

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

I decided to use an idea from an old “I Love Lucy” episode as the basis for my “Seinfeld” script and mix a little bit of Mary Richards’s horrible dinner party experiences from “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” into the mix. It was stealing, but Shakespeare did it too.

The trick for “Seinfeld” was figuring out a way to make it fresh and interesting enough to fill 20-30 blank pages of daunting, white computer paper.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS

Jen sits at her old, small Macintosh computer and begins typing.

CU of computer screen as the keys CLICK and Jen writes, “Seinfeld Episode One: Potatoes.”

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

Potatoes.

In smaller letters below the title, she writes “by Jenny” then shakes her head and changes it to “Jen” and then goes with “Jennifer Johans.”

ADULT JEN (V.O.) (CON’T)

In the first episode I wrote, Jerry decides to invite everyone over for dinner to watch an interview he just did on TV promoting his idea for “the show about nothing.”

There’s a BZZ sound as Jen stops typing and starts swatting at a mosquito flying in the room. She gets out of her chair to try and capture it but it’s no use.

JEN

I hate bugs.

She returns to her seat and resumes typing.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

While planning everything out, Kramer mentions he was having a problem with bugs in his apartment but volunteers to make mashed potatoes. Then Kramer remembers that he doesn’t know how to cook. He borrows a box of Instant Potatoes from Jerry, takes it to his place and starts mashing.

Jen laughs aloud as she types.

ADULT JEN (V.O.) (CON’T)

The potatoes turn out to be good, everyone compliments Kramer, at which point Kramer says “the bugs” (in his apartment) “liked them too.” Everyone spits out their food in a big potato spit take. Juvenile, yes, but the jokes worked. The plot didn’t, but I was young enough not to care. I was addicted to laughter and assumed that the more laughs I could fit into thirty pages the better.

Jen scrolls her mouse up to save.

ADULT JEN (V.O.) (CON’T)

Kramer was my favorite, the master of physical comedy. Tall, clumsy, awkward, loyal, lazily ambitious, Kramer was the “Where’s Waldo” of the group. The dreamer. The one who you couldn’t quite imagine the others actually being friends with. The outsider. The one who spoke to me as a precocious eleven year-old aspiring screenwriter.

Jen scrolls her mouse up to print and her dot-matrix printer WHIRS loudly as the pages slowly start to appear.

INT. JEN’S BEDROOM- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS

Jen sits on her bed and goes over her work with a red pen. There are pages crumpled up in balls tossed casually on the floor. Her forehead is crinkled and she is determined.

EXT. JOHANS BACKYARD- DAY

Jen sits on a swing and watches nervously as PAUL, a 15 year-old blonde boy

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

I had no idea where to begin.

INT. BOOKSTORE- NIGHT

Jen waits in a long line of patrons buying paperbacks and a WOMAN walks by with a stack of Sue Grafton novels. Jen follows.

JEN

Excuse me. How do I be a screenwriter?

EXT. BOOKSTORE- NIGHT

We see Jen leave the store with two full shopping bags.

INT. JEN'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Jen flips on the lights and pushes play on the stereo. Loud early 90's pop music comes BLARING from the speakers as she goes to her bed and puts the few pennies she has left back in her piggy bank. She sets the bank on the night stand and sits at her desk, pulling open the shopping bags.

She opens up "The Writer's Market" and begins flipping through it.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

A bible for writers with publishers as gods and agents as saints— "The Writer's Market" was just the book I needed.

Jen reaches in the other bag to take out Syd Field's Screenplay." Realizing she'll need her full concentration, she switches off the music and returns to her seat with the books. She grabs "The Writer's Market" again and starts to read.

INT. LIBRARY- DAY

Jen's MOM, an attractive brunette woman with glasses, pushes a cart of books and leads Jen to the nonfiction section of the library. She points out the shelf labeled "writing" out to Jen.

JEN

Thanks, mom.

Jen runs out of the aisle.

EXT. MINI MALL- DAY- CONTINUOUS

We see Jen run out of the hardware store and into the post office next door.

INT. POST OFFICE-DAY- CONTINUOUS

A few EMPLOYEES watch curiously as Jen selects a pack of huge manila envelopes and goes to the front counter.

JEN

I'd like a book of stamps, please.

The clerk produces a book of stamps and rings up the items.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

I had no idea where to send it. I called the local network affiliates to beg for an address.

