

GARDNER'S *guide to*

# PITCHING AND SELLING ANIMATION



SHANNON MUIR

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GARDNER'S *guide to*

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**PITCHING**

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**AND SELLING**

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**ANIMATION**

**SHANNON MUIR**



GARTH GARDNER COMPANY

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To my friends from Neopets for the ongoing creative adventures in a virtual world.

To Lesley Jeanne Muir Aeschliman, who taught me...

how to set the sun on crime,  
that a hawk can be an enchantress,  
the beauty of the seasons four,  
what it takes to hang in tooth and nail,  
to ride a wagon of imagination,  
and even about surviving life's rusty tricks.

# PREFACE

At ten years old, I knew I wanted to be a writer; that affirmation began with a poem that my teacher felt was good enough to be posted as part of a student exhibit at a local mall. By age thirteen, that statement changed, narrowing its focus down by the addition of one single word (and making ‘a’ into ‘an’ if you really want to be technical):

I WANT TO BE AN ANIMATION WRITER.

One needs to be careful what one wishes for, and to be aware that’s not as narrow as it appears. I’ve not only ended up writing for television animation (for a show that’s only ever aired in Japan), but also monthly non-fiction columns geared to the business, a masters thesis about animated spokesperson effectiveness, and two entire books about the business. You’re holding the second of those in your hands right now, and it feels like lightning striking twice to be doing this again.

In all those years in between, based solely on a series bible and a couple of animation scripts I fortunately received from several caring long-distance mentors, I became otherwise self-taught on the nuances of animation script structure and series development while drawing on those things that animation had in common with live-action television (on which information proved difficult to find where I was, though not nearly as difficult as animation). My younger sister and I spent a fair amount of time coming up with animation show ideas and creating our own bibles and pilots, but as we grew older put those aside for a long time but only in recent years began seriously revisiting many of them. This recent re-interest in development made it such incredible timing when the folks at GGC called me looking for someone to do a book on concept development.

I see this book and my first one as “dovetailing” together. Think of it this way. The writing and production book focuses mainly on the producer who wants to either buy a pitch from someone else or already has their own concept he or she wants to produce and walks that potential producer through the process to make it happen; also, if someone is only trying to market a single completed animated short film the marketing and distribution portion of the other book is the appropriate text. The book you have in your hands now primarily serves those people who want to pitch to the producer in the other book, but also can be an excellent resource for producers who need advanced information on the “hows” and



“whys” of the writing and development portions of the process (though for someone who is putting together, say, a “visuals only” short film, some sections will not be applicable).

This book comes from what I’ve learned both hands-on and in observation during my ten years in the business, coupled with my earlier efforts to both self-educate and educate under various mentors to become a better animation writer and developer. Specifically, I would be remiss not to credit Christy Marx, Greg Weisman, Kevin Hopps, and the late Dr. David K. Terwische for their direct one-on-one instruction. In addition, thanks must be given to Marc Handler, Peter Gaffney, and Jeff Kline for their willingness to read and give input on various spec projects for series they worked on both before and in my early years in the business. Lastly, I need to recognize Misa Manaka for giving myself and my partner Kevin Paul Shaw Broden for giving us our first professional animation writing assignments. Together, all of them have made the past twenty plus years an incredible adventure that I hope will only continue.

Like the first book, this one also utilizes “spotlight interviews” to bring voices from the field from a wide variety of professionals. Many of them are new to this book, but a few carry over from the production volume – these rare cases are when people had the right combination of factors in their background to provide the best information for the chapter above anyone else I could select. New to this book are “case studies,” which will give readers the first hand opportunity to see the evolution of two different pitches step by step from beginning to end of the pitch process. One I developed solo, the other with a collaborator. I hope readers learn by being able to follow these detailed interviews and experiences.

The biggest thing to remember is that this book does not provide a single magic formula that guarantees your idea will sell. There is always a little bit of good luck and timing that goes into the formula that nothing can prepare you for. That said, one needs to put one’s best foot forward in every way possible so that when that bit of luck comes along, that person’s idea rises to the top of the heap. My goal in putting this book together is to give readers the best toolkit possible to be prepared for those possibilities.

Shannon Muir  
Los Angeles, CA  
July 2007

**PART ONE:**

# **When Does an Idea Have Potential?**



# CHAPTER ONE

## The Light Bulb Goes Off

### WHERE DO IDEAS COME FROM?

On the surface, this may seem like an odd question, especially when one considers it is often said that there are “no new ideas” out there. Having said that, it seems like new and “fresh” movies and television shows do come along from time to time. This would support the idea that there are at least ways to make an idea feel like something exciting enough to get people interested.

Everything has to begin from somewhere. An animated project, generally speaking, doesn’t spring to life full born from the first moment it is conceived. The process usually is one of inspiration, trial and error, and ultimately a fully developed creation... an analogy not unlike nurturing a baby through childhood and adolescence to being an adult.

In this chapter, focus will be put on the idea and how far one should shoot for it to be developed before considering it ready to share with potential production partners. That life stage of an animated concept is a process known as pitching. Subsequent chapters will lead up to the pitch by tackling various issues in depth.

### HOW SMALL AN IDEA IS A VALID STARTING POINT?

There are stories of people being able to sell a series on a single sentence or drawing, and while not impossible, it is rare. This is mainly because things are difficult to sum up so succinctly enough in such a brief way to show how this specific idea stands out from the pack. Regardless, a single drawing or sentence can be considered a valid starting point given the right circumstances.

For example, take a look at the drawings that follow on the next several pages (see Figures 1.1 through 1.6). What kind of story possibilities does each drawing bring to mind? Does the style of the drawings affect perception of the potential concept?

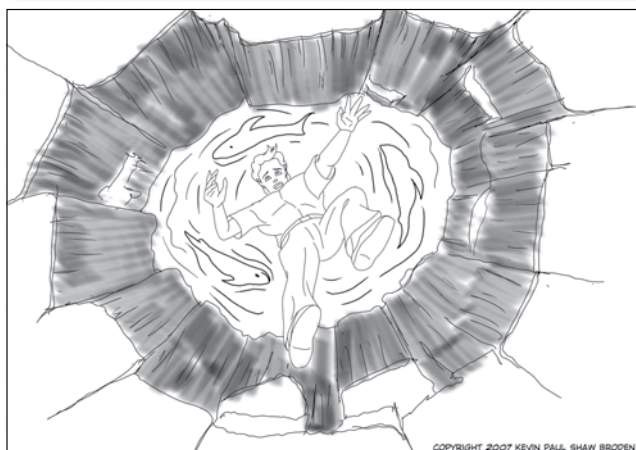
Figure 1.1



Figure 1.2



Figure 1.3



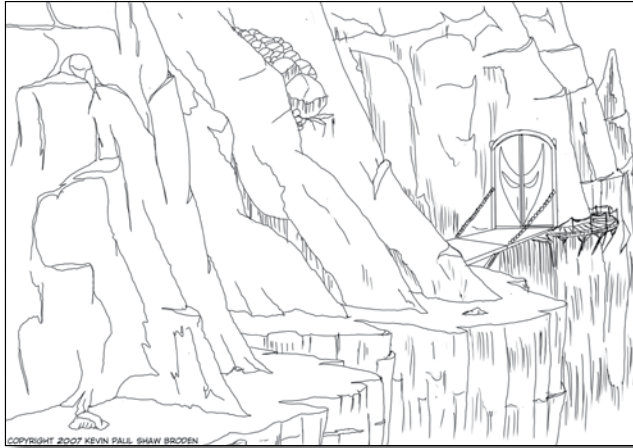


Figure 1.4

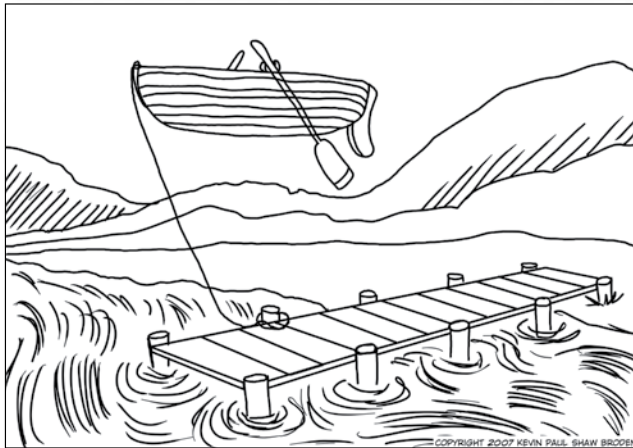


Figure 1.5

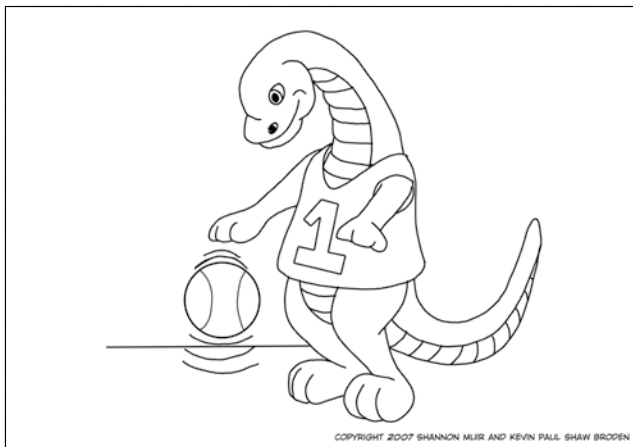


Figure 1.6

Single sentences, also sometimes called loglines, can be used. These summarize the concept into its most basic form, yet do not always capture the full uniqueness of the project. Here are a few examples, some may sound like familiar and others not:

- A kingdom taken over by an evil wizard must be rescued by a band of misfit underdogs held together by a common goal of restoring a young princess to her throne.
- A group of teens and their pet solve comical capers.
- Someone from outer space visits Earth and decides to become the planet's guardian after seeing why humanity is worth saving.

Regardless, what ultimately matters is the ability to back things up. A single drawing may grab attention, but if there's nothing to say other than to continue to talk about how neat it looks then ultimately the idea "doesn't have legs," or in other words lacks substance. It doesn't behoove any producer to put time and energy behind something for which only limited – or no – potential can be seen, meaning in the end no incentive would exist to work with a creator. This underscores the importance of developing an animated property, which is what this book aims to explore in-depth.

## **A NEW SPIN ON AN OLD TALE ISN'T AS EASY AS IT SEEMS**

Some potential developers may decide that their work will be made much simpler if they choose an idea in the public domain (for more on the definition of public domain, see Chapter 3, "Issues of Property Ownership"). Examples of this include modern retellings of Shakespeare plays, fairy tales, and even a number of Jane Austen novels have been re-crafted for today's teenagers. On the surface, this has advantages. A basic outline already exists, which can be modified to fit the developer's vision in any way he or she sees fit. Whether a developer thinks Robin Hood should have been a woman in disguise, or maybe Ophelia really didn't die after all but only pretended to in order to agonize Hamlet in some current retelling with a twist, or whatever the whim, there's nobody to (initially) turn the creator down. It also gives a bit of a pre-built high concept pitch line, making potential producers feel

more comfortable by being able to compare to something already known.

However, to every positive side, there is a negative one. These tales became popular and endured for a reason. If someone insists on adapting a concept too far from the original, it's probably best not to make that fact known; let people discover the connection or let it slip by. Otherwise, they come in with a preconceived set of expectations that may become too hard to shake.

## **BEING HIRED TO DEVELOP SOMEONE ELSE'S IDEA**

Sometimes that kernel of a thought may not begin with the person who ultimately develops the project. A developer can be partnered with someone, such as a toy company, videogame producer, or even someone with an idea who has limited experience preparing it for film or television; the intent here being for the developer to take the idea kernel to the next level and flesh it out. It can also happen that multiple people are hired to do a broad stroke development of how each one would tackle the idea, with one person's vision being selected as the blueprint for moving forward. This concept is referred to as work-for-hire. In these cases the people doing the development will never own any share in the concept as they are contractually doing the work for the company versus if the idea originated with the developer; in the latter scenario, there at least remains the possibility that some portion of an ownership stake may be retained in the animation adaptation of the concept.

## **GETTING THE RIGHTS TO ADAPT SOMEONE ELSE'S IDEA**

Being hired to adapt someone else's idea is not the only way other people's properties get developed. Some individuals, who have their heart set on adapting something that a company is not already doing, may get permission to do so on their own. However, getting the rights to adapt someone's property "on spec" (without a guarantee someone will actually produce it) generally is very risky.

Nothing guarantees an interested producer for the finished development will be found after completion. It could very well be an idea that interests a producer, but the producer may have



had a very different vision for the property and now is forced to deal with the developer as well as the original property owner as the developer holds the rights to the property; if it turns out that the potential producer and the developer can't agree (even if the producer and the rights holder agree), the product may never see the light of day.

Then there is the matter of personal expenses related to the project. Arrangements have to be made to option the other person's idea, which means the rights holder must be willing to agree to contractually allow the developer to adapt the property for a certain medium (film or television, as a couple examples) for a set period of time; options are rarely for an indefinite period, though they can potentially be renewed depending on the contract. A fee of some sort almost always must be paid by the developer to the rights holder as part of the contract. Even on the off chance the rights holder agrees to the option for free, the expense of drafting up the contracts and hiring legal counsel must be taken into account.

## **DEVELOPING AN IDEA AROUND A CELEBRITY**

Something that comes and goes in fashion involves developing a show around a celebrity (though this can also be applied to a one-off project, traditionally it has been applied to series). Examples abound from throughout the decades, including but not limited to *The Robotic Stooges*, *Harlem Globetrotters*, *Hulk Hogan's Rock 'N Wrestling*, *Mr. T: The Animated Series*, *Hammerman*, *Class of 3000*. These vary across the board in concept, but at the root operate essentially the same. Some take the celebrity and cast him or her in situations that are only exaggerated from their known reality with fantasy elements (e.g. Hulk Hogan's series), while others place the celebrity in an environment only vaguely similar to that with which he or she is associated (e.g. Andre Benjamin cast as the fictional Sonny Bridges, a music teacher in *Class of 3000*). Unless someone has a pre-existing rapport with a celebrity, such assignments tend to come as a result of being contracted by someone else to develop a take on a concept featuring the celebrity. Sometimes it can even be a sliver of an idea conceptualized by the celebrity he or she wants to see come to fruition, which may or may not limit the creative process.

## CREATING A ANIMATED SERIES AROUND A LIVE-ACTION PROPERTY

Another type of development that occurs would be the animated series based on a hit live-action series or movie. This tends to be because someone feels the property can be exploited in a new way either simply by the medium change, or the introduction of a new element. Examples include *Stargate Infinity*, the animated version of the *Punky Brewster* series, *Gilligan's Planet*, the *Brady Kids*, and *Clone Wars*. Sometimes they just fill in gaps in the live-action continuity much like a comic book can (e.g. *Clone Wars*) while others decide to add fantastical elements to an otherwise relatively typical live-action show (e.g. *Punky Brewster*). However, the fact the live-action version achieved success does not necessarily guarantee the animated version will fare the same, especially when there are drastic differences between the two.

## COLLABORATION

Developing an idea isn't necessarily done by one person; some people team up in a process known as collaboration. There are pros and cons which apply whether it is multiple writers collaborating or a writer and artist collaboration, which will be explored below. For additional specifics on collaborating with artists, see Chapter 7.

### Things to Consider in Collaboration

**Good Communication:** High on the list of important qualities is how well the people working together talk to each other. This includes not only a shared understanding of the concepts being spoken but also exchanging information regularly. If changes are needed and one partner does not inform the other promptly, that is a potential recipe for disaster.

**Personality Fit:** Even if partners fit based on other compatibility factors, they also need to be able to tolerate one another's quirks. They do not have to agree on how each one handles everything. However, if more time is spent arguing than creating a partnership may need reconsideration.

**Reliability:** One of the most important factors is reliability. Can someone count on this potential partner to do what is asked my deadlines asked? Will a potential partner make meetings on time? If it comes to the long awaited pitch meeting and only one half of the team is there, the odds are not good.

**Similar Vision of Concept:** When people come together to develop a concept, generally speaking they should retain a similar vision of where they think the concept should head. This doesn't necessarily mean they must think completely alike, but rather at least be willing to "agree to disagree". In the long run, failure to keep a united front ends in a weakened pitch. Exceptions to this are most prevalent when an artist is hired into a collaboration team on a "work-for-hire" basis; see Chapters 3 and 7 for more information on "work-for-hire".

**Trust:** The concept of trust actually permeates through many of the other listed factors, but for additional reasons it deserves separate mention. Those who do the written portion of development may often be conveying to the artists aspects of the idea not yet committed to paper. This could be just to visually experiment before writing it down or to let the art do the talking. Regardless, there must be trust that any desired confidentiality will be maintained as desired.

## **Pros to Consider about Collaboration**

**Able to bounce off one another:** Collaborators can share ideas to make the process flow. If one person gets stuck, another may know how to get past the issue quickly. Collaborators different perspectives on the same subject can also create great insights.

**Proofreading one another's work:** A group of people working together can doublecheck one another's work. This reduces the chance of developmental mistakes. It also allows for the proofreading of grammar and spelling errors in materials.

**People bringing different skill set strengths to the table:** One person in a team of collaborators may be best at world building, while another may specialize in character development. Multiple people bring a group of strengths to the table, versus one person handling everything where that person may not be good at every

aspect. A merging of strong skill sets toward a single goal can result in a stronger product.

## Cons to Consider about Collaboration

***Personalities that can't get along:*** If people working on a project fail to get along, things fall apart. Failure to agree on a solid development will come through in the quality of the pitch. It is even possible for the project to collapse before development is complete.

***Multiple people that must be negotiated with regarding rights if interested:*** If someone is interested in a property that is pitched, all involved parties must be negotiated. It can cause problems if all do not agree. Therefore, a deal may be lost if negotiations do not go smoothly.



### SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: HEATHER KENYON

Heather Kenyon previously worked as senior director of development, original series at Cartoon Network, focusing on the development of animated comedy, comedy adventure, action adventure and live-action series for children 6-11 years old. Prior to joining Cartoon Network, she was editor-in-chief of Animation World Network, the leading Internet publisher of animation news, information and resources, and was responsible for managing the site's editorial and writing efforts. In the first of this book's Spotlight Interviews, Heather talks about what kind of concepts people pitch.

"All sorts! From well thought out comedies, action adventure and live-action shows to scribbles in notebooks and beginning rough concepts. As long as the idea is for children 6 - 11, and in the spirit of Cartoon Network's brand, we will listen. Frequently, we get pitched ideas that really aren't 'Cartoon Network' shows -- for example, they are too educational, not geared toward our core demographic, or lack the very unique CN flavor that we are seeking at the network. Know who you are pitching to, before you pitch! This is one of the most important pieces of homework you can do. Know what the network airs and what they have

purchased recently.

“Most frequently when people come in to pitch, they leave behind a ‘pitch bible.’ The pitch bible is several pages long and includes the following information: a page or two about the show, an overview; and then solid paragraphs about each of the main characters; and then five to seven sample story ideas. The story ideas are very important. The bible has told me about the overall world and why the show is unusual, unique and interesting, plus I have then read about these great characters – the episode ideas are where all of this should pay off. I really like to see beginning, middle and end stories that show how the dynamics of the characters work. How do these characters drive each other into and out of trouble? How does the world influence these stories? Of course, great art helps. We love to see how people picture their world and characters, but if you cannot draw, don’t include any art. Bad art is worse than no art at all! We are especially spoiled as well because we are surrounded by fantastic artists each and every day at CN so we have seen the best of the best. Sometimes we receive pitches from triple threats - people who can write, draw and direct -- and their presentations are usually very well thought out and cohesive. Plus, we are usually more likely to give these tried and true professionals more breathing room and let them run with their ideas and surprise us. However, sometimes we just see one drawing and that’s all it takes. This is very, very rare however. Usually every idea, regardless of the creator or the project’s genre, takes many twists and turns throughout the development process. You should really come in with a well thought out group of characters and know their world and how they play in it. Sometimes people come in with a few drawings and just lay them out and expect us to fill in the blanks. This doesn’t work for us because we are really seeking creators -- people with a point of view. We want to see you speak about your characters and their world and how you see it all working.

“Sometimes we invite certain people to come in and pitch us loose ideas. After hearing these ideas we tell them what would work best for us and which aspects of the ideas don’t work so well for us. This is usually a more unusual circumstance and reserved for people with whom we would love to be in business. Usually, people come in to pitch and we re-act to a kernel, a nugget, and from there we

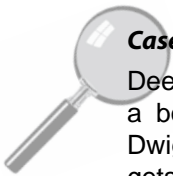
begin discussing tweaks that would make the show stronger.

“I really like to see the characters. Who are they? Show me a great drawing, a set-up, that shows the one or two main characters in their world being themselves, their personalities. I react very well to art that catches my eye -- that shows that cool group of characters that I want to hang out with, or that funny character that is intriguing and looks like a riot. We don't option much in the room, maybe one or two a year, and these projects are sold mostly on a fantastic drawing of a character in a unique and unusual world that we haven't seen before. It also helps if the creator is already in the industry and working. Then we know that he/she knows the ropes and can draw on their experience.

“Remember you aren't really selling this one pitch idea and this idea only -- you are selling yourself as a creative person who ‘gets it.’ If a development person says that they are passing on your idea -- your best answer is, ‘Why? And tell me the truth. I can take it!’ Getting truthful feedback on your ideas and their viability -- while painful -- is one of the best ways to learn and be able to come back with something else that more closely meets the outlet's needs.”

## **FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA**

Ideas can generally be developed in two ways: one way includes the use of artwork and the other does not. To help better understand the similarities and differences in the approaches, two “case studies” will be offered throughout most chapters of the book that follow ideas through each stage of development. Both are properties I own (and in the case of the one with artwork, co-own), and I will share my firsthand input as to what went into each stage and ultimately the outcomes of each project. This chapter will introduce both concepts and how they started.



### ***Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT***

Deejee and Dwight came about with a desire to make a boy-friendly comedy about a lonely boy named Dwight who befriends a shape-shifting kid alien that gets left behind by his absentminded parents and must hide out as a fellow student in the school; the alien's long and cumbersome name gets shortened down to

simply “Deejee”. Dwight must help the young alien figure out how to tell Mom and Dad what happened to him but is torn because it will mean losing his one true friend. If I had to give a high concept logline, the closest I’ve come up with is “Harry Potter meets E.T.” but I’ve never really been satisfied with that. In addition, across the way is the Masterson School for Girls and in particular a young lady named Jessca. Deejee mistakes her for an alien in a situation much like his own, Jessca is just your average female techno-geek whose parents hope to make her more ladylike... or maybe there is more to her story.

This book follows the progression of Deejee and Dwight as a project that does not use any kind of concept art to sell it. This series was pitched in real life to a major studio and throughout the book the evolution of this pitch will be discussed.



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

Doubles has a very complex history. A friend of mine and I as kids created our very own group of superheroes, and what I had initially wanted to do was spin off one character I liked that I created in a group totally created by me years later as an adult. This meant that I would need a whole new setup and back story, not to mention a hook. The interesting thing was that in the process, even this character lost any element of who she was in the past and the show is now totally its own thing with absolutely no relationship to the childhood inspiration. Sometimes a person has to be prepared to let go of an element that he or she really loves when it is in the best interest of the storytelling.

What I decided to pursue was a hook of “nature versus nurture” in the form of multiple separated sets of twin super humans not raised together. Years later, I wound up taking on a creative partner in this endeavor (not the original friend) for a couple reasons. One involved my hit and miss knowledge of what previously has been done in the superhero universe and I didn’t want to inadvertently copy too many things that people have seen before (though

not completely unavoidable, I must confess, as most superheroes and super villains are archetypes of various varieties) and also that I work this person on several other projects is quite knowledgeable in this area. The reason I felt artwork needed to be a must for this development stemmed from the fact that since there are so many various similar properties, I strongly felt that artwork bringing the “nature versus nurture” theme to life would be crucial to such a pitch; my creative partner happens to be both a writer and artist and graciously took on tacking Doubles with me.

Please, when looking at the Doubles materials, bear in mind that while they are good examples for format, they also intentionally fall short of optimum quality in terms of content. Unlike Deejee and Dwight, this show was not pitched in real life. It will be taken through all the steps of developing it for a pitch, and then at the end the book will talk about areas where the pitch could benefit from improvement in order to strengthen its chances of acceptance.

## **SUMMING IT UP**

Ideas for animated properties come from a variety of places. The initial concept can be as small as a single drawing or sentence, to something more detailed. Concepts can either be something the creator presents with no prior influence, or adaptation of others’ ideas. These can either be the optioning of other people’s properties to which copyright is still in force or adapting public domain properties (properties to which copyright has expired). Sometimes people can be hired to take the initial idea of a creator and flesh it out, which is called development. Development can be done by a single individual or in collaboration with others, which has both pros and cons.





# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **Finding the Best Format**

### **MANY WAYS TO TELL A STORY**

People enjoy animation in a variety of forms. There are animated television series that just can't be missed. Others email the link for the latest cool short discovered on the Internet to a bunch of friends. The wonder of entirely new worlds created through animated features captivates still others. Each of these works best because they are at the appropriate length for the stories that drive the art. This chapter looks at the variety of lengths that can be considered for an animated property, and why taking it in to consideration early can be important.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE STORY WILL GUIDE DEVELOPMENT**

Once a creator decides what type of story will be told, the next question to settle is how to present it. Whether an idea becomes an animated feature film, webisodes, or an animated television series does carry some impact on how the rest of development will proceed. When creators ultimately share their ideas with the people empowered to bring them to life, they need to target the people who can realistically make it happen. It is not a matter of generally saying "Here's my idea, I know you make television series, maybe this might interest you though I can't tell you why it would make a good series," but more of a targeted, "I've got this great idea for an animated fantasy television series, and I know your company specializes in these types of series, so I think you might be interested" situation. Therefore, a format for telling the story the creator wishes to be told needs to be settled on early.

Please be aware that the use of the term "format" is not necessarily an industry standard term in this context. In fact, there really doesn't seem to be one. A single term needed to be settled on for the basis of this text.

## WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

There are five major types of formats an idea can be presented in, with some amount of crossover between them. Though, always remain aware, with the rapid growth of technology new possibilities can open up at any time.

### Feature Length

Any single piece of animation 70 minutes or more in length can be classified as a “feature length” piece. This category has some subdivisions that have to do with distribution method. If the finished product is intended to be shown in a theater first, it will usually be called theatrical length or feature film. When the material goes straight to DVD for sales in stores, it is referred to as a direct-to-DVD film (in days gone by, “direct-to-video” was the same thing but on video tape, and similar terms could be used as new formats emerge). An animated feature made for broadcast or cable would be called a made-for-television movie. That said, there really isn’t an industry wide term at this time for material marketed straight to Internet download sites as it still tends to be a secondary distribution method after first having been made available for theater, TV, or DVD first; however, as pointed out above, this could easily change.

### Short Film

Any film under the rather arbitrary 70 minute threshold would fall under the classification of short film, but this term usually refers to films of 10 minutes in length or less. The primary venues for seeing these types of animated presentations include festivals and internet download distribution sites. Sometimes short films may run before a feature film or are included on a DVD as a bonus feature, with the latter tending to be after the short has performed successfully in one of the other venues. In the case of a successful animated film, sometimes a related “short” focusing on a single film character may be created as a tie-in for a DVD bonus.

### Television Special

Television specials bear similarity to short films in that they are

one-shot pieces shorter than feature-length films, but are of such a length that they are a good fit for the television medium without editing for commercial or air time. Usually they are geared toward a theme, usually holidays, but sometimes they can focus on social topics. The normal marketing path for television specials are to get a first-run on cable stations that play heavy amounts of animation (for example, there's an appeal to have something new to offer in the middle of the yearly Christmas special marathon). An added advantage is that these specials can also be marketed on DVD either simultaneously or at a later date.

### **Television Series**

Episodes for a television series tend to be 22 minutes in length in the Western world and Asia, though a single episode (at least in countries like the United States and Canada) may consist of one 22 minute or two 11 minute stories with a commercial break between them. 11 minutes stories tend to be more common in Europe as they are more accustomed to programs that last only one-quarter of an hour long. Exactly which format is used on a television series largely depends on the genre of the story. Action-adventure and drama stories exclusively fall in the 22 minute category, sometimes due to character depth and sometimes due to the types of action required. A comedy-adventure or straight comedic show can have two 11 minute stories or one 22 minute story depending on what the type of jokes in the show can sustain for a single story; traditionally, comedy-adventure and comedic shows were almost always 11 minute stories but more recently shows in this vein will alternate episode length within the series as the stories dictate.

### **Webisodes or Mobisodes**

With the advent of newer technologies, the marketing of multiple short pieces has become more prevalent. Depending on where they are viewed, these short pieces -- usually two to three minutes in length each -- are called webisodes (when seen on the Internet) or mobisodes (when seen on a mobile phone device). Often several of these very short pieces connect together into a single theme. They may later be connected and remarketed in one of the other forms (usually a pilot of a television series or a television

special), but not always. Sometimes they end up just functioning as promotional material or test marketing to see if a property can generate enough interest to be worth developing in a different format.

## **DESIRED AUDIENCE MAY AFFECT FORMAT CHOICE**

The format selected for a given animated project may be influenced by who ultimately will watch (also known as demographics). Seniors, while becoming more tech savvy, are not the prime audience for animated mobisodes. Preschoolers likely won't have the attention span for an animated feature film.

## **RESEARCH A COMPANY'S FORMATS BEFORE PITCHING**

Last chapter discussed what a pitch is, and especially how it matters to know the needs of where someone plans to pitch to. This is not only the needs of what type of material the place produces, but also the formats they produce, and if an appropriate story idea can be placed in a format that meets the needs of those to whom one plans to make the pitch. Once a developer has decided which format to focus upon, research must be done to find out what studios do this kind of work. Even if the developer knows what studios in the business handle, there is still the matter of learning if these businesses are currently accepting pitches for this type of format. The studios may accept pitches year-round for all kinds of items, or only accept pitches for some formats at certain types of the year, or currently be completely closed to hearing pitches for formats they traditionally do because their development slate (the list of projects they can devote resources to) is currently full. For that matter, it doesn't make much sense to try and sell someone on your animated comedy film idea when they clearly only specialize in television series (and action-adventure animated television series at that), for example.

However, take note that some individuals dream that only "Studio X" is the one that should handle their big idea, because they just love everything "Studio X" puts out and no one does it better. However, the idea may work in a better format than what "Studio X" specializes in. Say for example "Studio X" focuses on TV series; don't take an idea better suited for an animated feature and figure

out a way to drag it out into a 13 episode series of half-hour shows just because “Studio X” is the preferred studio. In the end it is not fair to the executives, the concept, or even the developing party for time wasted that could have been far better spent by everyone. Even if the concept did get bought, the end result may be of far less quality than what it potentially could have been.

## **REMEMBER FORMAT IS ONLY A GUIDE RIGHT NOW**

Remember that the choice of a format, especially at this stage, is largely a mental guide to help gear a concept to what the person working on it believes are its strengths. In some cases, the best way to present a story becomes clear. For example, while drama can be done in shorter formats, it doesn’t lend itself as well as comedy does. The opposite tends to be true for comedy, which doesn’t usually fare well in longer formats - note that animated feature films tend to be a comedy and drama blend that comes in on the short end. Some ideas work well in more than one way.

Format is to help keep focus and then pinpoint a pitch to those places best suited to produce that length of material. If it is discovered during the development process that a different format may be the way to pitch, there is ability for change. Also remember that a company pitched to may like a concept but have ideas of their own (see Chapters 10 and 11).

## **THE DANGERS OF SEEING AHEAD TO THE MERCHANDISING**

While putting together a pitch for a television series or special, film, or series of webisodes, it may be tempting to see the concept in other media. It may already spring to life in the creators head with a great videogame plot, for example. However, when going into a pitch, executives do not want to hear how what other media you’d tie into at Consumer Products. They may also take it as a sign that you have no faith in their decision making as executives, and since making a relationship with the executives is key to any sale that would not be a constructive outcome. Also, please note that it is also beyond the scope of the text to discuss the storytelling, development, and pitch methods of areas such as videogames as the process differs greatly.

## WHEN DISTRIBUTION CAN BE A DEVELOPER'S CONCERN

Do not concentrate on how the end product will be distributed during the pre-pitch creation process. This either becomes the responsibility of those who will buy the pitch (such as a large studio or network), or the developer and the buyer may develop a strategy together in the case of a group of independent producers. The exception to this would be if the developer could come to the pitch with a package deal of knowing an already interested distributor who would want to take on the finished product. The odds of this happening are quite slim and would probably only come about as a result of personal networking.

This having been said, if the creator has resources at hand to distribute in certain formats as well as the resources to get the production done, then the entire pipeline can be considered this early in the process. Webisodes would be the most likely example of this, especially in cases where the developer is a writer/artist who lets the animation tell all the story with little to no voice acting required. Discussing the entire production pipeline goes beyond the scope of this specific text, but it is something that it behooves anyone involved in the creation of animation to know regardless of their position.



### SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: GREG WEISMAN

Greg Weisman is an accomplished animation writer/producer who began his career as a writer for DC Comics before transitioning into animation. He currently is producing *The Spectacular Spider-Man* series for Sony and airing on CW4Kids, and previously produced the second season of *W.I.T.C.H.* for S.I.P. Animation/Disney but is best known for his extensive involvement creating and producing the *Gargoyles* animated series (for which he more recently has authored comic books for SLG Publishing continuing these adventures). In addition, Mr. Weisman has been an executive involved in the creation of animated television series for Disney and Dreamworks. He also has a background in voice direction, serving as voice director for Disney's DVD feature *Atlantis II: Milo's Return* and anime voice-

dubbing for New Generation Pictures. Greg's extensive credits as a writer and story editor for animated series include *Kim Possible*, *The Batman*, *Roughnecks: The Starship Troopers Chronicles*, *Max Steel*, *Ben Ten*, as well as work on the animated features *Bionicle - Mask of Light* and *Bratz: Genie Magic II*. Greg drew on this wide range of experience when addressing the choice of format in regard to developing a concept.

"If you've got one big story to tell, that's a movie. If you've got one big story to tell but that will roll into multiple stories beyond that, then maybe what you've got is a big pilot and a series, or maybe what you've got is a movie and a group of sequels, or maybe what you've got is a movie and a series that follows it. If what you've got is some initiating story that gets it started but it's not huge... just gets the ball rolling, maybe you don't even need that initiating story. I mean, I don't ever remember seeing the episode of *Gilligan's Island* where they crash-landed on the island. I'm told it exists, but I've never seen it, yet it's not hard to get the concept just from the opening titles about the seven stranded castaways. And basically it's just the adventures of these seven people on this island, etc., etc. And so, this isn't about value judgments, it's just the story that's in your head. Now, if you're talking about the difference between a movie like a theatrical release and a direct-to-DVD movie, that's more of a factor of budget, a factor of audience, demographics, and a factor of what can you successfully sell.

"I think you should always take your best shot out of the gate right off the bat because no matter what happens, any show that's rejected the water gets a little bit poisoned. Now, you can get rejected at Disney, and Warner Bros. can want it and that's terrific. But you know, once you get rejected at Warner Bros.," meaning you've struck out twice at this point, "it's tough to then go to Cartoon Network... it's not impossible but it's harder to sort of go to one division and pitch it as 'x', it gets passed on, you go to another division and pitch it as 'y', but it's the same property, you run the risk that someone in Division One is going to mention to Division Two, 'Oh yeah, we saw that. We passed on it.' And executives, particularly in these vertically integrated companies that exist today, are frankly always looking for an excuse to say 'no' and if someone already passed on it then if they say 'yes' they're putting their career at risk because someone already rejected it



and it feels to them that they're taking on someone else's rejects. So it's always a bit of a risk to do that... unless you really feel you have such an 'in' with executive John Doe at a certain specific division of a certain specific company and this is your best idea so you want to just take your best idea to this guy, but I have to say if it doesn't feel like this guy is going to make it a 'slam dunk' for you and you're pitching your idea counter to its strengths, you're making a mistake. Anything is possible... and exceptions to rules happen all the time, but in this business it also really pays to play the percentages, and the percentages say you always pitch to your strengths.

"You can always do the 'long shots' afterwards... it didn't sell as a TV show so... I might as well try to pitch it as a movie, or it didn't sell as a movie so I might as well try and pitch it as a TV show. There's nothing wrong with that, it's just hard, so you always want to go your best route first. Again, if you're a person who feels like 'I've only got one idea' then I understand being much more cautious with it but still I say pitch your idea to your strengths. What you hope though is that you are someone who has multiple ideas... that the well isn't going to run dry of ideas if you don't sell your first one. Maybe your second one will sell and the connections you made the first time out of the gate make it that much easier to get in the door the second time around.

"I've many times in a pitch said, 'In success...,' if this movie is big we could do this. I've said this about flat-out TV series, 'In success of Season One we could do this in Season Two,' or we could spin off this character in Year Three because if we're working this character's got his own story, and that kind of thing. And you can talk a little bit about this 'In success we could do 'x'...' Great. But I wouldn't spend a lot of time in a pitch doing that, because if you haven't sold them on the idea, then all your 'In success...' statements just sound like you're out of touch with the room that you're in. It doesn't hurt to do that. It's a lot tougher to say 'Hey, I'm pitching you a TV show' and 'In success we could also do a feature film based on this...'. Once it's a TV show it's kind of hard to go the other direction. If you keep those 'In success...' statements brief, it's a little carrot, it's kind of a fun notion, we could do this down the road, great. But if you start going into tremendous detail about the maybes down the road when what's

in front of them hasn't been decided on yet, then you're off on a tangent and you run the risk of losing your audience. And I don't mean audience like the TV audience, I mean the three or four people you're pitching to at that moment, or the one person you're pitching to at that moment. So I would not hesitate to mention what might come, but I would hesitate tremendously to get too involved in what might come. Focus on what's there, what you're pitching at that moment."

## FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA



### **Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT**

Deejee and Dwight, by nature of its premise, geared itself to situational humor. Situational humor often proves difficult to extend out for a 22-minute episode on a regular basis. Therefore, I developed it with 11-minute stories in mind. This would mean that two stories would be needed to make up one 22-minute episode. In fact, because of the situational humor nature, if mobisodes or webisodes were being done when it was pitched (it predated them by just a couple years), I might have seriously considered this route as an initial form for pitching the series if I had an artist partner who could have helped me create a couple samples.



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

Due to the nature of the action-adventure storylines combined with character exploration, Doubles naturally lends itself to being a series made up of 22-minute episodes. Also, unless the series is one of comedy-action adventure, episodes of animated series featuring characters with super attributes traditionally run this length.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show 'group shots' of the main characters to assist in visualizing the two teams throughout the book; more specifics about the characters and their world will unfold in Chapters 5 through 7. The designs of these characters are such that they better lend to television episodes (or possibly film) versus webisode or mobisode pieces.

Figure 2.1

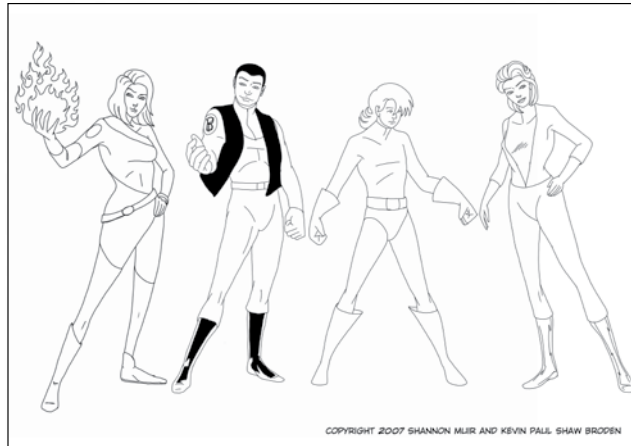
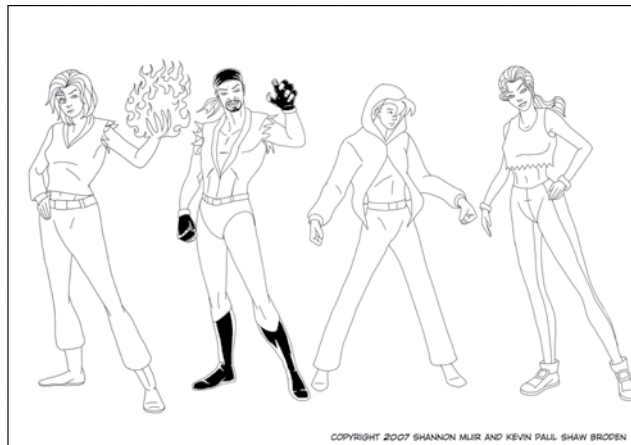


Figure 2.2



## SUMMING IT UP

There are many lengths that telling an animated story can run, which in this book are referred to as formats. Figuring out a proper format early may affect how a story is told. Feature films, television series, and webisodes are some of the possibilities for format. While one should research what kinds of formats a company produces before pitching there, what matters is telling the best story possible, and this should take precedence over fashioning a story just to be able to pitch at a dream studio. Remember that an initial choice of format is only a guide and can be changed if it doesn't meet the story needs. Thinking ahead to how a concept makes good merchandising, whether in other formats or related fields such as consumer products, is not the job of the developer and should be avoided. Distribution also tends to not be a focus of the developer either, unless it is a joint venture where the developing party has distribution channels but not production resources and hence the need for partnership.



# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **Issues of Property Ownership and Other Legal Matters**

### **ALWAYS BE AWARE OF LEGAL ISSUES**

This chapter touches on some of the most basic concepts on a variety of issues, but it must be stressed it cannot substitute for specific legal advice, whether provided by the author or any authorities interviewed for this chapter. It is only a guideline to help in guiding people to know what options they may have for a particular project and is designed to provide general terms and information to help a person do more specific and focused research on an individual situation. Additionally, everything in this chapter is based on the United States approach to intellectual property law, as that is the author's home country and what she is familiar with. Consult with intellectual property attorneys in the country or countries impacted by a concept in development for more specific details of what is required.

### **HOW MUCH IS ONE PREPARED TO GIVE AWAY?**

Part of Chapter 1 talked about the various degrees to which rights can be retained by someone developing an idea for animation, ranging from full creative control for a property the developer also created to a work-for-hire situation where the developer holds no rights in the property. If a developer is on a work-for-hire project, all rights have essentially been given away in exchange for whatever payment will be received. However, whether a developer is in a situation ranging from full control to anything short of work-for-hire, or a creator working with a developer has done anything less than fully sell away all rights to what was created, it behooves these individuals to learn the ins and outs of intellectual property ownership.

## **The Real Meaning of “Back End”**

“Back end” refers to money received after all payments have been made regarding the animated product, whether to the direct costs of making it or to the salaries and contracts of others. Due to the way bookkeeping can be done, it may turn out that a creator or developer never sees a cent of “back end” monies even though the animated product made a profit. It is often advised not to count on “back end” as primary, much less sole, compensation for creative efforts.

## **Don’t Underestimate the Value of Ancillary Rights**

Ancillary rights refer to revenue brought in from merchandise related to the main animated property, such as books, games, action figures, housewares – anything one can imagine. Today, many animated properties make more on the ancillary rights than on the sale and distribution of the actual animated series or film. Creators and developers who are not on a work-for-hire contract (which doesn’t leave any rights, as they are all owned by the company) should pay close attention to what ancillary rights are being received.

