyed the script I’d submitted and added that I’d beaten him to an early start writing—he’d begun his career at seventeen. He was amazingly kind, encouraging and said he was impressed enough that he hoped I would contact him again when I was older, though I’ve never had the guts—deep down I still feel like that eleven year-old writer.

INT. JEN’S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Jen places her worn copies of Syd Field’s “Screenplay” and “The Writer’s Market” on her bookshelf and straightens up her desk.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

I appreciated his advice and decided to keep working on my writing, experimenting with other genres and give my sitcom writing career a rest until I was a bit older.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM- NIGHT

23 year-old Jen sits at her small desk and types. Near her desk is a large oak bookshelf, housing numerous writer’s reference guides and film encyclopedias. Above it is a framed Scholastic Art and Writing Awards certificate for the “Silver Award” in dramatic screen writing, earned when she was 15. She switches on the lamp to see better as she writes.

CU of the computer screen as she begins an essay on “Antonia’s Line.”

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

Film has always been the driving force in my life because it got me interested in writing and helped me become the person I am today. I still write diligently and have worked in all genres but film criticism and essays have always been a passion of mine. I would love to be a film critic someday.

FADE IN:

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM- DAY

The room is silent save for the small voice of a red-headed GIRL at the front of the room, holding a piece of paper and shaking like a leaf. The entire CLASS OF STUDENTS strains to hear, leaning forward in their chairs that have been carefully arranged in a large horseshoe shape, as the girl stares at her shoes and mumbles.

Directly behind the girl hangs a banner on the blackboard reading, “CAREER DAY” in large blue letters.

Next to the board, sits MR. GREEN, the stressed-out teacher, trying to hold a fake smile as he watches the girl.

GIRL

And then I could wash hair and cut hair and that’s what I’d do if I worked as a beautician.

Mr. Green leads the group in applause as the girl runs to her seat, dropping her piece of paper on the ground.

The BOY to her right gets up and goes to the front of the room.

BOY

I want to be a fireman because I like fires and then I could learn how to set them and put them out without getting in trouble and you get to slide down the pole and run to

ADULT JEN (V.O.) (CON'T)

Now I just needed a cover letter. My mom had recommended a good cover letter and resume writing book from the library but it was too dull. I needed to stand out, and at this point, I got a little impatient.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM- DAY- CONTINUOUS

CU of the printer as the ink on the letter dries. The letter reads, "Dear Mr. Larry David and Mr. Jerry Seinfeld. Hi, I'm eleven and I love your show. I wrote this script. Please read it."

EXT. JOHANS HOME- MORNING

Jen puts the manila envelope in the mailbox and runs down the street towards the school bus.

EXT. STREET- AFTERNOON

Jen steps off the bus and runs down the street to the waiting mailbox but finds it empty.

EXT. STREET- AFTERNOON

Insert Card: The Next Afternoon

Jen steps off the bus again and runs down the street. The mailbox is once again empty.

INT. MAILBOX- AFTERNOON

Insert Card: The Afternoon After That

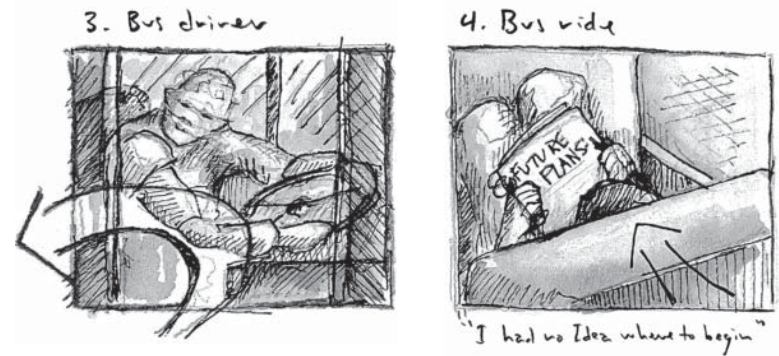
The metal door on the mailbox opens and JEN'S face appears as her expression brightens for a moment, and then sours.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM- DAY

Jen sits at her computer and on the screen types, "COACH."