INT. JOHANS KITCHEN- DAY

Jen cradles a phone between her shoulder and ear and sits at the kitchen table, watching snow fall out the window.

JEN

What do I want to send Jerry Seinfeld?

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

They were hesitant, to say the least.

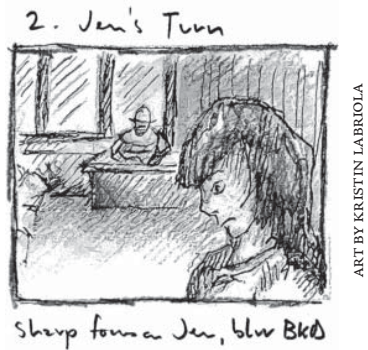
JEN

Um, I have some stuff. (Beat) A letter. (Beat) Yeah, I'm a fan. I'd like to get his autograph.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

Okay, so I lied.

Jen writes down an address on the envelope and stuffs the script inside. She hangs up the phone.



ART BY KRISTIN LABRIOLA

the truck and that's awesome.

MR. GREEN

Anything else?

BOY

You get to drive real fast

The boy shrugs his shoulders.

BOY (CON'T)

That's about it.

Again, Mr. Green is the first one to clap LOUDLY and the first one to stop. He looks down at his clipboard.

MR. GREEN

All right, who's next? Jen Johans, you're up.

JEN JOHANS gets out of her seat and goes to the front of the room. She is very tall for her age, skinny, with brown hair and it is apparent that she is slightly clumsy and a bit self-conscious. As she stands, she covers the bottom half of the Career Day banner and waits for the room to quiet down.

MR. GREEN (CON'T)

And how about you?

JEN

I want to be Woody Allen.

EXT. JOHANS HOME- DAY

Jen puts three manila envelopes into her mailbox and runs down the street in the snow towards the bus.

EXT. JOHANS HOME- DAY

The weather has changed and time has passed—it's summer and the sun is shining brightly as Jen shoots hoops on her driveway with her brother. She watches the mailman out of the corner of her eye as he places a large envelope in her mailbox. She passes the ball to her brother and heads for it.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

Jen curls up on the couch and reads the letter. CU of the large white envelope that bears the "Seinfeld" logo.

ADULT JEN (V.O.)

It was an encouraging blow-off letter, stating that they didn't accept un-agented, unsolicited submissions, but it was beautiful. I didn't recognize the name of the writer; he introduced himself as a member of the staff and sprinkled the words "sincerely" and "thank you" throughout. But he'd read my work and cared enough to send it back.

Jen empties the rest of the contents of the envelope and her script falls on her lap. She flips through the battered copy and begins reading. The pages are dog-eared and spotted with coffee stains.

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

I suddenly felt very self-conscious. My script had been read indeed or else simply used as a coaster. Jerry Seinfeld himself could have looked at something I'd whipped up on my Mac. I'm glad I hadn't spent too much time considering this possibility beforehand or I never would've had the courage to send it in the first place.

EXT. JOHANS BACKYARD- DAY

Jen sits on a swing and opens a large blue envelope bearing the "Coach" logo. She pulls out a letter and begins to smile.

INT. BOOKSTORE- DAY

In the creative writing/reference aisle, Jen reaches for a copy of “The Writer’s Market” and notices a small hand reaching up for the same sole copy. She looks down and notices a gawky, eleven year-old GIRL wearing glasses and a toothy smile. Jen smiles back and hands her the book.

INT. BOOKSTORE CAFÉ- DAY-CONTINUOUS

Jen drinks a bottle of water and sits at a table talking with the young girl, who is busy devouring a sundae.

JEN

So I guess what I’m saying is to try it and write as much as you can even if others laugh or call you different. And they will, because we’re outsiders.

GIRL

Then why do they laugh?

JEN

Because they don’t understand us. (Beat) But let me tell you something—there’s nothing to be gained from being an insider. I’m going to use a few clichés here but listen- read these books and write, write, write. Because you never know. Because you learn more from failure than you ever will from success.

GIRL

What do you mean?

JEN

I mean I didn’t sell my scripts. Of course, I didn’t sell my scripts but I tried. I wrote them and I sent them out and I got feedback on them and that’s what made me keep writing.

GIRL

It sounds like a lot of work.