## **What Does it Mean to “Option” a Property?**

Optioning a property means to acquire rights to a pre-existing idea in another medium (i.e. not animation) for a limited period of time in which to develop and/or produce it. Generally, this expense is taken on by production companies who then hire someone to do the development work. Although option deals can be made for as little of a financial amount as both parties agree to, in most cases it makes no sense for an independent developer to acquire rights, develop a property, and then pitch it. Among these includes having to deal with any additional option contract for an interested producing party, who could also not feel comfortable with having a backseat role in the options process.

## **“Public Domain” in Regard to Legal Rights**

We discussed in Chapter 1 (“The Light Bulb Goes Off”) that using ideas from the public domain can be an option for deciding what story to develop. Basically, what it means is that the length

of copyright protection has expired for a creative work, either because no one eligible to renew the property has done so, or because all options to extend copyright on the work are used up. The different manners in which each people interpret the public domain property are in turn copyrightable, but that does not extend to the core material the development is based upon.

Bear in mind that in recent years, things have been done to modify the copyright on aspects of older works, so use caution. For example, a colorized version of a black and white cartoon can be considered a different creative property (since it was colorized at a later date), therefore preserving the copyright for the color version although the original black and white copyright expires. Items such as Disney's direct-to-video DVD sequels featuring older characters help them maintain the copyright on the characters even if they may soon no longer have rights to the story told about those characters.

### **The Fine Line of Parody**

When doing comedy, making fun of the human existence is natural. Some animated properties go so far as to find humor in a person or group of people. However, there is a subtle difference between parody and what can be perceived as damaging to character. If one develops a program along these lines, be sure to develop legally sound guidelines or no one (including the developer of the project!) may be laughing.

## **DOING IT ALONE OR GETTING PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE**

There are resources that creators can use to do legal and business legwork if they choose, and at times legal documents they can sign in lieu of representation to pitch to some people (see Chapter 9 for more on this). However, others may feel more comfortable getting representation to assist, or encounter entities that will only deal with them through representation. In the United States, three different options for representation are available. Rules govern what each type can do. These examples are listed below.

### **Agent**

Agents work to schedule opportunities and negotiate deals. They



work on a percentage fee (currently ten percent). In addition, agents are required to be licensed.

### **Attorney**

Attorneys (lawyers) are exactly what one would expect. In this case, attorneys whose expertise lies in entertainment or intellectual property law is required. Be aware that if an attorney is used, attorneys cannot legally solicit work so a creator must work to find his or her own leads. Payment happens on either an hourly or percentage basis.

### **Manager**

A manager also is someone with a network of business connections who manages the interests of other creative people. Like agents, managers tend to be paid with a percentage fee of each contract amount, though since they do not have to be licensed, they can ask for more than a ten percent fee. The other difference comes in that managers, unlike agents or attorneys, are not prevented by law to negotiate producer positions on projects they broker (and in fact often do) though it often may be little more than a name-only credit. Also, agents and managers may take the percentage but may or may not legwork aggressively on someone's behalf, while attorneys are always paid upfront to do specific business the client requests to be initiated (such as submit materials or negotiate).

How to approach and locate representation varies by the kind (and again, these will be United States examples, so be sure to check locally). Attorneys can be researched the local bar association for entertainment or intellectual property specialties. Agents and managers can be researched using generally the same methods for each, such as guides printed several times a year by some of the major entertainment publishers.

## **CONCERNS ABOUT OTHERS “STEALING IDEAS”**

One of the things that often comes up, particularly among people just starting in the business, is a concern about others “stealing one's idea”. These kind of people may have a one pet project in personal development for years and then hear that some studio is releasing something that sounds remarkably similar and are

convinced someone ripped them off (whether or not they've actually ever pitched it to someone else!). There are very few core ideas in development, and what actually varies is how ideas are presented. This means that two completely independent created ideas can end up looking similar, and in fact even end up being shopped around at the same time.

Because of odds like these, someone may want to make the effort of protecting their work. However, even so it must be remembered that it is a protection of that form of the idea's presentation at that point in time and not the underlying idea. Ideas themselves cannot be copyrighted.

A benefit of doing this kind of protection is that it creates a firm recorded date and paper trail for an idea's development process. Changes can also be protected as well, either as an addendum or a separate filing. This depends on the method of protection selected.

## **TYPES OF PROTECTION**

In the United States, creators can take two approaches to protecting their material, though one provides more legal standing than the other generally speaking. The first option is to register a completed piece of development with the United States Copyright Office. An alternative comes in the form of the registration service as offered by the Writers Guild of America. There may be similar options in other countries. This chapter's Spotlight Interview will explore the options available in the United States in detail by an entertainment attorney (though the information is not under any circumstances to be taken as specific legal advice).

## **THE NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT**

A non disclosure agreement amounts to a signed document that details of a project not be divulged until certain conditions are met. The most common of these is waiting until a product is aired or distributed (which if it ends up not happening can be indefinite). Another way is agreeing not to talk until certain creative items are delivered, or payments made. Non Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) vary widely on a case by case basis.

## WORK-FOR-HIRE

In the case of a creator or developer doing their work as a “work-for-hire,” it is important to note that (at least under United States law) this means they are revoking any rights to the creative work being produced. All rights, and income generated from the property, go to the company who has paid the developer or creator a lump sum for the creative goods. Other than any credits on screen that may contractually be required to let the world know of the involvement of the creator or developer, no additional compensation of any kind is received. This is especially common practice in television animation production, as well as with major animated films. Sometimes a developer may also hire an artist as a “work-for-hire” to do artwork to accompany a project that the developer intends to pitch; for more specifics on this, see Chapter 7.

## EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND COPYRIGHT ISSUES

### Interactive Environments

Special issues may occur when wanting to develop items related to interactive environments, which can take various forms from simple forums to complex online gaming communities called Massive Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG). Well known examples of MMOG games are *Second Life*, *Sims Online*, *World of Warcraft*, and *City of Heroes*. There are also less intricate but interactive virtual gaming environments with *Neopets*, *Webkinz*, *Gaia Online*, and *Toontown* being examples of major players. Regardless of how user generated content is applied, it is a “shared world” experience where all users bring a part of their own little touch to a basic skeletal premise or infrastructure provided by a central party that users sign on to participate in (usually at a monthly financial cost). Essentially, the bottom line of who “created” the product can become unclear.

Where this becomes of greatest concern would be if someone wants to obtain the rights to develop a MMOG as a television show or film. How much content of the MMOG belongs to the company and how much to the users? How much have the users already given away legal rights to in the contract they entered to join the MMOG? If the rights issues are not clearly spelled out in the

contract between the users and the company, lawyers would have to be consulted to see how to proceed since potentially multiple people may need to be involved depending on what aspects of the MMOG need to be licensed for the project. If the owners of the MMOG select someone to develop a proposal for an animated series or movie based on the MMOG, they will set the rules for this work-for-hire project and therefore it is their responsibility.

### **Will User Generated Content Affect Development?**

User Generated Content (UGC) is a phenomenon that has grown through the internet. It is a term encompassing podcasting, wikis, blogs, and viral videos among many examples of a growing list. The jury is still out as to what the influence of user generated content will be on animation development in the future; this could be either creative impact or business impact as licensing may play a greater role than ever before. It could be that it becomes more of a marketing concern only, as those who put out the finished product find ensuring the ability for users to interact with a property a must and not an option. Only time, along with people actually having a desire to try and develop items based on user generated content into the animated medium, will tell.



#### **SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: LOUISE NEMSCHOFF**

Louise Nemschoff is an entertainment and intellectual property attorney in Los Angeles, California, who is licensed to practice in California. In the following interview, she explains from an attorney perspective the concepts discussed in this chapter.

The information contained in this interview is intended for general educational and information purposes only. It is not legal advice and does not contain legal opinions on any specific matter. Transmission of the information is not intended to create, and receipt does not constitute, a lawyer-client relationship between the person being interviewed and the recipient. Every situation is unique. Because legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case, and laws are constantly changing, nothing provided in this interview should be used as a substitute for the advice of competent counsel.

“In theory, agents sell your project, find you employment and negotiate the major terms of those deals, while managers advise you about your career and attorneys will negotiate the major and technical (boilerplate) terms of your deals. In practice, the distinctions are less clear. Managers, especially those outside of California, may get involved in pitching your properties, seeking employment and negotiating contracts. In California, however, managers do so at their own risk because state law prohibits them from seeking employment for their clients and they risk losing all their commissions if they do so. Some creators feel that their agents don’t really do much actual selling or pitching, and some agents are, in fact, more interested in negotiating terms of deals for established clients or negotiating deals their clients generate themselves, rather than exerting the significant effort needed to sell a new client. Some, but not all attorneys get involved in selling projects, while others only represent clients in the negotiation of contracts after the client or the agent has obtained the initial offer. When a creator has both an agent and an attorney, the agent will normally negotiate the major deal terms with input from the attorney and leave it to the attorney to handle all the other deal terms. When a creator also has a manager, that manager may also have input and suggestions regarding the terms of the deal.

Agents and managers are both paid on a percentage basis. Typically, film and television agents receive 10% of the revenues earned by their clients. Manager fees vary more widely, but are generally in the 15-20% range. Both managers and agents should bear their own costs for submitting your scripts (e.g., copying, delivery and telephone costs). You should be extremely wary of an agent or manager who requests a fee or payment in advance of representation, such as a reading fee. The selection and screening of clients is simply a part of their job and they should not expect the client to bear that cost. Nonetheless, there are agents and managers out there who earn their living from the fees they charge their clients, rather than the commissions they earn on their clients’ sales.

Some attorneys work on a percentage basis as well, usually getting 5% of the revenues earned by clients who also have agents. However, these fees are negotiable and the percentage may be slightly higher if there is no agent involved. Some attorneys who work on a percentage basis cover the submission costs, but many

expect the client to reimburse those expenses. Other attorneys work on an hourly fee basis, with the client reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses. Hourly rates vary widely, depending on the attorney's experience, the firm's overhead and their workload. Be sure to ask if the attorney you contact will be handling your matters personally, delegating some of it to more junior attorneys or having more senior attorneys review it. The more attorneys working on your matters, the higher your fees will be. In any case, you should determine the fees any of these representatives will charge and come to some agreement on the fees before you begin working with them. In most cases, you will want to have a written agreement with your representatives, outlining the services they are to provide as well as the fees. Occasionally, an agent will "hip pocket" a client and undertake to represent them without a formal fee agreement, but in that case, the client usually is responsible for bringing in the deals without much assistance from the agent. In my experience, most creators end up generating their own leads on work opportunities and potential buyers for their properties, but having an agent, manager or attorney frequently helps to open doors as most companies will not accept unsolicited material directly from a creator. In fact, many production companies, the studios and sometimes others require submission agreements or forms for unsolicited material. These form agreements are designed to protect them, not you. Even with the most reasonable forms, you are giving up valuable rights. If at all possible you should try to submit material through an agent, manager or attorney.

Ideas in and of themselves are not protected under copyright law. This is an extension of free speech principles that encourage an open marketplace and exchange of ideas. Copyright law protects only the particular expression of those ideas. Copyright protects your work from the moment it is 'fixed in a tangible medium,' e.g., when pen is put to paper or when you save the work as a computer file. Registration is not required to obtain copyright protection in the U.S., but registration does offer certain significant advantages in the event someone infringes your work after it has been registered. Ideas can be protected by an express or implied contract. In a few instances, it may be possible to secure a signed non-disclosure agreement before you make your pitch. In some other cases, it may be possible to send a letter or email prior to your pitch in which you say that you expect to be paid if the other

person uses your idea, which may help in proving the existence of an implied contract. Normally, however, potential buyers will not be willing to sign such agreements and may instead try to get you to sign their own one-sided agreements, as noted above.

So how do you protect your ideas if an express or implied contract is not practical? First of all, whenever possible write your idea down before pitching it. The more detailed this is, the better. Second, register your written work before pitching, preferably with the U.S. Copyright Office. If you are in a pitch meeting and come up with something new on the spot ('What else you got?'), then write it up as soon as possible after the meeting and register it, again with the U.S. Copyright Office. This provides the maximum protection, not for the idea itself but at least the way in which you chose to express that idea. Third, keep track of everyone to whom you have pitched each idea and submitted each work, including the date, names and company affiliation. Fourth, if you believe someone has stolen your idea or copied your work, consult with an entertainment litigator to determine whether or not you have a claim that is worth pursuing, but keep in mind that idea submission and even copyright infringement cases are difficult, time-consuming and potentially costly to pursue. The infringers know this, so don't expect a quick settlement regardless of the strength of your claims. Finally, if you want to be or are a creative professional, try not to get too hung up on any one idea. To build a career, you will need to come up with a whole lot of ideas and projects over time. It is sometimes a better use of your time -- and certainly more enjoyable -- to create new material than to get into a legal dispute over something that already exists.

Copyright registration ensures you the maximum protection of the U.S. copyright laws, although you will own the copyright in works you create from the moment of "fixation," whether or not they are registered. However, copyright registration is required in order to file a copyright infringement suit. For example, if you have registered your work prior to infringement or within 90 days of publication of the work, you can recover statutory damages (which are especially important if you have no prior sales of your work or if the fair market value of your work is otherwise difficult to determine) and attorneys' fees (which are always important as the ability to recover attorneys' fees will make it easier to find an

attorney to represent you on a contingency or deferred fee basis if you have to sue an infringer). Copyright registration is also a public register, meaning that it puts the world on notice of your claim to copyright ownership in the work (i.e., in legal terms, it gives “constructive notice”). More importantly, copyright registration is actual evidence of your ownership of copyright in the work (or in legal terms, *prima facie* evidence which can stand without further evidence but can be rebutted by contrary proof). The registration is valid for the entire term of copyright protection (usually life of the author plus 70 years, at least for works created on or after January 1, 1978). Copyright registration forms are available online, but must be submitted in hard copy by mail or some other form of delivery. You will be required to deposit one or more copies of your work when you register it with the U.S. Copyright Office. However, it may be difficult and costly to access and obtain a certified copy of your deposit at a later date if you need to prove exactly what it contained for a court proceeding. For further information on copyright and copyright registration, please see <http://www.copyright.gov/>.

The WGA (east and west) maintains a more readily accessible archive of registered works. In a court proceeding, the WGA registrar can be called as a witness and submit into evidence the copy you registered. This will establish that the work was in your possession and that you claimed to be the author and owner on the date you registered. This is sometimes useful in disputes over idea submissions, for example, if you need to prove that a particular character, plot, scene or dialogue was in your work at the time you submitted it to a third party. However, it has little or no further legal significance. It is NOT proof of ownership. In addition, WGA registration is valid only for a limited period of time, i.e., 5 years with the opportunity to renew for an additional five years. WGA registration may be done on-line. For further information on WGA registration, please see <http://www.wgawregistry.org/webrrs/regdetails.html#duration>.

In short, you should always register your works with the U.S. Copyright Office. You can also register your works with the WGA, particularly works that you plan to pitch widely over the next year or two, but do not rely on WGA registration alone for legal protection.



Again, trademark protection is not available for ideas, but it may in some cases be available for titles of a series of works, characters or logos. Trademarks identify the source of goods or services. Technically, trademarks protect consumers from deception in the marketplace, although they are enforced, not by consumers, but by the owners of the trademark rights. Thus, a trademark owner can prevent competitors from trading on the owner's goodwill and from diluting the owner's marks by making them less valuable as a means of identifying the source of the goods or services. In the United States, federal trademark protection is available only after a mark has been used "in interstate commerce." Basically, this means that the mark must have been used on goods or services that have been offered for sale and sold to consumers in more than one state (i.e., in interstate commerce). Therefore, trademark protection is not generally available for most original projects that have just been pitched. Trademark protection may be available for projects that are based on some pre-existing works that are already being offered and sold in another format in the marketplace, e.g., a series of comic books. If a project is still in the pitching stage, it may be possible to register what is known as an "Intent to Use" or ITU trademark application. Such an application is based on a bona fide intention to sell goods or services using the mark in interstate commerce. The application is good for only 6 months, but it may be extended for further 6-month intervals. However, you must use the mark on goods or services sold in interstate commerce and the requisite Statement of Use filed within 36 months after allowance of the application and no further extensions will be allowed.

Where trademark protection is available, it can be a very powerful tool for the protection of intellectual property, but there are two major disadvantages to its use. First, trademark registration is not as simple as it may appear from the face of the application. The application form uses many common terms, such as drawing, specimen and use, which have much narrower technical meanings. In addition, trademark applications, including ITU applications, are examined by employees at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office ('PTO') for eligibility. Therefore, in most cases it is advisable to obtain a trademark search before filing to determine the likelihood of success. The rules of eligibility are likewise not obvious and in some cases, even counter-intuitive. Therefore, it

is important to have an attorney review the trademark search, draft the description of the goods or services being sold under the mark, prepare and submit the application and respond to communications and requests for further clarification from the PTO. This is very different from copyright registration forms, which in most cases do not require much specialized knowledge. Even after a trademark has been registered, other filings must be made at different intervals and careful monitoring to avoid missing the deadlines and losing significant benefits. Second, trademark registration is expensive to obtain. Currently, the filing fee alone is \$325-\$375 per class of goods or services, plus \$100 for an ITU application, where additional fees will be due when the Statement of Use is filed. Post-registration filings also require the payment of \$100-150 fees. PTO fees are subject to change, so please consult [www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov) for up-to-date fee schedules and further information on trademark registration. Trademark searches start at around \$500, depending on the service used and the turnaround time. Legal fees for evaluating the search, preparing the application, dealing with the PTO and monitoring for subsequent filings vary widely, so ask up front for an estimate of the costs. In some cases, state trademark registration may be available at a lower cost, but its protection is more limited.

At the most basic level, I generally offer creators three quick tips for dealing with the variety of offers producers are likely to make. First, discuss the deal terms upfront. It is part of the producer's job to acquire rights to projects as cheaply as possible. They may also try to get themselves attached to a project with general puffery about how great the project will be, without making any concrete commitments on how you will be compensated. Once someone else starts shopping your project to third parties, it becomes hard to get rid of them down the line, even if they have not been able to sell it. As a result, you may find your project encumbered with a "producer" (or in some cases, even a co-creator and co-owner!) who has contributed or will contribute little or nothing to the actual production but must nonetheless be paid (i.e., paid off). Deals are usually harder to make later on, once everyone sees that a project is really going somewhere and there is something worth fighting over. If you wait until there is real money on the table, it may be harder to come to terms. Also, you should try not to get

too caught up in the creative aspects of a project (e.g., rewrites and fantasy casting) until you know what you are going to be getting paid for it. Ideally, you should ask the other person to give you a written offer. At a minimum you should discuss with them what rights they want to acquire; what you will be paid for those rights (including fixed, contingent and deferred compensation); if it is an option, how long the option will last and how much will be paid for each option period; whether or not you will be hired to do further work on the project and how you will be compensated for that work; and what credit you will receive on the project. There may be other key deal points as well, depending on the nature of the work and how it will be used.

Second, once you have agreed on the important terms of the deal, don't delay in getting this agreement put into writing. A well-known aphorism, generally attributed to Samuel Goldwyn, says, 'An oral contract is not worth the paper it is written on.' Oral contracts are hard to enforce, and they can create confusion about who actually owns the rights to your work. It is very important to keep your rights free and clear from any sort of colorable third party claim. Such a claim creates a cloud on your title (ownership) in the work, which will reduce its value or prevent it from being sold at all. Written agreements are particularly important when you are dealing with friends and even family. Misunderstandings can easily occur, and the consequences may be devastating for both the friendship and the project. It is much better to work out the details of your arrangement in advance than to have to fight over it later.

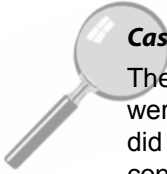
Third, don't sign anything until your lawyer has reviewed it. In selling written works, you are dealing with intangible property. Very specific and detailed laws apply. The legal implications may not be readily apparent from the document itself. This is true not just for long agreements but short ones as well. Make sure you understand what you are signing and how much you may be giving up. Keep in mind that a carelessly drafted contract also can cause problems by creating a cloud on your ownership of the rights. This may make it difficult if not impossible to resell your work."

## FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA



### **Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT**

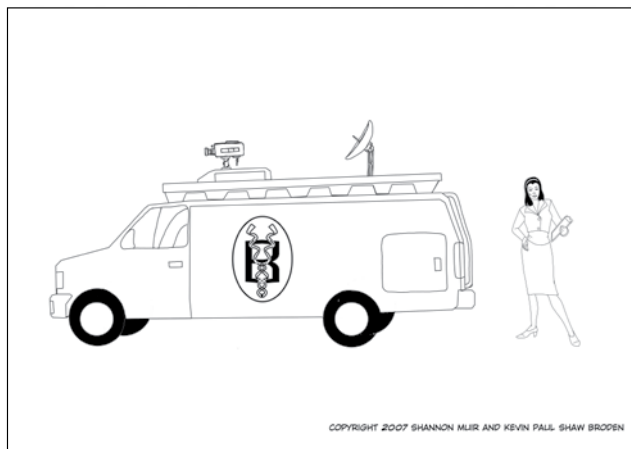
Deejee and Dwight's mini-bible was only registered through the Writers Guild of America, west. I chose this largely because of its broadness as well as lack of artwork.



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

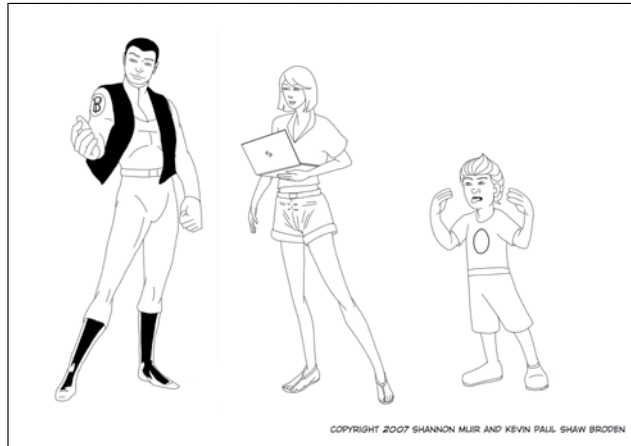
The mini-bible, concept art, and pilot script for Doubles were registered with the U.S. Copyright Office. We did this due to how well developed and specific the concept had become.

Examples of some of the wide variety of artwork that can be submitted for copyright or registration include Figures 3.1 and 3.2. Again, as emphasized earlier in the chapter, this only protects their presentation in this specific form. Both of these pieces of artwork feature friends of the main characters, who will be fully introduced in Chapter 5.



*Figure 3.1*

Figure 3.2



## SUMMING IT ALL UP

Creators of works can give away some or all rights to their work during the development process, and need to be aware exactly what they are giving away and what is being agreed on in exchange (such as back end or ancillary rights). Also, several means exist for developers to try to provide proof of creation for their works, which vary in the level of protection. Things can be submitted any time from earliest notes, to finished product, but sooner is better, though in the case of a work for hire the elements must be submitted by those who contracted the development. Professional guidance should be considered, especially by those both new to the industry and legal issues in general. Filing options range from the Writers Guild Registry to the U.S. Copyright Office, with varying processes for each. In some circumstances, trademark or patent filing may apply. At times, non disclosure agreements may be used to protect projects that are in early stages of development.

**PART TWO:**  
**Fleshing Out the**  
**Concept**



# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **Developing Characters, Story, and the World around Them**

### **WHAT MAKES THIS WORTH TELLING?**

Sometimes, as discussed in Chapter 1, a bare bones beginning of an idea may be plot driven or character driven. In either case, that skeleton must be dressed in what makes the story unique. With the advent of DVDs, downloads, and on-demand videos, many movies and series are being made available again that have not been seen for years. Take a look at what motivates why some movies or series do better than others (animated or not) when brought out again for purchase, or even for remakes and revivals. The ones that endure seem to have elements in common that make them lasting. Elements such as character, setting, theme and story must all be considered before writing up the pitch materials (to be explored further in subsequent chapters). This chapter discusses brainstorming of these essential building blocks to bring the initial idea to a full-blown concept.

### **EVEN A FILM WITH JUST VISUALS TELLS A STORY**

Dialogue does not dictate if a film tells a story. Visuals alone can carry a narrative if powerful enough. In fact, there are many effective and award-winning films that do just this. The concepts of strong character and a world in which those characters can believably exist are the elements that make any story memorable.

### **LOOK AT WHY THINGS SEEM TO ENDURE**

Some people might look at the entertainment offered today and wonder why people bothered to spend the money making it. Big action and chase scenes, lots of explosions, edge-of-your-seat



thrills... it's true these type of films pack the theatres for the short run, as the box office numbers prove time and again. However, given the expense of animation and the long shelf life it can have when very successful, it makes sense to get the most “bang for the buck,” as the saying goes. One of the best ways to do this is by crafting a strong story.

So what kind of things can make a story strong? Compelling characters that people care about, and not necessarily always the good guys; some of the most memorable characters in cinema aren't the ones who win at the end of the day. It doesn't matter if it was characters in outrageous situations that made people laugh, incredible chase scenes (though arguably the characters had to be interesting enough audiences wanted them to survive the chase scenes), or a touching dramatic tale. If there wasn't something inherently interesting about the characters and their world, no one would see the story through.

## **DEVELOPING CHARACTER IS ESSENTIAL FOR CONCEPT**

Characters, and how they act and react to things, drive everything that goes on. This can be anything from reactions to one another to how they deal with the world about them. Therefore, getting a sense of all the major players must come before anything else. Characters can be of a wide variety, but there are a few major types that need to be identified.

## **DEFINITIONS OF CHARACTER TYPES**

### **Antagonist**

An antagonist serves as the primary conflict force for the lead character. This may or may not be the villain, because an antagonist may not necessarily be a person. An antagonist can also embody external obstacles (a “ticking clock” deadline, the environment, or even the flaws of a lead character's personality).

### **Comic Relief**

This character provides the primary source of humor in a piece where the lead does not serve as the comedic element. Usually this

character operates as a sidekick to the lead character. Sometimes the comic relief character can be a side gag running in parallel to a main plot.

### **Protagonist**

Protagonist is another term for the lead character. More often than not, the protagonist also happens to have heroic qualities (though this character may also be flawed). However, sometimes the lead character may not have the best qualities and the story is a quest for his or her redemption.

### **Romantic Interest**

Characters that serve the protagonist's romantic need (or a focus of the protagonist's romantic desire) help provide reasons for the character to take certain actions. Maybe the romantic interest extends the offer of the story quest, or his or her rescue may be the motivation for the adventure. Romantic interests do not appear in every concept.

### **Villain**

Villain and antagonist are not the same thing. This especially holds true in cases where a "ticking clock" or some external element dictates the final outcome. A villain, however, is an obstacle getting in the protagonist's way that has attributes which are counter to that of the protagonist.

## **ATTRIBUTES OF CHARACTER**

### **Body Language**

Something immediately evident about any character is body language. How does a character carry the body when he or she walks - stooped over, shoulders back and chest forward, or something in between? Does the character tend to fidget nervously or is he or she very deliberate in actions? Whether or not a development includes concept art (see Chapter 7 for more on this), these physical mannerisms can be included in a text description. However, one must be very careful when using physical mannerisms due to

issues of potential misinterpretation; this will be explored more in depth in Chapter 12.

### **Motivation**

Characters taking action just to advance the plot in a way the developer wants the tale to unfold runs the risk of being counter-productive. While it will match with the creative intent for the vision, those watching the end product may question its credibility because the motivation behind the character's actions is not understood. The goal should be to achieve something that both forwards the creative vision while engaging the viewers.

### **Personality**

How a character interacts (or does not) with others tells a lot. Some items to consider include:

- Does the character speak much?
- How much of a sense of humor does he or she have?
- If a situation occurs, does a character tend to be proactive or sit back and wait for others to make a move before he or she reacts?

## **CHARACTERS AND CONFLICT**

Once all the major character elements are determined, they need to be compared to one another to see where things match up and where they do not. The places where personalities do not match up should be closely evaluated against the envisioned plot. If the plot is supported by these contradictory elements, this may be a good basis for the character conflict to drive the plot by identifying the protagonist and the antagonist, and possibly the villain if not the same as the antagonist. In addition, this process can help identify secondary characters that support the protagonist or antagonist, such as the romantic interest or comic relief.

## **ASPECTS OF CONFLICT**

Conflict describes the tension that moves the story along. Usually

conflict occurs between two people or groups of people (as a protagonist versus an antagonist), but conflict does not even necessarily need to be with another person. See the various examples below of protagonist versus antagonist. Sometimes a story can include multiple variations of conflict.

### **Person versus Person**

This is the most common form of conflict. Usually one person is up against another for some goal. It may be a romantic rival's affections, quest for a treasure, or any number of things. One person generally has better motives for why he or she wants to win than the other.

### **Person versus Nature or a Higher Power**

This either captures a person against natural events (e.g. a tornado, a tsunami) and how they survive afterwards. Along a similar line are conflicts of a personified higher power of some sort versus a mortal person (such as the interference of the gods in Disney's *Hercules* series). Generally, it is a conflict of greater than normal odds or circumstances.

### **Person versus Society**

These kind of stories are usually about a single individual or a group of rebels standing up to a society. Also, generally speaking, the society's currently fallen into a bad state of affairs and the person or group wants to restore things to either a better way or a former glory. However, it also possible to tell the story from the viewpoint of a society fighting to keep an individual or group from changing their way of life – making the smaller group of people the antagonists.

### **Person versus Self**

This variance of conflict occurs least frequently in animation, because it doesn't lend itself as naturally to the medium. Most frequently in animation, this would be encompassed by characters torn between a public and private persona and who they would most rather be. People with multiple personality disorders fall into this category as well.

## **THE WORLD OF THE STORY AFFECTS THE TALE**

The world of a story can influence its characters. A happy fairy-tale kingdom will be populated by far different characters than a dark, gritty futuristic urban sprawl. As characters are developed, they must naturally fit into the environment required to propel the story... or at the very least, the fact the characters do not fit the environment must be a story catalyst in itself.

## **HOW DEVELOPING SOMEONE ELSE'S IDEA CAN INFLUENCE STORY**

The hardest challenge comes when adapting a well-known property originally created by someone else. Since the property is known, core elements of what make it recognizable should be maintained enough even if the concept needs to be somewhat adjusted or even updated. However, the need to retain core elements is not a given and sometimes adaptations are done where only the original name and maybe likeness are all that remains; this is rarely if ever successful, however, as the audience has nothing familiar with which to identify.

## **ENSURING A STORYLINE HAS A BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END**

This is not the same as judging the sequel potential of a property while still in the development stage, which is not advised unless the property in question is a sequel property. The closest that a developer should come, in an era where DVD sequels have been more common for the last little while, is to make sure that all characters are well-rounded enough to provide promise of future stories. However, the integrity of the current story being developed should not be compromised simply to make sequels.

In the case of an animated series, advantages and disadvantages exist to having episodes that must be aired in order to preserve a larger beginning, middle, and end (in addition to then individual episodes of the series). A positive aspect is that a natural "hook" exists to keep viewers coming back for more of the story as the characters go toward a larger goal. The downside of this comes if

viewers come in mid-series and may not be able to keep up with what has gone before up to this point (some shows counteract this by putting “recap” openings that catch people up at the start of each episode, but this only helps to a degree); it provides the potential for people to get frustrated, quickly lose interest, and stop watching a show. However, the greater risk (which is really the Producer’s concern and not so much a developer’s) is if production delays cause an episode to not be completed on time. Despite the risks, a developer should be concerned on crafting the best possible storyline.

There are situations where continuity (of both plot and character) seems to be lacking and yet animated properties are highly popular, as in some anime series. In others, the lack of continuity is expected as part of the world building and the characters are aware of it and make fun of it regularly. So admittedly this is a general rule with exceptions, but it must be borne in mind that very few things in animation development have hard and fast rules.

## **WHAT ARE A-, B-, AND C- STORIES AND ARE THEY NEEDED?**

Most scripts do not follow just a single main plot. There are those characters that are involved in the main plot, but may also be struggling with their own issues that need to be resolved over the course of the grander adventure. These are subplots. When terms such as A-, B-, and C-plots are used, these refer to the hierarchy of importance each plot has within the overall story. The main storyline is always called the A-plot, and sometimes (but not usually) it can be the only plot. This usually is the item with the “ticking clock” attached, like rescuing someone or saving the world. If there are subplots, there can either be an A-plot and B-plot, or A-, B-, and C-plots.

B-plots tend to revolve around character growth. Usually the change happens in the lead character, but again this is not a set requirement. It is often a personal battle to get over an issue: perhaps old guilt from the past, or to change some character trait that is causing a barrier to succeeding in the A-plot. B-plots can be either serious or comedic in nature; however, when a storyline contains A-, B- and C-plots these type of plots tend to be serious.

C-plots do not always appear, and when they do they always are intended for comedy. In some animated films, there may be some comedic sidekicks that get into mischief. The series of mini-adventures experienced by these sidekick characters are the C-plot. Where A-plots and B-plots show resolution, C-plots usually end on a built-up to climax gag that may or may not bring an end to the thread.

## **WHAT IS A STORY ARC AND WHEN IS IT NECESSARY?**

The term story arc usually applies in television, but could also be used to describe the story beats of a series of films. It refers to a series of events that when appearing in a certain order, form larger stories. Just like the individual items (episodes or films), the larger storyline that they form must also have a clear beginning, middle and end. Story arcs are optional when developing a series of episodes or films – each piece could just as easily stand alone if desired – but arcs can help motivate interest in the property and have people returning for more. The downside is that if too much emphasis is put on the arcs, a viewer who comes in at the middle may feel things to be too inaccessible and not see the story the rest of the way through. So a careful and cautious balance must be struck to maintain both interest and viewership.

## **STORY ARC VERSUS PLOTS**

Often the terms “plot” and “story arc” are used interchangeably but in my evaluation there is a subtle difference. There are those movies and television series that want to be a thrill ride or visual eye candy with no pretenses or apologies short of needing something to push it along to make it happen, such as “capture the villain of the week”. These are not designed to have any growth, change, or challenge for the characters or their environment, and are termed as “formulaic”. In these cases, the term story arc does not seem to apply; it feels more appropriate to say the movie or television show has a plot. A story arc looks to seek growth, change, or challenge in some way and it is with this definition that story arcs will be explored in this book.

## TYPES OF STORY ARCS

### Character Growth

A Character Growth Based Story Arc puts emphasis on a main character's evolution in personality over enriching the audience on the way to a destination. In this kind of arc, the character learns more about himself or herself during the storyline, and becomes in some way a stronger person than he or she began the story as. Sometimes it can even be that the character does not complete the task initially assigned, but because the audience sees the change in the character as a positive reward in its own right, the ending feels satisfactory.

However, in some ways crafting this type of story arc is like walking a tightrope. While allowing the character to evolve and become more complex, the character must (except in extremely rare cases) remain the same in regard to core character attributes. These fundamental elements of personality are what keep viewers returning to re-experience the same adventure or join the same character on new outings.

### Theme Based

The theme based story arc relies heavily on the plot, but is more than a matter of just following the story like a road map. While it helps to have interesting characters in these types of stories, the real 'star' is the idea that the creative team wishes to get across. In the film world, these are also sometimes termed as "message movies".

### Timeline

In these situations, an external force or event to the characters will establish the guide for how things unfold. This countdown or deadline may or may not (but usually is) a driving force in the plot. The world around the characters, and sometimes the characters themselves, experience changes through a passage of time in the story arc. Timeline based story arcs are by necessity usually shorter in film (e.g. 48 hours or one week) versus television (can easily cover an entire year in sync with a year's worth of TV airings) to help maintain tension and suspense.



## **DEVELOPING A STORY ARC IN ANIMATED TELEVISION**

Story arcs can be used in television animation but by necessity should be subtle for maximum airing flexibility, primarily for unforeseen production reasons making changes to airing order. If episodes rely on all having to run in a precise order and one gets skipped or played out of sequence, confusion for the viewer results and they could become frustrated and not finish the series. The means of accomplishing this is to have certain episodes along the way that make major changes in the plot direction or character development, but between these key episodes can be ones able to run in any order as long as they air between the two episodes.

## **DEVELOPING A STORY ARC IN ANIMATED FEATURES**

Unless one goes into a project already doing a known and approved series of films, dealing with pre-planning a story arc in animated features can be extremely complicated. More recently, animated features consist of a beginning, middle, and an ending left just open enough to feel resolved yet able to possibly bring things back for more (this was not always the case in traditional animated features). However, ultimately what must be done should be in the best interest of the story; if it must close off with no hope of a sequel, take it seriously as the best course of action.

## **KNOWING THE RULES AND WHEN TO BREAK THEM**

So far, this chapter examined a lot of rules for story characters, arcs, and plots. It's true that understanding these basic subjects can help make someone a better writer. That said, an animated project isn't destined to fail if not all of these are followed. It must be kept in mind that at the end of the day, the items discussed in this chapter are all just tools. How the tools end up being applied makes all the difference.



## SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: STAN BERKOWITZ

Stan has worked for many years in the animation industry. Most recently story editor for the BBC-produced series *Friends and Heroes*, Stan's also been a writer and story editor for many Warner Bros. Television Animation shows including *Justice League*, *The Batman*, *Batman Beyond*, *Superman*, and *Static Shock*. Additional writing credits include *Legion of Superheroes*, *Transformers Animated*, and the DVD adaptation of the DC Graphic Novel *The New Frontier*.

"The key components of a strong story are character (as revealed by action) and, ultimately, changes in that character (or characters). Story isn't all that important, at least not in a commercial sense. If it were, there wouldn't be so many movies that are the cinematic equivalents of thrill rides: escalating series of stunts and special effects tied together by characters that are little more than stick figures.

In TV, there are few series that tell traditional stories any more. Most are open-ended serials with overlapping multi-episode arcs. These arcs, of course, are stories – often compelling – but the individual episodes are seldom well-constructed stand-alone stories. Occasionally there will be a B- or C-story in an episode that is a complete story, but these are little more than four or five scenes out of a total of perhaps twenty-five. Arc or no arc? With a multi-episode arc, you keep the audience coming back week after week (or sequel after sequel), but you run the risk of alienating potential new viewers who happen to come in at the middle of the arc and have no idea what's going on. And you can also wear out your welcome with your regular viewers by creating arcs just to keep the franchise going. Witness "The Sopranos": It seemed to me that the series was set up to show something we'd never seen before – a Mafia boss going through mid-life crisis. In the real world, people usually come out of these crises in one of two ways: with a new job or dead. Combine that with the presence of the psychiatrist who has an ethical responsibility to be guiding Tony away from his criminal activities, and the series should have ended with Tony leaving the mob. But the series proved so popular, it would have been unthinkable to end it after one season. So new

arcs were invented, usually involving a strong character actor playing someone close to Tony who screws up, and then Tony has to kill him. Yawn. It just proves that to do an arc right, you need to have a finite number of episodes.

Sadly – for me, at least – it seems that multi-episode arcs are de rigueur these days. Maybe we can blame it on boxed DVD sets; they make it easy for people to watch episodes in close proximity, often one immediately after the other. Confronted with a bunch of free-standing, non-arc episodes, many DVD buyers would probably feel they haven't quite had their money's worth.

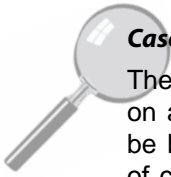
The problem with planting seeds for a sequel – besides presumptuousness – is that those seeds can damage your project. They can make the original work seem incomplete and unsatisfying; they can also make the creators seem cynical and crass. Besides, in most good stories, there are at least a few left-over threads which, upon reflection, can form the foundation of another story two. They don't have to be deliberately planted."

## FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA



### ***Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT***

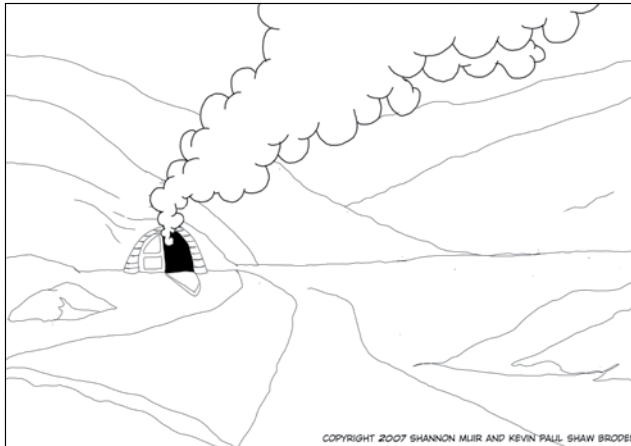
With Deejee and Dwight, there was a story arc envisioned for the show when I created it. The story arc for season one revolved around Deejee and Dwight's experiences of teaching Deejee about Earth while waiting for his parents to locate him. Though I never put this in the written pitch, I strongly felt the longest we could stretch this would be a season (not because Deejee's parents were neglectful, but part of the heavy comedy had to be how poor they were with directions). While leaving the door somewhat open to the executives by not committing this to paper, there are two roads in my head that a second season could go from that turning point -- the hinge being whether Deejee stays at the Academy or Dwight doesn't remain there. Therefore, since the story arc revolved around "how long would it take for Deejee's parents to return" it is best termed as a timeline-based story arc for its initial season; subsequent seasons would have probably varied.



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

Therefore Doubles, which from its inception moves on a driving force of “nature versus nurture,” would be best described as a person versus person style of conflict with a character based story arc. As will be unveiled in Chapters 5 and 6, the series has built into it an arc that carries over the course of the first season as the main characters find themselves on a mission, though all the reasons for it are discovered as they go along. Along with this are plots about how each teenager evolves as a person, not only as they are confronted with ordinary teenage issues but with their extraordinary powers and a past that is just now fully being revealed to them. While the mission takes them to each destination, how the characters grow as people truly drives the series. We created this show's premise to have much more layers than a full comedic show in order to maximize its full dramatic potential.

The artwork in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 suggest some of the varied locations, close to home and far away, where the characters travel on that journey.



*Figure 4.1*

Figure 4.2



## SUMMING IT ALL UP

Developing the characters, their story, and the world around them are the keys to what make each story unique. Major character types include the protagonist, the antagonistic opposing person or force against him, a romantic interest, comic relief, and the villain (who may or may not also play the antagonist role). Antagonistic elements can be either another character, nature or a higher power, society, or a dual nature in the lead character. The choice of what type of environment the characters are in also affects development. Sometimes, when developing the properties of others, it is hard to preserve what makes the property unique while taking it in a direction dictated either by the medium or other people on the project. Plots need to offer a beginning, middle, and end and often stories contain multiple threads. Story arcs can be used if planned well.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Crafting the Bible for a Pitch

### THE WRITTEN GUIDE TO A CREATOR'S WORLD

Every animated series (and some animated films) create a guidebook about all the major characters, locations, and how they interact with one another in order to keep everyone on staff “on the same page” and make sure things stay consistent within the creative universe. The name for this, on an animated or a live-action production is the “show bible.” A smaller, earlier version of this with many details trimmed usually becomes part of the materials for a pitch, and is often called a “pitch bible” (the term “mini-bible” seems to be vaguer in nature, and often applied in early development after a pitch has been sold). What follows will be an introduction to the pitch bible, a comparison to its full counterpart of the show bible, and how to use the pitch bible.

### HOW IS A BIBLE USED?

The pitch bible serves as a snapshot of the essence of a concept. It brings the most important elements together in a single reference tool. Often, a copy of it is left with producers as a “leave behind” for them to review later so they don’t need to take detailed notes during the pitch.