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

I decided to stop running to the mailbox everyday. I had to be realistic. I knew it would take awhile. I decided to try writing a few of my other favorite shows like "Coach," "Full House," and "Saturday Night Live."



The students in the classroom look confused as the teacher frowns and scratches his chin.

MR. GREEN

I'm afraid you misunderstood. Woody Allen is a person. What do you want to be when you grow up?

JEN

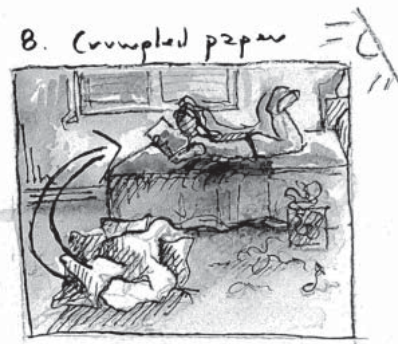
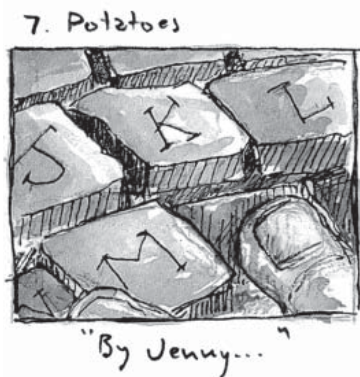
A staff writer on "Seinfeld."

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

It was a strange goal for an eleven year-old from Minnesota but then again, I'd always been a strange kid. In 1992, most kids my age were getting into Pearl Jam, skateboarding and Sonic The Hedgehog. I liked neurotic East Coast Jewish comedians.

INT. SCHOOL BUS- DAY

The bus is filled to its capacity as the DRIVER blares classic Eric Clapton ROCK from scratchy speakers near the front. A group of BOYS play keep-away with a younger child's backpack. Nearby, three GIRLS sit in a seat gossiping and pointing at the boys. Further back sits Jen, alone in one of the enormous, ripped, tacky green seats. She opens up her bag and pulls out a Lisa Frank trapper keeper, then fishes inside for a notebook and pen. CU of the notebook as she opens it up and writes "FUTURE PLANS" in big letters across the top. She taps the pen on the page twice and stares off into space.



with glasses and a San Francisco Giants t-shirt reads over her script. It's a windy day and Jen zips up her jacket.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

I wrote a few drafts, and then I showed it to Paul, my best friend, who knew Seinfeld better than anyone I'd ever met. Paul was my test audience.

Paul sets down the script and Jen stops swinging.

JEN

Well?

PAUL

Hilarious. The dialogue sounds like stuff they would actually say.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

That was good enough for me.

INT. HARDWARE STORE- DAY

Jen watches her dad compare prices of screwdrivers and hammers. He picks up the same screwdriver twice and sets it back down. Bored, Jen, looks at her watch.

JEN

I'll be right back.

Jen opens up her Esprit bag and begins to sweep the books off the shelf and into it.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

Next, I put some frequent flyer miles on my library card by checking out the entire screen writing section. I needed to teach myself how to write a professional looking script.

INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

Jen sits on a couch taking notes as she watches "I Love Lucy." In front of the TV sit TWO SMALL CHILDREN, glued to the screen and laughing hysterically. The little boy laughs louder and then his younger sister looks at him adoringly and laughs along to show she's hip enough to get the joke.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

It beat the hell out of fractions. My New Alma mater was Nick at Night. TV time became research time and I put the skills I thought I'd never need from biology class to good use. My laboratory was my living room. Friends, family and the kids I baby-sat became test audiences. I studied when they laughed and why they laughed to try and find the secrets of comedy.

Jen watches the screen to see the loaf of bread Lucy was making turn into a disaster.

INT. JOHANS KITCHEN- NIGHT

We see Jen sitting on one side of the dinner table opposite her mom. At the two ends of the table sit her DAD and 14 year-old BROTHER. Her brother is still wearing his karate uniform from practice. The family starts chatting indistinctly as they pass food along to each other and begin dishing it up on their plates.

Jen's brother hands her a bowl of mashed potatoes and her face brightens.

JEN

Potatoes!

She gets up from her chair and runs out of the kitchen.