### THE PITCH BIBLE, THE MINI-BIBLE, AND THE FULL BIBLE

The pitch bible is a short document containing the barest essences of fictional world development to sell executives on an idea. The bibles then may or may not be left behind for further evaluation. This term does not apply to bibles for concepts where the producer acquires something for animation development and needs it fleshed out. The average length for a pitch bible is about five pages. The general rule with a pitch bible is that shorter is better. Not as

short as it one doesn't get any idea, but succinct to get the point across in clear, precise terms.

Mini-bible is a term that gets used often and just as frequently seems to be used incorrectly. It generally seems to be a pitch bible once it is accepted into the development stage, or a bible of that length created when someone is hired on directly to do development on a property without a need to pitch executives on an idea.

A full bible (or a series bible) lays out everything in great detail. It is the foundation handed out to all writers, artists, and production staff. Unlike the short pitch or mini-bible, this document can be as long as needed.

## **WHY A FULL BIBLE ISN'T USED FOR A PITCH**

A full bible contains more than needs to be shared at a pitch meeting. First and foremost, attention needs to be drawn to the essence of the concept. The reality is that some of the smaller details and nuances may be asked for changes anyway before the full bible ever get seen by anyone else. Also, if the people being pitched to get overwhelmed with too much information, it may turn them off to the concept altogether.

## **WHAT A PITCH BIBLE CONTAINS**

### **Major Characters**

All the characters that a creator gave such hard thought over during the part of the process discussed in Chapter 4 appear in the pitch bible. In a brief paragraph (or at the most, two) each character gets introduced as far as name, personality, and role each plays in the tapestry of the storyline.

### **Character Interactions**

It can often be hard to get a sense of how one character reacts to another, much less a range of characters, when each of them is explained in isolation. The character interactions section of the pitch bible allows for focus on paragraphs that illustrate how one character interacts with all others in the main cast, or even how

groups of characters react to other groups. These should be very short, a few sentences each per character at the maximum.

### **Major Locations**

Fortunately, this doesn't have to be the fictional world atlas, with every river and mountain and city planned out. What is must contain are the cities (including specific locations within cities) and other natural terrain that is significant to the principal characters and the story. Besides providing a basic guide of the terrain of the fictional world, on a practical planning level it also indicates how many "standing," or regularly used, sets are envisioned.

### **Major Rules of the Universe**

It is important, especially in magic or science based projects, to stress what the most important rules of the environment are. This gives the people who want to know more about the property an idea of what to expect. However, it is very important to stress that the pitch bible must not bog down with too many details, just a few bullet points to give an idea. If the concept sells, then the finer points can be hashed out.

## **DOES ART GO IN A PITCH BIBLE?**

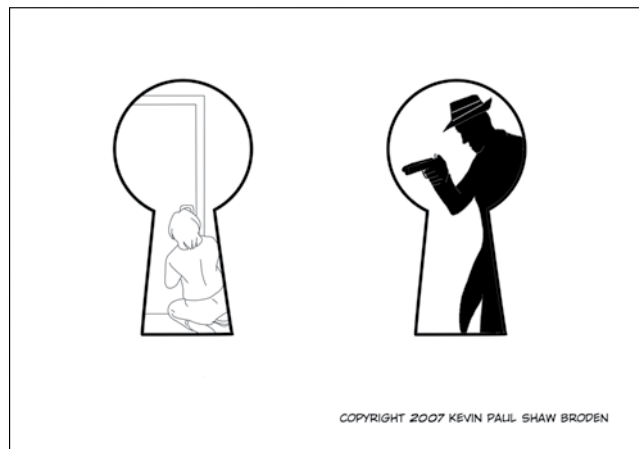
Generally art is not recommended to be included in the pitch bible itself, even if there is other presentation art (which will be explored more fully in Chapter 7). Another reason art is usually not included has to do with the fact it makes the pitch bible look unnecessarily long due to additional page length. The exception comes when the art style serves as an integral part of the world building itself, and there is no other way to make things visually clear in the bible without it. Examples of art appear below that might be found in a pitch bible in circumstances such as those described:



Figure 5.1



Figure 5.2



In a case where someone approaches a studio or producer that is willing to review written pitch submissions, the mini-bible is in essence the pitch for television (for a movie an outline is more likely to be submitted, see Chapter 6). All the key information must be relayed in the document, as no opportunity will be provided to follow up and fill in added details. The pitch will sink or swim based on the written word. Art can be included in this style of pitching, but done so sparingly.

## **DON'T THINK THIS MEANS ONE SHOULDN'T THINK ABOUT THE REST**

Some thought should be put into other elements not portrayed in the mini-bible, just to help make things solid in one's own mind, but only in a general sense. Here are examples.

### **Detailed Backstory**

Though this chapter emphasizes brevity and a broad stroke when forming a pitch, that doesn't mean that only a barebones level should be developed and stop there. Detail of development should progress to a level where it feels natural, then be pared back for presentation. This will help ensure the creator's grasp on the vision of the concept as well as a nice tight presentation.

### **Full Story Arc**

Enough hints of story need to be illustrated in the pitch bible to show an idea has "legs" and can go the distance it needs to in order to be the proper length. However, the executives will not want to be inundated with every plot point in the early stages. There are several reasons for this. One is that they need to feel there is room for them to have input into the process. Another is not so they do not feel overwhelmed early on and will be able to understand the bigger picture.

## **WHY BOTHER DEVELOPING THE OTHER STUFF NOW?**

### **Be Ready to Field Questions "In the Room"**

After a creator makes a pitch, executives may ask a few questions for clarification. If a creator can answer these questions quickly and simply instead of fumbling and mumbling in the room, a better impression will be made regarding the creator's professional qualities. Having done more development than is presented in the pitch allows the creator to be better prepared to answer these spontaneous questions. Though having said that, if a better flash of inspiration strikes as a natural, organic result of a pitch session do not be afraid to run with it. Solid development at least provides a core foundation for added creativity.

## **Figure Out the “Tough Questions” Early**

Sometimes there are complicated aspects of the story vision that should be worked out well in detail even if not presented in a pitch. This is so one does not “paint the development into a corner” by promising elements that cannot be delivered upon later. Better to work out the trickier points and reveal as needed - with the caveat one still needs to be open to input and change.

## **THINGS TO AVOID INCLUDING IN ANY TYPE OF BIBLE**

### **Casting Considerations**

Characters must not be identified as being specifically written with a particular actor in mind. Saying someone sounds reminiscent of another actor is fine as it suggests range, but insisting a part is only for so-and-so is not. An exception comes when a particular actor has already come on board in support of a package deal where he or she gets the specified role, but this approach can put one on thin ice if executives like the idea but not the actor.

### **Detailed Information on Every Character**

Only go into detail on the major characters of the series. Flesh out supporting characters with a little less detail. However, a cabbie that only appears for one scene in the premise for the first episode does not need his whole life story revealed. Granted, inspiration may strike later on how said cabbie (or similar character) can play a greater role later, but right now pare it down to the bare essence of what is needed to launch the show.



### **SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW:**

#### **MARV WOLFMAN**

A writer of video games, novels, animation, theme park rides and more, Marv Wolfman is best known as the creator and writer of comics such as Blade The Vampire Hunter, The New Teen Titans, Bullseye, Black Cat and hundreds of other comic book characters. He also worked as founding editor of Disney Adventures magazine, Senior Editor at DC Comics, and Editor-in-Chief at Marvel Comics. He talks about what goes into making a bible for a pitch.

“A thorough overview of each character, what they think and how they relate to the other members of the cast. The tonal approach a series takes so it can be understood and followed. The kind of stories that are sought. Also, art to show what the characters look like. To let writers know about the series early on before animation is seen and before scripts are done. After the first season, bibles are needed only to remind writers who is who. Any information that one can give writers benefits them. Fleshing out the world makes it clear how characters deal with their surroundings. Before they are accepted bibles are constantly revised. Once a series is go, bibles usually get revised only when changes are made. As I said above, once the series is on the air, or after scripts are done, the bible is somewhat less important.

I’ve never seen a bible for an animated film but that doesn’t mean there isn’t one. Usually bibles are created only for continuing projects. On the other hand, you do essentially the same work as writing a bible on an animated film because you still need to know who the characters are and how they relate to others, also what the environment is and how it affects the story. It may not be called a bible, but it gives the same kind of overview for the single story so it can be understood by the executives, the art director and even possibly yourself as the writer that you would do explaining a series for other writers. Even if the information is essentially the same its intent is different.”

Figure 5.3 is the three page bible I submitted as a written pitch for Deejee and Dwight. Note my brief series overview, character list, sketch for an introductory plot (which arguably doesn't have much of an ending, looking at it years later), and suggestions for other episodes.

## FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA

### Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT

#### DEEJEE AND DWIGHT

Series Development  
by SHANNON MUIR

##### SERIES OVERVIEW

DWIGHT is a very lonely boy at the WILMONT ACADEMY. His jet setting busy parents send him an occasional email at best; he never sees them in person and lives at Wilmont year-round. He's a shy, unpopular, and loves space and science in ways that his teachers frown upon. Caught up in the wonder and mystery of potential life on alien worlds, he's determined to prove they exist.

The humanoid alien DEEJEEFORTHMA -- DEEJEE for short -- and his parents make a wrong turn on their way to their dream vacation and end up landing on the grounds of Wilmont Academy. Deejee eagerly runs out to explore, just as his parents realize the coordinates aren't right and hurriedly take off before they are discovered... not realizing Deejee is still outside.

Dwight discovers Deejee and realizes he must take the alien boy in until his parents find him again. As much as Dwight would like to expose Deejee as an alien to prove all the naysayers wrong, he now risks losing his best -- and only -- friend.

##### CHARACTERS

**DEEJEE** -- Deejee's full name roughly translates to Deejeeforthma, or as his human name becomes, D.G. Forthman, though Dwight calls him Deejee. He's a young curious humanoid alien who wanders too far from his ship and is accidentally left behind. Deejee functions as the equivalent of an Earth kid diagnosed with ADD. His mind is everywhere at once, and Deejee loves getting into everything regardless of the risks.

**DWIGHT** -- Dwight Boyston is shy and unpopular boy at the Academy who has his own room because no one wants to share with him, age 11. He loves space and science and often watches the stars dreaming there would be aliens he could befriend since his own parents never spend time with him. None of the kids like him, though Kieran might if Roger didn't constantly keep him under his thumb. Imagine Dwight's surprise when he discovers Deejee and his dreams come true! Though nowadays he's the cautious half of the pair whenever Deejee's curiosity is peaked.

**ROGER** -- At age 11, Roger Silverman is the richest, most self-centered boy at Wilmont Academy who also has physical size on his side. Roger loves making everyone knuckle under to him, and if they don't, ensures their lives will be miserable. His parents carry so much influence that if he whines, even Headmaster Saunders feels intimidated. Roger's parents show up all the time and drown him with whatever he wants, but this is a far cry from any affection.

**KIERAN** -- Kieran Grant hangs around with Roger because Kieran he feels intimidated by Roger's physical presence and his money. He's scared and feels out of his element, since he's at Wilmont Academy on a scholarship funded by the corporation run by Roger's parents, and is a study year ahead of kids his age (he's only age 10), so he's in classes with Dwight, Deejee, and Roger. Kieran's parents rarely come to the Wilmont Academy, largely out of fear they will embarrass him because they are not rich.

**HEADMASTER SAUNDERS** -- He's in charge at Wilmont Academy. Headmaster Saunders gets very upset when his protocol, principle, or the feeling of the world totally being in order is thrown out of balance. In short, a disciplinarian control freak.

**JESSICA** -- Jessica Chandler, age 11, the pretty and brainy girl from the MASTERSON SCHOOL FOR GIRLS across the lake, has caught the eye of Deejee. The young alien's convinced she must be a female alien from his world also undercover; the name Jesscachanlar is common on his planet, and Deejee thinks she's changed her name to Jessica Chandler. Deejee will do anything to make contact with her; Dwight's not as easily convinced. She's the techno-geek of Masterson School for Girls, and the audience should be left guessing exactly what her story is.

**HEADMISTRESS HARRISON** -- She's in charge at the Masterson School for Girls, though some would wonder how she's managed to stay so. While not senile, she's prone to daydreaming and reminiscing, and can be easily distracted by convincing her to start telling stories of days of past glory. It makes it very easy for Jessica (or Dwight or Deejee if they get caught on the Masterson property) to distract her long enough to get away.

#### **PILOT EPISODE - "WELCOME TO EARTH"**

We see Dwight's loneliness as he looks at a photo of his parents as he gets a rare email from them, and is made fun of by Roger. An upset Dwight, tired of all this, runs away into the woods.

Meanwhile, Deejee's parents make a wrong turn to their interstellar vacation destination and land on the grounds of Wilmont Academy. They realize their mistake and take off to avoid discovery, not realizing Deejee's slipped off the ship. It's not until Deejee's parents reach the vacation planet they realize Deejee is not with them. Apparently he has a habit of running off and getting in trouble, so they think he's hidden somewhere on the vacation world! No telling when they'll realize he's back on Earth, and where they left him.

Dwight meets Deejee in the woods. Deejee shows off some of his techno-toys in his pockets, like nothing Dwight has seen. Dwight is convinced Deejee is an alien, especially when he describes where he's from. However, the one thing Deejee doesn't have is a communicator. It starts to rain. Dwight sneaks Deejee into his room so he can stay dry.

In his room, Deejee sees the picture of Dwight's parents and realizes they have a lot in common. Dwight tries writing out Deejee's name, but all he gets is D.G. Forthman, so this is what Deejee thinks he needs to be in Earth language. Deejee sadly realizes he will need to be here a while. Then he sees Dwight's computer. Before Dwight comprehends what is happening, Deejee figures out how to get into the school computer and set up an identity for himself, as D.G. Forthman. He also tells it he is an exchange student with all bills paid. Dwight protests that Deejee can't do that, it's not legal on our planet, Deejee points out he already did. Dwight tells him to undo it. All the commotion gets the attention of HEADMASTER SAUNDERS, who pokes his head in based on complaints to the other students. Dwight is forced to introduce new student D.G. Forthman in his unusual pajamas. The Headmaster sighs that no one tells him anything these days, and we'll get you proper uniforms in the morning. Now go to sleep! After the Headmaster leaves, Deejee asks Dwight if he still wants him to fix the computer. Dwight sighs, it's too late now. Dwight pleads with Deejee you didn't know better this time, but please please don't do it again.

The next morning, Roger and Kieran give Dwight a hard time about his alien-gazing again. Dwight gets so angry he nearly reveals Deejee's secret, but then introduces his friend D.G. and how he likes the same things too, so Dwight's not so weird after all. They walk off together, while Roger and Kieran can't think of an immediate comeback.

#### **EPISODE IDEAS**

**"Deejee, Meet Jessca"** -- Deejee sees Jessca Chandler while both sets of students have a day at the lake. He's convinced she must be a female alien from his world and sets out to meet her, and Dwight must do anything to stop him. The boys make it onto the Masterson grounds and actually do meet Jessca, but Dwight is able to break things up before Deejee reveals his suspicions to Jessca... leaving each curious about the other and the audience unsure about Jessca's actual background.

**"Career Day"** -- The boys at the school must research their dream career for a class report. Deejee is disappointed he can't find any information on his dream career from his homeworld and must learn about Earth careers. But he truly has no motivation to do the project, and his insolence not to do it creates a threat of Headmaster Saunders contacting Deejee's parents, whose information in the computer is fictional. Dwight has to turn things around and find a career Deejee is interested in reporting on or they may get discovered.

**"Breakout"** -- Deejee breaks out in an body rash that has everyone panicked because they don't know what it is and he has no known allergies. Headmaster Saunders calls in the school nurse, whom Dwight and Deejee fear will look too close and realize Deejee is not human. They're on the run, keeping Deejee from the nurse until the rash goes away. Turns out Deejee has a food allergy, which they only figure out when he tries the food again while hiding out and it makes things worse. Their panicked screams reveal their location, but Dwight makes the connection between the food and the rash at a crucial moment, and Deejee is treated without too much of a look in-depth to reveal his alien self.



## Case Study #2: DOUBLES

### Step 1: Pitch Bible – Solo Development

#### **DOUBLE DUELERS**

Series Development  
by SHANNON MUIR

#### **SERIES OVERVIEW**

Eight children, four sets of twins, genetically engineered to be the future. At least that was the plan of the self-dubbed DR. GENEFACTOR and his assistant ARTHUR FARNSWORTH.

Until the day Arthur got a sense of ethics and tried to liberate the children to give them a normal life. He got half out -- one set of each of the twins -- before a terrible fire prevented him from rescuing the other children. Now their fate, along with Dr. Genefactor, has been unknown for years.

Now teenagers, the four have lived keeping their powers secret and pretending to be normal teenagers. One day, it appears DENA breaks all the rules by jumping off the roof and flying. But mind-probing MALCOLM proves that it wasn't Dena, opening up a barrage of questions to Arthur Farnsworth and a decision how to handle their future as it becomes clear Dr. Genefactor still lives and raised the remaining children in a plot to help him take over the world.

#### **"GOOD" CHARACTERS**

MALCOLM -- Black, 16, master of the mind. He can read other's thoughts and catch visual glimpses of their thought-related flashbacks through physical contact. The brainy nerd of the group, he loves to read and learn information. Intaking thoughts is just another information source for him; he can be quite detached. In some ways, this makes him perfect for his dream of being a psychotherapist. Malcolm dates a girl without powers who doesn't know the truth about Malcolm and his friends. His twin is KEESHA.

YANG -- Chinese, 16, who has the power of channeling heat. He's griddled eggs on a skillet in his hand to firing heat lasers with his eyes. Yang is a gifted musician as well. His twin is YIN; they are fraternal.

DENA -- Caucasian, 16, the pretty popular cheerleader. Since she's able to fly due to her genetic manipulations plus has enhanced speed, she really has to keep her routines under control to not blow her cover. Confident, brash, and full of attitude. Her twin is DONA; they are identical.

LUIS -- Latino, 16, ability to change into whatever he wants. Luis, though a well-rounded sports player, must work hard not to daydream about being anything while in public so not to blow his cover. However, there is a time limit on how long a single shape can be maintained (roughly 2 minutes), and once he changes into a shape cannot change to another or back to his normal self for the duration. His twin is (guy); they are identical.

The 2 pages of Figure 5.4 illustrate my original notes for the concept as an animated series called Double Duelers (and I originally had been working on a comic even before this). Please note that in this version not all the twins are identical, a fact that would change really quickly as it became clear story possibilities would be limited and the impact of having 'double' in the title would be lessened. Soon, I came to the conclusion that in order to do this property justice I would need assistance.



ARTHUR FARNSWORTH -- Now makes his living legally as an inventor who works on payroll. He's told the kids nothing of their past, which makes it all the worse when the past comes knocking on their door.

**"BAD" CHARACTERS**

KEESHA -- Black, 16, powers of the mind. She can read other's thoughts and catch visual glimpses of their thought-related flashbacks through physical contact. Her twin is MALCOLM.

YIN -- Chinese, 16, with the power of channeling intense heat. His twin is ? (guy), and they are fraternal twins.

DONA -- Caucasian, 16, ability to fly and enhanced speed. Her twin is DENA, who looks identical to her.

CARLOS -- Latino, 16, power of transforming into whatever he wishes. However, there is a time limit on how long a single shape can be maintained (roughly 2 minutes), and once he changes into a shape cannot change to another or back to his normal self for the duration. His twin is LUIS, and the brothers are identical.

DR. GENEFACTOR -- He's secretly raised these children in hiding after taking severe hurt rescuing them. Unlike the Farnsworth kids, his four have a much harder time blending in and interacting with society. Since Dr. Genefactor ultimately wants to take the world over, in his eyes, that's not necessarily a bad thing... but it makes it tough for them to try and pass as their twins, in Dona and Dena's cases, since they look alike. His original name and origin is shrouded in mystery; even Arthur Farnsworth doesn't know who Dr. Genefactor really is.

## Step 2: Pitch Bible – First Collaboration

### DOUBLE DUELERS

Series Development

by SHANNON MUIR and KEVIN PAUL SHAW BRODEN

#### SERIES OVERVIEW

The DUELERS is a group of young super heroes who work together to stop crime, super criminals, natural disasters, and so forth. Each have their own unique powers, but work as the perfect team, and on top of that, the public love them. The press and cameras are on them all the time. The public take to them like a winning baseball team. They go on talk shows, and celebrity parties and so forth. To the public these kids can do no wrong.

Of course in private they don't always get along, but they are pretty much a family. Then there's Malcolm who's begun to get mental "glimpses" of someone he doesn't know but seems to be very close to him.

Things suddenly change when they attempt to stop a new group of super-villains. The villains, though masked and unidentifiable, seem to have powers very similar to their own. As if they were a matching and opposite set. They even seem to know how the Duelers work. Where our team has been trained to work together for the benefit of others, the villains work more like rough, street smart kids, trained like a military squad.

After the villains escape, the heroes return to their base, very confused. They inquire with their mentor and benefactor Arthur Farnsworth if he might know who these new villains might be. He obviously knows something, and seems shocked, but gives them little in the way of answer.

To make matters worse. The TV Rumors Shows, like EXTRA, are talking about certain members of the Duelers being seen around town carousing with the wrong type of people and getting in trouble. There is even some photos taken. Our team look at one another in total surprise, they'd all like to blow off steam partying but they know they can't do anything to endanger the team. So who are the impersonators?

#### "GOOD" CHARACTERS

**MALCOLM** -- Black, 16, master of the mind. He can read other's thoughts and catch visual glimpses of their thought-related flashbacks through physical contact. The brainy nerd of the group, he loves to read and learn information. Intaking thoughts is just another information source for him; he can be quite detached. In some ways, this makes him perfect for his dream of being a psychotherapist. Malcolm's best friend is a girl without powers who doesn't know the truth about Malcolm and his friends. His fraternal twin sister is KEESHA.

**YANG** -- Chinese, 16, who has the power of channeling heat. He's griddled eggs on a skillet in his hand to firing heat lasers with his eyes. Yang is a gifted musician as well. His twin is YIN; they are fraternal.

Figure 5.5 (see the next 2 pages) shows the results of my first draft of collaborating a mini-bible with writer and artist Kevin Paul Shaw Broden. Even after Kevin came on board the project, the name stayed Double Duelers at first. Some twins remain opposite genders. Many secondary characters are still not yet created at this point. Kevin's biggest contribution is suggesting one set of twins have become celebrity superstars.

DENA -- Caucasian, 16, the pretty popular cheerleader. Since she's able to fly due to her genetic manipulations plus has enhanced speed, she really has to keep her routines under control to not blow her cover. Confident, brash, and full of attitude. Her twin is DONA; they are identical.

LUIS -- Latino, 16, ability to change into whatever he wants. Luis, though a well-rounded sports player, must work hard not to daydream about being anything while in public so not to blow his cover. However, there is a time limit on how long a single shape can be maintained (roughly 2 minutes), and once he changes into a shape cannot change to another or back to his normal self for the duration. His twin is (guy); they are identical.

ARTHUR FARNSWORTH -- Now makes his living legally as an inventor who works on payroll for a major company. He's told the kids nothing of their past, which makes it all the worse when the past comes knocking on their door.

#### **"BAD" CHARACTERS**

KEESHA -- Black, 16, powers of the mind. She can read other's thoughts and catch visual glimpses of their thought-related flashbacks through physical contact. Her twin is MALCOLM.

YIN -- Chinese, 16, with the power of channeling intense heat. His twin is YANG, and they are fraternal twins.

DONA -- Caucasian, 16, ability to fly and enhanced speed. Her twin is DENA, who looks identical to her.

CARLOS -- Latino, 16, power of transforming into whatever he wishes. However, there is a time limit on how long a single shape can be maintained (roughly 2 minutes), and once he changes into a shape cannot change to another or back to his normal self for the duration. His twin is LUIS, and the brothers are identical.

DR. GENEFACTOR -- He's secretly raised these children in hiding after taking severe hurt rescuing them. Unlike the Farnsworth kids, his four have a much harder time blending in and interacting with society. Since Dr. Genefactor ultimately wants to take the world over, in his eyes, that's not necessarily a bad thing... but it makes it tough for them to try and pass as their twins, in Dona and Dena's cases, since they look alike. His original name and origin is shrouded in mystery; even Arthur Farnsworth doesn't know who Dr. Genefactor really is.

### Step 3: Pitch Bible – Revised Collaboration with Title Change

#### DOUBLES

Series Development

by SHANNON MUIR and KEVIN PAUL SHAW BRODEN

Draft Date: January 23, 2007

#### SERIES OVERVIEW

The BOLD YOUTH are a group of young super heroes who work together to stop crime, super criminals, natural disasters, and so forth. Each have their own unique powers, but work as the perfect team, and on top of that, the public love them. The press and cameras are on them all the time. The public take to them like a winning baseball team. They go on talk shows, and celebrity parties and so forth. To the public these kids can do no wrong.

Of course in private they don't always get along, but they are pretty much a family. Then there's Malcolm who's begun to get mental "glimpses" of someone he doesn't know but seems to be very close to him.

Things suddenly change when they attempt to stop a new group of super-villains. The villains seem to have powers very similar to their own, as if they were a matching and opposite set. They even seem to know how the Bold Youth work. Where our team has been trained to work together for the benefit of others, the villains work more like rough, street smart kids, trained like a military squad.

After the villains escape, the heroes return to their base, very confused. They inquire with their mentor and benefactor Arthur Farnsworth if he might know who these new villains might be. He obviously knows something, and seems shocked, but gives them little in the way of answer.

To make matters worse. The TV Rumors Shows, like EXTRA, are talking about certain members of the Bold Youth being seen around town carousing with the wrong type of people and getting in trouble. There is even some photos taken. Our team look at one another in total surprise, they'd all like to blow off steam partying but they know they can't do anything to endanger the team. So who are the impersonators?

#### "GOOD" CHARACTERS

MALCOLM -- Black, 16, master of the mind. He can read other's thoughts and catch visual glimpses of their thought-related flashbacks through physical contact. The brainy nerd of the group, he loves to read and learn information. Taking in thoughts is just another information source for him; he can be quite detached. He also has to a degree the power of suggestion. In some ways, this makes him perfect for his dream of being a psychotherapist, yet in other ways creates issues. Malcolm's best friend is KELLER, a girl without powers who doesn't know the truth about Malcolm and his friends. His fraternal twin brother is TYRONE.

After additional discussion, the name shortened to strictly Doubles. Double Duelers made it sound like they belonged to an established closed arena fight setup. Also note that this version changes all the twins to identical, begins to introduce secondary characters for both the good and bad guys, along with a more detailed origin. See the resulting bible in Figure 5.6, over the next 4 pages. To further put this revised pitch bible to the test, my writing partner and I decided to write a pilot script. Learn more about this experience in Chapter 6, including why we chose to do this. The revised documents that resulted out of that experience can be found in Chapter 11.

KYOKO - Japanese, 16, who has the power of channeling heat. She's griddled eggs on a skillet in his hand to firing heat lasers with her eyes. She's the pretty popular cheerleader with a fiery attitude. Her twin is KAGAMI.

DENA -- Caucasian, 16. Dena has the gift of super speed. Her twin is DONA; they are identical.

LUIS -- Latino, 16, able to fly. Luis is a gifted musician as well. His twin brother is CARLOS.

ARTHUR FARNSWORTH -- Now makes his living legally as an inventor who works on payroll for a major company. He's told the kids nothing of their past, which makes it all the worse when the past comes knocking on their door.

BELINDA BRAND – The Bold Youth PR Manager.

KELLER -- Malcolm's best friend. She knows about his powers but isn't afraid of them, but will her attitude change with the new people in town. She's a computer whiz who soon will find herself as the non-superpowered member of BOLD YOUTH.

KONNOR – Malcolm's best friend's sometimes annoying younger brother, who totally idolizes Malcolm.

### **"BAD" CHARACTERS**

TYRONE -- Black, 16, powers of the mind. She can read other's thoughts and catch visual glimpses of their thought-related flashbacks through physical contact. Her twin is MALCOLM.

KAGAMI -- Japanese, 16, with the power of channeling intense heat. Her twin is KYOKO.

DONA -- Caucasian, 16, enhanced speed. Her twin is DENA, who looks identical to her.

CARLOS -- Latino, 16, power of flight. His twin brother is LUIS.

DR. GENEFACTOR -- He's secretly raised these children in hiding after taking severe hurt rescuing them. Unlike the Farnsworth kids, his four have a much harder time blending in and interacting with society. Since Dr. Genefactor ultimately wants to take the world over, in his eyes, that's not necessarily a bad thing. His original name was EUGENE FACTOR.

VIOLA CRANE -- Black, in her 30s. A streetwise tough woman who has been a kind of 'house mother' to Dr. Genefactor's teens and clearly has a thing for Dr. Genefactor.

### **ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS**

KENSINGTON NORTON – Keller and Konnor’s father. An old school chum of Arthur Farnsworth and the brains behind the Bold Youth’s technology.

### **ORIGIN**

Eccentric billionaire Arthur Farnsworth was concerned for the future of mankind, and was approached by a bio-chemist who sold himself as the world expert in gene-splicing and could provide Farnsworth with a way of ensuring the future he dreamed of.

Using odd forms for cloning, the scientist soon had several sets of twins that he worked on who were implanted back in their four willing mothers who had signed up for this cause for a variety of reasons – from the money being offered to believing genetic research would improve the world. Farnsworth even fell in love with the young idealistic Japanese woman who thought good things would come from the research.

Over time, Farnsworth began to piece together that Dr. Eugene Facktor’s intents were not quite so honorable. So first he tried to order the scientist to shut down the experiments, but when that didn’t work he tried to liberate the children himself and help the mothers to escape. Unfortunately, when the scientist attempted to stop him there was a fire, and Farnsworth was only able to escape with half the children. The fire engulfed the laboratory, and he feared the bio-chemist and the remaining children had all died. The three mothers willing to escape with him could not take their children because of the environments they had escaped that put them in the position to be test subjects in the first place, or because of the bitterness towards Farnsworth that he could not save all the children -- so they parted ways, leaving Farnsworth to raise the remaining children alone. Though he never forgot the woman he’d fallen in love with, even though she’d hardened her heart with bitterness.

Farnsworth swore that he would provide for those that lived that they would have the lives the others had lost, though he would never tell them of their lost siblings or of the man that fathered them. So raising them almost as if they were his own children he taught them to love the world, and help others. When they reached their teenage years and their super powers manifested themselves, it was only right in all their eyes that they use them to help the world. When they reached their teenage years and their super powers began to manifest themselves, it was only right in all their eyes that they use them to help the world while at the same time bringing in much needed income as his teaching at the local university now brought in insufficient funds by itself.

Eugene Genefacktor, who had already been scorned by the scientific society, and his cloning procedures banned by the government, had great plans to show them all what he could accomplish. He would make a better world through genetics, even if he had to force it upon the world. But Farnsworth had chickened out. As the fire engulfed the laboratory, he was able to save his experiments (the other infants), with the plans of finding someplace to continue his plans. But it wasn’t easy, and to keep his experiments alive, he would have to find a way to raise them. Fortunately Viola Crane, one of the

mothers, remained totally devoted to his cause and stood by him to raise the children in less than desirable condition.

These kids had to grow up on the street, with a hard edge, trying to survive the only way they could. When their powers grew they used them to take what they wanted. But then the bio-chemist saw on the news a group of super heroes who were obviously his other experiments. So he knew he must take back what was his. He pulled the kids together, though it was rough, taught them that it would be better to work together to go after what they wanted. He then showed them the BOLD YOUTH who had what they should have had. It didn't take him long to convince them to go and take it.

Meanwhile, Dr. Genefactor and Viola Crane discover that something did not go as well with the genetic experiments as hoped. They realize they need to go in search of the other mothers in order to get the purest DNA to cure what will eventually destroy all the children. The problem is that Farnsworth has the information. They take it from him, but Farnsworth manages to still retain a backup copy which he shares with the BOLD YOUTH, putting a mission on their hearts to find and protect their birth mothers... though ignorant of what is at stake.

After several episodes of the twins fighting against one another, they will learn the truth over time, and the idea that they are fighting family will have an influence on what happens from here on out. Some on both sides won't care, others will care. A hero will want to help his/her sister. Or a villain will want to take what the sibling has. And so on.

By the end of the first season there will be an uneasy truce between them as they realize their fates are intertwined.

## SUMMING IT ALL UP

The bible serves as a written guide to character, story, and environment building, along with the major rules of the universe. Pitch bibles are the bare essence of the series or film idea used to interest others while full bibles carry every detail of the project. Art is usually not included in a bible but rather offered separately when required. Even though only a pitch bible is needed early on, full development should be done to prepare for any questions that may arise. However, don't make suggestions in a pitch bible that imply telling others how to do their jobs.





# CHAPTER SIX

## Spec Treatments and Pilot Scripts

### GIVING IT A TEST RUN BEFORE IT'S APPROVED

Generally speaking, the bible stage is as far as one needs to go before going in for a pitch. This helps sell the executives - whether they be partners for production or co-financiers - to come on board and be part of a project, while assuring room for input still exists. After that comes the development of a film treatment or outline or a television pilot script. This chapter is designed for those who want to understand this phase of the process before going in to pitch, or in rare circumstances may find a pilot script justifiable to do before a pitch.

### SPEC FILM OUTLINES OR TREATMENTS

If one plans to pitch a film idea, say for example to an independent producer, writing out the entire script in advance is not advised. Bear in mind an animated feature is roughly the length of three half hour television episodes. The producer will likely want some degree of change, which would mean a lot of effort completely thrown out the window.

As emphasized in Chapter 4, the scenario where almost universally. I hear that it is not recommended to do the equivalent of full development early on is the animated film unless someone is on a development team already hired and working in-house. The main reason is that unlike a television series, a person is essentially writing a draft of the entire work on "spec" (for free) that may or may not be approved, versus setting up a blueprint for the future. Also, one needs to bear in mind that for most feature films, major studios do all their development in-house so going even to an outline stage really makes sense if dealing with independent producers.

If someone wants to do some writing to get a better feel of a story's world, an alternative is to write a scene by scene outline or a treatment (the summarized story in prose form), and then expand a few key scenes. The same information used to write a pilot television script as shared later in this chapter can be used in constructing sample scene. If resources permit, it may even be worth the while to script a sample scene or two for use as part of a “sizzle reel” to sell the entire movie idea (see Chapter 7).

In the case of an independent producer putting together his or her own project, a pilot script may be useful. If resources are available, a mini demo reel can be produced using part of the script. Or, if co-financiers want to see a detailed story, this is a case where a script could be beneficial because they generally want more information than the bible (not to mention a business plan for implementing all the elements required).

What follows is a treatment of an unproduced feature I developed and actually sent in at one point to an independent production company called *The Legend of Tanalia*. As I child, I'd grown up on a mix of Asian and Western folk tales from my father being stationed in Japan. One of my favorite stories was about a boy who ended up being raised by bears and other wild creatures and ultimately goes back to save his village. Originally envisioned as just exploring a simple role reversal on that Japanese concept with some original twists thrown in, the character of Tanalia became an intriguing Robin Hood meets Snow White type character as she began taking on more Western archetypes. Example 6.1 shows the treatment for the unproduced feature, written in 2003. An interesting tidbit I discovered when unearthing this: an incomplete bible for *The Legend of Tanalia* dated 2002, labeling it as a television series, so clearly I came to understand somewhere in the process it was better for one long feature than a series of episodes.

## THE LEGEND OF TANALIA

An Animated Feature Treatment

by Shannon Muir

The kingdom of Joya has been peaceful for centuries, ruled by a King and Queen adored by all. The royal family celebrates the first birthday of their daughter, the Princess TANALIA, when the King's evil distant cousin RANS, whose family was banished over the mountains long ago, rises up with a dark army and evil magics to conquer Joya. Unable to flee the castle, the Queen gives the young child to LAFF (real name is Lafferty), the court jester, and tells him to leave Tanalia at the borders of the Mysterious Wood. Laff panics; anyone who returns from the woods does so with their memory erased and how the people see it as a frightening place. The Queen says that is what she hopes for, that Tanalia will forget who she was to save herself. Laff, devoted to his Queen, reluctantly agrees.

Laff, a true bumbling fool, struggles to sneak young Tanalia out in the chaos. Luckily he is such a bumbling fool that he sneaks beneath anyone's notice. As instructed, he leaves Tanalia at the edge of the wood, shoving her into some bushes and begging to her to hide in the wood and stay safe. This is just at the evil cousin's men capture Laff to return him to the castle.

As the men take Laff away, Tanalia pokes her head out only to find herself lifted up by the back of her small royal outfit. As she squirms, we see Tanalia has been lifted up in the mouth of a deer, MOTARA.

Laff is returned to the audience of the evil cousin to find that his beloved King and Queen are trapped in stasis in a magic orb that will keep them alive, and that it will take another spell to release them. The evil cousin -- now the conquering King -- decides Laff's clumsiness amuses him and keeps him around, for now.

Meanwhile, in the Wood, Motara brings young Tanalia to the Lake of Forgetfulness. WIZOR, the wise owl of the Wood, alights and asks Motara her plight. She tells him of the man leaving the child in the woods wanting her to be safe; we have to take care of it. Wizar counsels against this, what have humans ever done for us? Luckily the magic I have worked on this lake makes them forget all when they drink of it and they wander off forgetting they ever came. Motara says that is what we must do; make the child drink of the water and raise her as if the Wood were her home; Motara will take responsibility. Wizar calls Motara a fool as she takes a large leaf into her mouth, dips it into the water, and drops the wet leaf to the child's lips.

Move ahead to seventeen years later. Tanalia, now called Woodgirl by Motara, has grown into a wild and sometimes rebellious teenager. She's taken into playing in the trees in a Tarzan-like way, where Motara cannot reach her. She's very knowledgeable on edible fruit and nuts, and has a keen sense of danger. When humans come, she's been trained to lure them out of curiosity to the Lake Of Forgetfulness. It's clear however that the routines of the wood are beginning to bore her and she resents not being able to go around the boundaries into the town she sees.

Meanwhile, Laff still serves Rans, but has never forgotten his true loyalties. We see one of his many attempts over the years to try and uncover how to release the king and queen without getting caught, but he can't pronounce the words right. He's also developed a loyal ally to help him with distractions and the like, a stable hand named FERRYLL who was Tanalia's age when Joya was conquered and dreams of the peaceful days the Laff's told him about time and again. He also has a fondness for magic, but wishes it could be used for good. Laff often catches him eavesdropping on Rans; today it's as Rans casts a pause spell on a rebellious knight who will not follow orders. After a short while, Rans speaks the counterspell, freeing the young knight. and Rans tells the young knight that's a taste of what he can do to him if he doesn't shape up, leave him for eternity as a statue. As they sneak off, Ferryl says Rans uses that spell a lot to scare people and he thinks he has it memorized.

Together Laff and Ferryl set out to find another way to free Tanalia's parents. However today their luck runs out because Ferryl gets caught. Laff reveals he set the boy up and takes his place, swearing the boy has learned his lesson and let him continue to serve you. Laff thrown into the wood as his punishment; either the dark spirits will take him and he will never return or he'll return without a memory.

As she has been trained to do, Tanalia hears Laff in the woods and tricks him towards the Lake. As he follows her, he calls out after her: "Tanalia? Is that you?"

Motara hears Laff calling out in the woods, and the voice sounds familiar. She follows , and Wizer joins Motara, chiding her that he had warned this would happen. They see Tanalia has had Laff follow her to the Lake's edge, tempting him to drink. As he reaches for the cool clear water, Motara pushes Laff aside.

Tanalia is confused; after all Motara trained her that all humans are bad. Motara speaks to Laff, asks him why he came for her, I kept her safe as you wished. Laff is shocked the deer talked to him, but after some prodding tells Motara, Wizer, and Tanalia about how Rans came years ago. Both Motara and Wizer become very grave, and this does not escape Tanalia's notice. Laff concludes with how Rans put him here for trying to rescue Tanalia's parents.

Tanalia asks Motara if she knows what this Tanalia is. Motara reluctantly tells Tanalia she is the princess. Laff tells how all the people have suffered for all these years and they cannot suffer anymore. Tanalia says that the Wood is her home, why should she care about others? Motara and Wizar are her parents, why should this King and Queen matter? Motara admits Wizar was right, Tanalia cannot live in the forest forever, and they must let her go with Laff.

In an unexpected twist, Wizar gives his support, and Tanalia doesn't understand. She thinks they don't love her anymore. Wizar explains this is not true, and finally reveals the history of the Mysterious Wood. A past king had a royal wizard, and magic was used for good purposes in the land of Joya. However, that king's cousin begged to become the apprentice to the royal wizard, but began using what he learned to do bad things. Finally, he turned his mentor the wizard and many of the royal staff who tried to stop him into animals. Since turning people into animals was not a good thing, it was not something the wizard knew how to reverse without his spell books, but found they had all been hidden. Though the wizard was an animal, he could still cast spells and was able to stop the renegade cousin by casting counter spells... enough that the cousin could not gain the upper hand and fled over the mountains in frustration, unfortunately with the wizard's book of spells. Unable to be changed back, the royal staff that had become animals retreated to the woods, and over the generations people forgot what had happened and since magic was now feared in Joya, twisted the importance of the woods and now began to fear it. The once-human animals also began to find that a trapping of their enchantment was to never age, so Wizar used a variation of a bliss spell to create the Lake of Forgetfulness elements and institute that as a form of protection.

Laff is overwhelmed; Tanalia still doesn't understand why she should become part of that world. Shouldn't they stay here and be safe?

Wizar tells them all if the dark magics have returned, and Rans learns the true significance of the woods, he will destroy them so the magic within is no longer a threat. Right now, because he only knows what the townspeople have told him, he sees it as a non-threatening form of evil magic that makes people forget. However, they may be Joya's best hope if someone can get Wizar the spell book of the evil king wizard to find the needed counter spells. Tanalia, as Joya's princess, has to lead the change to save its people and the people of the wood. If she does not act, all will be lost.

Tanalia initially wants to make all this go away, and herself reaches to take a drink from the Lake. Wizar chastises her by saying that if she does that, he will make sure she remembers everything, for he knows the counter spell. Defiant Tanalia does so, and as promised Wizar casts a spell that removes all effects of the Lake... so much so that she remembers the love of the King and Queen, she remembers Mommy giving her to Laff, and being left in the woods. As those emotions surge back through her for the first time in almost eighteen years, it changes her and she becomes driven to action. Now it's personal.

Laff sneaks Tanalia into the town to show her how badly the people live and to teach her how to blend in with the humans as the next phase of her plan takes shape. She realizes the trust of the humans must also be won over, as it will take all their efforts to beat Rans. He also introduces her to Ferryl, and lets the young man in on the secret. It is decided that Laff will return to the castle a wandering amnesiac and still seem so bumbling that maybe Rans will want him back, so that he can help Tanalia take back the castle. Laff succeeds in convincing the guards and winning over Rans. Once that trust is regained, he will search the castle for the spell to free the King and Queen and get it to Wizer.

Meanwhile, Tanalia becomes like a female cross between Tarzan and Robin Hood, operating out of the headquarters of her magic wood but doing good for the people of the town. Her forest survival skills make her impossible to catch, and while her enemies can chase her into The Mysterious Wood, few would dare because they fear legends and shadows. And those that do, the Lake of Forgetfulness makes them wandering lost as they are returned to the town. Other townspeople who come into the wood, if they are non-threatening, learn about Tanalia and the animals and they began to win new secret allies throughout the town.

Rans suspects this new lady rebel is the missing Princess Tanalia, who has been mentioned for years but her fate unknown. He will do anything to have her brought before him. Unfortunately for Tanalia and her friends, that opportunity presents itself when Laff slips up and it becomes clear that he did not lose his memory in the woods, so Rans casts a spell to extract the truth from Laff. Ferryl overhears the long interrogation commence and takes advantage of the opportunity to search the King's library for the spell. Ferryl finds it just as Laff divulges everything, including Ferryl's involvement in the plot. Rans demands the palace be searched for Ferryl just as he's beginning his escape with the spell. Ferryl races to avoid the guards and his quick nimbleness is too much for the men in armor, finally disappearing into the wood.

Ferryl breaks the news to Tanalia about Laff's capture and presents the spell to Wizer. Tanalia says they can wait no longer, and the animal army of the wood, led by Tanalia and Ferryl, must get to the castle so Wizer can cast the release spell. Rans is overjoyed because he believes Laff will draw Tanalia straight into his clutches, not realizing the power and determination of the animals. As Tanalia makes her way to the castle, people see Tanalia with the animals, and recognize her as their valiant guardian against Rans. She reveals her identity as Princess Tanalia calls to them to join with her in freeing the real King and Queen and drive Rans out forever, together we can do it but I need your help. Slowly, as people realize what Tanalia has done for them, they get the courage to join with her until a large amount of the town walks with her, Ferryl, and the animals right up to the castle.

Their numbers overpower the guards, combined with protection spells from Wizar, and Tanalia goes to face off with Rans with Motara, Wizar and some of the animals and townsfolk, while Ferryl leads the rest to find and free Laff. While making her way to the throne room they encounter guards, most of which Tanalia fends off, and Motara risks becoming injured by the last guard, to give Tanalia and Wizar the chance to get to the throne room.

Ferryl and the others free Laff and go to join Tanalia in the throne room.

Not realizing the significance of Wizar, Rans and Tanalia face off while buying Wizar the opportunity to get near the orb with Tanalia's parents. As Wizar begins to chant the spell, Rans pays attention midway through and interrupts Wizar, shooting spells at the bird, which Wizar is able to counter. Just then, Ferryl, Laff and the others appear. Ferryl nervously speaks the pause spell he overheard Rans cast earlier in the movie, freezing Rans. Tanalia asks Ferryl if he knows how to undo it; Ferryl shrugs and says he doesn't have that part memorized yet.

With Ferryl's help, Wizar makes his way through all the resources left behind by Rans and locates the reverse spell to return the animals from the wood back to their human forms. We learn that Wizar was a past castle magician, and Motara a castle housekeeper who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Tanalia's parents invite the former magic animals to become part of their new castle staff as Joya once again becomes a joyous kingdom. Ferryl moves out of the stables and becomes Wizar's apprentice.

And as for Rans: he's spending time locked away in a royal storage room as a statue.

Tanalia tries to play the part of royalty but remains the most improper princess in terms of manners, as we see at her debutante ball at story's end... yet became one of the strongest rulers of all time. But that's another story, as we close the storybook for now.



## **WHEN ONE SHOULD WRITE A TV PILOT SCRIPT AND WHEN NOT TO**

Television pilot scripts are almost always written when someone is paid by a company to create one. The final result may or may not actually air as an episode. They are never used as part of a pitch, to my knowledge. Executives will want to feel they have a lot of say in the creative process, and a finished pilot script may make them feel a concept is too locked down.

However, there is one scenario where I personally advocate writing a television pilot script. This advice applies to someone newer to development, and is in fact a process I personally adopted when I first started learning without regular access to mentors and still sometimes use in developing materials today (though not on all projects). Writing a pilot script proved to be a way for me to “test drive” my show bible. Did the characters end up interacting the way I’d imagined them doing so in the bible; if not, why not, and was the bible or the script version the better approach? Can they effectively carry an entire episode for the length (11 or 22 minutes of screen time) the developer envisions the show to be? If the idea sells and the person creating the pitch gets the chance to write the script, that’s the time to take what dialogue and sequences worked from the other draft (if approved) and use them again; if the person who pitched doesn’t get the chance to write a pilot script but someone else does, and there is an opportunity to give feedback, what was learned can be given as diplomatic suggestion. At the very least, if someone needs to learn about the process, he or she can learn more by doing if willing to be critical and analytical.

## **WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF A PILOT SCRIPT?**

A pilot script, as described earlier, sets up the world. Sometimes it is fully produced and counts as an actual series episode. Other times, the script is used as simply a sales tool. In these cases, only a portion of it is produced as a sales piece, and sometimes just the written word becomes a sample.

## **THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A “PILOT” AND “REGULAR” SCRIPT**

The purpose of a pilot script for television is to introduce the characters and the environment of a show. Generally speaking pilot shows are origin stories, focused on how the universe has come to be in the condition it will be for the main series. They may spend a bit more screen time weaving in characters explaining elements of history with story action.

## **ANIMATION SCRIPT FORMAT BASICS**

This book presumes knowledge of all the steps of a television script (premise, outline, script); to teach them is beyond the scope of this text. If more information about these steps is required, other books on the market exist that focus on that process. What will be focused on here is a quick overview regarding the nuances of an animation script that make it different from its live-action (script with human actors) counterpart. The next page is a sample script page featuring Deejee and Dwight (see Figure 6.2).

**ACT TWO**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. DWIGHT'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

Deejee continues to frantically around everything in Dwight's room. He goes to look under the bed as Dwight shakes his head disapprovingly.

DEEJEE

(Highly stressed)

How can you not have one?

DEEJEE - gets up from under the bed and continues to zoom around at a rapid pace.

DWIGHT

Have what?

DEEJEE

A Teerg Machine. How do you contact others not nearby?

DWIGHT - laughs as he digs a flip style cell phone out of his pocket.

DWIGHT

(tries not to laugh)

We use these. They're called phones.

Deejee ENTERS FRAME and snatches the cell phone from Dwight. He flips the phone open and starts dialing wildly.

DEEJEE

(Excited)

Deejeeforthma--

DEEJEE - holds the phone away from his ear as we hear <LOUD YELLING> and then closes the phone.

DEEJEE (CONT'D)

Must be a wrong connection.

Deejee starts to dial again, but Dwight grabs the phone.

DWIGHT (O.S.)

(sternly)

You. Can't. Phone. Home.

DISSOLVE TO:

## Shot Calls or No Shot Calls?

In the beginning, a major element that separated animated and live-action scripts came with the use of shot calls describing how individual camera setups look; calling the shots on paper is practically considered a “no-no” in live-action but often appear in animated scripts. The types of shots described range from upshot and downshot angles, to pans across wide open spaces or cityscapes, split-screens and more. Suggestions such as these are intended to help the director and storyboard artists get a better idea of the writer’s intent as well as help them work faster by “pre-staging” the sequences. However, with the growing use of 3D animation which has more camera potential along the lines of live-action, more animated shows – not all of them 3D -- are returning to the idea of writing simply in “master shots,” allowing more freedom of camera style and movement back to the storyboard artist and director’s vision. Ultimately, then, whether or not a script contains master shots or calls the shots depends on the individual production needs and style.

## Parts of an Animation Script

*Scene Heading (also known as Slugline):* In the page sample, INT. DWIGHT’S ROOM – NIGHT is a scene heading. This describes where action takes place and is broken up into several components:

- Int. Or Ext. - Is it taking place inside (interior) or outside (exterior)?
- Location name (in this case, it is Dwight’s room)
- Time of Day (usually Day or Night, but if a specific time of day such as Sunset is needed, it can be specified)
- Continuous - is it continuous after a prior scene, and is used for act breaks and passages of time back to back at same location. Note the Continuous in the Scene Heading on the sample page.

*Action:* This simply describes how characters move on screen. Sometimes it can be individual sentences, or sometimes a paragraph made up of several sentences. The key is that the paragraphs not

get too detailed with what is going on and kept in broad strokes, as the specific timing will be left up to the director.

The paragraph right below the scene heading is a good example of action description. Notice that the initial description does not have a suggested shot call, though every action description afterwards does. This is indicated by the words in capital letters at the start of the action description, followed by a dash and then the rest of the action description. The person(s), angle, or object indicated in capital letters would be the item focused on in the shot.

**Dialogue:** Dialogue refers to the words spoken by each character. The format of these varies whether or not a series is prime-time animation or not; due to the constantly changing nature of prime-time animation dialogue (since its themes and many of its writers came from the live-action sitcom arena), its dialogue is double spaced for jotting rewrites on the fly similar to live-action television sitcoms. Since the sample page is for daytime animation, dialogue is single spaced. However, please note that some animated stories are told completely by the character's actions and do not require words, or may be in a totally different language than the viewer but the movement tells the entire story so the content can easily be understood.

**Parenthetical:** A parenthetical is used help clarify to actor how to emotionally read dialogue. However, it must be borne in mind that depending on the production the animation may be limited and unable to convey the desired emotion. The trick is to discover how to balance the needed vocal performance and the available animation detail to make character emotion clear. There are several on the sample page.

**Transition:** This indicates the shift from one scene to another. In most circumstances the basic CUT TO (an instant change from one scene to the next, with no passage of time) is implied and not written out, and instead the next Scene Heading (Slugline) is written. Other transition types are:

- MATCH CUT TO: When there is an immediate jump in time to the next scene but two items are needed to match up as a transition.
- DISSOLVE TO: The scene that is finishing slowly

disappears to be replaced by another. It also usually indicates some time has passed between one scene and the next. The sample page ends with this kind of transition.

- **MATCH DISSOLVE TO:** This is the same idea as a Match Cut but it also usually indicates a passage of time.
- **WIPE TO:** A pattern transition between scenes of some sort, generally stylized to a specific show, in which one scene is pushed aside for the other or the stylized logo placed between two scenes.
- **FADE IN:** Coming out of black to begin a show or act. Please note the FADE IN: at the top of the sample sheet. The black at the start of the show slowly fades away to reveal the show images. It is the only transition that is left justified.
- **FADE OUT:** Used when ending an act or ending a show as the image slowly is replaced by black.
- **FADE TO BLACK:** This rarely gets used, and essentially consists of what amounts to a dissolve from a scene to blackness within an act. Used for dramatic effect, such as a scenario where a villain gloats about a hero being trapped and we transition to where the hero starts out trapped in total darkness until a light source enters the picture.
- **CUT TO BLACK:** Similar to Fade to Black, except the transition is quick and jarring. Used within an act for dramatic effect, usually when a person has been knocked unconscious and the next scene starts from their POV waking up.

***Sound Effects:*** Sound effects are required noises that enhance the action. Phones <RING>, doors <SLAM>, and horns <HONK> just to name a few. Sound effects appear in the action in carats as shown in the prior sentence. Look for the sound effects that appear on the sample page.

***All Uppercase Letters on First Appearance:*** People and props (items) that are important to the story must always appear in all

uppercase letters on first appearance. This is so they stand out to the production staff when they need to figure out what must be designed for a story. It's also a good way to call a script reader's attention to something as the written word lacks cues.



### **SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: JYMN MAGON**

Jymn Magon has been in the animation business for over twenty years, where he has developed, written, story edited, produced, and/or voice directed numerous hit shows. He has worked for Disney, MGM, DreamWorks, and many other studios. His work includes pre-school shows (like *Make Way for Noddy* and *The Book of Pooh*), comedy-adventure (*Tale Spin* and *All Dogs Go to Heaven*), and films (*A Goofy Movie* and *Casper Meets Wendy*). Jymn also teaches animation writing at UCLA Extension. Here he shares his experience in the creation of pilot scripts.

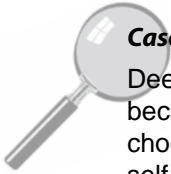
“As part of a normal development deal (and I’m speaking both as a freelancer and a staff developer), a studio/network will want to see a bible first. This will tell them the goal & tone of the series, the settings, the characters, how the characters interact, and sample stories. Once the execs agree that this is the show they want to do, they will then order a pilot script. Naturally, the process of actually writing the script may reveal new concepts that will need to be retro-fitted into the bible.

This is probably the toughest script you will write. Not only do you have to introduce all the main characters and situations (which often necessitates lots of exposition), you still have to find room to tell an entertaining story. This single episode has to set the feel, the look, and the sound for the entire series. That’s a lot to cram into a single document. Worse still, everyone and his brother reads and gives notes on that script. No other episode has more scrutiny. (By the way, we used to get around this at Disney by doing a pilot movie, which was actually multiple episodes cut together into a single event. It gave us more room to introduce the new cartoon universe.)

I’ve been very lucky in that most of my pilot scripts have been produced and aired, but this isn’t always the case. When you think

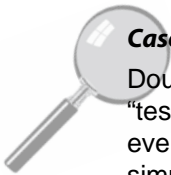
of the number of shows that go into development every season, and then consider that only a handful will be put into timeslots, the odds are against a pilot script being animated. The unused bible and pilot go into a file somewhere, probably never to see the light of day again.”

## THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA



### **Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT**

Deejee and Dwight does not have a pilot script, because neither was I asked to write one nor did I choose to write one on my own. I felt the concept fairly self-explanatory. The sample script page included in this chapter I created solely for the illustrative purposes of the book, relying on information I knew the reader would already be familiar with.



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

Doubles proved to be a case where it helped to “test drive” the bible to be sure things worked before even considering a pitch. The concept itself looks simple on the surface, something many people could do, but its key is in the twins and the effectiveness of how their characters interact. That could only be tested by writing it out. This step of the case study follows the evolution of that script and how it affected development.

### **Step #1: Outline**

The first thing my writing partner and I did was put together rough notes for the pilot script. Remember that more than a few character names and abilities changed, as shown in the early steps in Chapter 5's case study, and this was the time period many of those changes occurred. The largest of these is the change of Arthur's last name from Farnsworth to Forsythe, a change made for many reasons forgotten to me – I think just that it largely instinctually didn't “feel right” - but recently I was also reminded that the Doctor in *Futurama* is Doctor Farnsworth so it was definitely a good call. After this we made a complete full outline (a treatment can be done as an alternative to an outline, but outlines are more common in



Note the first major change in this from the original notes I had before coming together with Kevin on the project. Luis and Carlos can fly, they are not shape-changers. This came up as we were trying to figure out who would arrive at the scene at what point. Once we had to actually put the characters into action, the script showed us where both the bible and outline did not operate the most effectively. It made far better sense to have half the team (one of each gender at that) be able to arrive faster on-scene than the other two. [Figure 6.3 –Doubles outline]

television) for the episode after considering issues that came out of our brainstorm session. The outline went through several drafts, the final version of which is on the next 8 pages as Figure 6.3.

**DOUBLES**  
**"Memories in the Mirror"**  
 by SHANNON MUIR and KEVIN PAUL SHAW BRODEN

**Draft Date: January 17, 2007**

**TEASER**

- 1) **INT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - NIGHT**  
 A FIRE burns all around. A hand reaches out and grabs TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM, and a voice like from heaven tells him to move. But Malcolm continues to look towards the fire expecting someone else to appear and finally starts shouting in a little boy's voice:  
 "Tyrone! Tyrone!"
  
- 2) **INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT**  
 Malcolm, now a TEENAGER, awakes from a nightmare, shouting the "Tyrone." A name he knows nothing about. He's awakened LUIS, who looks over at him, as he calmly but with determination gets out of bed. "Don't freak out man, it's just the klaxon alarm." The alarm. Malcolm knows what that means; they're being called to duty! He and Luis need to suit up quickly. They pull flashy outfits from the closet.
  
- 3) **INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**  
 The two boys, now in costume, run down the hall, the klaxon still sounding. An already suited up DENA and KYOKO join them in equally flashy outfits. Kyoko lights a flame in one hand and comments that she wonders what excitement is in store for them this time; we can tell by her attitude how overeager and confident she is. Malcolm uses one of his mental abilities (telepathic suggestion) to remind her in a lecturing tone that Dr. F keeps warning her about playing with fire in the house and she just stops.  
  
 Dena leaps ahead of them with a somersault or two and reaching and opens the door at the end of the hall, but Luis has flown ahead of them all and gets there first.
  
- 4) **INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**  
 Sitting at his desk is DR. ARTHUR FORSYTHE, who presses a button under his desk and turns off the klaxon as the kids enter. At his side is BELINDA

BRAND, part chaperone and part Public Relations representative. (Belinda should be friendly, saying good morning to the kids, but Forsythe is silent and grim.)

"So what's up?" Luis asks.

"This," Dr. Forsythe says, pointing to the fireplace behind him as the painting on the wall flips to reveal a TV monitor showing what is announced as live news coverage from helicopter cameras. On the monitor we see a gang of four kids (in street gang attire) terrorizing a warehouse district.

"You got us out of bed for a standard gang mugging?" Luis yawns. "We're the Bold Youth! We don't do standard street stuff."

The image on the screen centers on a fight between one female Asian teenager who holds a hand high above. The teenager looks a lot like Kyoko, something which makes Kyoko angry as to what this poser will do to her image. Then the "poser's" fist bursts into flame.

Kyoko's hand goes to her mouth in shock.

## ACT ONE

- 1) **INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**  
The Bold Youth spring into action. Dena races on ahead before anyone can stop her, and Luis flies off out the study window. Belinda beckons for Malcolm and Kyoko to come with her.

- 2) **INT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT**

Malcolm and Kyoko arrive in a van driven by Belinda emblazoned with the name of their team, the BOLD YOUTH. They see Luis and Dena trying to take action. The other two youth jump out of the back and start taking on the attacking people, the media watching. Kyoko immediately races for the Asian girl and starts trying to take her on, finding up close they are mirrors of themselves in style, build, and mannerism.

"When I was named the Japanese word for mirror, I never dreamed I'd really find someone who almost

really was my mirror... except for the fact you're on the wrong side," seethes the bad girl.

"Mirror?" the girl asked puzzled. "My name is also mirror. Kyoko."

"Kagami. Not pleased to meet you," the other girl KAGAMI says, totally getting the upper hand.

Elsewhere, Malcolm, Dena, and Luis also take on teenagers who look and fight just like them!

Malcolm and the boy who looks like him keep trying to make mental suggestions to one another to do things, but each can counter equally. Finally, they try to read one another's minds, and they both see the same scene of fire filling their minds except the names being screamed out alternate: "Malcolm! Tyrone! Malcolm! Tyrone!" Both fall to the ground, screaming "I'm Malcolm!"/"I'm Tyrone!" and then together: "GET OUT OF MY HEAD!"

Dena and the other girl like her are chasing circles around each other. Dena's seeing what's happening to the others and is trying to chase after the other girl for answers, but the other girl can keep away from her at an equally fast pace, Dena can't catch up, and they continue chasing in a circle in a blur.

Luis and Carlos fly some incredible patterns to stay out of each other's reach, more impressive than any stunt pilot.

As police sirens are heard in the distance, the attackers finally break off and take off before anyone can hear them, mainly getting the upper hand by Tyrone making the mental suggestion for everyone to let them get away.

Belinda goes up to the others, who are devastated and shocked. This is their first loss as the Bold Youth. Belinda steps in and says that as their PR manager, she'll step in and take charge, not to worry, people won't soon forget the BOLD YOUTH!

3) INT. TALK SHOW SET - DAY

Belinda has booked the group quickly on some low-rated talk show with a sleaze for a host. Just like a tabloid, the host can't help but call attention to the group's defeat at first. However, the kids step in and turn it around as best they can by turning the subjects to things such as how they got started, their personal likes and dislikes and other small talk, guiding the defeat to be pushed into the background.

Belinda congratulates them afterwards, even though they don't feel they accomplished much. Acting more like a surrogate mother than a PR manager, she tells them sometimes starting small is best, they just had to act quickly. Soon things will swing their way again.

4) **INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

Belinda and Arthur speak privately that evening. Unlike Belinda, Arthur Forsythe is not pleased with the appearance. He isn't pleased with the public attention (The two adults are always against each other over how the team should be handled.)

"They're still children..." he says with great concern.

"You allowed them to go out there," she says, "because you couldn't afford to raise them otherwise and you at least wanted them to be using their powers legitimately and responsibly."

"It was wrong of me," he says. "This is far too much responsibility too young."

"You raised them to improve their skills and use them wisely, which is what all good heroes do," she replies, "so shouldn't they be allowed to enjoy being heroes? Besides, if they aren't supposed to be heroes, what did you hire me for?"

Arthur doesn't give an answer.

5) **INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT**

Malcolm looks out his window at the house next door. A neighbor girl his own age, KELLER, is at her window talking over to him. He asks if she saw the TV program, she says yes in a way that doesn't hide the fact she didn't like it very much.

"I miss just coming over and hanging and playing video games with you, but you're never home" she tells him. "Why did you guys get into doing this Bold Youth gig anyway? I mean, it's kind of weird and neat you can do all that stuff with your brain. But how can you use it to save the world?"

Just then, from O.S.: "Keller likes Malcolm. Keller likes Malcolm."

Keller pushes down her little brother KONNOR who keeps peeking over the windowsill, apologizing for little brother's behavior.

"I saw Malcolm on the TV. He was awesome!" Konnor says. "My sister likes a TV star."

Keller just shakes her head.

"Malcolm is not a TV star, Malcolm is just—"

At that moment, the klaxons go off again at the Forsythe house. Malcolm sighs.

"Malcolm is just a member of Bold Youth," he says sadly. "Good night, Keller," he adds and then closes the window behind him.

6) **INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

The kids arrive, suited up, only to be shown footage of the people they fought apparently posing as them and doing horrible things all over town in separate incidents. No one gets a good look, but since these people appear to be in similar costumes to their own now (even though no one gets a perfect look at their attackers) the news rumor mill is starting to theorize that their attackers inspired the BOLD YOUTH to go bold and bad.

The four kids are devastated. They don't know what to do next to save their reputations.

Just then, Belinda barges in very upset, with Keller and Konnor at her heels. Showing them more news and "gossip" reports about them doing things they would

never do, "or at least I don't believe you would ever do." The kids feel betrayed that the people they love would ever doubt them.

Keller in particular is devastated, chewing out Malcolm as to how he and the others can be such bad role models for Konnor. Malcolm helps Keller calm down and reminds her how long they've known each other and how she's been able to read things between them better than he's ever been able to use his powers on her. If there's anyone in the world he couldn't hide from it's her. Malcolm begs Keller to help them search out information about the people they came up against, being she's a computer whiz and all. Keller agrees.

## **ACT TWO**

### **1) INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT**

Keller and Malcolm talk across through their open windows, Luis overhears as well. Keller has done a computer search that reveals some reports of other super powered beings, even before these new people appeared. But they are mostly rumors and no major police reports. As if people were too scared to mention them in the reports. But the things described in those rumors match the abilities of these four people.

### **2) INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - GIRLS' ROOM - NIGHT**

They knock on the door and call a meeting in the girls' room. Together the four of them decide Arthur Forsythe must be hiding something, and they want to know what. Four kids their age with similar looks and powers is just too much coincidence.

### **3) INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

The four kids press Forsythe for answers. Forsythe, with Belinda also present, decides must tell them a story, if not entirely true. It is about a "mad scientist" experimenting on children. Arthur attempted to stop it, but there was a fire. He saved what children he could, but didn't know of any others that had survived. From a close shot of a stunned Malcolm MATCH CUT TO:

### **4) EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

MATCH CUT TO a close shot of a very mean looking Tyrone. His 'gang' is at play in the city streets out front an old orphanage/apartment building. Part of their fun is harassing other people on the street. This is a run down part of town where people don't go to the cops against normal thugs, let alone super powered ones. This is their world, darker and dirtier than that of the other kids.

They are "called to dinner," by their HOUSE MOTHER, a African American woman in her 30s who looks like she could be a commando in her own right, both in build and attitude. The people may be terrified of these, but the shout of their House Mother is enough to put fear into all of them. She does not appear happy at all regarding how they handled themselves earlier, but at the same time an underlying plan is still working. She ends on the fact that they will all have what they want very soon.

### **ACT THREE**

#### **1) EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

The Bold Youth has traveled through town to an area that Keller's research has indicated several other sightings of powerful kids, but no substantial facts because of no police reports. Keller and Belinda are in the front of the van.

This has taken them into the neighborhood of our 'gang'. They try to talk to people in the neighborhood, but they don't get the same response as they would elsewhere. These people either ignore them or try to get away from them. Almost frightened by them. Their presence doesn't go unnoticed and the group is soon attacked by the 'gang'. "Stay out of our 'hood!"

During the fight, Malcolm sees snippets of each of their lives and begins to recognize puzzle pieces of a common bond. Clearly Tyrone is doing the same.

This is followed by an all out Battle Sequence in which words like "Brother" and "Sister" are thrown around in a negative and degrading context (ex. "Thank goodness I don't have a sister like you!")

Keller winds up as a hostage in the fight.

2) INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

DR. GENEFACTOR and the HOUSE MOTHER take the opportunity to pay Arthur Forsythe a visit. When they first come, he addresses them by the names he last knew them as (DR. EUGENE FACTOR and VIOLA CRANE) but most of all is shocked by the fact they are still alive. Dr. Genefacktor corrects Forsythe and proclaims himself Dr. Genefacktor, the man with the power to father a new world. Now he's going to take back what is his, starting with some information I know you stole from me. Forsythe is horrified.

3) EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The Bold Youth rescue Keller, but not without allowing the opportunity for the other teens to escape. Belinda sees quite the Public Relations battle ahead.

Malcolm is the most troubled by the whole thing, especially now that he knows not only his nightmares are real but from reading the minds of the others, they're more connected than anyone wants to admit.

4) INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

The Bold Youth return to find the study trashed and Forsythe returning to consciousness. The kids are upset they couldn't defend Forsythe. As he comes to, they ask who did this, and he tells them they are all in danger. Forsythe tells them someone came to get something from him, but as he opens a hidden panel in his fireplace he points out the fools didn't get the only copy.

Hidden in the fireplace is a data chip. Forsythe drops it into a slot on the desk which unveils the TV showing pictures of four women, one of which is HOUSE MOTHER at about age 18. The others are one Asian woman, one Caucasian woman, and one Latina woman at about the same age.

"Children," he says to them. "The Bold Youth has a whole new mission... find out the truth about your birth mothers and why it is so important to our new enemy."

On their stunned reactions, we FADE OUT.

**THE END**



## **Step #2: Script**

### **Teaser – First Draft**

Some animated half-hour television episodes start with beginning credits and then just use a three act structure. Others begin with a small “teaser” to get people interested in the storyline, cut to opening credits (usually followed by commercials) and then back to the rest of Act One. The idea of a “tag,” a short bit at the end of a show along with the ending credits, rarely gets used in animation and is more used in live-action sitcom (though in theory a prime-time animated sitcom might employ this given its similarities to the live-action sitcom).

**DOUBLES**  
**"Memories in the Mirror"**  
by SHANNON MUIR and KEVIN PAUL SHAW BRODEN

**INT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - NIGHT**

A FIRE burns all around. TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM, a young African-America child, sits safely in the center of a room where he is surrounded by objects on fire.

TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM  
<crying, sniffing>

MALCOLM'S POV - An ADULT GLOVED HAND reaches out and tugs at Malcolm. He's not responsive.

MALE VOICE  
Come, Malcolm!

Malcolm continues to look up towards camera, crying. All he responds with is calling out a name.

TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM  
Tyrone! Tyrone!

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT**

A teenage MALCOLM awakes from a nightmare. The sound of an <ALARM> is heard.

MALCOLM  
Tyrone!

WIDE ON ROOM - Malcolm is sitting up in his head, while LUIS is already standing next to his.

LUIS  
Having that dream again? Or was it the  
warning alarm actually waking you up this  
time?

Malcolm snaps to with the recognition of the alarm.

MALCOLM  
(snapping orders) The alarm! Go!

Both leap out of bed and over to the closet, where they pull out flashy outfits emblazoned with the logo of their team, the BOLD YOUTH (a B and Y with the Y formed out of an unraveling DNA strand).

PUSH IN ON THE LOGO as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

For this show, we chose to use a teaser and three act structure, as it is the most common for action-adventure shows. Figure 6.4 shows the four page teaser as we first wrote it. This includes any typographical errors and other mistakes, as will be shown throughout the sample script. Note how quickly we introduce everyone as part of the action while it unfolds, yet leave enough for people to ask questions about and hopefully come back after the credits.

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

MALCOLM AND LUIS - Exit their room, wearing their costumes, the <ALARM> still sounding.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - As they start run down the hall and joined by DENA and KYOKO in similar costumes.

ON KYOKO - her excitement is revealed by her hand bursting into flame.

KYOKO  
(overeager, confident)  
Wonder what cool adventure is in store  
this time?

INCLUDE DENA

DENA  
Things are never 'cool' around you,  
Kyoko.

MALCOLM - looking towards Kyoko with disapproval, and speaks to her TELEPATHICALLY.

MALCOLM (V.O.)  
(telepathic filter)  
And you know what Dr. Forsythe says about  
playing with fire in the house.

KYOKO - looks back Malcolm with disappointment, and the fire in her hand goes out.

KYOKO  
You're no fun.

GROUP SHOT as they head further down the long hallway, Luis is in the back of the group.

DENA - leaps ahead of them with a somersault or two and reaches to open the door at the end of the hall.

CLOSE ON DOOR KNOB - As Dena's hand reaches into frame, so does Luis' hand.

PULL BACK to reveal Luis hovering above Dena as he turns the knob and pushes the door open, surprising her that he's gotten there first.

LUIS  
(polite)  
Ladies first.

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

Sitting at his desk is DR. ARTHUR FORSYTHE, who presses a button on a CONTROL PANEL. At his side is BELINDA BRAND, part chaperone and part Public Relations representative. Belinda is friendly and bright even at this late hour, but Forsythe is silent and grim.

REVERSE ANGLE - on team entering office.

MALCOLM  
So what's up?

KYOKO  
I still don't understand why you never  
read his mind and find out.

MALCOLM  
Because, because it wouldn't be right.

BELINDA/FORSYTHE

BELINDA  
That's the spirit, Malcolm. Uphold the  
Mission Statement of the Bold Youth.

DR. FORSYTHE  
(stern)  
Enough, Ms. Brand.

Dr. Forsythe presses another button on the control panel.

ANGLE ON A PAINTING HANGING ABOVE FIREPLACE - It rotates around to reveal a flat-screen TV on which images labeled as live news coverage from a helicopter camera is playing. On the monitor we see FOUR KIDS IN STREET GANG LIKE ATTIRE terrorizing workers in a warehouse district.

As the monitor settles into place, the audio comes on and we join the helicopter pilot's speech in progress.

HELICOPTER PILOT (V.O.)  
-- last thing we expected to find after  
that car chase was seeing some unusual  
fires in the warehouse district that  
would lead us to this.

ON LUIS/DENA - Luis stretches and yawns.

LUIS

(yawns) You got us out of bed for a standard gang mugging? We're the Bold Youth!

DENA

Leave that to the cops, I say.

HELICOPTER PILOT (V.O.)

Is that a fire? Zoom in to get us a closer look, Hal!

BACK ON MONITOR - The image zooms in as close as it can to a long aerial shot. It centers on a fight between a SECURITY GUARD and A FEMALE ASIAN TEEN, and around them crates are on fire. The Asian teen holds a hand as if to strike the guard. Even at this distance she looks a lot like Kyoko.

ON KYOKO

KYOKO

What's that poser doing, thinking she's stealing my looks?

INCLUDE DENA - Dena points back at the screen.

DENA

Looks like she's taking a lot more than that.

ON MONITOR - The "poser's" fist bursts into a flame just like Kyoko's did earlier.

KYOKO - Her hand goes to her mouth in shock.

**FADE OUT.**

**END TEASER**

## Act One – First Draft

Figure 6.5 is Act One of the show pilot's first draft. The main thing to point out is that it is 16 pages in addition to the length of the teaser, for a total of 20 pages. The combined total of a teaser and Act One should be no more than about 13 to 14 pages. It immediately became apparent that a pacing issue existed and that the acts breaks would need to be revisited.

Even though Kevin and I worked on what we almost certainly knew would be an unproduced pilot, it still remained to be discovered what factors led to the pacing problems. If they were character or concept related, those revelations would then go back and impact the series bible. This specific example is why I personally prefer to write “test” pilot scripts for ideas I feel need to be more deconstructed to be sure the inner premise works.

As far as the story, note how Act One functions to introduce the antagonists and highlight their similarities to their look-alike counterparts, first in quick scenes for three of the four Bold Youth members, and then culminating in Malcolm and Tyrone's “mini mind war” where new revelations become apparent. Also, up until now believing they were the only people with such special gifts in the world and achieving celebrity status due to that fact, the Bold Youth are shaken by two facts: they are not alone, and for the first time they've lost a battle. Their PR manager Belinda feels that quick action is necessary to restore their image and does so in a way that also lets the audience learn more about character. Malcolm finally gets pushed against his gentle nature and does something that previously he considered unthinkable; as he has the least visual power, Kevin and I compensated by giving him the most powerful character arc, which only became really apparent at the script stage how powerful it could be. As news of the other group spreads, the Bold Youth – along with an unexpected new ally – decide to take action.

One other piece of trivia is that Forsythe still appears at Farnsworth as one point in this act. Keep an eye out and see if it becomes apparent.

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 5.

**ACT ONE**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

WIDE SHOT - Kyoko brings her hand down from her mouth as they continue to watch.

KYOKO

(hurt)

She's got powers like mine!

KYOKO - Her fist surrounds by flame as she balls it.

MALCOLM

(telepathic voice filter;  
soothing)

No.

The flame goes out as the camera PULLS BACK to include Dena.

DENA

I'm going to get to the bottom of this!

DR. FORSYTHE - He gets up from his desk, reaches out a hand in a gesture to stop her.

DR. FORSYTHE

Dena, wait--

Papers from his desk <FLUTTER> up into his face. PULL BACK to show Dena is already gone!

WIDE SHOT - The others looking back towards the door.

KYOKO

And everyone says I'm the hothead. Ha!

MALCOLM

You should know by now, Doc. There's no stopping her once she's set her mind to something. She just takes off.

FOLLOW LUIS as he walks over and opens the study window.

LUIS

I know what to do. See you there.

**EXT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - NIGHT**

Luis LEAPS out the window and immediately starts flying into the sky.

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

BELINDA, MALCOLM, KYOKO - Belinda holds up a set of car keys.

BELINDA  
Your carriage awaits.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Malcolm and Kyoko follow Belinda out of the room.

KYOKO  
(whispers to Malcolm)  
I wish she wouldn't be quite so perky.

MALCOLM  
What do you want me to do about it?

MALCOLM - He immediately realizes how silly his own question sounds. Kyoko gives him a knowing smirk, daring him to read her mind.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
(shocked)  
That, that would be wrong.

KYOKO - She's angry but doesn't cause her hand to glow.

KYOKO  
What's wrong is wannabees pretending to be Bold Youth!

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT**

The front gate of the property has been torn open, and Dana rushes through.

SECURITY GUARD - The guard's been surviving the fight, but just barely, with a scorched uniform. The girl's flaming hand is coming directly at the guard, when PULL BACK as Dena runs into frame and grabs hold of the security guard.

ON CORNER OF WAREHOUSE - This is some distance away; Dena puts the security guard down.

DENA  
You'll be safe here.

SECURITY GUARD  
That... that girl, her hand... fire.

SECURITY GUARD - The Security Guard takes off, frazzled.



DENA

Yeah, she really did look a lot like  
Kyoko, didn't she?

Suddenly DONA runs into frame and knocks Dena aside.

DONA

Quite a surprise, isn't it?

OTS DENA - Dena looks up from where she fell, shocked to  
see her own face glaring down at her.

LUIS - He hovers above, shocked at what's going on.

LUIS

They look identical. This can't be  
happening.

CARLOS (O.S.)

Believe me...

DIFFERENT ANGLE as CARLOS, another flying teen who looks  
just like Luis, smashes into Luis.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

...this is definitely happening.

LUIS - tumbles, then rights himself. PULL BACK as he  
turns around to see his attacker.

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - STREET - NIGHT**

Belinda's van pulls up out front the gate. Malcolm and  
Kyoko leap out shocked by what they see.

OTS KYOKO - as she spots the girl who looks like her  
setting fire to rubbish along the side of the warehouse.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - Kyoko runs up to the other Asian teen  
girl and grabs her to turn her around. Kyoko gasps at  
looking into her own face.

KYOKO

(gasp)

When I was named the Japanese word for  
mirror...

The two girls size each other up, and the one thing they  
both know is that they are identical.

KYOKO (CONT'D)  
... I never dreamed I'd really find  
someone who almost really was my mirror...  
except for the fact you're on the wrong  
side.

ON KAGAMI - swinging her blazing fist at Kyoko.

KAGAMI  
(puzzled)  
Mirror? My name is also mirror. Kagami.

KYOKO - throws up her arm to defend herself, and her own  
fist bursts into flame.

KYOKO  
Kyoko. Not pleased to meet you, poser.  
You think your tricks can match my REAL  
power?

KYOKO, KAGAMI - As both girls battle with confidence,  
they each burn portions of the other's outfit, and just  
like mirrors, each looks down at the burnt spot with a  
frown.

KAGAMI AND KYOKO  
(in unison)  
That was my best outfit!

PULL OUT AND UP to reveal Luis in dog fight like flying  
battle with Carlos.

LUIS  
Don't think you're getting away from me!

CARLOS - He pulls a maneuver in the air that has him  
dipping and turning so he winds up behind Luis!

CARLOS  
Ah, but can you get away from ME?

MALCOLM - stands just inside the property gate, staring  
at the strange confusing sight.

TYRONE  
(Telepathic filter)  
They make quite a sight, don't they?

MALCOLM REACTS to the voice in his head. He turns to see  
his own duplicate, TYRONE, who gives an evil smirk.

CLOSE ON MALCOLM'S EYES - They go wide with recognition.

**INT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - NIGHT (REUSE)**

Two year old Malcolm continues to look up at the viewer, crying. All he responds with is calling out a name.

TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM  
Tyrone! Tyrone!

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT**

TYRONE - He frowns as this mental image is broadcast to him.

**INT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - NIGHT**

TWO YEAR OLD TYRONE is next to a crying TWO YEAR OLD KAGAMI. They're surrounded by fire. GLOVED MALE HANDS belonging to a YOUNGER DR. GENEFACTOR pick up Kagami and GLOVED FEMALE HANDS belonging to VIOLA CRANE pick up Tyrone.

TWO YEAR OLD TYRONE  
Malcolm! Malcolm!

VIOLA (O.S.)  
Eugene, how could you let this happen?

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT**

CLOSE ON MALCOLM - Having this new information puzzles him.

MALCOLM, TYRONE - Both fall to their knees and hold their heads, overwhelmed.

MALCOLM AND TYRONE (V.O.)  
(demanding, telepathic  
filter)  
GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

PULL BACK to see Dena and Dona chasing one another around the mentally tortured boys in an almost CIRCULAR BLUR.

DENA  
You've got to tire sometime!

DONA - She looks back behind her as she keeps running.

DONA  
Probably about the same time as you! How long can you hold out?

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 10.

DENA - Dena continues to run with determination, but tiring.

DONA (O.S.; CONT'D)  
(CONT'D)  
Hours? DAYS?

Police <SIRENS> can be heard in the distance.

CLOSE UP ON: Police Car FLASHING LIGHTS, with the sound of <SIRENS> under them.

TYRONE - Looks up towards the approaching <POLICE SIRENS> then puts a hand to his head.

OTS TYRONE - looking down at the recovering Malcolm.

TYRONE (V.O.)  
(telepathic filter)  
You will let us escape. You will let us escape.

QUICK CUTS OF EACH MEMBER OF BOLD YOUTH - they stop what they are doing and look around as if hearing a voice.

Tyrone runs O.S.

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER**

The BOLD YOUTH is regrouping. They look devastated, shocked, and somewhat confused. Dona runs into frame after making a quick surveillance of the warehouse property.

MALCOLM  
(totally shocked)  
He messed with our thoughts. Invaded our minds.

DENA  
I've checked everywhere, they're gone.  
They just disappeared. How?

WIDE ON GROUP - Favor Kyoko/Luis in the foreground.

KYOKO  
This is the first time we've lost.

LUIS  
Who'll trust us now?

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 11.

BELINDA - She joins the group, her smile is almost sickening as she continues on unfazed.

BELINDA

Not to worry, I'll see to it people won't soon forget the BOLD YOUTH!

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**

Two very sexy hosts, one male and one female (DARWIN and DARLA) sit in two director style chairs on a very cheap talk show set. Across from them are four empty director style chairs.

DARWIN

I'm Darwin.

DARLA

And I'm Darla.

DARWIN AND DARLA

And welcome to "Double Talk," the only talk show hosted by twins!

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - BACKSTAGE - DAY**

The four members of Bold Youth, in full costume, await their cue.

KYOKO

(whispers to others)

That name would make more sense if they were IDENTICAL twins.

LUIS

You give them too much credit.

DENA

What are we doing here, anyway?

MALCOLM

Saving our reputation.

MALCOLM - He shakes his head.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

So NOT.

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**

Darwin and Darla gesture O.S.

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 12.

DARWIN  
And now please welcome today's hottest  
superhero team--

DARLA  
Don't forget ONLY superhero team!

DARWIN AND DARLA  
THE BOLD YOUTH!

The Bold Youth walk out on stage to <AUDIENCE APPLAUSE>.

**MONTAGE FOLLOWS**

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - COOKING SET - DAY**

Darwin is with Kyoko on a cooking set. He picks up a frying pan and she looks at him puzzled. Darwin holds the frying pan over her hand, which she then lights on fire. Darwin <LAUGHS> as he cracks an egg into the frying pan while Kyoko rolls her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**

Dena comes walking out in some stupid designer fashion that is not her look either in general style or for a speedy athlete superhero. She looks completely uncomfortable trying to "catwalk" the fashion onstage, and stumbles. Darla applauds over-enthusiastically.

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. TELEVISION STUDIO - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Darwin and Luis have gone outside into the studio parking lot to have Luis demonstrate a simple flight trick. Luis launches into the air. PAN UP as if from the POV of the cameraman, who finally stumbles and falls on to the ground because he can't follow up that high, causing the camera to fall on its side.

FROM THIS SIDEWAYS POV, show Luis coming back down into frame, highly apologetic.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**

Darla and Malcolm are sitting in the two host chairs.  
Darla leans in to Malcolm with a seducing smile.

DARLA

Can you read what I'm thinking?

MALCOLM - His eyes go wide as a he gets a glimpse of her thoughts, then turns away blushing from embarrassment as the <AUDIENCE LAUGHS>.

**END MONTAGE**

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**

The four teens come up to sit in directors chairs opposite the two hosts.

DARWIN

Thanks for showing us what it's like to be Bold Youth!

DARLA

Now tell us all about this big battle you just had against super criminals!

DARLA - She clutches her arms into herself, nervously.

DARLA (CONT'D)

I thought you all were the only ones like you. I mean, with the powers and stuff.

KYOKO - Kyoko's hand lights up with fire.

KYOKO

There is no one else like the Bold Youth!

DARWIN - He gets pushy compared to timid Darla.

DARWIN

But they had powers just like yours. We all saw it on the news.

LUIS - He's not sure what to say.

LUIS

Things aren't always what they appear.

DARLA - She thinks she sees an opportunity to spice things up.

DARLA

Are you saying it was just a publicity stunt?

LUIS (O.S.)

Well, uh...

MALCOLM - uncertain, looks over at the other Bold Youth members (who are equally speechless) and then at the hosts.

OTS DARWIN AND DARLA - Malcolm concentrates his efforts on Darwin.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

(telepathic filter)

Ask us how we got started.

DARWIN - blinks, then continues with the interview.

DARWIN

I'm more interested to know how you got started.

MALCOLM

Sure.

MALCOLM - He answers with poise and confidence.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

We realized we were different and wanted to use that to make a difference.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - BACKSTAGE - DAY**

Belinda waits backstage as the Bold Youth step offstage to the sounds of a <CHEERING AUDIENCE>.

BELINDA - She's trying to act more like a mother than a PR manager.

BELINDA

Sometimes it's best to start small. The public will quickly forget the battle, and things will swing your way again.

OTS BELINDA - All four teens cast doubting looks her direction, then walk out of frame leaving her alone.



MALCOLM - He walks forward with his hands in his pockets, a bit ahead of the group. KYOKO ENTERS FRAME and runs up to him.

KYOKO  
(whispers)  
Malcolm! You did something during that interview, didn't you?

Malcolm says nothing, just keeps walking on ahead.

KYOKO (CONT'D)  
(a little louder)  
Malcolm! Answer me!

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

Belinda and Dr. Arthur speak privately that evening. Unlike Belinda, Dr. Forsythe is not pleased with the public attention.

DR. FORSYTHE  
They shouldn't have gone out there.

BELINDA  
The fight or on television?

DR. FORSYTHE  
Both!

BELINDA  
You allowed them to go out there because you couldn't afford to raise them otherwise and you at least wanted them to be using their powers legitimately and responsibly.

DR. FORSYTHE  
(greatly concerned)  
They're still children. It was wrong of me. This is far too much responsibility too young.

BELINDA - She persists to make her case.

BELINDA  
You raised them to improve their skills and use them wisely, which is what all good people do. So shouldn't they be allowed to enjoy being heroes?  
(MORE)

BELINDA (CONT'D)  
Besides, if they aren't supposed to be  
heroes, what did you hire me for?

DR. FORSYTHE - He sits quietly, brooding, and doesn't  
give an answer. Belinda is almost insulted by his  
silence.

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT**

PAN AROUND - Malcolm as he practices a peaceful martial  
arts pose. He's meditating, attempting to find peace  
after all the stress of the battle and the talk show. But  
he can't find that peaceful place in himself, and falls  
out of the pose, then looks over towards the window.

Through the window he can see a neighbor girl his own  
age, KELLER, who is at her window typing on her laptop.

MALCOLM  
Hey, Keller?

Keller looks up from the laptop.

KELLER  
Yeah?

MALCOLM - He leans against his window sill nervously.

MALCOLM  
You didn't happen to see me on TV, did  
you?

KELLER - She stumbles nervously.

KELLER  
Um...

KELLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
(telepathic filter)  
How can I tell him what I really think?

MALCOLM

MALCOLM  
(calm, understanding)  
Just tell me the truth, Keller. I'd  
rather hear you say it than draw it out.

KELLER, MALCOLM - She looks over directly at Malcolm.

KELLER

I really hate the fact you can do that,  
but I like the fact you're trying to  
respect me. I just don't like what Dr.  
Forsythe has made you.

MALCOLM

The Doctor didn't make us into anything.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON KELLER AND MALCOLM - Their conversation  
continues.

KELLER

I miss just coming over and hanging and  
playing video games with you, but you're  
never home. Why did you guys get into  
doing this Bold Youth gig anyway? I  
mean, it's kind of weird and neat you can  
do all that stuff with your brain.

KELLER - She expresses her curiosity and concern.

KELLER (CONT'D)

But how can you use it to save the world?

PULL BACK at the sound of a little boy's voice. It's  
Keller's little brother KONNOR.

KONNOR

Keller loves Malcolm. Keller loves  
Malcolm.

Konnor leans toward the windowsill, and Keller pushes him  
back.

KELLER

Quit it, Konnor!

MALCOLM, KELLER - Malcolm puts his hand to his head, as  
if in pain. Keller notices.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Malcolm, are you okay?

**EXT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - MOUNTAINS - NIGHT**

Smoke can be seen in the distance rising from the  
mountains.

Two year old Malcolm, along with TWO YEAR OLD DENA (crawling at an impatiently fast pace), TWO YEAR OLD LUIS (whom two year old Malcolm keeps grabbing by the ankle every time he tries to fly), and TWO YEAR OLD KYOKO (bawling in tears) are all at the feet of a YOUNGER ARTHUR FARNSWORTH and Kyoko and Kagami's mother, a YOUNGER RAI SATO.

RAI (O.S)

I don't want to leave you, Arthur.

ARTHUR (O.S.)

Rai, you have to get away. We'll find each other again someday, I promise.

As the body language of the legs tells us Arthur and Rai lean in for a kiss:

KONNOR (V.O.)

You're just tired after beating the bad guys, right?

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT**

Konnor's voice brings Malcolm back to the real world.

KONNOR

My sister's in love with a TV star.

KELLER - She shakes her head in the negative.

KELLER

(exasperated)

Malcolm is not a TV star--!

Both siblings glance at Keller's laptop computer. Then Keller turns back to the window and Malcolm.

KONNOR

Hey, you're on the computer too!

KELLER

Uh. Malcolm, you better see this.

OTS KELLER AND KONNOR - They watch Malcolm, who sighs. But as Malcolm leans forward on the window sill to see what Keller was indicated, but stops when the <KLAXON ALARMS> goes off.

He straightens and turns away.

MALCOLM

Gotta go.

KELLER/KONNER - She watches Malcolm leave his window, responding to the alarm. Konnor now pays full attention to something on the computer, moving the mouse about as he looked at different things.

KONNOR  
Wow. Malcolm and his friends are on a whole bunch of feeds.

Keller turns and looks at what he was watching, and <GASPS>.

CLOSE ON MONITOR FOOTAGE - SPLIT SCREEN of the four look-alikes doing terrible things all over town. This time their choice of clothing looks far more cleaned up, not identical costumes to the Bold Youth but close.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)  
(disbelief and panic)  
I don't believe what I'm seeing, not only has the Bold Youth changed their wardrobe...

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - DAY**

The four members of BOLD YOUTH, now in uniform, are devastated as they watch the monitor. They don't know what to do next to save their reputations.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)  
... they've changed their attitude!

SHOT OF THE BOLD YOUTH - They look downhearted and devastated, not knowing what to do next to save their reputations.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)  
(CONT'D)  
Who's going to save us now?

ON STUDY DOORS - Keller barges in with her laptop under her arm, with Belinda chasing after her. It's the first time we haven't seen her perky.

BELINDA  
I told you, you can't--

KELLER  
YOU can't order me around, lady.

MALCOLM - Keller ENTERS FRAME, opens up her laptop, and shows Malcolm digital photo stills open all over the screen.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
They're all over the 'Net. People saying  
you've done things you'd never do...

CLOSE ON KELLER - She looks very sad.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
... or at least I don't believe you would  
ever do.

MALCOLM - He looks equally devastated.

MALCOLM  
How can you even think...?

KELLER, MALCOLM - She closes the laptop.

KELLER  
I don't think. But Konnor's seen and  
he's not sure what to think. What am I  
supposed to tell him?

Malcolm puts his hands on Keller's shoulders.

MALCOLM  
Keller, we've known each other a long  
time. You've been able to read things  
better between us than I can do with my  
powers.

MALCOLM - He continues to speak to Keller, not use his  
mind.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
If there's anyone in this world I can't  
hide from, it's you. Please, help us  
figure out who's trying to set us up.

KELLER - She looks uncertain.

**FADE OUT.**

**END ACT ONE**

This 6 page Act Two shown in Figure 6.6 shows where the imbalance of acts took place. The three acts should be about the same each (with the Teaser and Act One coming to one third if used). A non-powered person comes in unofficially as part of the Bold Youth, though no offer is actually made to that effect. The kids decide to confront Dr. Forsythe to find out how much he knew when he first adopted them, and Malcolm publicly speaking of his nightmares and revealing what he learned in the mind contact with his counterpart. A first detailed glimpse is given of the antagonists' world.

## Act Two – First Draft

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 21.

### ACT TWO

**FADE IN:**

#### INT. FORSYTHE STUDY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

PAN ACROSS - Keller sits at her laptop computer crosslegged on the floor. The Bold Youth watch her eagerly, Dr. Forsythe sits at his desk frowning in disapproval. Belinda jots down notes as she observes everyone.

CLOSE ON LAPTOP KEYBOARD - Keller's slender fingers play across the keyboard quickly as she goes from one web-site to the next.

CLOSE ON HER FACE - It's stern as she concentrates on her work, she may still be mad at Malcolm.

CAMERA CIRCLES AROUND KELLER as she works away. Finally she firmly says:

KELLER

I think I've found what you need.

PULL BACK as the Bold Youth gather around her.

KELLER (CONT'D)

From what I can find on the web, you and the rest of the Bold Youth aren't the only ones with powers.

OTS MALCOLM - Keller maintains her serious expression as she tells him what she's found.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Tonight's incident isn't the first. Most of this is unsubstantiated rumors with no major police reports. As if people were too scared to mention them in the reports. But the things described on some people's blogs match a lot of your powers.

OTS KELLER OF MALCOLM - His expression goes to deep concern.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Some of these go back to before Bold Youth made your first public appearance last year.

Malcolm goes to put a hand on Keller's shoulder.

MALCOLM

Thanks, Keller. I knew we could count on you.

Keller pushes Malcolm's hand away. PULL BACK as she hurriedly stands, grabbing her laptop.

KELLER

I need to get back to Konnor and my Dad.

Keller runs out and leaves the room. The Bold Youth return their attention to Dr. Forsythe's monitor.

LUIS

That's all good to know. But what do we do about it?

DR. FORSYTHE - He sits in his chair.

DR. FORSYTHE

Lay low and plan a strategy. There has to be a way to defeat these others.

CLOSE ON MONITOR - Focus on the footage of the mystery people as we

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - EXT. GIRLS' ROOM - NIGHT**

CLOSE UP ON DOOR - Malcolm's hand ENTERS FRAME and starts to knock on the door, but as he does, THE DOOR OPENS and Dena and Kyoko are waiting there.

DENA

Malcolm, your thoughts are so strong we knew you were coming.

KYOKO

And we think you're right.

OTS DENA AND KYOKO - The girls talk to Malcolm and Luis.

KYOKO (CONT'D)

The Doc's got to be hiding something. How much did he know about us when he adopted us?

DENA

Why isn't he so eager to see our names are cleared?



ON ALL FOUR - The girls step into the hall and join the boys.

MALCOLM

Four people that look like us that can do what we do, that's just too much to be coincidence.

LUIS

There's only one person who can give us the answers.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

CLOSE ON FORSYTHE - Sitting behind his desk, his grim face betrays what the kids are asking.

DR. FORSYTHE

They are your twins.

WIDE ANGLE ON BOLD YOUTH - They look shocked at each other.

DR. FORSYTHE (O.S.;

CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I tried to stop it, I swear I did. There was this other doctor, who turned out not to be so legitimate, but I didn't know it at the time. He said his methods were sound.

(beat)

I discovered him experimenting on newborn children of desperate mothers in need.

DR. FORSYTHE - He gets out from behind his desk to walk towards the kids.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)

There was a fire and I tried to save as many of the children as I could. But the others... the others had been separated from you.

The kids back away as he tries to come closer.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)

The fires started without warning and everyone had to get out. I didn't know if the others had survived. I prayed, but didn't know.

LUIS  
(curious)  
Didn't you ever try to find them?

DR. FORSYTHE  
The trail went cold.

KYOKO  
I'm not sure if I can believe you.

DENA  
Malcolm, there's a way to find out. Read him. Is it true? Is it true?

CLOSE SHOT OF MALCOLM - He closes his eyes intently.

MALCOLM (O.S.)  
I don't have to read him. I've known since I was two years old.

WIDE SHOT - The other three look over at Malcolm who still has his eyes closed.

LUIS  
What?

MALCOLM  
Those dreams... the ones that keep waking me. They were really memories.

Malcolm opens his eyes.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
Of the night of the fire. Of my brother trying to reach out to me with his mind. I'm sorry I didn't say anything earlier.

OTS MALCOLM OF DR. FORSYTHE - Dr. Forsythe looks down at the floor ashamed.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
But I couldn't believe it was true either

CLOSE ON MALCOLM - He looks sad and concerned.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
I guess I just wanted it to be a dream.

MATCH CUT TO:

**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

MATCH CUT TO a close shot of a very mean looking Tyrone.

PULL OUT as he is obviously watching things happening around him. A king surveying his domain. A rundown area of town, the street is boarded by old brownstones. This is a run down part of town where people don't go to the cops against normal thugs, let alone super powered ones. This is their world, darker and dirtier than that of the other kids.

OTS TYRONE - as the rest of his 'gang' is playing on the city street and tormenting anyone who passes by their run down apartment building. A car ENTERS FRAME.

ON CAR - continues down the road, as Dona SUPERSPEEDS across the street. The blur is enough to scare the driver to a fearful stop!

TYRONE - He <LAUGHS LOUDLY>.

TYRONE  
Excellent, Dona! I always love seeing  
the fear of power put into them!

ON CAR - It just barely starts moving again as Carlos intentionally lands on the hood, startling the driver to a stop again!

TYRONE - He hugs himself tightly as he continues to  
<LAUGH LOUDLY>.

KAGAMI - She starts to form a fireball with her hand.

KAGAMI  
Time for a little light show finale!

VIOLA (O.S.)  
(strictly)  
Dinner time.

Kagami turns towards the voice (O.S.) and her flame goes out.

TYRONE - as he is joined on the front stoop by VIOLA CRANE, African American woman in her mid 30s, with the build and attitude of a marine drill sergeant who functions as a "house mother" of sorts.

VIOLA (CONT'D)  
And tonight we're going out on the town,  
so dress up.

VIOLA - She makes her hand into a fist.

VIOLA (CONT'D)  
Let's make a buffet meal out of this city  
to satisfy your hearts' desires.

PULL BACK as Viola walks up to Tyrone specifically.

VIOLA (CONT'D)  
And you, my Tyrone, my flesh and blood  
soon, shall have the world at your feet.

TYRONE - He smiles greedily.

**FADE OUT.**

**END ACT TWO**

Closer to the right length for an act, this 10 page Act Three (as shown in Figure 6.7) takes the story to its climax as the two groups have their first very public showdown. When a friend is put in danger, Malcolm's pushed over the edge and starts to taste the power his counterpart has no problem abusing. Meanwhile, Doctor Forsythe is confronted by people he thought long since perished, and as a result sends the Bold Youth on a mission he thought he'd never dreamed... to locate their birth mothers.

## Act Three – First Draft

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 27.

### ACT THREE

**FADE IN:**

#### EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The Bold Youth Van pulls up to a street busy with city nightlife. Belinda drives, Keller is up front with her. Kyoko and Malcolm are in the seat behind.

BELINDA

Keller, is this the place you said a lot of those blog sightings are?

KELLER

Yes, Ms. Brand.

#### INT. BOLD YOUTH VAN - NIGHT

MALCOLM, KYOKO - Kyoko whispers to Malcolm.

KYOKO

She better be right.

MALCOLM

She has no reason to lie to me... um, us. Besides, I think I'd know if she was.

KYOKO

Mr. Privacy Policy? I don't think so.

MALCOLM

(flustered)

That's not what I meant.

CLOSE ON THE DASHBOARD - Belinda presses a button.

BELINDA

I'll stay put as usual...

#### EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

ON TOP OF VAN - A camera pokes up of the top.

BELINDA (V.O.; CONT'D)

... and get some footage for our PR file!

WIDE SHOT - Tyrone, Kagami, Dona and Carlos burst on the scene. They're dressed in new outfits, a step up from what we've seen them in before -- equally flashy as the Bold Youth but with a streetwise rebel twist. At first people think they're just part of the party nightlife crowd and ignore them.

DONA  
(to the others)  
I think I feel like...

She grabs a YOUNG MAN near her and spins him like a top  
as she runs in a circle.

DONA (CONT'D)  
... dancing!

KAGAMI - She shoots a fireball at a tree along the street  
and in front of an awning covered patio dining area with  
a small group of DINERS, setting the awning ablaze.

KAGAMI  
The streets are SO poorly lit around  
here. Let's fix that.

WIDE SHOT - Keller, Malcolm, and Kyoko are getting out of  
the van as Dena runs up and Luis lands. Belinda stays in  
to run the camera.

DENA  
Came as fast as we could once you  
confirmed you found them.

OTS KELLER - She watches Carlos grab a YOUNG WOMAN and  
fly off into the air with her.

KELLER (V.O.)  
Yeah, but now what?

LUIS - He takes off into the sky.

LUIS  
Try to make a difference! I'll find  
water to fight the fire.

KELLER, MALCOLM - Keller, standing next to Malcolm,  
points O.S.

KELLER  
Look, those people are trapped, and  
scared.

DINERS - are terrified as the tree burns and drops flames  
on the awning above them, but they are trapped among the  
tables and the patio railings.

KELLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Malcolm, you've got to CALM them down so  
they can get out safely.

MALCOLM - looks at the terrified diners then back to Keller, he knows what she wants him to do. PUSH IN ON MALCOLM as he raises a hand to his head, closes his eyes, and concentrates, sending out a TELEPATHIC message to the crowd.

MALCOLM  
(Telepathic filter)  
Calm down. There is nothing to fear. Move away from the fire.

ON CROWD - They don't appear to be calming down, in fact they are confused and getting further scared.

MALCOLM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(Telepathic filter)  
You must calm down.

MALCOLM/KELLER - He stops, opens his eyes and looks at Keller, uncertain.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
There are too many of them, and they are so scared, I don't think I can do this.

KELLER  
You can do it, I know you can.

PUSH IN ON MALCOLM as he closes his eyes once more.

MALCOLM  
(Telepathic filter)  
Please calm down, you will be safe--

TYRONE (O.S.)  
(Telepathic filter, stronger)  
But I don't want them to calm down.

Malcolm's eyes SNAP open.

OTS MALCOLM - as he sees Tyrone standing across from him.

TYRONE (CONT'D)  
(threatening)  
In fact, I think they should panic more!

CROWD - Filled with panic, the people push one another.

MALCOLM - seeing the danger become worse, he shouts.

MALCOLM  
(vocal and telepathic filter)  
STOP!

CROWD - People stop everything they are doing, but don't attempt to get away from the fire either.

MALCOLM, TYRONE - Malcolm looks from the crowd, not certain what he just did, over to Tyrone who has a devilish but also proud smile on his face.

TYRONE

You may not be as weak as I first thought, but you'll never be able to control this power.

KELLER - Frustrated at what is going on, Keller runs toward the crowd of diners. FOLLOW HER as she tries to motion the crowd along with her hands, not understanding the mind war that's going on between Malcolm and Tyrone.

KELLER

(tries to wave crowd along)  
Don't panic! If we just move along orderly we can all be safe.

Carlos lands in between Keller and the crowd, still holding on to the young woman her body goes limp with terror and collapses to the ground.

CARLOS

(sarcastic)  
My poor date's already worn out, but I'm far from finished.

He drops the young woman to the ground, as he grabs Keller's wrist tight.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

How about you and I take a spin? I like your spunk.

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

Standing near the large monitor on the mantel, Dr. Forsythe watches a wide shot of the action play out from Belinda's camera. His back is to the study door, and he's on a CELLULAR PHONE. The study door quietly opens behind him as he speaks into the phone.

DR. FORSYTHE

No, Keniston, I haven't seen your daughter Keller. After all you've done for me and these kids, the last thing I'd do is let harm come to your own. Yes, I promise to let you know if I hear anything. Good night, Keniston.



We hear Dr. Forsythe <HANG UP> the cellular phone.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)

(under breath)

As soon as you get back, Ms. Brand, we're going to have a long talk about the future of Bold Youth.

DR. GENEFACTOR

I think that's a conversation between us, Arthur.

Forsythe spins hurriedly to face DR. GENEFACTOR and Viola in the face. Viola holds a club in her hand and taps it impatiently into the other.

DR. FORSYTHE

(stunned)

Eugene. Viola.

DR. GENEFACTOR/VIOLA

DR. GENEFACTOR

It's Doctor Genefacktor now. After what happened, Eugene Facttor is no more.

DR. FORSYTHE (O.S.)

I thought the fire--

DR. GENEFACTOR

(cold)

Feeling's mutual... until we heard of the Bold Youth, that is. Now your children know how OUR children felt finding out part of their life was a lie.

VIOLA

(resentful)

And seeing all the things they had that OUR children did not. Don't they have a right for an equal life?

DR. FORSYTHE

DR. FORSYTHE

(to Viola)

You haven't changed, Viola. Still insisting it's your way or the highway.

(to Genefacktor)

I told you that letting the woman you selected as disciplinarian also be part of the project was a mistake.

OTS DR. FARNSWORTH - Of Dr. Genefacktor and Viola.

DR. GENEFACTOR

And I got to have and raise children with  
the woman I love. What did all of this  
get you, Arthur Forsythe?

Arthur slumps back in his chair.

DR. FORSYTHE

What do you want me to do, after all  
these years?

VIOLA

Help us find the others.

DR. FORSYTHE

DR. FORSYTHE

And let you do further damage? NEVER!

VIOLA ENTERS FRAME and grabs Dr. Forsythe's collar.

VIOLA

You have to have that information here,  
and we'll rip the place apart until we  
find it!

**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

Carlos still holds tight to Keller's wrist as Tyrone  
ENTERS FRAME.

TYRONE

Carlos, you sure you want to risk the  
jealous boyfriend?

Keller looks at Tyrone puzzled.

CARLOS

Bring him on. I can take him.

TYRONE

TYRONE

Not unless he makes you believe you  
can't.

CARLOS

CARLOS

Dude, there's no one around here like  
that except you--

ANOTHER ANGLE INCLUDING MALCOLM - Carlos stops mid-sentence and looks over at Malcolm who is still stunned by what he's just done.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
HIM and her?

KELLER  
(firmly)  
It's not like that.

TYRONE, KELLER

TYRONE  
Then you won't mind if I do this.

Tyrone reaches out towards Keller's face.

TYRONE (CONT'D)  
Tell me everything you know about him.  
His family. Without speaking a word.

Dena runs INTO FRAME and PUSHES Tyrone out of the way.

DENA  
Keep your hands off!

TYRONE - Tyrone looks at Dena with an evil smirk.

TYRONE  
Like I even need to touch her!

OTS TYRONE - Dena is ready to block any move he might make, but her head suddenly slumps forward asleep. PULL BACK as Tyrone walks around the sleeping Dena and FOLLOW HIM back towards Keller once more, her arms now behind held behind her by Carlos who presents her to his friend like a sacrifice.

ON MALCOLM - shaking off the last of his confusing from the mind-war he just experience. He looks O.S. To see:

OTS MALCOLM - The slumbering Dena, and the trapped Keller as she struggles not to be touched by Tyrone.

MALCOM - TERROR turns to ANGER.

MALCOLM  
(telepathic filter)  
NO YOU WILL NOT!

TYRONE - He doesn't drop his hand, but freezes like a statue.

MALCOLM - He walks with righteous anger towards Tyrone, Carlos. Keller continues to try and pull away from them more out of disgust than real fear.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
(telepathic filter)  
NO YOU WILL NOT INVADE HER MIND! STAY  
OUT! GET AWAY FROM HER! GET AWAY FROM  
HERE!

WIDE SHOT - Like soldiers following orders, Tyrone gets up and starts walking away. Carlos lets go of Keller's hand, grabs Tyrone, and flies off with him. Dona runs away holding Kagami who creates a wall of fire to keep others from following her.

UPSHOT - Just then, Luis returns with the water that he's managed to bring in several buckets and carefully puts out the fires, while Dena and Kyoko calm the crowd below.

Malcolm rushes up to a shocked Keller.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
Keller?!? Are you all right?

KELLER/MALCOLM - She turns to look over at Malcolm.

KELLER  
Did he read your mind or was he playing  
with mine?

MALCOLM  
(puzzled)  
Huh?

KELLER  
He thought we were, you know, together.

FAVOR MALCOLM - He turns away shyly.

KELLER (CONT'D)  
(flatly)  
Actions speak louder than words, Malcolm.  
Even for a guy who is a master of the  
mind. Right now I need to get home to  
Konnor and my Dad ASAP, so they know by  
my actions they can trust me.

Keller walks away. Malcolm watches her go.

WIDE SHOT - The group gathers together. Belinda ENTERS  
FRAME.

DENA

So, we won... right?

BELINDA

We're really going to have to work with the press to make it feel that way.

MALCOLM

That kid... my brother I guess, Tyrone... his mind is oozing with dark thoughts. I'm certain this isn't the last we've seen of them. I just wish we knew more about what we were facing besides people like ourselves.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

WIDE SHOT - The Bold Youth return to find the study trashed. Malcolm still walks unsteady, holding his head.

LUIS

What happened here?

DR. FORSYTHE (O.S.)

Help... me...

FOLLOW DENA as she races over and helps Dr. Forsythe up.

DENA

Who did this? We were busy fighting all our look-alikes. It couldn't be them.

DR. FORSYTHE

You are all in danger.

FOLLOW DR. FORSYTHE - with unexpected strength he pulls away from Dena to balance himself against the fireplace, placing one hand under the mantle.

ON FIREPLACE MANTLE - Forsythe presses one of the bricks and it slides aside revealing a hidden compartment.

A data chip drops into Forsythe's hand.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)

The people who did this took information from me.

OTS FORSYTHE - The kids and Belinda watch him as he takes

a seat at the desk.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)  
They think they took the only copy... but  
they did not.

CLOSE UNDER DESK - Forsythe inserts the data chip into a  
groove under the desk.

WIDE ON FORSYTHE - The monitor above the fireplace now  
reveals a split screen image of four women, one of which  
is VIOLA CRANE at about age 18. The others are one Asian  
woman (RAI), one Caucasian woman, and one Latina woman at  
about the same age.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)  
Children, the Bold Youth has a whole new  
mission. Locate your birth mothers  
before our new enemies do, for their  
lives are in extreme danger.

MALCOLM, LUIS, DENA, KYOKO - They look at one another  
stunned.

FADE OUT.

THE END

# HOW DOES THE SCRIPT TRANSLATE TO SCREEN?

The full process of how script pages become animation is outside of the scope of this book, but to give a sense of how the process works, Figure 6.8 shows a sample of a section of the pilot script converted into storyboard pages.

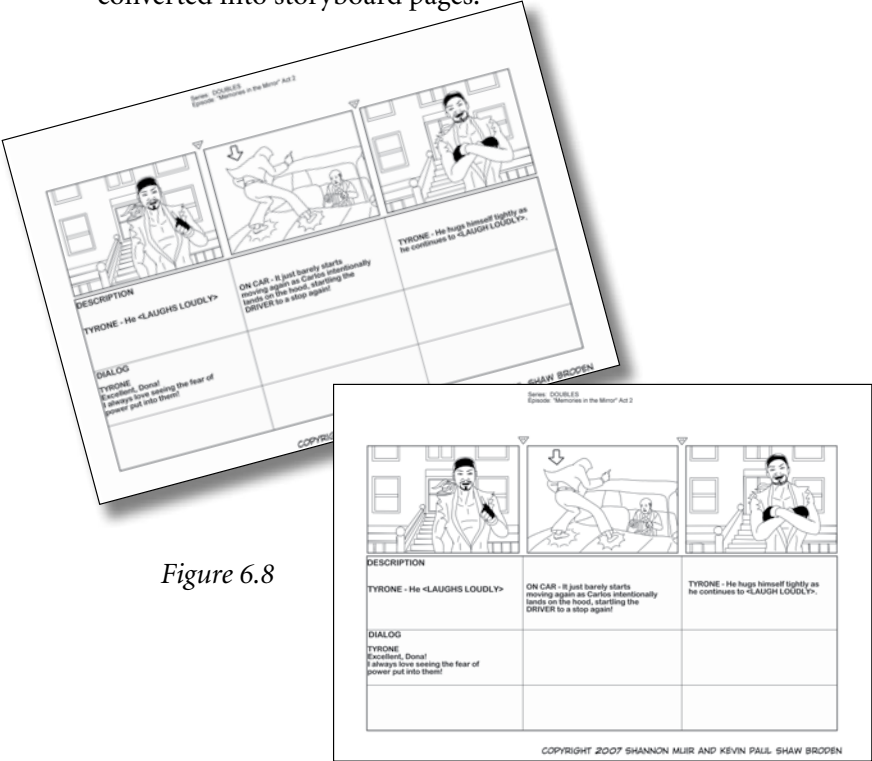


Figure 6.8

# SUMMING IT ALL UP

Pilots are normally done only for television, and almost always after a project goes into development. However, in some cases, it may be helpful for a developer to write a pilot script to get a better feel of the characters and their world in order to figure out parts of the bible development; in no instance is this script later offered when pitching, it is simply a tool. Pilot scripts often are the origin story of the characters and establish relationships. Anyone writing an animation script should be aware of the minor nuances between an animation script and a live-action one.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Sketches, Reels, and Other Concept Art

### THERE IS NO ANIMATION WITHOUT ART

It goes without saying that the art of animation cannot exist without artwork itself, as animation consists of moving pictures. This chapter specifically takes a look at the art options available for a pitch, and how to take the best advantage of them to support the concept being pitched. For those reading the book that happen to be non-artists, it also provides some guidance in figuring out how to best partner with an artist for a concept.

### WHEN IS THE USE OF ART IN A PITCH NECESSARY?

Art can play a crucial role in the pitch process. It brings a world to life quickly, either in bright vivid colors or dark and moody tones. This can help pique interest faster than trying to explain, but could also turn an executive off quickly as well.

Yet, some people are capable enough of building a rich vivid story orally or in writing. In these cases art might actually serve to be the weaker presentation. However, one should be very sure and confident about not choosing to use art as it becomes more necessary to be identifiable in a growing pack.

### DETERMINING A PROPER ARTIST FIT

Many elements in an artist and writer collaboration are the same as multiple writer collaboration. For more information on collaboration in general, refer back to Chapter 1. To refresh regarding the legal aspects of collaboration, see Chapter 3. In addition, here are some things to consider that apply uniquely to relationships with artists:



### **Artist Partner as “Work-for-Hire”**

In this case, the hiring party will own all the finished artwork so it need only meet contract specifications. However, as discussed more in depth in Chapter 3, any collaboration contract - whether a full collaboration or work-for-hire - should be clearly spelled out to protect all parties. Also, in a case where artwork is done for hire, it may be necessary to have the artist sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (see Chapter 3) to help ensure elements of the pitch are not prematurely leaked.

### **Art Style that Fits the Concept**

Partners should ultimately work together for a concept’s best interest. While a friend may desperately need a gig, if that artist’s strengths lie in humanoid action adventure, better he or she not struggle to do art for a comic humanoid animals pitch. A concept is better served without art than drawings that fail to complement.

## **ART TYPES**

Several art choices exist to be used in a pitching situation. Each one may appropriate for different reasons, and some may be used in combination. Ultimately, the goal is to use art as a tool to help bring a pitch to life, yet not solely rely on it.

### **Concept Sketches**

There are several different types of concept sketches.

*Characters:* Character sketches can appear in either turnarounds or poses. These show the important people who populate the universe of the pitch

*Locations:* These drawings show the places of the world. They can be interior or exterior shots, depending on what’s needed.

*Action Shots:* Characters interact with other characters or the environment to bring the world of the story to life in dynamic still images.

### **Sizzle Reels**

Sizzle reels are a term for a series of moving pictures to a soundtrack

(dialogue and/or music) used to sell a pitch. This can range from an animatic - also known as a leica reel - where the storyboard panels are scanned and edited together, all the way to something fully animated such as a film or television series. It can be an exciting excerpt from a pilot script to a 'mini-story' with a beginning, middle and end written expressly for the presentation. No matter what, the sizzle reel must make the heart and the highlights of the show come to life for those who see it to give a glimpse into the developed world.

## **ARE COMPLETED FILMS EVER USED IN PITCHING?**

With it becoming easier for people to do animation on their own, a completed short film or series of webisodes may become the basis for a pitch instead of a sizzle reel. This would be most likely if the creators wanted to take it to "the next level," such a film or a television series. Length would dictate whether or not the full short film or webisodes, or just an excerpt, would be screened. If an excerpt is chosen, it is best to select what gets to the heart of the concept and shows why it is worth supporting.

Completed films may also be used for those creators of short films that just come in looking for partners to create a series of multiple short films or webisodes in order to lessen their time and workload. There may also be the need to also seek a final distribution outlet for these short works. In these cases, the purchasing development partner may then also be the distributor as part of the deal, depending on what resources the partner has access to.

## **ART CHANGES CAN COME EVEN AFTER THE SALE**

Even if a creator (and the art partner, as the case may be with a writer and artist team) work long and hard to create the best look and style for the characters, from clothing to posing, in the end the actuality is that whomever buys the pitch will take it for what that company wants to do. It could very well turn out to be a case of "we love it... except the look of the characters, that won't fit at all" and the purchaser brings the preferred artist on board (or a series of them if they can't make up their mind). This goes back to why the pros and cons of collaboration were stressed in Chapter 3; an artist who becomes involved and whose ability to participate

ends if the art style does not get picked up as part of the package should make sure to get a good flat fee upfront or the ability to be paid an additional sum of money for time invested on the project if removed at the sale stage. A writer/artist combination just needs to give up half the reins to someone else and shift gears from going solo to collaboration, something he or she may not be used to.



## **SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW:**

### **VIC COOK**

Vic Cook's credits include Producer/Supervising Director of *The Spectacular Spider-Man* (2008 series for CW4Kids and 4 DVD movies) from Culver Entertainment, and Director of *Hellboy: Blood and Iron* (animated feature for DVD) for Starz Media. Director of *Mickey Mouse Club House* (CG pre school series and DVD movie), he's also worked on various Disney projects including serving as Producer/Director of *Lilo and Stitch: The Series*, Director of the direct-to-DVD movie *Atlantis 2: Milo's Return*, Director of the series *Buzz Lightyear of Star Command*, and Producer/Director of the series *101 Dalmatians*. Vic also directed various pilots for Walt Disney TV Animation's development department, and draws on that expertise to explain the uses and effectiveness of art in a pitch.

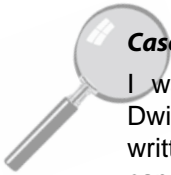
"The art shows one potential way your show could look. The art style helps you set the tone and mood of your concept. I've directed various pilots of different genres for studio development departments. Directing those pilots I was able to work with a variety of very talented character designers. On one action pilot, the character designer and I went for an anime look, another music based project the designer went for a flat graphic look, another pilot had an urban setting and a very talented and unique artist came up with a graffiti-type style that reflected that.

The art you would use in a sizzle reel is based on your pitch card art. You can add to it by drawing new poses or set ups. The sizzle piece is like a movie trailer, in a short amount of time you want to convey in an exciting and entertaining way what your project is all about. The music, like the design, should convey the mood and tone you want your show to have. If time and money are limited, you could re-use the pitch art in your reel doing a pan

and scan animatic, doing something like a fancy slide show. Add the right music and sound effects and you can produce a reel that is entertaining and effective. If you have more resources, you could actually storyboard a short sequence and animate it. In both examples it is important to remember to keep the sizzle reel short. Your sizzle reel is really a trailer or a commercial designed to sell your show.

Research various designers to make sure you find one that can do a style you are envisioning for your show. Decide how you are compensating the designer. Simply paying them keeps you the sole owner and creator of your project. It makes it easier to change designers if you need to. To get development art at no up front cost you may need to give equity or a partnership in your project if it sells. If you end up in a partnership make sure the artist is someone you enjoy working with.”

## **FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA**



### ***Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT***

I wanted to let imagination work in Deejee and Dwight's favor when the executives were reading the written pitch. If the characters and situations could capture interest enough, I felt that they could then place it in the art style that the place I pitched to felt would be the best fit for either of the two outlets it regularly sold to. The style and feel of both outlets varied significantly and I didn't want the executives to feel too "trapped" by seeing something that might only work on one of them.



### ***Case Study #2: DOUBLES***

What follows is a sample of character and concept stills that are part of the Doubles pitch package. How many of the drawings would actually be taken in to a pitch would depend on the overall length of the pitch and any way we might wish to specifically customize the pitch each time it was given. Figures 7.1 to 7.22 are broken out into the various subjects of the concept the art covers.

## Good Guys

Kevin and I felt it to be very important that each of the four main characters be visualized in their public and private styles. This emphasizes the double nature of their existence as both human and superhuman. Also, as these four get the most screen time, it is important to emphasize the need for two outfits for each from a production standpoint. Figures 7.1 to 7.8 illustrate Malcolm, Kyoko, Luis, and Dena in both of their outfits. We further strengthened the comparison by doing similar poses between the two sets of clothing wherever possible.

*Figure 7.1*



*Figure 7.2*





*Figure 7.3*

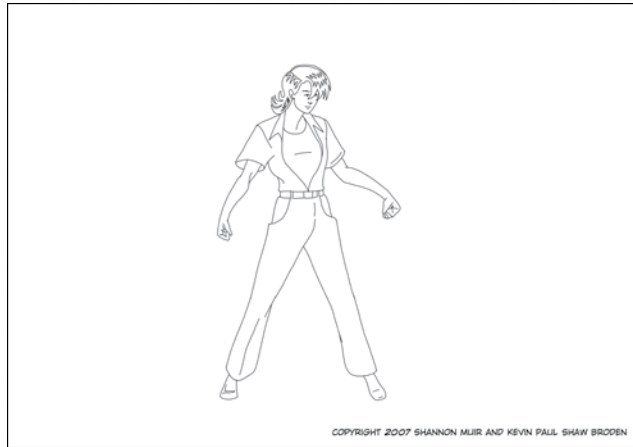


*Figure 7.4*



*Figure 7.5*

*Figure 7.6*



*Figure 7.7*



*Figure 7.8*

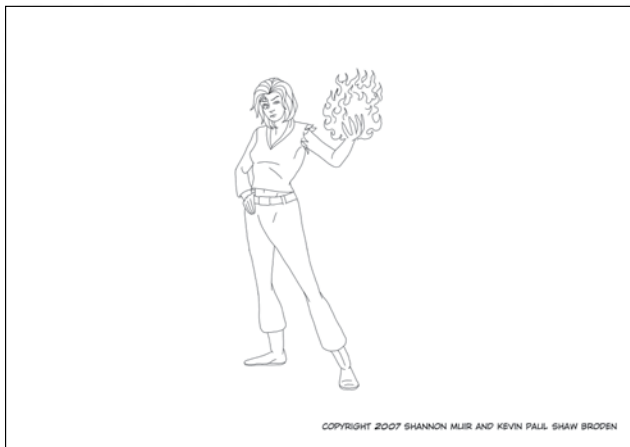


## Main Villains

Malcolm, Kyoko, Luis and Dena are hounded by four other superpowered teens who want what they as the Bold Youth have. Rivals Tyrone, Kagami, Carlos and Dona only have one outfit each. This is fine by them as they only want to be seen as superpowered bullies. In their opinions, to dress any other way would make them appear more human, and thereby inferior and weak. Figures 7.9 to 7.12 show concept art for Tyrone, Kagami, Carlos and Dona.



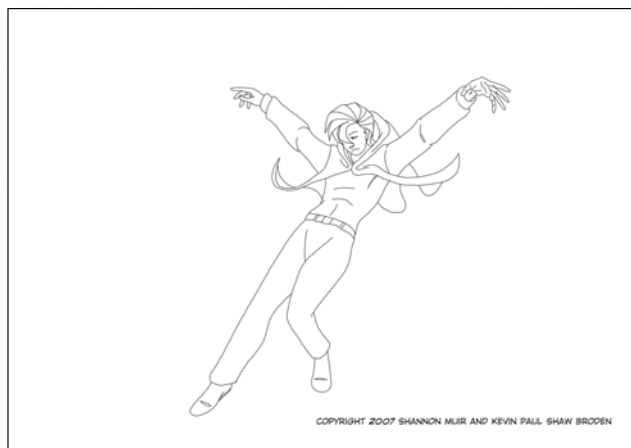
*Figure 7.9*



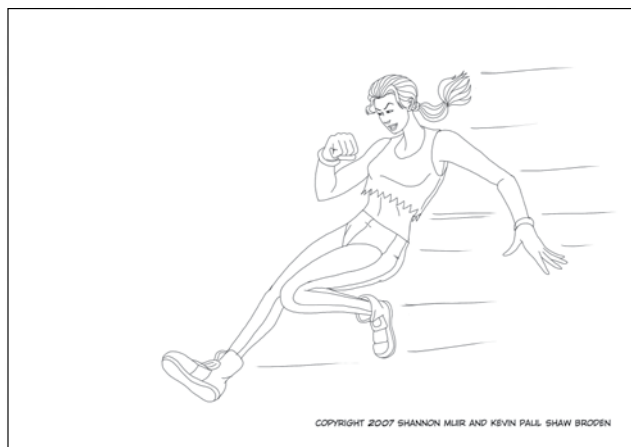
*Figure 7.10*



*Figure 7.11*



*Figure 7.12*

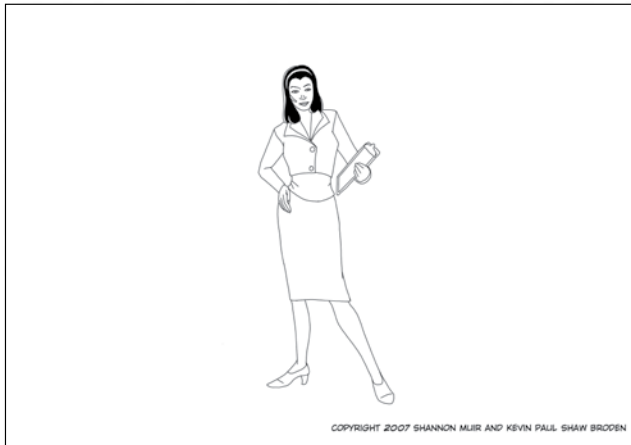


## Supporting Friends

The Bold Youth are surrounded by family and friends. Figure 7.13 shows their surrogate father, Doctor Arthur Forsythe. Their director of public relations (who also plays a mother-like role) Belinda Brand is shown in Figure 7.14. Figures 7.15 and 7.16 show Malcolm's neighbor friend Keller, and her younger brother Konnor.



*Figure 7.13*

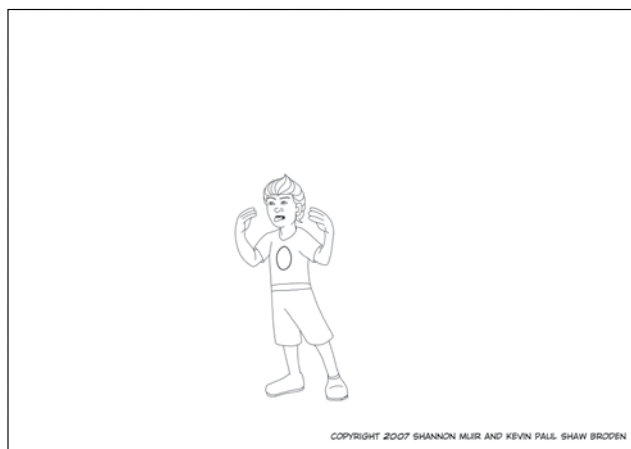


*Figure 7.14*

*Figure 7.15*

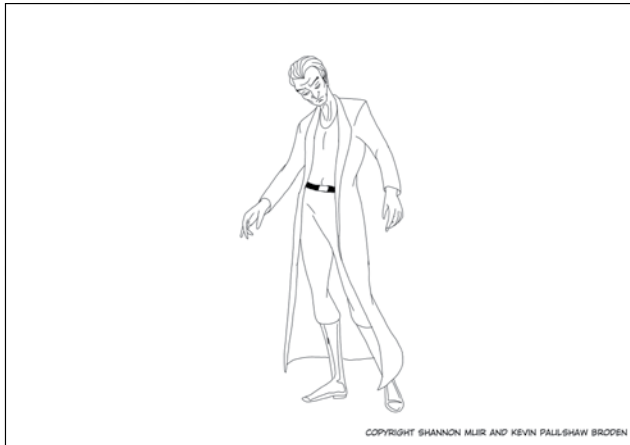


*Figure 7.16*



## Supporting Villains

Just as the Bold Youth are surrounded by surrogate parents and friends, their adversaries have them as well. Figure 7.17 features Doctor Genefacktor (Eugene Facktor); note his difference in demeanor and stature to Arthur Forsythe. Featured in 7.18 is Viola Crane, Genefacktor's "right hand woman" who is also referred to as House Mother.



*Figure 7.17*

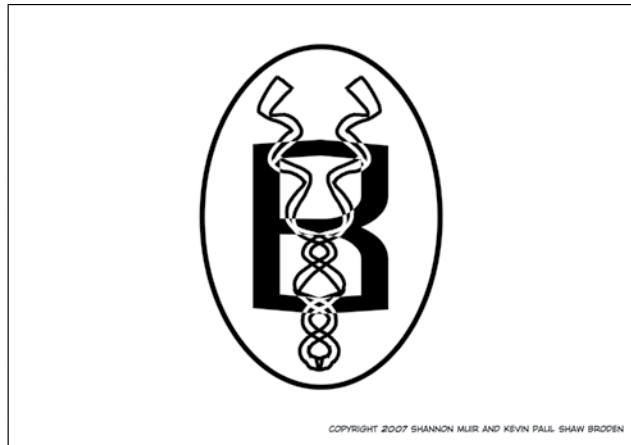


*Figure 7.18*

## Concept Art

A selection of other concept art pieces helps to bring the series pitch to life. Figure 7.19 shows a close-up of the Bold Youth logo, with the tail of the Y turning into a DNA like pattern. Figure 7.20 shows battle and action as Kyoko and Kagami engage in an all out firefight. In Figure 7.21, the more human side of the characters is shown as Malcolm and Keller communicate with one another across upstairs windows. Lastly, Figure 7.22 shows a day in the public eye as Luis and Dena participate in a television interview.

*Figure 7.19*



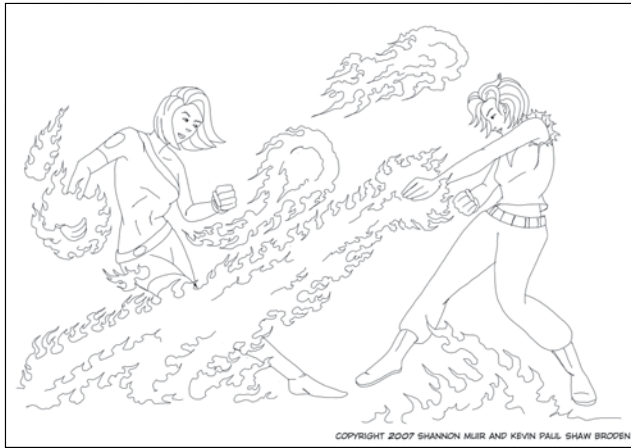


Figure 7.20



Figure 7.21

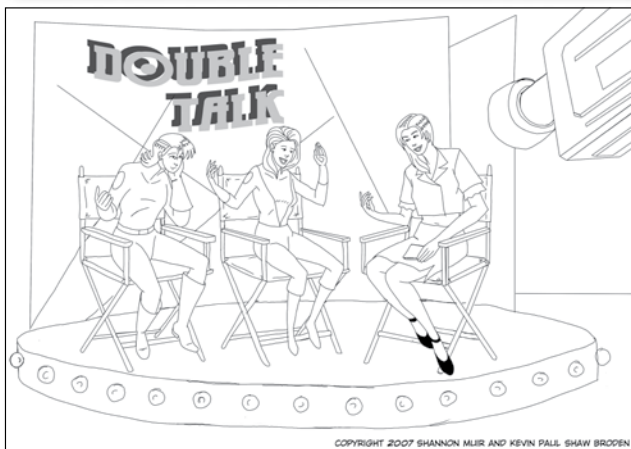


Figure 7.22

## SUMMING IT ALL UP

Art can play a crucial role in the pitch process, especially for those concepts for which the visuals are the hook. People who both write and draw can assemble a complete package, while someone who only does written development that needs art must decide if they will take on an artist as a full creative partner or solely as “work-for-hire” to their specifications. Still concept shots or sizzle reels (also known as leica reels or animatics) are the two main art options. It must always be remembered that art style changes can take place even after a sale.

**PART THREE:**  
**Onwards**  
**to the Pitch**





# **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## **Getting In to Submit or Pitch an Idea**

### **IT'S MORE THAN JUST WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED**

In the age of user generated content, it seems like everyone just makes something and puts it out on the Internet with the hopes that someone will just find it and bigger things will come to pass. However, it's not as simple as just posting a finished animated piece on one's own website. Others must be able to locate these creations to find out they are indeed available, so it may take allying with sites that can showcase independent creators. Perhaps the key may be still turning back to more traditional methods such as networking to get pitch meetings. This chapter looks at some of the various options for getting exposure for a developed product.

### **LETTING THEM FIND THE FILM FIRST**

Traditionally, someone needed to always without fail be in the major metro centers to initially sell an idea because that's where the decision makers were and these people had no chance of discovering stuff otherwise. Now, with the Internet, this model has changed somewhat as it becomes easier to simply just 'be discovered'. This becomes especially more attractive to people who do not currently live in a major production area such as Los Angeles and see the Internet as their way of being 'found' without ever leaving their living room. However, there are also some realities to be aware of.

#### **Uploading an Animated Clip**

Uploading some sort of visual, whether a trailer from a longer work or a short piece, can be a great advantage. It immediately gets people into the world of the story and what the creator's idea is about. It's vibrant and visual, versus just reading a text proposal.

Not to mention, executives are searching the Internet to find gold mines; it's just a matter of getting on the radar. One way, especially if the person maintains their own domain and server, would be to purchase ad space on sites visited by people interested in similar content. This would allow the greatest control of presentation and direction of traffic. However, the very strong downside comes in the form of the costs incurred to advertise the existence of the creator's site elsewhere.

Some sites offer the ability to host and showcase short films. Some sites allow any user to post materials for free without screening it while others charge a fee for posting. Others sites require that individuals must be invited to take advantage of the opportunity to show their work. The biggest risk of uploading at a site open for any user to post content is that viewers may not know for sure if the poster is the creator and be less likely to make contact; however, at those sites which require a fee the cost may be prohibitive. Some of this may change as some sites may get more selective about even the content posted for free to the user but as these sites themselves become more niche to attract the customers wanted for the ad base that supports them.

None of this applies for a written pitch with no accompanying artwork. There are few if any venues for materials presented in this way to be easily posted to be discovered and shared. In these cases, creators sometimes post the development or business plan on personal websites hoping it will be discovered but this rarely proves effective unless it is backed by advertising and heavy forum posting.

### **What "Being Discovered" Could Lead To**

When a representative discovers someone's work online, a variety of things could happen in large part depending on the type of representative making contact. It could be an agent wanting to act as the creator's 'go-between' to the studios for more direct contact. It could be assistants to executives asked to scout the Internet for new talent and then arrange meetings with promising candidates.

It also may or may not involve an interest in the specific work that initiates the contact. Be prepared for the possibility that the

person making contact is interested in the art style of the piece and is looking for someone who can do that art style for an existing property under development. Another possibility is that the person making contact likes the way what has been seen on the Internet tells a story and that story sensitivity fits the needs for the next project in the pipeline. So, while placing on the Internet can certainly give increased exposure to a specific work, a creator risks that it may not ultimately be the selling launch pad for that work; rather, that piece will serve as a demo to getting other job possibilities.

In any case, the next step will involve meeting with the person interested, who usually will be in a major metro center such as Los Angeles or New York if in the United States. This is why it remains an advantage to live in such areas despite the ability for ease of discovery on the Internet is the prohibitive cost of regular meetings. The agents and executives certainly have enough local talent to deal with that it will not be a good investment of their time to deal regularly with someone new to the field that isn't more at their fingertips.

## **MORE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF SELLING AN IDEA**

### **The Pitch Meeting**

Most people talk about “taking a meeting” when it comes to selling an idea. By this they mean a pitch meeting. A pitch meeting is exactly what it sounds like: a person (or persons) who have an idea for a concept gets in a room with executives who can help make it happen and throw, or “pitch,” the idea out to them to see whether or not they want to catch and run with it in a business partnership. Pitching can be very challenging, so it will be discussed in detail in the next chapter (Chapter 9, “The Art of the Pitch”).

### **Submission**

Another alternative for some companies is to accept submissions sent to them. Please note that for legal reasons these never are allowed unsolicited; an inquiry must be made to the producer finding out if it is all right to approach the company with product. In most cases, if approval is given, a company will require a business

representative (agent, manager, or attorney) to send the material and act as a go between. Again, this is for legal protection. Very few companies still allow the people pitching to send to them directly with the use of a submission release. Still, on the rare chance one is encountered, submission forms bear discussion. Fewer and fewer places use the submission form. Generally this involves legal reasons. However, there also exists the reality that tracking these additional submissions takes time, energy, and manpower that the company may require elsewhere.

A submission form - basically, a short contract - serves as an acknowledgement by the submitter to the sender of several things. First, the sender acknowledges that he or she has the right to send the work, as well as controls all rights in the work. Second and equally important, the sender agrees that if the company develops something similar even if this idea is not purchased, he or she cannot seek damages.

At first that sounds very intimidating, but the reality is that there are only a few core ideas and what varies is packaging and presentation. A place something is submitted to may in fact have a similar idea in development (this really happened to me with an idea I submitted; it turned out the studio was doing webisodes based on a character a sister company owned at the same moment). That said, any contract should be entered into with careful consideration.

## **HOW DOES ONE GET PERMISSION TO PITCH OR SUBMIT?**

Methods vary depending on who material is being given to. Getting permission usually begins with either an in-person short meeting at some event where follow up by phone or email is requested, or an initial phone inquiry. Initial email requests may be taken, but possibly are not company policy or could be inadvertently caught by an aggressive spam filter.

As to whether or not a company will allow someone they are not familiar with to come in to the office and pitch, this will vary from company to company. Smaller companies may be more flexible. Others may actually require an agent or manager to book appointments; executives have only so much time in their schedule and may use this to help determine who is serious. Each company

may also have specific guidelines as to presentation length, etc.

Some production companies may require an agent or manager to send in written material. Others may allow written pitches to be submitted. This may be with or without - but usually with - paperwork provided by the company, such as the submission form mentioned earlier this chapter.

## **WHAT TYPES OF PEOPLE CAN BE APPROACHED?**

### **Agents and Managers**

Agents and Managers are good to get in someone's court because some places may not hear a pitch without them. However, it must be remembered that agents and managers are generally only a key to then getting to anyone on this list and not an end in itself. Agents and managers can arrange meetings with these people; however, the less regulated manager may also be able to operate similar to a financier in that a producer credit may be expected for the manager's networking effort.

### **Distributors**

This method only makes sense if the creator completed a stand alone animated short film that can also work as a sales piece for something larger. The distributor can then give that sales piece exposure through varied means - Internet, film festivals, cable interstitials - to then be noticed by others. On rare occasion, a distributor could have a good working relationship with a company which it then makes aware of its acquisition in hopes of distributing future product if a deal is struck.

### **Financiers**

These are people who only want to put their money behind a project and not have much else of an active role other than receiving a producer credit for the financial contribution. Why it can be food to make contact with a financier directly and pitch is that the financier may then know others he or she would trust to work on the property, giving the person pitching a leg up on networking with other needed key players.

## Independent Producers

Independent Producers spearhead creative visions without belonging to a studio or network (though they may supply material for them). Independent Producers may work alone or with other financiers; if there are multiple production companies involved, it is best to find the one most likely to do the bulk of the preproduction work as it would be easier for them to sell to their minor partners than vice versa.

## Studio or Network Executives

These two types of people are in the same category because as companies become more vertically integrated (basically, owning both a studio and a network), these two individuals work closely together. In fact, it could even be the same person depending on the organization size.



### SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: JENNIFER UPTON

Jennifer Upton works as a producer for London-based HIT Entertainment. At the time of this interview, her efforts primarily focused on the company's development slate. Here she talks about various global opportunities for pitching ideas.

"In Europe the main pitching event is Cartoon Forum. This is an annual event which takes place in September in a different European city. This event is attended by all the major European broadcasters, distributors and licensors and allows different production companies to pitch their programme ideas in a series of presentations. Cartoon (<http://www.cartoon-media.be/>) also organise events centred around animated movies and different aspects of the animation business. The other two major industry events are MIPCOM and MIPTV held in Cannes in October and April respectively. These two markets are for general TV, not just animation, but are attended by all the major international broadcasters who come ready to be pitched to. MIP can be less personal than Cartoon - it's very intense and time is often limited, but it does give the opportunity to pitch to lots of broadcasters all in one go.

As well as these markets there is Kidscreen in New York in the

spring. Whilst not attended by all broadcasters, it is becoming more and more recognised as a major industry event. There's also the Annecy Animation festival, also in the Spring, held in Annecy in France which has an attached industry event, MIFA, although this tends to be more about the technical side of animation: new software and the like, however, lots of movers and shakers in the industry attend (mainly because Annecy is such a nice place) and quite a bit of pitching goes on. There's also Cartoons on the Bay in Positano Italy - I've never managed to blag my way to this one, but I understand it's more of an animation festival than a pitching event. And finally the Banff TV festival.

Different countries have smaller, more local industry events, for example Animated Encounters in Bristol in the UK and the annual festival in Ottawa, all of which can be great places to pitch shows, as they're generally a bit more relaxed and less pressurised.

In general, I've found that the more informal festivals that are solely focussed on animation, are best for making contacts and pitching, for example Cartoon Forum is a great event, as it's very social and quite informal and there are lots of organised activities and events that give the opportunity to network. This would also apply for Annecy and the other animation festivals. MIP can be good for making contacts, but it is such a busy market, with so many people from so many different strands of the media industry (from porn to pre-school animation) that you are far less likely to causally meet people at parties/bars etc.

As in most things in life, it tends to be not what you know but who you know. Having a contact, or someone that can make an introduction, however casual, can be invaluable. However, the animation industry is, in general, very friendly and open to new ideas, so unsolicited approaches are more often than not considered.

The vast majority of unsolicited approaches are in general, very unprofessional, submitted by people who have no real understanding of the market or how the industry works. Therefore, when submissions come in that have been well considered, have an awareness of what else is out there, and have a professional and competent approach, whether they're unsolicited or not, they are immediately given serious consideration.



If you're submitting a project to a broadcaster/production company it's generally acceptable to send a polite email, or make a quick phone-call to make sure that the material has arrived safely and to get an idea of how long it's going to take for the material to be reviewed. If you haven't heard back within the time advised, then it is also completely fine to send a gentle reminder: as I'm often telling people, submissions are generally not a priority and we often need a little nudge to review the material.

The biggest no-no is to be pushy or aggressive. My colleague had an incident yesterday, when a creator was pitching her his idea for a project, which was utterly unsuitable. However, instead of taking my colleague's comments and advice on board, he argued with her and inferred that she didn't know her job. None of us will obviously ever have a meeting with this guy again. However, if he had been open to my colleague's criticism, he would have, not only, been able to learn from her huge experience, we would, more than likely, have been happy to meet with again in the future.

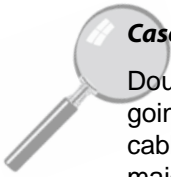
The best advice I can offer is just to know your market. Be aware of what's currently popular - what kids are watching and enjoying. Also what's in development and production: reading industry news-sites like C21 could let you know that Nickelodeon are about to go into production on a show very similar to something you're developing, which would mean that any more time spent on the project would more than likely be wasted."

## **FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA**



### ***Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT***

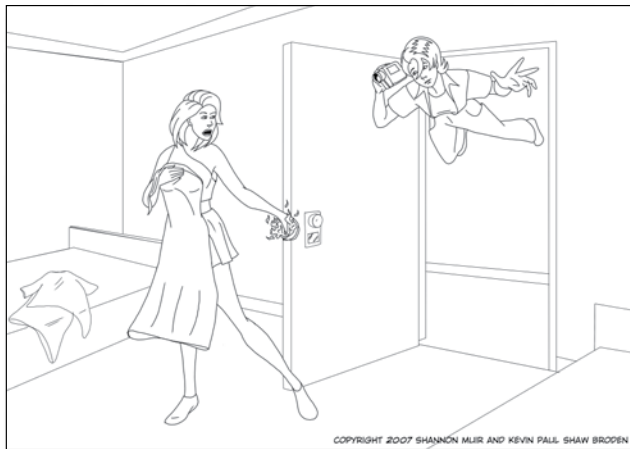
I selected where to send my written pitch submission for Deejee and Dwight based on several factors. The studio in question was a major studio known for doing comedy series, and for doing them well. It also had a direct relationship with a network where the series could air and where the network could co-invest, and in my mind fit the demographic, without the added struggle of finding a buyer.



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

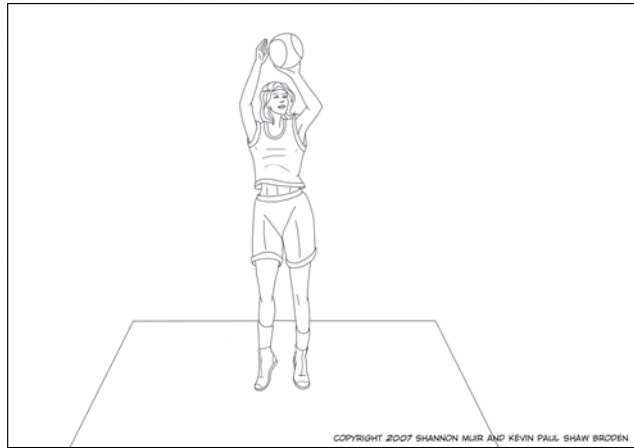
Doubles as a pitch would make the most sense going to independent studios to then be placed on cable networks or possibly even direct to DVD. The major studios which have action-adventure in their repertoire also, for the most part, also have either their own superhero universes as part of that pantheon or already have contracts with other people that have superhero properties. The right studio fit in this case would likely be young, bold, and willing to take risks.

As stated previously, many studios do shows in this kind of vein so a studio must have faith that the unique factors around DOUBLES make it worth producing. What gives DOUBLES the ability to rise above other shows of its type is the human factor, not the celebrity factor or extra abilities. Figures 8.1 and 8.2 shows additional concept art detailing the everyday teenage side of the main characters, which is the main emotional hook of the show.



*Figure 8.1*

Figure 8.2



## SUMMING IT ALL UP

Getting the opportunity to pitch or submit is the most challenging step. Some people post to the Internet (either independently or at a channel) in hopes of discovery. Others arrange pitch meetings through contacts or get the paperwork to submit written pitches. Pitching can range from agents for potential representation to independent producers and network executives for production.

# CHAPTER NINE

## The Art of the Pitch

### GETTING THE CHANCE

During the process of development, the team has readied all the written and art materials as appropriate for each project – whether it be a pitch bible, concept art, or a completed short. However, there are still very much the issues of preparing to make the best pitch possible, customizing it to the specific audience willing to hear it. This chapter covers pitch preparation, as well as handling the actual pitch itself.

### PREPARING FOR A PITCH

#### Length

While enough detail must be included to get the pitch across, people must take care not to get too wordy. If the listeners get too lost in the details, a sale can get lost. A pitch should be exact, short, and to the point. There is no hard and fast rule for pitch length since it varies by concept, so be reasonable.

#### Memorization

One should not obsess with getting every detail exactly right and in a precise order, or else risk coming off either robotic or unemotional. However, a good enough familiarity should be had with the material so that someone isn't constantly referring to a written bible during a pitch; otherwise, that person might as well just have submitted a written version. Be familiar enough to be conversant, and to skip around as is warranted.

### “DO”S AND “DON’T”S ABOUT PITCHING

DO... remember that these are busy people who took time out of

their schedule, and treat them with according respect.

DON'T... be late to a pitch, or even too early. From personal experience I know this is easier said than done, especially taking into account the unpredictability of traffic. If someone arrives late, it shows disrespect for the executives and the project. While arriving too early does not convey this, what it does make someone is both a burden to the assistants (who must make sure visitors are taken care of) and adds a level of tension to the executives' day putting them in the hot seat to prepare while equally important business may be going on.

DO... pay attention to what's interesting them. Yes, it may very well be that there is something in the pitch that means the world personally but if the executives don't care and want to hear more about some other aspect, start telling them what they want to hear about.

DON'T... keep trying if their interest has totally fallen away. If at first it seems their interest isn't being held, one can make an attempt to try a different tact to see if that doesn't work. However, if that direction fails, be prepared to give up and don't push too hard. Better to leave a good impression and be able to get in the door in the future than be someone they never want to talk to again, ever.

DO... remember that the top priority in a pitch is not to sell a project, but to build and maintain relationships. With a good solid relationship, someone's odds of returning to share other ideas are far greater.

DON'T... push another pitch on them in the same session unless they extend an invitation to share other ideas.

DO... always remember to thank people for their time, no matter the outcome of the pitch.

## **THE LEAVE BEHIND**

Chapter 5 mentioned how the mini-bible also could function as a leave behind after a pitch. Though people being pitched to will make their own notes in a presentation, also giving them a mini-bible gives them the core points of the idea in the developer's

words to refer to. It is important the same passion shown in the verbal pitch come through in the written word. An energetic pitch can be undercut by a lackluster leave behind, as it can create the impression the verbal song and dance was all smoke and mirrors for an idea with no longevity.

## **TAKE A WRITTEN PITCH SUBMISSION JUST AS SERIOUSLY**

Even though sending in a written pitch isn't quite the same as "prepping to be in the room," it should be given equal care and consideration. Make sure the document conveys what it needs to convey in an exciting manner without bogging down. Use courtesy in how often one follows up on your written submission. Just like after a pitch session, once an outcome of a written submission is heard, also thank people for their time.



### **SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: BETSY MCGOWEN**

Betsy McGowen works as Senior Executive kids programming at the CW Network. Here she shares her thoughts about pitch sessions.

"Generally an agent or manager will call to introduce a client or to discuss a property. If a property seems like a good fit for CW Network, we'll schedule a pitch. For original properties, the average pitch meeting runs 20 to 30 minutes and usually one or two original concepts are pitched. A good, solid pitch has the essential elements of great storytelling - engaging characters in a compelling world - along with a strong, creative vision for the property. In pitching the storyline, whether it's for the series arc or individual episodes, a beginning, middle and end are a must.

Do not pitch if unprepared. Never pitch a property that's not suitable for the intended target audience. And, if told after the pitch that the property is not right for that outlet, don't then offer to completely redo property in an attempt to make a sale. There are many reasons why a particular show isn't right for a network at any given time. It's best to move on and end the pitch on a positive note, even if that just means establishing a friendly relationship so the door is left open to you for future pitches. Although pitching

can be intimidating, please know that the people sitting in the room need your content and, whether they show it or not, are rooting for you to succeed. So relax as much as possible and have fun with the process.”

## **WAITING, WAITING AND WAITING**

The most trying time about the whole pitch process can be the waiting process to hear feedback. Just because an idea wasn’t rejected in the room doesn’t rule out that there still can’t be a rejection of the idea after further review, or alternatively (and preferably) the place pitched to will want to go forward and develop the idea. The possibility of becoming impatient always exists.

The question arises as to when it is acceptable to follow up after a pitch. Optimally, this would be something to kindly ask the people pitched to as the meeting wraps up but it must be done tactfully, by asking what their average response time is. If no response is heard by then, place a gentle reminder call and wait some time (at least several days if not up to a week) for a response before trying again. Being too forceful or insistent will paint a picture of being difficult to work with and could jeopardize something that might be taking time because details are being worked out before an offer can be presented.

## **PITCHING MULTIPLE PLACES**

It is not uncommon for a pitch to be “making the rounds,” and being shared with several interested parties around the same time. Realize that response times will differ. When multiple places end up being interested in something in the same timeframe, “bidding wars” occur. Odds are this won’t happen, but if it does, this is yet another reason to have a representative as outlined in Chapter 3.

However, also please note that some places expressly will not take simultaneous pitches.

They want to know they are the only ones currently reviewing it and will insist that a submitter hear back from them before proceeding elsewhere. This tends to be more true of submissions than pitches.

The bottom line is always pay attention to the guidelines of each place being pitched to.

## TRACKING AND ORGANIZING A PITCH HISTORY

Some places are willing to take items they know have been pitched elsewhere. Others are not. Whether there is one pitch out at several places, or someone juggles multiple pitches at once, it behooves to develop some sort of tracking system to keep track of pitches.

Something that can be used at a bare minimum is a spreadsheet. Categories would include pitch name, who pitched to (company and individual), whether it was written or in person, date submitted, and dates of any follow-up. Staying on top of pitch status is a key element of professionalism.



### SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW:

#### KEVIN PAUL SHAW BRODEN

Kevin really was born with four names, which he finds helps entertainment executives remember him. He's both a writer and an illustrator, with experience in animation and comics. Kevin co-wrote three episodes of the Japanese series *Midnight Horror School*, where the scripts were translated from English into Japanese and then produced by company Milky Cartoon Ltd. of Japan, and also was hired to write an unproduced animation pilot based on someone else's property. Animation development artwork by Kevin can be found in the book *Gardner's Guide to Writing and Producing Animation* published by the Garth Gardner Company. He's also co-creator, co-writer, and artist for the webcomic *Flying Glory and the Hounds of Glory*, which celebrated five years online in 2006. Drawing on all this experience, combined with his own experiences pitching at major studios, Kevin shares how he would handle pitching a television series like *Doubles*, for which he is co-developer and development artist.

"Once your Presentation Bible is completed, know it. Know it completely. With intent to leave the pitch bible with the executives, there is no need to tell them everything. However, if they have



questions, and there will be the unexpected question, you need to know all the answers.

Heroes versus villains is a long time staple in animation, but Doubles asks the question: What makes you a hero and not a villain? The same people, with the same powers; what made one group good, and the other bad? And from whose side of the mirror are we looking? This unique concept will allow the series to explore numerous aspects of the super hero genre not normally dealt with.

In animation, storytelling relies on the visual. Providing conceptual drawings for Doubles is essential to translate the fact that these two teams are identical and yet very different at the same time. Without hearing the pitch, the executive should be able to see the series concept with a minimum of images.

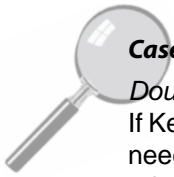
Doubles doesn't necessarily reach the end of the road solely if it is passed on. Whether executives go for your property, or pass, they need to see your enthusiasm come through so they will know you will provide the same passion on the next concept you present, or on a show they may wish to hire you for. Your pitch isn't just about the property in your hand, but about the next. Even if the property is rejected, it isn't dead so don't round file it. These same executives, or the ones sitting behind their desks in a year or two may see the series as exactly what they are looking for. In the meantime, work on the next one in hopes it'll be something they'll absolutely love, which I continue to do."

## FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA



### **Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT**

As mentioned in Chapter 8, *Deejee and Dwight* was submitted as a written pitch. First, I contacted the company and got the required submission paperwork. After that, I sent it in following the instructions. Then, I patiently waited for them to get back to me, which took a couple months.



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

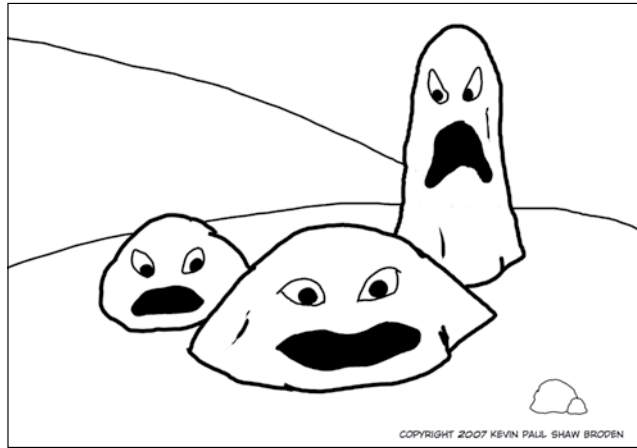
*Doubles* has yet to be pitched to any studio or network. If Kevin and I did arrange for a pitch, I feel that it would need to be a pitch that the two of us did in person primarily due to the heavy use of art. Also, due to the subtle nature of some aspects of the premise, it might help to be in a position where the executive has the opportunity to ask questions early on. If we could be fortunate enough to produce a sizzle reel, that element would only help aid in showing what makes these superpowered characters special and unique.

Samples of artwork Kevin has done for other pitches can be found in Figures 9.1 and 9.2.



*Figure 9.1*

Figure 9.2



## SUMMING IT ALL UP

In preparing for a pitch, it should be short and to the point, and fairly well memorized (though not coming off like it is). Remember to respect they've taken time out of their schedule, and pay attention to what about the pitch interests the listeners. Have a leave behind ready if requested, and no matter the outcome do not forget to thank for the opportunity. It may be ok to pitch a project several places but always keep track of the preferred guidelines of places to pitch to. Tracking where items are pitched and the responses received is imperative.

# **CHAPTER TEN**

## **Dealing with Feedback**

### **HEARING A RESPONSE**

Waits for response on a pitch can vary from a very short to a very long time. This depends on a variety of factors, from the form of the pitch (verbal pitches get responded to faster than written pitches, generally speaking) to the availability of the person who took the pitch to respond. The level of feedback can also vary from a simple yes or no, to detailed notes. This chapter will take a look at a variety of these scenarios, possible responses, and how to go forward.

### **COPING WITH REJECTION**

The odds in the entertainment business are tough, and the acceptance of a pitch or submission is no exception. Realistically, most people will be rejected, but it does not necessarily mean the concept itself is flawed or needs more work. It could be the company wants to work on producing different things than it has before so it doesn't fit the company's needs now. Possibly, as cited elsewhere in the book, the company developed something similar but it isn't widely known yet. That said, if one does get specific feedback on a pitch or submission, take it into consideration.

### **WHY IS ONE IDEA CHOSEN OVER ANOTHER?**

There really is no hard and fast 'magic formula' for what will be seen as successful. A lot does depend on what the people who hear the pitch can sell to their bosses up the chain, and that will vary based on the personalities involved and the company's current needs. Just because a creator 'clicks' in the room with the executives pitched to, does not necessarily mean the same fit will be found higher up the ranks. In fact, it must be remembered

that an idea must pass the test several times over before it gets to someone who can give it the greenlight, or go-ahead.

## **WHAT IF THEY WANT CHANGES BEFORE THEY WILL BUY?**

Very rarely do executives go for a “slam dunk” on a property even on that slim chance that they say yes. Often they will fall in love with specific elements, such as characters or locations, and want others tailored to the buyer’s specific needs. What the heart of the issue becomes is if the creator is willing to make those changes to make the sale or if they feel the creative integrity of the project will be compromised.

These kinds of notes may be the most challenging when given on a complete short film as the basis of the pitch. This is particularly so because the creator’s time and effort went into creating something that stands as his or her vision, not only an investment of personal man hours but possibly personal financial ones as well. It becomes up to the person (or people) who made the pitch if they want to go with this company enough to redo the film based on the notes – that may or may not strengthen the concept – or if the original vision is believed in enough that compromise is not an option. Sometimes it can go so far as saying that they like the core concept but totally do not like the direction it currently heads in. This can be some of the hardest feedback to deal with. Basically, the executives like the core element of the idea but not some of the concepts surrounding it. The key is to discover what the executives want changed while not messing up what they like. This is a tough balancing act.

With those pitches consisting of sizzle reels, or just concept art and written materials, the ability for change can be easier since less has been committed to creatively on paper. This makes it feel that more latitude exists for alterations. However, depending on how much development and emotional investment occurred as part of the mini-bible or art process, the people behind the pitch may or may not want to incorporate the notes to make the sale.

The reality in any case is that not being willing to commit to making the requested changes results in not making a sale to the company pitched to. The company’s own needs at the time (even

if they've produced similar material in the past) may not currently be in line with the presentation, but the executives see the concept as adaptable to the new direction things are moving in. The company exists to meet its own current needs, not the needs of the creatives coming to them; if someone says no to them, they can likely find someone else who will say yes instead who may not have been their top choice. That's how fierce competition is.

## **NEVER HEARING BACK**

Generally speaking, responses to pitches are made by those who hear them or their designated representatives. Some may take more time than others, especially depending on the amount of received submissions in a given timeframe. Some periods of the year used to be known as 'pitching season,' when most of the pitches were taken and which put the most strain on the development cycle; the way the business is changing, development demands are becoming more year round and this is less of an issue.

Major companies usually respond to verbal or written submissions, and in the case of written submissions that are returned also send back a rejection letter that may or may not explain why it wasn't approved. The more unpredictable situations come with the independents who may just not be as business-savvy and don't follow up with rejections. After several attempts to reach a company in a fair amount of time, one must make the call as to whether or not the work was rejected. For example, I haven't heard on the Tanalia treatment I submitted in 2003 despite multiple attempts to contact the company, so after a period of years I am assuming a lack of interest.

## **WHAT TO DO AFTER A 'PASS'**

If executives do not say yes to an idea – whether 'in the room' or later in a rejection letter - they may or may not give detailed responses as to what did and did not work. When given detailed feedback, bear in mind that it could be valid overall commentary on a project, or may reflect the preferences of particular producers, networks, or studios. Look very carefully at any feedback and compare it against the project. If one finds it valid, changes to the project can be considered - but ultimately it is up to the person

doing the pitching. However, please note unless strictly stated, reworking a passed upon pitch is not necessarily an invitation to re-pitch it where it was rejected.



### **SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: ADAM BEECHEN**

Adam not only has developed properties, he's been a writer for such shows as *Teen Titans*, *Johnny Test*, and *Hi Hi Puffy Ami Yumi*. He shares his thoughts on how to deal with executive notes.

"First, I read over them carefully to get first impressions, making notes if there's anything I need clarified or want to ask about. Then, if there's time, I sort of sit with the notes for a while to let them sink in. I've spent a lot of time on my first draft, so the picture I have in my head of how the script should be tends to be pretty strong, and it can be difficult to wrap my mind around the fact that I need to try things in other ways (In other words, basically I go from denial to acceptance!). Once I've done that, I approach the notes systematically, addressing each in turn, crossing them off the list and then, when finished, I go back through the entire script to make sure everything makes sense, and to smooth out any rough patches.

Generally, I turn in a completely new draft of the script, often with the changes I've made marked as per the writing program I'm using. Be open minded and remember to see the forest for the trees. Notes aren't a referendum on your ability -- they're meant to make the script better, and to make the script better serve the show. Story editors want to work not only with great writers, but with writers who are easy to work with, and they pay attention to how writers take the notes they're given. Usually, all parties involved can come to a point, over a series of drafts, where they can agree that a script works. But sometimes a script just never seems to get there, no matter how many outlines or script drafts you do. But it's not really in a production company's interests to invest a lot of time and money in a script only to shelve it -- They want it to work out as badly as the writer does!"

## FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA



### **Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT**

*Deejee and Dwight* ultimately was passed on by the studio I sent it to. The letter that came back with the written pitch basically said it didn't meet their current needs. This is likely the most standard response a studio can make, but I know that the response can vary. A previous series I sent them came back rejected because they had something similar in development, and the letter told me so.

However, to an extent, I wonder if part of the pitch quality has to do with me adapting the premise to something a bit more “boy-friendly” than the original idea. I say boy-friendly for two reasons. One was because this was the mandate of where I was pitching this to, and the other stems from the fact that *Deejee and Dwight* actually grew from reversing a much earlier concept of mine called *Jessca and the Masterson School Girls* (not one of my very first but close to it), which followed an alien girl named Jessca who does much the same thing. As shown, Jessca and the Masterson School for Girls both appeared in the *Deejee and Dwight* pitch, though Jessca's not an alien here. *Jessca and the Masterson School Girls* also wasn't as heavy of a comedy, though in my mind the high concept was “think *Facts of Life* with an alien amongst the girls” (though bear in mind that reference wouldn't have been nearly as dated when I first came up with the show).



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

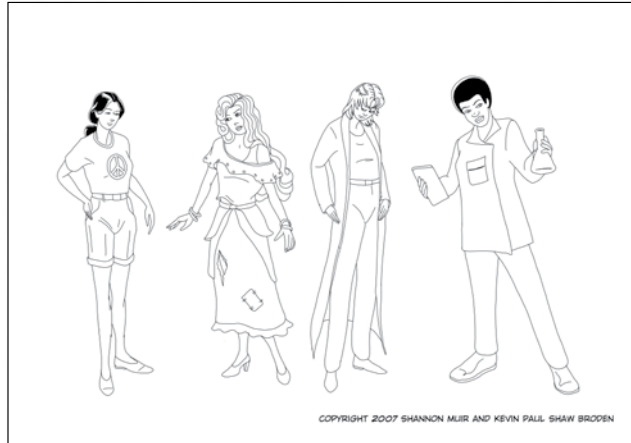
*Doubles* as it appears here arguably still has room for growth. Some areas that potentially remain touchy as issues that affect what demographic the series would be perceived as appropriate for: dealing with the mothers and their backgrounds (although they were willing participants); the ethics of genetic manipulation; how far to take the Malcolm/Tyrone/Keller triangle as a romantic subplot.

An example of feedback is that the people pitched to might like to know more about the mothers characters

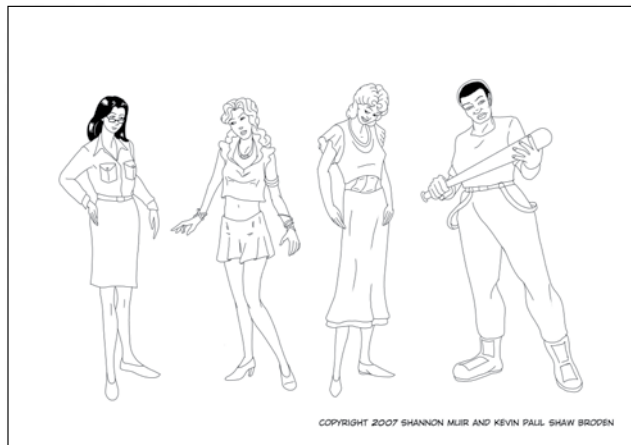


before committing to the series. Figures 10.1 and 10.2 show concept art of the mothers when they first met the scientists in their early 20s, and then in present day.

*Figure 10.1*



*Figure 10.2*



## SUMMING IT ALL UP

Odds are high a pitch will get rejected simply because of the competitive number of possibilities. Sometimes a company may be interested and demand extreme changes before buying. No response after a long period of time is generally considered a pass. One can take notes from executives given on a passed project, but this is not an implied invitation to re-pitch the re-worked project to those who passed before.



**PART FOUR:**

# **What Comes After?**



# **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

## **After the Sale**

### **SIGNED ON THE DOTTED LINE**

The deal's been looked over by all parties, and the ink is dry. Congratulations and welcome to the world of officially being "in development"! So what happens next? How much involvement do those who pitch have going forward? What recourses are there if things seem to slow down or stall? This chapter explores these questions.

### **CHANGES FROM PITCHED IDEA TO FINISHED PRODUCT**

Last chapter we talked about revision requested before being willing to sign on the dotted line. Yet, that doesn't mean that the project is locked at that point. No hard and fast rule exists as to either the number of passes or the extent of revisions. Additional changes can be requested in any part of the concept, all the way up to when the final product hits the airwaves, debuts in the movie theater, or whatever the final venue may be. Creators must be prepared for this and flexible to roll with changes. However, if the project veers too far off a base the creators are comfortable with, the contract must be consulted to see what if any remedies may be enacted. Some may have more latitude than others; this often but not always depends on the past track record of the creator.

Changes may also come in format type as well as content. For example, a studio or network could say that they need to start with webisodes that build up to creating a half-hour show instead of starting immediately doing half hours such as the pitch envisions. This could be for any number of reasons from creative resources to budget to scheduling availability.

It is also important to remember that in animation, just because someone pitches an idea and it sells does not automatically mean

that the person continues in the process. Often executives feel it would be more advantageous to have a more experienced person do the actual development to meet company needs. However, it behooves someone who has successfully sold a pitch to see if a producer position may be possible in order to maintain some level of involvement. Otherwise, a creator who sells a pitch must sit back and watch the process unfold largely without further input.

## **COMPLETED DEVELOPMENT IS NOT A GUARANTEE**

As mentioned before, projects in development do regularly get abandoned. Also, there are times projects are purchased for development but never worked with again after that point (a reason that occurs sometimes is that the company who buys isn't interested per se, but doesn't want to see the idea in a competitor's hands, so it's strictly a business move). Generally, though, the reasons that a pitch is purchased but never pursued are never known or able to be figured out, compared to development that has simply run out of funding and/or interest.

## **THE NEED FOR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT FUNDS**

Even when an idea has been bought, that is no guarantee that production is a certainty. When a company acquires a concept, they presume that only a certain amount of resources (man hours and money) will be required to get it ready to go to production. This rarely turns out to be exactly on target. Sometimes additional money can be found from elsewhere to keep the process going. However, if development drags on, and people can't agree on the final product, the project can be abandoned.

## **THE MEANING OF TURNAROUND**

A savvy creator of their own product (or a developer of public domain product) will make sure to look into the idea of 'turnaround' before signing on the dotted line. 'Turnaround' is most often applied as the ability for a script to return with all rights to the writer after a specified period of time. This term usually appears in conjunction with original live-action feature films, but may be negotiable in certain animation instances.

## DOES THIS GIVE ANY CREDIBILITY TO SELL FUTURE IDEAS?

Looking back over animation's rich history, it is shown that some people held an incredible record of developing new hit shows (for example, William Hanna and Joe Barbera). Yet, not even every pitch from grand masters such as these turned into sold properties. Other people may only pitch and sell one concept in a lifetime but try as they might never get another shot. Selling one idea may (at least in the short run) get the creator some more open doors but it really takes a track record to make a recognizable difference.

As discussed in Chapter 9 and 10, how creators present themselves during and receive feedback after the pitch is most important. Creators who can show themselves professional and with promise although rejected stand a better chance in the long run than someone with great talent but great attitude. This is because executives know they can work with these creators.



### **SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: CHRISTOPHER KEENAN**

Christopher Keenan is a highly accomplished Creative Executive, Writer and Executive Producer who has enjoyed nearly twenty years of success in the Animation and Family Entertainment industries. As an independent Executive Producer, Writer and Creative Consultant, Mr. Keenan's current projects (under his Creating4Kids banner) include a number of new, animated series in development and production for Create Media Ltd., National Geographic Kids' Entertainment, Blink Studios of Dubai, Target Entertainment Ltd., Voiceworks Enterprises Inc., Foothill Entertainment, and The Natural Science Collaborative. Prior to setting up shop as Creating4Kids, Christopher Keenan served as Senior Vice President of Creative Affairs for the Animation Division of Warner Bros. where he launched Kids' WB! and oversaw the development and production of dozens of original and franchise television series and made-for-DVD features. Previously, he was recruited by Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment as Story Editor to develop animated feature films and television series and he has also served as Director of Children's Entertainment for Capital Cities/ ABC, Inc., where he oversaw the network's Saturday Morning Children's



programming block and participated in the acclaimed “After School Specials” series. A long-time desert resident, Christopher Keenan divides his time between Los Angeles and Palm Springs, California.

”Each situation is completely unique. Generally, an intellectual property is optioned, licensed or purchased because the ‘buyer’ sees some inherent value in it. To what degree the creative elements of the original pitch are kept intact hinges on so many different factors that it’s truly impossible to predict what will happen. Much depends on the extent to which a property or idea has been developed by the time a deal is being made, and who the actual buyer is. For example, a network, broadcaster or production company may have many specific ideas for further development (generally, to better shape the property for their needs); while an independent producer or financier may leave all the creative decisions to the creator -- and only be interested in a return on the initial investment and/or garnering interest from a third party. With so many different media outlets and cross-platform ventures out there, there are innumerable sorts of buyers (with all kinds of agendas), thus making the scenarios for development incredibly varied.

One thing that every creator (or rights holder) should keep in mind is that every negotiation is just that -- a NEGOTIATION. If there is a strong desire to maintain particular aspects of the concept or property during development/production, these elements should be identified up front and protected during the drafting of the option/license/purchase agreement. The same is true for any attachment and/or approvals that may be desired by the creator/ rights holder -- he or she can always ask for these to be built into the deal as it’s being negotiated.

For me, creative development is all about discovery. Whether discovering a particular property, a talented individual, or an innovative idea, all development starts with one simple question, ‘What if...?’ The process then continues with the same question asked over and over -- from every possible angle. And, with each answer, new possibilities are uncovered and new ideas are discovered. There is an element of surprise to development that invigorates me.

Another aspect of development that I find incredibly appealing is the collaborative nature of the process. Exchanging ideas and sharing insights is one of the most rewarding forms of interaction, and watching these ideas and insights get applied to a development project is incredibly satisfying. The experience becomes a communal one.

The third thing I enjoy about the development process is the strategic thinking behind all the creative work. Generally, the goal of any 'development' is to realize the full potential of an idea so that it has the greatest chances of moving from creative concept to production reality. For production to become a reality, however, the concept must resonate with those who will finance and/or exhibit it, and each creative decision made during development can have a direct effect on the project's likelihood of seeing the reality of production. While there are no 'bad' ideas during the development process, strategy requires that only certain ideas get acted upon. It's a bit of a creative chess game, always balancing the creative integrity of the property with the market reality.

Probably the most challenging aspect of development is the ease with which we all lean toward the familiar. By its very nature, development is about the cultivation of new ideas -- and yet we all tend to apply what we already know, what we've already seen or what we've already done to the new work at hand. The challenge is to acknowledge this tendency and move through it, to go beyond the first answer or the safe answer or the obvious answer.

In tandem with this challenge is the difficulties one can have with prospective buyers along the same lines. Like the rest of us, many buyers tend to embrace what they know has worked for them in the past, or what feels familiar to them; it's safe and it's comfortable -- who can blame them? But I don't know of one instance of anyone ever 'making it big' by imitation -- and the greatest successes have always been wholly original ideas on which someone took a risk on something new.

As an executive and producer, one of the recurrent challenges I've faced during development is the navigation of creative waters with a creator or rights holder who is overly protective or 'precious' about his or her own work. While collaboration is at the heart of development, some creators are less interested in actually

‘developing’ their idea than they are in “just getting it made as is.” This can present some serious challenges, both during the development process itself and, ultimately, when it comes time to produce or sell. And, sometime, I have to ask, ‘If the project is perfect as it is, why isn’t it sold already?’ Generally, a project is ‘in development’ because it needs to be developed... And this is a very simple concept that I wish all creators would understand and accept from the beginning of the process.

In my experience, the statistics for any property moving from ‘development’ to ‘production’ are very, very low. While the development process is in place to cultivate ideas and increase their chances of going into production, it is also a ‘weeding’ process and many projects get eliminated as they move further forward toward a production greenlight. It’s natural selection, ‘survival of the fittest’. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule (for example, smaller studios who only develop projects on which they make production commitments or “in-house” projects to which a company may be prepared to commit from the outset), but the odds are generally stacked against a project from the start. There are an infinite number of properties put ‘into development,’ and a finite number of production/broadcast slots -- the math is pretty simple.

There really isn’t a formula for success (or failure) when it comes to development. There are any number of reasons why a project may fall out of the running, and many more reasons that we can’t even predict. The one equation that seems most frequently to apply to projects making a successful move from development to production is: Right Idea + Right Time + Right Place = Production Order. But, as explained earlier, a lot of creative and strategic work generally goes on before this equation can even be possible.

Thankfully, the animation and children’s television business still puts enormous emphasis on talent. While having a property in development with studio or broadcaster can be an effective calling card, talent is still the name of the game once you’re in the door. But a development deal may not be quite the notch on the belt that many think it is. While others may be interested to hear of a deal elsewhere, ‘...That’s great; now what do you have for ME?’ is a familiar and frequently heard response. Good ideas can come from

anywhere, but the likelihood of a good idea getting recognized is obviously increased if there is an invitation to present it.

What truly makes for ‘industry credibility’ is talent, consistency, reliability and prolificacy. Without these, a dozen development deals won’t matter a bit.”

## **FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA**



### ***Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT***

Given my dramatic tendencies, I’ve often given thought to what I would have done if the show had sold. As mentioned earlier, the premise was quite a departure for me to try something totally comedic. Given that the idea didn’t sell, I decided to try a rewrite of the pitch bible to bring it back more towards a comedy-action show than just straight comedy. The next 4 pages are a heavily reworked of the Deejee and Dwight concept in a new pitch bible, changing family relationships, adding new characters, and providing a pilot suggestion with a stronger beginning, middle, and end based on dramatic plot points. Is this version any better than the other? I’ll leave it to others to decide.

## **DEEJEE AND DWIGHT**

Series Development  
by SHANNON MUIR

### **SERIES OVERVIEW**

DWIGHT is a very lonely boy at the WILMONT ACADEMY. His single mom works all the time (in addition to his scholarship) to see that he can stay at the prestigious school, so Dwight lives at Wilmont year-round. He's shy, unpopular, smart, and loves space and science in ways that his teachers frown upon. Mainly, he's caught up in the wonder and mystery of potential life on alien worlds, and he's determined to prove they exist. After all, any world must be better than Dwight's own.

The humanoid alien DEEJEEFORTHMA -- DEEJEE for short -- and his parents make a wrong turn on their way to their dream vacation and end up landing on the grounds of Wilmont Academy. Deejee eagerly runs out to explore, just as his parents realize that other aliens (a splinter group that broke off generations ago and still at war with their kind) are in Earth airspace and hurriedly take off before they are discovered... not realizing Deejee is still outside. Not until they reach their original destination will they realize Deejee is gone, and then must decide how to go back for their son. However, they leave enough of a trace that the other aliens decide to begin their search for conquest of Earth there to see how many aliens may already be on the planet and headquarter in the same woods.

Dwight discovers Deejee and realizes he must take the alien boy in until his parents find a way to rescue him... and at this point, they can't even get in touch with one another for fear of discovery by the other aliens. Also, as much as Dwight would like to expose Deejee as an alien to prove all the naysayers wrong about his "fanciful dreams", he now risks losing his best friend. As Deejee makes Dwight realize that his fantasies may turn to nightmares with the arrival of the opposing alien invasion forces, the two boys form an unlikely and sometimes humorous alliance to keep the Earth from being taken over.

### **CHARACTERS**

**DEEJEE** -- Deejee's full name roughly translates to Deejeeforthma, or as his human name becomes, D.G. Forthman, though Dwight calls him Deejee. He's a young curious humanoid alien who wanders too far from his ship and is accidentally left behind. Deejee functions as the equivalent of an Earth kid diagnosed with ADD. His mind is hyper, everywhere at once, and Deejee loves getting into everything regardless of the risks. It's a combination of natural intellect and high curiosity.

**DWIGHT** -- Dwight Boyston is shy and unpopular boy at the Academy who has his own room because no one wants to share with him, age 11. He loves space and science and often watches the stars dreaming of better worlds. Also, Dwight's partially at Wilmont Academy on a scholarship funded by the corporation run by Roger's parents. None of the kids like Dwight, though Kieran might if Roger didn't constantly keep him under his thumb. Imagine Dwight's surprise when he discovers Deejee and he's proven right! With Deejee and Dwight now working together against the invading aliens, he's the cautious half of the pair whenever Deejee's curiosity is peaked.

**CLAYTON** -- Clayton Saunders is the 11 year old son of Headmaster Saunders (see below). He's known as the writer of the daily email that goes out to all of the students of the school happenings, the facts as much as the dirt. Clayton originally did this hoping it will get people to like him and see him as more than the Headmaster's son, and when it fails, uses it to get back at everyone by releasing any rumor to his advantage.

**ROGER** -- At age 11, Roger Silverman is the richest, most self-centered boy at Wilmont Academy who also has physical size on his side. Roger loves making everyone knuckle under to him, and if they don't, ensures their lives will be miserable. His parents carry so much influence that if he whines, even Headmaster Saunders feels intimidated. Roger's parents show up all the time and drown him with whatever he wants, but this is a far cry from any affection.

**KIERAN** -- Kieran Branson hangs around with Roger because Kieran he feels intimidated by Roger's physical presence and his money, and is the closest thing Roger has to a "lackey". He's a study year ahead of kids his age (he's only age 10), so he's in classes with Dwight, Deejee, and Roger. Kieran's parents rarely come to the Wilmont Academy as they jetset around the globe and struggle to relate to their supersmart son.

**HEADMASTER SAUNDERS** -- He's in charge at Wilmont Academy. Headmaster Saunders gets very upset when his protocol, principle, or the feeling of the world totally being in order is thrown out of balance. In short, a disciplinarian control freak.

**JESSICA** -- Jessica Chandler, age 11, the pretty and brainy girl from the MASTERSON SCHOOL FOR GIRLS across the lake, has caught the eye of Deejee. The young alien's convinced she must be a female alien from the opposing race working undercover; the name Jesscathanlar is common on that planet, and Deejee thinks she's changed her name to Jessica Chandler. Deejee will do anything to make contact with her; Dwight's not as easily convinced. She's the techno-geek of Masterson School for Girls, and the audience should be left guessing exactly what her story is.

**HEADMISTRESS HARRISON** -- She's in charge at the Masterson School for Girls, though some would wonder how she's managed to stay so. While not senile, she's prone to daydreaming and reminiscing, and can be easily distracted by convincing her to start telling stories of days of past glory. It makes it very easy for Jessica (or Dwight or Deejee if they get caught on the Masterson property) to distract her long enough to get away.

**COMMANDER VIKKTORWISHIN** – Commander of the alien military forces currently on Earth. He's so full of himself and sure of his plans he never sees the flaws in them. These aliens want to conquer Earth not for any serious reason, but because they've splits within the group that split off before, and a group of unhappy people want a new world to settle.

### **PILOT EPISODE - "WELCOME TO EARTH"**

We see Dwight's loneliness as he looks at a photo of his mother as he gets a rare email from her, and is made fun of by Roger and Clayton. An upset Dwight, tired of all this, runs away into the woods. Meanwhile, Deejee's parents make a wrong turn to their interstellar vacation destination and land on the grounds of Wilmont Academy. Curious Deejee arms his backpack of gear and heads out. As the radar detects alien warships entering airspace, they realize their mistake and take off to avoid discovery, not realizing Deejee's slipped off the ship. It's not until Deejee's parents reach the vacation planet they realize Deejee is not with them. Apparently he has a habit of running off and getting in trouble, so they think he's hidden somewhere on the vacation world! No telling when they'll realize he's back on Earth, and where they left him.

Dwight meets Deejee in the woods. Deejee shows off some of his techno-toys in his pockets, like nothing Dwight has seen. Dwight is convinced Deejee is an alien, especially when he describes where he's from. However, the one thing Deejee doesn't have is a communicator of the needed strength. It starts to rain. Dwight sneaks Deejee into his room so he can stay dry.

In his room, Deejee sees the picture of Dwight's mother and realizes they have a lot in common. Dwight tries writing out Deejee's name, but all he gets is D.G. Forthman, so this is what Deejee thinks he needs to be in Earth language. Deejee sadly realizes he will need to be here a while. Then he sees Dwight's computer. Before Dwight comprehends what is happening, Deejee figures out how to get into the school computer and set up an identity for himself, as D.G. Forthman. He also tells it he is an exchange student with all bills paid. Dwight protests that Deejee can't do that, it's not legal on our planet, Deejee points out he already did. Dwight tells him to undo it. All the commotion gets the attention of HEADMASTER SAUNDERS, who pokes his head in based on complaints to the other students. Dwight is forced to introduce new student D.G. Forthman in his unusual pajamas. The Headmaster sighs that no one tells him anything these days, and we'll get you proper uniforms in the morning. Now go to sleep! After the Headmaster leaves, Deejee asks Dwight if he still wants him to fix the computer. Dwight sighs, it's too late now. Dwight pleads with Deejee you didn't know better this time, but please please don't do it again.

The next morning, Roger, Clayton and Kieran give Dwight a hard time about his alien-gazing again. Dwight gets so angry he nearly reveals Deejee's secret, but then introduces his friend D.G. and how he likes the same things too, so Dwight's not so weird after all. They walk off together, while Roger and Kieran can't think of an immediate comeback. Clayton writes up a piece for the daily Wilmot school email saying all eyes will be kept on this strange new kid.

Later on, Deejee sees JESSICA CHANDLER while both sets of students have a day at the lake. He's convinced she must be a female alien from the other planet and sets out to meet her, and Dwight must do anything to stop him. The boys make it onto the Masterson grounds and actually do meet Jessica, but Dwight is able to break things up before Deejee reveals his suspicions to Jessica... leaving each curious about the other and the audience unsure about Jessica's actual background. As they dodge HEADMISTRESS HARRISON, they find the enemy spaceship in the woods and that's when Deejee tells Dwight that the game is over and Earth really is in danger.

#### **EPISODE IDEAS**

**"Career Day"** -- The boys at the school must research their dream career for a class report. Deejee is disappointed he can't find any information on his dream career from his homeworld and must learn about Earth careers. But he truly has no motivation to do the project, and his insolence not to do it creates a threat of Headmaster Saunders contacting Deejee's parents, whose information in the computer is fictional. Dwight has to turn things around and find a career Deejee is interested in reporting on or they may get discovered.

**"Breakout"** -- Deejee breaks out in a body rash that has everyone panicked because they don't know what it is and he has no known allergies. Headmaster Saunders calls in the school nurse, whom Dwight and Deejee fear will look too close and realize Deejee is not human. They're on the run, keeping Deejee from the nurse until the rash goes away. Turns out Deejee has a food allergy, which they only figure out when he tries the food again while hiding out and it makes things worse. Their panicked screams reveal their location, but Dwight makes the connection between the food and the rash at a crucial moment, and Deejee is treated without too much of a look in-depth to reveal his alien self.

**"Extra, Extra"** -- It's looking like Clayton may have stumbled upon some questions regarding Deejee's past that don't have simple answers. If Clayton snoops enough and gets his way, he could expose Deejee for who he really is. Deejee and Dwight need to stop Clayton from finding the truth.





### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

This series has of course not yet been sold, but what follows is a revised version of both the mini-bible and the pilot script that Kevin Paul Shaw Broden and I did that illustrates how things can change from draft to draft. As in Chapter 6, descriptions will be provided as to why elements changed. This gives a sense of how things can change and evolve with feedback, which we gave one another as the pieces passed back and forth between us.

#### **Bible – Revised**

The biggest change, as seen during the script phase, is the change of Arthur's last name in the bible for the first time (though we missed it a couple of places in the first draft script, as previously noted). The rest of the modifications are relatively minor. Look out for them when comparing the next 4 pages in Figure 11.2 to the version in Chapter 5.

## **DOUBLES**

Series Development

by SHANNON MUIR and KEVIN PAUL SHAW BRODEN

Draft Date: July 11, 2007

### **SERIES OVERVIEW**

The BOLD YOUTH are a group of young super heroes who work together to stop crime, super criminals, natural disasters, and so forth. Each have their own unique powers, but work as the perfect team, and on top of that, the public love them. The press and cameras are on them all the time. The public take to them like a winning baseball team. They go on talk shows, and celebrity parties and so forth. To the public these kids can do no wrong.

Of course in private they don't always get along, but they are pretty much a family. Then there's Malcolm who's begun to get mental "glimpses" of someone he doesn't know but seems to be very close to him.

Things suddenly change when they attempt to stop a new group of super-villains. The villains seem to have powers very similar to their own, as if they were a matching and opposite set. They even seem to know how the Bold Youth work. Where our team has been trained to work together for the benefit of others, the villains work more like rough, street smart kids, trained like a military squad.

After the villains escape, the heroes return to their base, very confused. They inquire with their mentor and benefactor Arthur Forsythe if he might know who these new villains might be. He obviously knows something, and seems shocked, but gives them little in the way of answer.

To make matters worse. The TV Rumors Shows, like EXTRA, are talking about certain members of the Bold Youth being seen around town carousing with the wrong type of people and getting in trouble. There is even some photos taken. Our team look at one another in total surprise, they'd all like to blow off steam partying but they know they can't do anything to endanger the team. So who are the impersonators?

### **"GOOD" CHARACTERS**

**MALCOLM** -- Black, 16, master of the mind. He can read other's thoughts and catch visual glimpses of their thought-related flashbacks through physical contact. The brainy nerd of the group, he loves to read and learn information. Taking in thoughts is just another information source for him; he can be quite detached. He also has to a degree the power of suggestion. In some ways, this makes him perfect for his dream of being a psychotherapist, yet in other ways creates issues. Malcolm's best friend is KELLER, a girl without powers who doesn't know the truth about Malcolm and his friends. His fraternal twin brother is TYRONE.

KYOKO - Japanese, 16, who has the power of channeling heat. She's griddled eggs on a skillet in his hand to firing heat lasers with her eyes. She's the pretty popular cheerleader with a fiery attitude. Her twin is KAGAMI.

DENA -- Caucasian, 16. Dena has the gift of super speed. Her twin is DONA; they are identical.

LUIS -- Latino, 16, able to fly. Luis is a gifted musician as well. His twin brother is CARLOS.

ARTHUR FORSYTHE -- Now makes his living legally as an inventor who works on payroll for a major company. He's told the kids nothing of their past, which makes it all the worse when the past comes knocking on their door.

BELINDA BRAND -- The Bold Youth PR Manager.

KELLER -- Malcolm's best friend. She knows about his powers but isn't afraid of them, but will her attitude change with the new people in town. She's a computer whiz who soon will find herself as the non-superpowered member of BOLD YOUTH.

KONNOR -- Malcolm's best friend's sometimes annoying younger brother, who totally idolizes Malcolm.

### **"BAD" CHARACTERS**

TYRONE -- Black, 16, powers of the mind. She can read other's thoughts and catch visual glimpses of their thought-related flashbacks through physical contact. Her twin is MALCOLM.

KAGAMI -- Japanese, 16, with the power of channeling intense heat. Her twin is KYOKO.

DONA -- Caucasian, 16, enhanced speed. Her twin is DENA, who looks identical to her.

CARLOS -- Latino, 16, power of flight. His twin brother is LUIS.

DR. GENEFACTOR -- He's secretly raised these children in hiding after taking severe hurt rescuing them. Unlike the Forsythe kids, his four have a much harder time blending in and interacting with society. Since Dr. Genefactor ultimately wants to take the world over, in his eyes, that's not necessarily a bad thing. His original name was EUGENE FACTOR.

VIOLA CRANE -- Black, in her 30s. A streetwise tough woman who has been a kind of 'house mother' to Dr. Genefactor's teens and clearly has a thing for Dr. Genefactor.

### **ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS**

KENISTON NORTON – Keller and Konnor’s father. An old school chum of Arthur Forsythe and the brains behind the Bold Youth’s technology.

### **ORIGIN**

Eccentric billionaire Arthur Forsythe was concerned for the future of mankind, and was approached by a bio-chemist who sold himself as the world expert in gene-splicing and could provide Forsythe with a way of ensuring the future he dreamed of.

Using odd forms for cloning, the scientist soon had several sets of twins that he worked on who were implanted back in their four willing mothers who had signed up for this cause for a variety of reasons – from the money being offered to believing genetic research would improve the world. Forsythe even fell in love with the young idealistic Japanese woman who thought good things would come from the research.

Over time, Forsythe began to piece together that Dr. Eugene Facktor’s intents were not quite so honorable. So first he tried to order the scientist to shut down the experiments, but when that didn’t work he tried to liberate the children himself and help the mothers to escape. Unfortunately, when the scientist attempted to stop him there was a fire, and Forsythe was only able to escape with half the children. The fire engulfed the laboratory, and he feared the bio-chemist and the remaining children had all died. The three mothers willing to escape with him could not take their children because of the environments they had escaped that put them in the position to be test subjects in the first place, or because of the bitterness towards Forsythe that he could not save all the children -- so they parted ways, leaving Forsythe to raise the remaining children alone. Though he never forgot the woman he’d fallen in love with, even though she’d hardened her heart with bitterness.

Forsythe swore that he would provide for those that lived that they would have the lives the others had lost, though he would never tell them of their lost siblings or of the man that fathered them. So raising them almost as if they were his own children he taught them to love the world, and help others. When they reached their teenage years and their super powers manifested themselves, it was only right in all their eyes that they use them to help the world. When they reached their teenage years and their super powers began to manifest themselves, it was only right in all their eyes that they use them to help the world while at the same time bringing in much needed income as his teaching at the local university now brought in insufficient funds by itself.

Eugene Genefacktor, who had already been scorned by the scientific society, and his cloning procedures banned by the government, had great plans to show them all what he could accomplish. He would make a better world through genetics, even if he had to force it upon the world. But Forsythe had chickened out. As the fire engulfed the laboratory, he was able to save his experiments (the other infants), with the plans of finding someplace to continue his plans. But it wasn’t easy, and to keep his experiments alive, he would have to find a way to raise them. Fortunately Viola Crane, one of the

mothers, remained totally devoted to his cause and stood by him to raise the children in less than desirable condition.

These kids had to grow up on the street, with a hard edge, trying to survive the only way they could. When their powers grew they used them to take what they wanted. But then the bio-chemist saw on the news a group of super heroes who were obviously his other experiments. So he knew he must take back what was his. He pulled the kids together, though it was rough, taught them that it would be better to work together to go after what they wanted. He then showed them the BOLD YOUTH who had what they should have had. It didn't take him long to convince them to go and take it.

Meanwhile, Dr. Genefacktor and Viola Crane discover that something did not go as well with the genetic experiments as hoped. They realize they need to go in search of the other mothers in order to get the purest DNA to cure what will eventually destroy all the children. The problem is that Forsythe has the information. They take it from him, but Forsythe manages to still retain a backup copy which he shares with the BOLD YOUTH, putting a mission on their hearts to find and protect their birth mothers... though ignorant of what is at stake.

After several episodes of the twins fighting against one another, they will learn the truth over time, and the idea that they are fighting family will have an influence on what happens from here on out. Some on both sides won't care, others will care. A hero will want to help his/her sister. Or a villain will want to take what the sibling has. And so on.

By the end of the first season they there will be an uneasy truce between them as they realize their fates are intertwined.

### **Script – Teaser – Revised**

Not many changes happened in the revised teaser for the pilot (see Figure 11.3). The teaser was the right length and achieved its intended goals. Most of the changes are fixing misspellings and format issues. Other changes in the teaser include:

A clear indicator of when and how the klaxon alarm shuts off.

Indicating Belinda's standard props on her first appearance by naming and putting them in uppercase.

More action movements to Belinda and Arthur Forsythe to back up how their perkiness and sternness clash.

Added more spot fires in the news footage to make it clear the action's been going on for a little while.

Kagami is actually named here, because although a reveal for the reader, the production staff would need to know at this point.

**DOUBLES**  
**"Memories in the Mirror"**  
**by SHANNON MUIR and KEVIN PAUL SHAW BRODEN**

**INT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - NIGHT**

A FIRE burns all around. TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM, a young African-American child, sits safely in the center of a room where he is surrounded by objects on fire.

TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM  
<crying, sniffing>

OTS MALCOLM - An ADULT GLOVED HAND reaches into frame and tugs at Malcolm. He's not responsive.

MALE VOICE  
Come, Malcolm!

CLOSE UP - Malcolm continues to look up towards camera, crying. All he responds with is calling out a name.

TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM  
Tyrone! Tyrone!

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT**

A teenage MALCOLM awakes from a nightmare. The sound of an <ALARM> is heard.

MALCOLM  
Tyrone!

WIDE ON ROOM - Malcolm is sitting up in his bed, while LUIS is already standing next to his.

LUIS  
That dream again? Or was it the warning  
alarm actually waking you this time?

Malcolm snaps to with the recognition of the alarm.

MALCOLM  
(snapping orders)  
The alarm! Go!

Both leap out of bed and over to the closet, where they pull out flashy outfits emblazoned with the logo of their team, the BOLD YOUTH (a B and Y with the Y formed out of an unraveling DNA strand).

PUSH IN ON THE LOGO as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

MALCOLM AND LUIS - They exit their room, wearing their costumes, the <ALARM> still sounding.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - As they run down the hall and are joined by DENA and KYOKO in similar costumes.

ON KYOKO - her excitement is revealed by her hand bursting into flame.

KYOKO

(overeager, confident)

Wonder what cool adventure is in store this time?

INCLUDE DENA

DENA

Things are never 'cool' around you, Kyoko.

MALCOLM - He looks towards Kyoko with disapproval, and speaks to her TELEPATHICALLY.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

(telepathic filter)

And you know what Dr. Forsythe says about playing with fire in the house.

KYOKO - looks back at Malcolm with disappointment, and the fire in her hand goes out.

KYOKO

You're no fun.

GROUP SHOT as they head further down the long hallway, Luis is in the back of the group.

DENA - leaps ahead of them with a somersault or two and reaches to open the door at the end of the hall.

CLOSE ON DOOR KNOB - As Dena's hand reaches into frame, so does Luis' hand from above.

PULL BACK to reveal Luis hovering above Dena as he turns the knob and pushes the door open, surprising her that he's gotten there first.



LUIS  
(polite)  
Ladies first.

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

Sitting at his desk is DR. ARTHUR FORSYTHE, who presses a button on a CONTROL PANEL and the alarm goes silent. At his side is BELINDA BRAND, part chaperone and part Public Relations representative. Belinda is friendly and bright even at this late hour, but Forsythe is silent and grim. She wears her MICROPHONE HEADSET and CLIPBOARD.

REVERSE ANGLE - on team entering office.

MALCOLM  
So what's up?

KYOKO  
I still don't understand why you never  
read his mind and find out.

MALCOLM  
Because, because it wouldn't be right.

BELINDA/FORSYTHE - waves her clipboard like a cheerleader.

BELINDA  
That's the spirit, Malcolm. Uphold the  
Mission Statement of the Bold Youth.

Forsythe sternly raises a hand to silence Belinda.

DR. FORSYTHE  
(stern)  
Enough, Ms. Brand.

Dr. Forsythe presses another button on the control panel.

ANGLE ON A PAINTING HANGING ABOVE FIREPLACE - It rotates around to reveal a flat-screen TV on which images labeled as live news coverage from a helicopter camera is playing. On the monitor we see FOUR KIDS IN STREET GANG LIKE ATTIRE terrorizing workers in a warehouse district. Several spot fires light up around the warehouse.

As the monitor settles into place, the audio comes on and we join the helicopter pilot's speech in progress.

HELICOPTER PILOT (V.O.)  
 -- last thing we expected to find after  
 that car chase was seeing unusual fires  
 in the warehouse district that would lead  
 us to this.

ON LUIS/DENA - Luis stretches and yawns.

LUIS  
 (yawns) You got us out of bed for a  
 standard gang mugging? We're the Bold  
 Youth!

DENA  
 Leave that to the cops, I say.

HELICOPTER PILOT (V.O.)  
 Is that one holding a torch? Zoom in to  
 get us a closer look, Hal!

BACK ON MONITOR - The image zooms in as close as it can  
 to a long aerial shot from the helicopter news camera. It  
 centers on a fight between a SECURITY GUARD and A FEMALE  
 ASIAN TEEN (KAGAMI), and around them crates are on fire.  
 The Asian teen holds a hand as if to strike the guard.  
 Even at this distance she looks a lot like Kyoko.

ON KYOKO

KYOKO  
 What's that poser doing, stealing my  
 looks?

INCLUDE DENA - Dena points back at the screen.

DENA  
 Looks like she's taking a lot more than  
 that.

ON MONITOR - The "poser's" fist bursts into a flame just  
 like Kyoko's did earlier. The hand comes down towards the  
 security guard O.S.

KYOKO - Her hand goes to her mouth in shock.

**FADE OUT.**

**END TEASER**

## **Script – Act One – Revised**

Act One shortened dramatically from the first draft. Figure 11.4 shows an act that is now only 11 pages (which comes to 15 total including the teaser, still a tad long but more even than before). The television show, and Kyoko prompting Malcolm to find out if he's done what would previously be unthinkable, ends the act with the intent to leave the audience questioning what Malcolm maybe becoming after being "mind touched" by Tyrone. Other changes this act include:

More emotional reaction from Forsythe to get a better sense of how he feels.

Clarity in some of the warehouse choreography between Kagami, Dena, and Dona.

Made it clear that Luis' arrival is delayed though he still arrives ahead of the van.

**ACT ONE**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

WIDE SHOT - Kyoko brings her hand down from her mouth as they continue to watch.

KYOKO  
(hurt)  
She's got my powers!

KYOKO - Her fist surrounds by flame as she balls it.

MALCOLM  
(telepathic voice filter;  
soothing)  
No.

The flame goes out as the camera PULLS BACK to include Dena turning towards the study door.

DENA  
I'm going to get to the bottom of this!

DR. FORSYTHE - He gets up from his desk, reaches out a hand in a gesture to stop her.

DR. FORSYTHE  
Dena, wait--

Papers from his desk <FLUTTER> up into his face.

WIDE SHOT - The others looking back towards the door as it swings closed.

KYOKO  
And everyone says I'm the hothead. Ha!

MALCOLM  
You should know by now, Doc. There's no stopping her once she's set her mind to something. She just takes off.

FOLLOW LUIS as he walks over and opens the study window.

LUIS  
Don't worry, I'll get her. See you there.

**EXT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - NIGHT**

Luis LEAPS from the window and takes flight into the sk.

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

FORSYTHE - looks at the open window and shakes his head, obviously not in control like he should be. He then looks over to Belinda.

BELINDA, MALCOLM, KYOKO - Belinda holds up a set of car keys.

BELINDA

Your carriage awaits.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Malcolm and Kyoko follow Belinda out of the room.

KYOKO

(whispers to Malcolm)

I wish she wouldn't be quite so perky.

MALCOLM

What do you want me to do about it?

MALCOLM - He immediately realizes how silly his own question sounds. Kyoko gives him a knowing smirk, daring him to read her mind.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

(shocked)

That, that would be wrong.

KYOKO - She's angry but doesn't cause her hand to glow.

KYOKO

What's wrong is wannabees pretending to be Bold Youth!

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT**

The front gate of the property has been torn open, and Dana rushes through.

SECURITY GUARD - The guard's been surviving the fight, but just barely, with a scorched uniform. The girl's flaming hand is coming directly at the guard once more, when we PULL OUT as Dena runs into frame and grabs hold of the security guard and runs on leaving a surprised Kagami, her flame flickers out in the wake of Dena passing.

ON CORNER OF WAREHOUSE - This is some distance away; Dena puts the security guard down.

DENA  
You'll be safe here.

SECURITY GUARD  
That... that girl, her hand... fire.

SECURITY GUARD - The Security Guard wanders off, frazzled.

DENA  
Yeah, she really did look a lot like Kyoko, didn't she?

Suddenly DONA runs into frame and knocks Dena aside.

DONA  
Quite a surprise, isn't it?

OTS DENA - Dena looks up from where she fell, shocked to see her own face glaring down at her.

LUIS - arrives and hovers above, shocked at what's going on.

LUIS  
They look identical. This can't be happening.

CARLOS (O.S.)  
Believe me...

DIFFERENT ANGLE as CARLOS, another flying teen who looks just like Luis, smashes into Luis.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
...this is definitely happening.

LUIS - tumbles, then rights himself. PULL BACK as he turns around to see his attacker.

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - STREET - NIGHT**

Belinda's van pulls up out front the gate. Malcolm and Kyoko leap out shocked by what they see.

OTS KYOKO - as she spots the girl who looks like her setting fire to rubbish along the side of the warehouse.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - Kyoko runs up to the other Asian teen girl and grabs her to turn her around. Kyoko gasps at looking into her own face.

KYOKO

(gasp)

When I was named the Japanese word for  
mirror...

The two girls size each other up, and the one thing they  
both know is that they are identical.

KYOKO (CONT'D)

... I never dreamed I'd really find  
someone who almost really was my mirror...  
except for the fact you're on the wrong  
side.

ON KAGAMI - swinging her blazing fist at Kyoko.

KAGAMI

(puzzled)

Mirror? My name is also mirror. Kagami.

KYOKO - throws up her arm to defend herself, and her own  
fist bursts into flame.

KYOKO

Kyoko. Not pleased to meet you, poser.  
You think your tricks can match my REAL  
power?

KYOKO, KAGAMI - As both girls battle with confidence,  
they each burn portions of the other's outfit, and just  
like mirrors, each looks down at the burnt spot with a  
frown.

KAGAMI AND KYOKO

(in unison)

That was my best outfit!

PULL OUT AND UP to reveal Luis in a dog fight like flying  
battle with Carlos.

LUIS

Don't think you're getting away from me!

CARLOS - He pulls a maneuver in the air that has him  
dipping and turning so he winds up behind Luis!

CARLOS

Ah, but can you get away from ME?

MALCOLM - stands just inside the property gate, staring  
at the strange confusing sight.

TYRONE

(Telepathic filter)

They make quite a sight, don't they?

MALCOLM REACTS to the voice in his head. He turns to see his own duplicate, TYRONE, who gives an evil smirk.

CLOSE ON MALCOLM'S EYES - They go wide with recognition.

**INT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - NIGHT (REUSE)**

Two year old Malcolm continues to look up at the viewer, crying. All he responds with is calling out a name.

TWO YEAR OLD MALCOLM

Tyrone! Tyrone!

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT**

TYRONE - He frowns as this mental image is broadcast to him.

**INT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - NIGHT**

TWO YEAR OLD TYRONE is next to a crying TWO YEAR OLD KAGAMI. They're surrounded by fire. GLOVED MALE HANDS (more slender than the ones in the first scene) belonging to a YOUNGER DR. GENEFACTOR pick up Kagami and GLOVED FEMALE HANDS belonging to VIOLA CRANE pick up Tyrone.

TWO YEAR OLD TYRONE

Malcolm! Malcolm!

VIOLA (O.S.)

Eugene, how could you let this happen?

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT**

CLOSE ON MALCOLM - Having this new information puzzles him.

MALCOLM, TYRONE - Both fall to their knees and hold their heads, overwhelmed.

MALCOLM AND TYRONE (V.O.)

(demanding, telepathic  
filter)

GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

PULL BACK to see Dena and Dona chasing one another around the mentally tortured boys in an almost CIRCULAR BLUR.



DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 10.

DENA

You've got to tire sometime!

DONA - She looks back behind her as she keeps running.

DONA

Probably about the same time as you! How long can you hold out?

DENA - Dena continues to run with determination, but tiring.

DONA (O.S.; CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

Hours? DAYS?

Police and Fire <SIRENS> can be heard in the distance.

CLOSE UP ON FIRE TRUCK WITH FLASHING LIGHTS and <SIRENS>.

TYRONE - Looks towards the approaching <POLICE SIRENS> and fire trucks then puts a hand to his head.

OTS TYRONE - looking down at the recovering Malcolm.

TYRONE (V.O.)

(telepathic filter)

You will let us escape. You will let us escape.

MALCOLM - under Tyrone's brief command turns and looks towards his fellow teammates.

QUICK CUTS OF EACH MEMBER OF BOLD YOUTH - they stop what they are doing and look around to Malcolm as if hearing a voice, their counterparts take the moment to make their leave.

DONA (V.O.)

Not been nice meeting you!

TYRONE - Tyrone smiles, <LAUGHS> and runs O.S.

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER**

The BOLD YOUTH is regrouping. They look devastated, shocked, and somewhat confused. Smoldering from the fires is all around. Dena runs into frame after making a quick surveillance of the warehouse property. Belinda makes notes on her clipboard.

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 11.

Kyoko looks to Malcolm for understanding, especially after her teasing about what he could do with his mind.

MALCOLM

(totally shocked)

He messed with our thoughts. Invaded our minds.

DENA

I've checked everywhere, they're gone. They just disappeared. How?

WIDE ON GROUP - Favor Kyoko/Luis in the foreground.

KYOKO

This is the first time we've lost.

LUIS

Who'll trust us now?

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**

Two very sexy hosts, one male and one female (DARWIN and DARLA) sit in two director style chairs on a very cheap talk show set. Across from them are four empty director style chairs.

DARWIN

I'm Darwin.

DARLA

And I'm Darla.

DARWIN AND DARLA

And welcome to "Double Talk," the only talk show hosted by twins!

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - BACKSTAGE - DAY**

The four members of Bold Youth, in full costume, await their cue.

KYOKO

(whispers to others)

That name would make more sense if they were IDENTICAL twins.

LUIS

You give them too much credit.

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 12.

DENA  
What are we doing here, anyway?

MALCOLM  
Saving our reputation.

MALCOLM - He shakes his head.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
So NOT.

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**  
Darwin and Darla gesture O.S.

DARWIN  
And now please welcome today's hottest  
superhero team--

DARLA  
Don't forget ONLY superhero team!

DARWIN AND DARLA  
THE BOLD YOUTH!

The Bold Youth walk out on stage to <AUDIENCE APPLAUSE>.

**MONTAGE FOLLOWS**

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - COOKING SET - DAY**  
Darwin is with Kyoko on a cooking set. He picks up a  
frying pan and she looks at him puzzled. Darwin holds  
the frying pan over her hand, which she then lights on  
fire. Darwin <LAUGHS> as he cracks an egg into the  
frying pan while Kyoko rolls her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**  
Dena comes walking out in some stupid designer fashion  
that is not her look either in general style or for a  
speedy athlete superhero. She looks completely  
uncomfortable trying to "catwalk" the fashion on stage,  
and stumbles. Darla applauds over-enthusiastically.

DISSOLVE TO:

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 13.

**EXT. TELEVISION STUDIO - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Darwin and Luis have gone outside into the studio parking lot to have Luis demonstrate a simple flight trick. Luis launches into the air. PAN UP as if from the POV of the cameraman, who finally stumbles and falls on to the ground because he can't follow up that high, causing the camera to fall on its side.

FROM THIS SIDEWAYS POV, show Luis coming back down into frame, highly apologetic.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**

Darla and Malcolm are sitting in the two host chairs. Darla leans in to Malcolm with a seducing smile.

DARLA

Can you read what I'm thinking?

MALCOLM - His eyes go wide as a he gets a glimpse of her thoughts, then turns away blushing from embarrassment as the <AUDIENCE LAUGHS>.

**END MONTAGE**

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MAIN TALK SHOW SET - DAY**

The four teens come up to sit in directors chairs opposite the two hosts.

DARWIN

Thanks for showing us what it's like to be Bold Youth!

DARLA

Now tell us all about this big battle you just had against super criminals!

DARLA - She clutches her arms into herself, nervously.

DARLA (CONT'D)

I thought you all were the only ones like you. I mean, with the powers and stuff.

KYOKO - Kyoko's hand lights up with fire.

KYOKO

There is no one else like the Bold Youth!

DARWIN - He gets pushy compared to timid Darla.

DARWIN

But they had powers just like yours. We all saw it on the news.

LUIS - He's not sure what to say.

LUIS

Things aren't always what they appear.

DARLA - She thinks she sees an opportunity to spice things up.

DARLA

Are you saying it was just a publicity stunt?

LUIS (O.S.)

Well, uh...

MALCOLM - uncertain, looks over at the other Bold Youth members (who are equally speechless) and then at the hosts.

OTS DARWIN AND DARLA - Malcolm concentrates his efforts on Darwin.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

(telepathic filter)

Ask us how we got started.

DARWIN - blinks, then continues with the interview.

DARWIN

I'm more interested to know how you got started.

MALCOLM

Sure.

MALCOLM - He answers with poise and confidence.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

When we realized we were different it just seemed right to make a difference in the world.

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 15.

WIDE ON STAGE - NO AUDIO as the interview continues while other members of the Bold Youth contribute to the topic as we

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - BACKSTAGE - DAY**

Belinda waits backstage as the Bold Youth step offstage to the sounds of a <CHEERING AUDIENCE>.

BELINDA - She's trying to act more like a mother than a PR manager.

BELINDA

Sometimes it's best to start small. The public will quickly forget the battle, and things will swing your way again.

OTS BELINDA - All four teens cast doubting looks her direction, then walk out of frame leaving her alone.

MALCOLM - He walks forward with his hands in his pockets, a bit ahead of the group. KYOKO ENTERS FRAME and runs up to him.

KYOKO

(whispers)

Malcolm! You did something during the interview, didn't you?

Malcolm says nothing, just keeps walking on ahead.

KYOKO (CONT'D)

(a little louder)

Malcolm! Answer me!

**FADE OUT.**

**END ACT ONE**

## **Script – Act Two – Revised**

Act Two (Figure 11.5) now runs 12 pages. It includes the rest of what appeared in Act One after the TV show (now opening at the Forsythe residence) through the original end of Act Two. Other edits to note here:

Some scenes are now day that were originally mismarked as night, the whole script cannot happen in one day.

Malcolm changes how he speaks about Doctor Arthur Forsythe (now calls him simply “The Doc”).

Corrected the wrong reference to Arthur’s name in the text; he is now Dr. Forsythe.

Kyoko, not Dena, pushes Malcolm to try and read Doctor Forsythe’s mind to stay consistent with the storyline.

Kagami has a fireball in her hand (though not used) to make the threat feel more real.

**ACT TWO**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - DAY**

Belinda and Dr. Arthur Forsythe speak privately that evening. Unlike Belinda, Dr. Forsythe is not pleased with the public attention.

DR. FORSYTHE

They shouldn't have gone out there.

BELINDA

The fight or on television?

DR. FORSYTHE

Both!

BELINDA

You allowed them to go out there because you were running out of money to raise them raise them and at least wanted them to be using their powers legitimately and responsibly.

DR. FORSYTHE

(greatly concerned)

They're still children. It was wrong of me. This is far too much responsibility too young.

BELINDA - She persists to make her case.

BELINDA

You raised them to improve their skills and use them wisely, which is what all good people do. So shouldn't they be allowed to enjoy being heroes? Besides, if they aren't supposed to be celebrity heroes, what did you hire me for?

DR. FORSYTHE - He sits quietly, brooding, and doesn't give an answer. Belinda is almost insulted by his silence.

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - DAY**

PAN AROUND - Malcolm as he practices a peaceful martial arts pose. He's meditating, attempting to find peace after all the stress of the battle and the talk show. But he can't find that peaceful place in himself, and falls out of the pose, then looks over towards the window.



Through the window he can see the neighbor girl his own age, KELLER, who is at her window typing on her laptop.

MALCOLM

Hey, Keller?

Keller looks up from the laptop.

KELLER

Yeah?

MALCOLM - He leans against his window sill nervously.

MALCOLM

You didn't to see me on TV, did you?

KELLER - She stumbles nervously.

KELLER

Um...

KELLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(telepathic filter)

How can I tell him what I really think?

MALCOLM

MALCOLM

(calm, understanding)

Just tell me the truth, Keller. I need to hear you say it.

KELLER, MALCOLM - She looks over directly at Malcolm.

KELLER

I hate it when you do that, but like the fact you try to respect me. I just really don't like what Dr. Forsythe has made you.

MALCOLM

The Doc didn't make us into anything.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON KELLER AND MALCOLM - Their conversation continues.

KELLER

I just miss coming over and hanging and playing video games with you, but you're never home. Becoming Bold Youth, that certainly wasn't your idea, so why a team of heroes?

(MORE)

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 18.

KELLER (CONT'D)

I mean, it's kind of weird and neat you  
can do all that stuff with your brain.

KELLER - She expresses her curiosity and concern.

KELLER (CONT'D)

But how do you expect to use it to save  
the world?

PULL BACK at the sound of a little boy's voice. It's  
Keller's little brother KONNOR.

KONNOR

Keller loves Malcolm. Keller loves  
Malcolm.

Konnor leans toward the windowsill, and Keller pushes him  
back.

KELLER

Quit it, Konnor!

MALCOLM, KELLER - She looks back over to Malcolm to see  
him put his hand to his head as if in pain.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Malcolm, are you okay?

**EXT. UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - MOUNTAINS - NIGHT**

Smoke can be seen in the distance rising from the  
mountains. Two year old Malcolm, along with TWO YEAR OLD  
DENA (crawling at an impatiently fast pace), TWO YEAR OLD  
LUIS (whom two year old Malcolm keeps grabbing by the  
ankle every time he tries to fly), and TWO YEAR OLD KYOKO  
(bawling in tears) are all at the feet of a YOUNGER  
ARTHUR FORSYTHE and Kyoko and Kagami's mother, a YOUNGER  
RAI SATO. Only the legs of the adults are visible.

RAI (O.S)

I don't want to leave you, Arthur.

DR. FORSYTHE (O.S.)

Rai, you have to get away from me, it's  
not safe. We'll find each other again  
someday, I promise.

As the body language of the legs tells us Dr. Forsythe  
and Rai lean in for a kiss:

KONNOR (V.O.)

You're just tired after beating the bad  
guys, right?

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - BOYS' ROOM - DAY**

Konnor's voice brings Malcolm back to the real world.

KONNOR

My sister's in love with a TV star.

KELLER - She shakes her head in the negative.

KELLER

(exasperated)

Malcolm is not a TV star--!

Both siblings glance at Keller's laptop computer. Then Keller turns back to the window and Malcolm.

KONNOR

Hey, you're on the computer too!

KELLER

Uh. Malcolm, you better see this.

OTS KELLER AND KONNOR - They watch Malcolm, who sighs. But as Malcolm leans forward on the window sill to see what Keller was indicating, the <KLAXON ALARMS> goes off.

He straightens and turns away.

MALCOLM

Gotta go.

KELLER/KONNOR - She watches Malcolm leave his window, responding to the alarm. Konnor now pays full attention to something on the computer, moving the mouse about as he looked at different things.

KONNOR

Wow. Malcolm and his friends are on a whole bunch of feeds.

Keller turns and looks at what he was watching, and <GASPS>.

CLOSE ON MONITOR FOOTAGE - SPLIT SCREEN of the four look-alikes doing terrible things all over town. This time their choice of clothing looks far more cleaned up, not identical costumes to the Bold Youth but close.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

(disbelief and panic)

I don't believe what I'm seeing, not only has the Bold Youth changed their wardrobe...

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - DAY**

OTS BOLD YOUTH MEMBERS - The four members of BOLD YOUTH, now in uniform, are devastated as they watch the monitor. They don't know what to do next to save their reputations.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

... they've changed their attitude!

SHOT OF THE BOLD YOUTH - They look downhearted and devastated, not knowing what to do next to save their reputations.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

(CONT'D)

Who's going to save us now?

ON STUDY DOORS - Keller barges in with her laptop under her arm, with Belinda chasing after her. It's the first time we haven't seen her perky.

BELINDA

I told you, you can't--

KELLER

YOU can't order me around, lady.

MALCOLM - Keller ENTERS FRAME, opens up her laptop, and shows Malcolm digital photo stills open all over the screen.

KELLER (CONT'D)

They're all over the 'Net. People saying you've done things you'd never do...

CLOSE ON KELLER - She looks very sad.

KELLER (CONT'D)

... or at least I didn't believe you would ever do.

MALCOLM - He looks equally devastated.

MALCOLM

How can you even think...?

KELLER, MALCOLM - She closes the laptop.

KELLER

I don't think. But Konnor's seen and he's not sure what to think. What am I supposed to tell him?

Malcolm puts his hands on Keller's shoulders.

MALCOLM

Keller, we've known each other a long time. You've been able to read things better between us than I can do with my powers.

MALCOLM - with the other members of Bold Youth behind him.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

If there's anyone in this world I can't hide from, it's you. Please, help us figure out who's trying to set us up.

KELLER - She looks uncertain.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE STUDY - DAY - LATER**

PAN ACROSS - Keller sits at her laptop computer cross-legged on the floor. The Bold Youth watch her eagerly, Dr. Forsythe sits at his desk frowning in disapproval. Belinda jots down notes as she observes everyone.

CLOSE ON LAPTOP KEYBOARD - Keller's slender fingers play across the keyboard quickly as she goes from one web-site to the next.

CLOSE ON HER FACE - It's stern as she concentrates on her work, she may still be mad at Malcolm.

CAMERA CIRCLES AROUND KELLER as she works away. Finally she firmly says:

KELLER

I think I've found what you need.

PULL BACK as the Bold Youth gather around her.

KELLER (CONT'D)

From what I can find on the web, you and the rest of the Bold Youth aren't the only ones with powers.

OTS MALCOLM - Keller maintains her serious expression as she tells him what she's found.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Tonight's incident isn't the first. Most of this is unsubstantiated rumors with no major police reports. As if people were too scared to mention them in the reports. But the things described on some people's blogs match a lot of your powers.

OTS KELLER OF MALCOLM - His expression goes to deep concern.

KELLER (CONT'D)

A same city streets repeat through many of these stories, so that's probably where you should start.

Keller closes her lap top, and stands.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Some of these go back to before Bold Youth made your first public appearance last year.

Malcolm goes to put a hand on Keller's shoulder.

MALCOLM

Thanks, Keller. I knew we could count on you.

PULL BACK as Keller pushes Malcolm's hand away.

KELLER

I need to get back to Konnor and my Dad.

Keller runs out and leaves the room. The Bold Youth return their attention to Dr. Forsythe's monitor.

LUIS

That's all good to know. But what do we do about it?

DR. FORSYTHE - He sits in his chair.

DR. FORSYTHE

Lay low and plan a strategy. There has to be a way to defeat these others.

CLOSE ON MONITOR - Focus on the footage of the mystery people as we

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - EXT. GIRLS' ROOM - NIGHT**

CLOSE UP ON DOOR - Malcolm's hand ENTERS FRAME and starts to knock on the door, but as he does, THE DOOR OPENS and Dena and Kyoko are waiting there.

DENA

Malcolm, your thoughts are so strong we knew you were coming.

MALCOLM - He turns his head away in embarrassment.

KYOKO - Kyoko points towards Malcolm.

KYOKO

And we think you're right.

OTS DENA AND KYOKO - The girls talk to Malcolm and Luis.

KYOKO (CONT'D)

The Doc's got to be hiding something.  
How much did he know when he adopted us?

DENA

Why isn't he so eager to see our names are cleared?

ON ALL FOUR - The girls step into the hall and join the boys.

MALCOLM

Four people that look like us that can do what we do, that's just too much to be coincidence.

LUIS

There's only one person who can give us the answers.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

CLOSE ON FORSYTHE - Sitting behind his desk, his grim face betrays what the kids are asking.

DR. FORSYTHE

They are your twins.

WIDE ANGLE ON BOLD YOUTH - They look shocked at each other.

DR. FORSYTHE (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

I tried to stop it, I swear I did. There was this other doctor, who turned out not to be so legitimate, but I didn't know it at the time. He said his methods were sound.

(beat)

I discovered him experimenting on newborn children of desperate mothers in need.

DR. FORSYTHE - He gets out from behind his desk to walk towards the kids.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)

There was a fire and I tried to save as many of the children as I could. But the others... the others had been separated from you.

ANOTHER ANGLE - The kids back away as he tries to come closer.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)

The fire started without warning and everyone had to get out. I didn't know if the others had survived. I prayed, but didn't know.

LUIS

(curious)

Didn't you ever try to find them?

DR. FORSYTHE

The trail went cold.

DENA

I'm not sure if I can believe you.

KYOKO

Malcolm, there's a way to find out. Read him. Is it true? Is it true?

CLOSE SHOT OF MALCOLM - He closes his eyes intently.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

I don't have to read him. I've known since I was two years old.

WIDE SHOT - The other three look over at Malcolm who still has his eyes closed.



LUIS

What?

MALCOLM

Those dreams... the ones that keep waking me. They were really memories.

Malcolm opens his eyes.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Of the night of the fire. Of my brother trying to reach out to me with his mind. I'm sorry I didn't say anything earlier.

OTS MALCOLM OF DR. FORSYTHE - Dr. Forsythe looks down at the floor ashamed.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

But I couldn't believe it was true either

CLOSE ON MALCOLM - He looks sad and concerned.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I guess I just wanted it to be a dream.

MATCH CUT TO:

**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

MATCH CUT TO a close shot of a very mean looking Tyrone.

PULL OUT as he is obviously watching things happening around him. A king surveying his domain. A rundown area of town, the street is boarded by old brownstones. This is a run down part of town where people don't go to the cops against normal thugs, let alone super powered ones. This is their world, darker and dirtier than that of the other kids.

OTS TYRONE - as the rest of his 'gang' is playing on the city street and tormenting anyone who passes by their run down apartment building. A car ENTERS FRAME.

ON CAR - continues down the road, as Dona SUPERSPEEDS across the street. The blur is enough to scare the driver to a fearful stop!

TYRONE - He <LAUGHS LOUDLY>.

TYRONE

Excellent, Dona! I always love seeing  
the fear of power put into them!

ON CAR - It just barely starts moving again as Carlos  
intentionally lands on the hood, startling the DRIVER to  
a stop again!

TYRONE - He hugs himself tightly as he continues to  
<LAUGH LOUDLY>.

ON DRIVER - startled as he watches Carlos leaps from his  
car hood, only to be turned to fear as a fiery light  
reflects off his windshield and he turns to see:

KAGAMI - A fireball is growing in her hand, as she looks  
devilish down at the driver.

KAGAMI

Time for a little light show finale!

VIOLA (O.S.)

(strictly)

Dinner time.

Kagami turns towards the voice (O.S.) and her flame goes  
out.

TYRONE - as he is joined on the front stoop by VIOLA  
CRANE, African American woman in her mid 30s, with the  
build and attitude of a marine drill sergeant who  
functions as a "house mother" of sorts.

VIOLA (CONT'D)

And tonight we're going out on the town,  
so dress up.

VIOLA - She makes her hand into a fist.

VIOLA (CONT'D)

Let's make a buffet meal out of this city  
to satisfy your hearts' desires.

PULL BACK as Viola walks up to Tyrone specifically.

VIOLA (CONT'D)

And you, my Tyrone, my flesh and blood  
soon, shall have the world at your feet.

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 27.

TYRONE - He smiles greedily.

**FADE OUT.**

**END ACT TWO**

### **Script – Act Three – Revised**

The revised Act Three, as shown in Figure 11.6, is 11 pages long. Changes here include:

Dena actively shown trying to take Kagami down.

Crowd now referred to as Diners to make their purpose clearer.

All uppercase on the first appearance of the young woman Carlos has with him.

Tyrone and Dena fight sequence expanded.

Added humor to lighten the mood when Luis returns with water to take care of fires and the conflict is over.

Better clarified the situation with the copies of the data file Doctor Forsythe has; clearer dialogue.

**ACT THREE**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

The Bold Youth Van pulls up to a street busy with city nightlife. Belinda drives, Keller is up front with her. Kyoko and Malcolm are in the seat behind.

BELINDA

Keller, is this the place you said a lot of those blog sightings are?

KELLER

Yes, Ms. Brand.

**INT. BOLD YOUTH VAN - NIGHT**

MALCOLM, KYOKO - Kyoko whispers to Malcolm.

KYOKO

She better be right.

MALCOLM

She has no reason to lie to me... um, us. Besides, I think I'd know if she was.

KYOKO

Mr. Privacy Policy? I don't think so.

MALCOLM

(flustered)

That's not what I meant.

CLOSE ON THE DASHBOARD - Belinda presses a button.

BELINDA

I'll stay put as usual...

**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

ON TOP OF VAN - A camera pokes up out of the top.

BELINDA (V.O.; CONT'D)

... and get some footage for our PR file!

WIDE SHOT - Tyrone, Kagami, Dona and Carlos burst on the scene and start walking through the crowd. They're dressed in new outfits, a step up from what we've seen them in before -- equally flashy as the Bold Youth but with a streetwise rebel twist. At first people think they're just part of the party nightlife crowd and ignore them.

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 29.

DONA  
(to the others)  
I think I feel like...

She grabs a YOUNG MAN near her and spins him like a top  
as she runs in a circle.

DONA (CONT'D)  
... dancing!

KAGAMI - She shoots a fireball at a tree along the street  
and in front of an awning covered patio dining area with  
a small group of DINERS, setting the awning ablaze.

KAGAMI  
The streets are SO poorly lit around  
here. Let's fix that.

Dena runs INTO FRAME and grabs on to Kagami.

DENA  
That'll be quite enough of that!

ACROSS THE STREET - Belinda's van pulls to a stop. The  
roof mounted camera revolves to point at the fire.

WIDE SHOT ON VAN - Keller, Malcolm, and Kyoko are getting  
out of the van as Luis lands. Belinda stays in to run the  
camera.

LUIS  
Came as fast as we could once you  
confirmed you found them.

OTS KELLER - She watches Carlos grab a YOUNG WOMAN and  
fly off into the air with her.

KELLER (V.O.)  
Yeah, but now what?

LUIS - He takes off into the sky.

LUIS  
Try to make a difference! I'll find  
water to fight the fire.

DENA, KAGAMI - Both continue to struggle as Kyoko ENTERS  
FRAME.

KYOKO  
Dena, we need to fight fire with fire!  
Help the others!

KELLER, MALCOLM - Keller, standing next to Malcolm, points O.S.

KELLER

Look, those people are trapped, and scared.

DINERS - are terrified as the tree burns and drops flames on the awning above them, but they are trapped among the tables and the patio railings.

KELLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Malcolm, you've got to CALM them down so they can get out safely.

MALCOLM - looks at the terrified diners then back to Keller, he knows what she wants him to do.

PUSH IN ON MALCOLM - He concentrates, sending out a TELEPATHIC message to the crowd.

MALCOLM

(Telepathic filter)

Calm down. There is nothing to fear. Move away from the fire.

ON DINERS - They don't appear to be calming down, in fact they are confused and getting further scared.

MALCOLM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(Telepathic filter)

You must calm down!

MALCOLM/KELLER - Malcolm stops, opens his eyes and looks at Keller, uncertain.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

There are too many of them, and they are so scared, I don't think I can do this.

KELLER

You can do it, I know you can.

PUSH IN ON MALCOLM - uncertain, as he closes his eyes once more.

MALCOLM

(Telepathic filter)

Please calm down, you will be safe--

TYRONE (O.S.)

(Telepathic filter, stronger)

But I don't want them to calm down.

Malcolm's eyes SNAP open.

OTS MALCOLM - as he sees Tyrone standing a short distance away.

TYRONE (CONT'D)  
(threatening)  
In fact, I think they should panic more!

DINERS - Filled with panic, they push at one another but are unable able to escape the patio area as the fire spreads across the awning above them.

MALCOLM - seeing the danger become worse, he shouts.

MALCOLM  
(vocal and telepathic filter)  
STOP!

DINERS - People stop everything they are doing, but don't attempt to get away from the fire either.

MALCOLM, TYRONE - Malcolm looks from the crowd, not certain what he just did, over to Tyrone who has a devilish but also proud smile on his face.

TYRONE  
You may not be as weak as I first  
thought, but you'll never be able to  
control it.

KELLER - Frustrated at what is going on, Keller runs toward the crowd of diners. FOLLOW HER as she tries to motion the crowd along with her hands, not understanding the mind war that's going on between Malcolm and Tyrone.

KELLER  
(tries to wave crowd along)  
Don't panic! If we just move along  
orderly we can all be safe.

Carlos lands between Keller and the crowd, still holding on to a YOUNG WOMAN whose body goes limp with terror in his arms.

CARLOS  
(sarcastic)  
My poor date's already worn out, but I'm  
far from finished.

He drops the young woman to the ground, as he grabs Keller's wrist tight.



CARLOS (CONT'D)

How about you and I take a spin? I like your spunk.

KELLER

Hey! Let go!

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

Standing near the large monitor on the mantel, Dr. Forsythe watches a wide shot of the action play out from Belinda's camera. His back is to the study door, and he's on a CELLULAR PHONE. The study door quietly opens behind him as he speaks into the phone.

DR. FORSYTHE

No, Keniston, I haven't seen your daughter Keller. After all you've done for me and these kids, the last thing I'd do is let harm come to your own. Yes, I promise to let you know if I hear anything. Good night, Keniston.

Dr. Forsythe <HANGS UP> the cellular phone.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)

(under breath)

As soon as you get back, Ms. Brand, we're going to have a long talk about the future of Bold Youth.

DR. GENEFACTOR

I think that's a conversation between us, Arthur.

Forsythe spins hurriedly to face DR. GENEFACTOR and Viola in the face. Viola holds a club in her hand and taps it impatiently into the other.

DR. FORSYTHE

(stunned)

Eugene. Viola.

DR. GENEFACTOR/VIOLA - They gloat over Forsythe.

DR. GENEFACTOR

It's Doctor Genefacktor now. After what happened, Eugene Facktor is no more.

DR. FORSYTHE (O.S.)

I thought the fire--

DR. GENEFACTOR

(cold)

Feeling's mutual... until we heard of the Bold Youth, that is. Now your children know how OUR children felt finding out part of their life was a lie.

VIOLA

(resentful)

And seeing all the things they had that OUR children did not. Don't they have a right for an equal life?

DR. FORSYTHE - He crosses his arms.

DR. FORSYTHE

(to Viola)

You haven't changed, Viola. Still insisting it's your way or the highway.

(to Genefactor)

I told you that letting the woman you selected as disciplinarian also be part of the project was a mistake.

OTS DR. FORSYTHE - Of Dr. Genefactor and Viola.

DR. GENEFACTOR

And I got to have and raise children with the woman I love. What did all of this get you, Arthur Forsythe?

Arthur slumps back in his chair.

DR. FORSYTHE

What do you want me to do, after all these years?

VIOLA

Help us find the others.

DR. FORSYTHE

DR. FORSYTHE

And let you do further damage? NEVER!

VIOLA ENTERS FRAME and grabs Dr. Forsythe's collar.

VIOLA

You have to have that information here, and we'll rip the place apart until we find it!

**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

Carlos still holds tight to Keller's wrist as Tyrone ENTERS FRAME.

TYRONE

Carlos, sure you want to risk the jealous boyfriend?

Keller looks at Tyrone puzzled.

CARLOS

Bring him on. I can take him.

TYRONE

TYRONE

Not unless he makes you believe you can't.

CARLOS - Carlos looks around, confused.

CARLOS

Dude, there's no one around here like that except you--

ANOTHER ANGLE INCLUDING MALCOLM - Carlos stops mid-sentence and looks over at Malcolm who is still stunned by what he's just done.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

HIM and her?

KELLER

(firmly)

It's not like that.

TYRONE, KELLER

TYRONE

Then he wont mind if I get to know you better.

Tyrone reaches out towards Keller's face.

TYRONE (CONT'D)

Tell me everything you know about him. His family. Without speaking a word.

Dena runs INTO FRAME and PUSHES Tyrone out of the way.

DENA

Keep your hands off!

TYRONE - Tyrone looks at Dena with an evil smirk.

TYRONE  
Like I even need to touch her!

OTS TYRONE - Dena, taking a defensive posture, is ready to block any move he might make.

DENA - her head suddenly slumps forward and to the side, asleep.

PULL BACK as Tyrone walks around the sleeping Dena and FOLLOW HIM back towards Keller once more, her arms now behind held behind her by Carlos who presents her to his friend like a sacrifice.

ON MALCOLM - shaking off the last of his confusion from the mind-war he just experience as he has been overwhelmed by feelings he's never experienced. He looks O.S. To see:

OTS MALCOLM - The slumbering Dena, and the trapped Keller as she struggles not to be touched by Tyrone.

MALCOLM - His TERROR turns to ANGER.

MALCOLM  
(telepathic filter)  
NO YOU WILL NOT!

TYRONE - He doesn't drop his hand, but freezes like a statue.

MALCOLM - He walks with righteous anger towards Tyrone, Carlos. Keller continues to try and pull away from them more out of disgust then real fear.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
(telepathic filter)  
NO YOU WILL NOT INVADE HER MIND! STAY  
OUT! GET AWAY FROM HER! GET AWAY FROM  
HERE!

KELLER - Shocked as she realizes what her friend's done.

WIDE SHOT - Like soldiers following orders, Tyrone gets up and starts walking away. Carlos lets go of Keller's hand, grabs Tyrone, and flies off with him. Dona runs away holding Kagami who creates a wall of fire to keep others from following her.

DENA - she's still asleep from Tyrone's command, but suddenly a water SPLASHES down on her head waking her.

DENA

Hey!

She looks up to see.

UPSHOT - Luis returning with the water that he's managed to bring in several buckets, one has tipped pouring it's contents down on Dena.

LUIS

Uh, sorry.

DIFFERENT ANGLE ON LUIS - as he carefully uses the rest to put out the fires

DENA/KYOKO - calm the Diners and get them away.

Malcolm rushes up to a shocked Keller.

MALCOLM

Keller?!? Are you all right?

KELLER/MALCOLM - She turns to look at Malcolm.

KELLER

Did he read your mind or was he playing with mine?

MALCOLM

(puzzled)

Huh?

KELLER

He thought we were, you know, together.

FAVOR MALCOLM - He turns away shyly.

KELLER (CONT'D)

(flatly)

Actions speak louder than words, Malcolm. Even for a guy who is a master of the mind. Right now I need to get home to Konnor and my Dad ASAP, so they know by my actions they can trust me.

Keller walks away. Malcolm watches her go.

DISSOLVE TO:

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 37.

**EXT. CITY STREETS - LATER - NIGHT**

WIDE SHOT - The group gathers together. Belinda ENTERS FRAME.

DENA  
So, we won... right?

BELINDA  
We're really going to have to work the  
press to make it feel that way.

MALCOLM  
That kid... my brother I guess, Tyrone...  
his mind is oozing with dark thoughts.  
I'm certain this isn't the last we've  
seen of them.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. FORSYTHE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT**

WIDE SHOT - The Bold Youth return to find the study  
trashed. Malcolm still walks unsteady, holding his head.

LUIS  
What happened here?

DR. FORSYTHE (O.S.)  
Help... me...

FOLLOW DENA as she races around the room and behind the  
upturned desk where she finds and helps Dr. Forsythe up.

DENA  
Who did this? We were busy fighting our  
look-alikes. It couldn't be them.

DR. FORSYTHE  
You are all in danger.

FOLLOW DR. FORSYTHE - with unexpected strength he pulls  
away from Dena to balance himself against the fireplace,  
placing one hand under the mantle.

ON FIREPLACE MANTLE - Forsythe presses one of the bricks  
and it slides aside revealing a hidden compartment.

A data chip drops into Forsythe's hand.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)  
The people who did this took information  
from me.

DOUBLES - "Memories in the Mirror"/Muir and Broden 38.

OTS FORSYTHE - The kids and Belinda watch him as he takes a seat at the desk.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)  
They think they took every copy.

CLOSE UNDER DESK - Forsythe inserts the data chip into a groove under the desk.

WIDE ON FORSYTHE - The monitor above the fireplace now reveals a split screen image of four women, one of which is VIOLA CRANE at about age 18. The others are one Asian woman (RAI), one Caucasian woman, and one Latina woman at about the same age.

DR. FORSYTHE (CONT'D)  
Children, the Bold Youth has a whole new mission. Locate your birth mothers before our new enemies do, for their lives are in extreme danger.

MALCOLM, LUIS, DENA, KYOKO - They look at one another stunned.

**FADE OUT.**

**THE END**

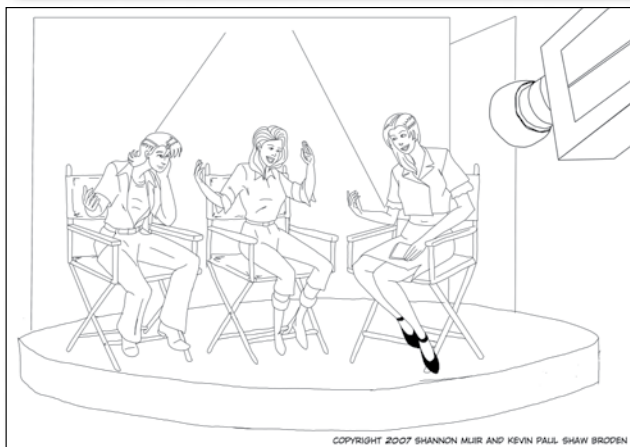
## Concept Art – Revised

Figure 11.7 and 11.8 show two changed pieces of concept art.

- Figure 11.7 is an alternate design for Malcolm's costume. This one is more of a 'bodysuit' in design. However, since his powers are mental in nature, it was decided best to use the 'layered' look with the vest that would encourage movement on-screen.
- In Figure 11.8, the television interview picture, the two characters being interviewed – Luis and Dena – appear in regular street clothing. This helps sell their "human" side over their "superpowered" side. Compare this to Figure 7.22.



*Figure 11.7*



*Figure 11.8*



## SUMMING IT ALL UP

A pitch being purchased for development means a lot of work may still be put into it before going into production. Development funds may be cut short, or a property was only bought “for development” to keep it from a competitor. Selling an idea is not itself credibility for future sales; what matters most is professionalism.

# **CHAPTER TWELVE**

## **Pitching is a Global Business**

### **A FEW LAST THINGS TO NOTE**

Animation development is a constantly changing arena. For example, early on in the United States, the main place to see animation would have been as shorts before featured movies at the cinema, with the Walt Disney Studios offering some animated feature film fare. Then the mainstay of animation became television, though short films gained popularity on festival circuits. Now fully animated movies regularly appear at the theatres by a variety of filmmakers, alongside webisodes and other new media, plus those films formerly relegated solely to the festivals now easily available on the Internet. Staying on the pulse of where animation goes and grows is key to success. Looking into a few of these topics, plus a wrap-up of the development experience, unfold on the following pages.

### **FINDING OUT IF ONE IS CUT OUT FOR THE PITCHING BUSINESS**

For some people, all they have is one great idea burning inside, which must be pursued with the hope of sale or that person knows he or she will live to regret it. That is understandable, and definitely a pursuit that can be undertaken. These types of people either will moonlight to sell a show while pursuing a day job, or after the efforts made will turn to a different line of work.

Yet, there are others who see pitching as a business. While risks of rejection are high, they are willing to explore again and again, trying a wide variety of concepts until one 'clicks' and sells. For these kind of people, either just the hope of a 'pot of gold' or simply the exploration and thrill of adventure keep them in the game.

Any of these paths are perfectly legitimate. Great ideas come from all types of people. The only thing guaranteed is that failure to try means nothing will happen.

## THE EFFECT OF THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE ON DEVELOPMENT

With the increased costs of production, it is more and more common for multiple producers and production companies to pool their resources. As part of that, they also look to having their final products shown in more and more parts of the world to recoup their investment. Below are some factors taken into consideration when creation productions for an international audience.

### **Gestures**

As much as physical body language can tell a lot about character, especially in a visual environment (see Chapter 4), in today's global marketplace physical attributes need to be used with caution. Of particular concern are gestures, such and hand motions. It is very possible that a hand gesture may be very harmless in one country and highly offensive in another.

### **Verbal Cultural References**

For related reasons, verbal cultural references are also discouraged. Certain slang and idioms that are in one language may not translate well into another. This advice applies not only to character dialogue but to action description as well. Otherwise, some people involved in the production – particularly if it ends up getting animated somewhere other than in the country of origin – may not understand the context of what is going on and ultimately provide footage or other materials that must be redone.

Related to this idea comes the recommendation of no topical jokes or humor. What plays when something initially airs may not work five years down the road, much less one, unless it is so entrenched in world culture that the event will remain memorable enough for years to come. This is because executives will want to confidently feel it can be resold into new mediums in the future, such as occurred with the DVD and downloadable phenomenon for what began strictly as television animation. Arguably, shows such as the *Simpsons* thrive on such topical humor. However, the key is that if topical material does appear, it must be as support to the main through line of the plot and not the support beams on

which the entire production rests.

### **Signage and other Written Text**

Relying too heavily on written words or signs for a storyline can still be very problematic, even though subtitled signs have become more acceptable following the explosion of global interest in anime. It's always safe to have the characters read the text out loud or make a comment on the sign so that can be dubbed into the local language of the final product. This way it helps ensure the enjoyment of the final product for everyone.



### **SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: STEPHANIE GRAZIANO**

Stephanie's involvement in the animation business includes Owner of Graz Entertainment, producer of *X-Men the Animated Series*, *GI Joe Extreme* and *Street Fighter*. She also was a founding member of the Fox Kids Network, DreamWorks Television Animation, and BKN Studios, Los Angeles and France.

"In the past 10 years there has been a tremendous change in the structure of developing and producing animation for the global market. First, with the deregulation of the ownership of broadcast content in the US, the broadcasters are now allowed to produce and own their own programming. This has changed the relationship between the Studio and the Broadcaster – and the Broadcaster and the rest of the world. There is a much less emphasis put on the independent production company who would develop and produce, then sell into a Broadcaster, remaining the actual rights holder of the program. Today, the Broadcaster has the ability to establish their own Studio for development and production - as well, they can buy or partner on programming from around the world that will give them a greater variety at a fraction of the cost. Second, the world has become a much smaller place. The number of countries developing and producing animation has grown significantly. These emerging countries are forming international partnerships in record numbers. There are virtually no shows produced without first having partners in several countries. This forces the parties to co-develop ideas to be sure that the content

will work across the borders and around the world. In some cases, partnering countries will simply invest upfront in the production in order to obtain the broadcast rights in a program for their territory. This is a form of prepaying for the rights. In other cases, the partnering countries are actually a production partner providing services or controlling a part of the production process in exchange for the rights in their territories.

The things that have to be considered are just what anyone might expect, cultural differences. The first thing I would stay away from is anything that is specific to or only familiar in a specific culture. Now that the world is a much smaller place and with the internet so widely explored, those areas are fewer, but they still exist. Anywhere slang is used or where a translation would be difficult or non-existent would be a red flag. You must be aware of behavior issues for children and you must try not to create signage unless you can provide copies of the scene where the lettering can be exchanged for the local language. There are some territories that still have a need for locally created music, and of course, the language dubbing is of utmost importance. Technology has made the replacement of these elements much simpler, but the process is still time consuming and has to be considered in the delivery schedules and cost of production and distribution. A level head and a well rooted partner will take care of any cultural issues during the pre-production stages, but even in the USA we have to be aware of issues like the use of seatbelts.

Children are the same no matter the areas of the world. They are all engaged by animation, like to watch shows about other kids, and will forever be superheroes. Stories that reflect the life of an everyday kid will always be popular. The stories must be 'real' in the minds of children, and they should also have heart. These stories will be accepted around the world and for generations. Children will suspend their knowledge that a star fish can't talk and believe that they are a kid just like themselves if the stories are believable. They will understand the anxiety of needing to do your homework when what you really want to do is continue saving the universe. They have been in the position of having too much strength over their little sibling when they got angry and destroyed the toy box. So, dress them up as you might, kids will always be sucked in to a good story that reflects their every day life."

## FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA



### **Case Study #1: DEEJEE AND DWIGHT**

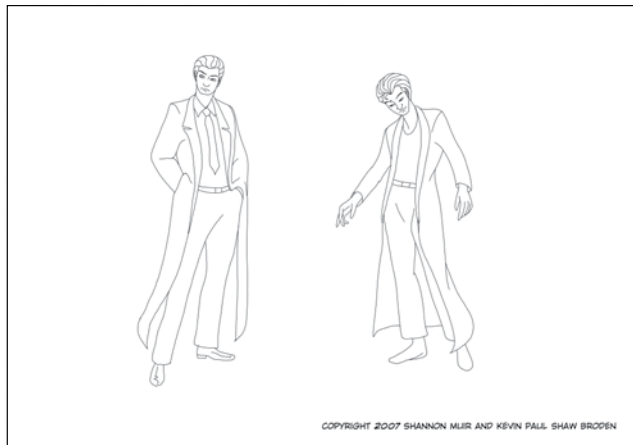
With *Deejee and Dwight*, I took a concept that interested me and tweaked it to what I thought would sell by reversing some things and changing as little as possible. In the end, though I'll never know for sure, the concept likely would have been better served if I'd followed my heart on the original premise.



### **Case Study #2: DOUBLES**

With *Doubles*, we dared to tell a story closer to our heart even though the odds would be against us selling it due to the heavy competition in the superhero arena. This does mean the odds are less likely of something happening with it, but not impossible. Personally, compared to either bible version of *Deejee and Dwight*, I believe this is the better show because of the richer characters and strong story potential.

This case study will conclude with two more pieces of art capturing the world of DOUBLES, as shown in Figures 12.1 and 12.2. Perhaps someday it may yet find its way to the large or small screen.



*Figure 12.1*

Figure 12.2



## SUMMING IT ALL UP

Making up new animation shows and films can be fun and rewarding. Yet, there's no denying pitching is a business. One must stay very aware of global trends and their effect on development as shows are sold all over the world. Animation projects can retain cultural flavor and yet need to be universally accessible.

# AFTERWORD

In the days as I was winding down putting the first draft of this book together, I moderated a panel at Comic-Con International: San Diego with three experienced animation producers: Stephanie Graziano, Tad Stones, and Greg Weisman. One of the topics that came up in that panel was the need to have passion to make it in this business, and if not how one may be better off doing something else. Someone came up during our question and answer panel and asked something along the lines of how much passion is enough passion... essentially he wanted to know what it took.

Our answer summed up to basically this: it's more than just not being able to imagine yourself doing anything else, to know that passion is to feel that if you weren't doing something else, it is like one is dying inside. I've been there and I know how it feels, even relatively recently. Both books I've done try not to sugarcoat how tough this business is, and pitching an idea in many ways is harder than production. I try to strike a balance between telling it like it is but still leave room for hope.

In the last year, my employment has taken me from traditional animation studios into the landscape of internet communities and virtual worlds. I've started to see firsthand how some of the same skill sets that apply in traditional animation studios are just as equally valid in these other environments, though there are some variants in process. It makes me optimistic for the future, and the new horizons yet to come for the animation medium.

To those of you who know what this feels like too, hang in there and don't give up.

Shannon Muir  
Los Angeles, CA  
August 2008



# GLOSSARY

## A

**action** – visual conflict

**action-adventure** – a term to describe a story that mixes visual conflict with a quest element

**action shots** - Characters interact with other characters or the environment to bring the world of the story to life in dynamic still images

**ADR** – Short for Automatic Dialogue Replacement, the process of dubbing dialogue

**agent** – a person who helps make deals and solicit employment for creative talent, usually for a ten percent fee; unlike managers, who operate similarly, agents are regulated by law in the United States

**ancillary rights** - revenue brought in from merchandise and deals for other media related to the animated intellectual property

**animation** – the art of moving pictures

**anime** – general term for animation originating in Japan, or for anything done in a style mimicking the Japanese style

**antagonist** – the person who is in a state of conflict with the protagonist; may not necessarily be the villain

**A-Plot** – term focusing to the most important plot of a story, usually centering around a quest or a goal that must be completed by the end

**arc** – a set of episodes that comprise a longer story

**artist** – an individual who draws concept art for development

**attorney** – a person trained with a legal degree and certified by a bar exam, who can evaluate contracts and assist with some forms of dealmaking; lawyers are not allowed to solicit employment (see also lawyer)

**attributes** – things that make each character unique

**audience** – the people who view an animated project

## B

**back end** - money received after all payments have been made regarding the animated project

**backstory** – history about a character that takes place prior to the start of the story featured in the script

**bible** - in animation, a book detailing the characters, locations, and rules of an animated project's world

**body language** – motions made by a character that can indicate mood or emotion (see also gestures)

**B-Plot** – term focusing to the second most important plot of a story (also known as a subplot), usually centering on character growth or learning a lesson

## C

**character** – a fictional individual (not necessarily human) who takes part in the story of an animated project

**collaboration** – two or more individuals working together (usually a writer and artist combination, but sometimes it may be multiple people working together on the same idea)

**comedy** – a method of telling a story that relies on humor

**comedy-adventure** – a term to describe a story that mixes visual conflict with a quest element as well as humor

**concept** – the genesis around which the story idea of an animated project is based

**concept art** – drawings that illustrate the genesis around which the story idea of an animated project is based

**conflict** - the tension that moves the story along

**copyright** – the claim as to who owns the legal rights to a particular work

**C-Plot** – term focusing to the third most important plot of a story (also known as a subplot), usually centering on a humorous series of events; not all stories have C-Plots

**comic relief** – a type of character who usually plays a focal role in C-Plots that brings a humorous element to a story; usually a sidekick to the protagonist

**creator** – person with whom an animated concept originates, even though this person may not be the developer

## D

**demographics** – a term used to describe a sampling of a particular segment of an audience

**developer** – the person hired to create a bible and sometimes also a pilot for an animated project; this may or may not be the same person as the creator

**development** – the process of creating a bible and sometimes also a pilot for an animated project

**dialogue** - words spoken by characters

**director** – individuals providing specialized creative oversight on various aspects of a project

**distribution** – the process by which an animation project gets to people interested in seeing it

**drama** – a type of story that is more grounded in reality than a comedy

**dubbing** – the process of replacing one voice actor with another (see also ADR)

## E

**episode** – a series of animation projects (usually for television) that usually share a consistent set of characters and locations

**executive** – a title indicating a level of seniority, either as a producer or as a general term for a high-ranking person at a network or studio

## F

**feature** – a long form film, usually 70 minutes or more in length

**feedback** – response from an executive, financier, or producer regarding a story or animated project (see also notes)

**film** – compared to an episode, usually a stand-alone story (though sometime there are sequels)

**financiers** – people who put up the money for making an animated project

**follow up** – the process of checking with an executive, financier, or producer after a pitch

**format** – in the terminology of this text, a reference to a combination of the length and distribution model of an animated project

## **G**

**gestures** - motions made by a character that can indicate mood or emotion (see also body language)

**growth** – refers changes and maturity in a character

## **H**

**high concept** – similar to a logline, this is a statement that tries to boil down the essence of what a film is to a single sentence but usually includes a comparison statement to some other film, television series or intellectual property

**hook** – element that captures someone's interest in seeing an animated project

## **I**

**intellectual property** – a term referring to any creative work as a concept owned by a creator

**interactive** – an environment where a person can give input to a computer and be given information in return to which then must be responded; most commonly used to refer to entertainment experiences on the Internet such as MMOG but does have wider application

**Internet** – information relayed to the viewer through a computer device

## **L**

**lawyer** – a person trained with a legal degree and certified by a bar exam, who can evaluate contracts and assist with some forms of dealmaking; lawyers are not allowed to solicit employment (see also attorney)

**leave behind** – a document given after a pitch meeting as a summary of the concept; usually but not always a pitch bible

**length** – the final running time of an animated project; television standards in the United States include 7-minute, 11-minute, and 22-minute running times

**location** – an area where an animated project takes place

**logline** – A single sentence summarizing the concept into its most basic form

## M

**manager** – a person who helps make deals and solicit employment for creative talent, usually for a ten to fifteen percent fee; unlike agents, who operate similarly, managers are not regulated by law in the United States and are in fact able to get themselves added as producers to deals they negotiate

**massively multiplayer online games** – games played via the Internet that allow many people to interact in a shared virtual environment, called MMOG for short

**merchandising** – the sales of items based off the animated project, which are granted by ancillary rights

**mini-bible** - often applied to a bible early development after a pitch has been sold

**MMOG** - see Massively Multiplayer Online Games

**mobisodes** – short episodes that play on mobile devices, but can also usually also be distributed using the Internet (see webisodes)

**motivation** – why a character behaves the way he or she does

## N

**network** – an outlet that broadcasts content

**non-disclosure agreement** – a legal document obligating the signer not to reveal information about an animation project until certain conditions are met

**notes** – response from an executive, financier, or producer regarding a story or animated project (see also feedback)

## O

**option** – a contract with the owner of an intellectual property for the rights to develop it for a specified length of time, after which it is usually renewable

**outline** – a “map” of the major points in a story

## **P**

**parody** – a specific kind of comedy that is a twisted take on something existing

**parenthetical** – set between the character name and dialogue on a script page, it indicates the emotion of a character’s speech

**pass** – the term used when an executive, financier, or producer decided not to buy a pitch

**personality** – traits that define a character

**pilot** – a term used for both the introductory script to the characters and their world (i.e. pilot script) as well as the finished animation project itself, if made; this item may be used to sell a television series but not necessarily be aired

**pitch** – a meeting with executives, financiers, or producers in which someone tries to interest them in a developed concept or an intellectual property to then be developed

**pitch bible** - a short version of the bible usually used as a leave behind after a meeting

**plot** – a term defining one thread of a story, though some people use it as a synonym for story; most often used in a ranking order of threads (see A-Plot, B-Plot, C-plot)

**premise** – a one to three line summary of a feature or episode idea

**producer** – generally, someone who oversees an animated project, though there are many levels for this position

**project** – a piece of animation (e.g. episode, feature)

**protagonist** – the lead character in the story; has a conflict with a villain and an antagonist (who may or may not be the same person)

**public domain** – intellectual property that is no longer protected by copyright because the term has expired

## **R**

**recap** – a narrative opening an animated piece (usually in television) that summarized previous events

**registration** – with intellectual property, the filing of documents to help establish the creator's efforts; this can be either copyright registration with the Library of Congress or registration with an organization such as the Writers Guild of America, west

**rights** – the legal ownership of any creative work (including bible, script, or completed film or series)

**romantic interest** – a person that the protagonist is interested in; often, the antagonist or villain may be competing for affection as well

**rules** - guidelines laid out about the workings of the created world

## **S**

**script** – a written guideline for the animation to follow in telling the story

**sequel** – a follow-up story (usually to a feature) including the same characters as the prior project

**series** – a group of episodes (usually for television)

**scene heading** - the line in a script that identifies the location for that part of the story (see also slugline)

**short film** – a film of short duration, in animation usually less than 70 minutes in length and often five minutes or less (also known as shorts)

**shorts** – see short film

**shot** – a single point of view

**sizzle reel** – a short visual reel combining art and an audio track (any combination of voice, music, and effects) to be used as part of a pitch

**slugline** - the line in a script that identifies the location for that part of the story (see also scene heading)

**sound effects** – within a script, these are bracketed by < and > symbols to indicate items needed for addition in audio post, such (e.g. the <RING> of a telephone)

**spec** – short form of the word speculation, which means to do something without any advance promise of payment or production

**special** – an animated project, usually produced for television that only airs at specific times such as holidays

**story** – the journey the characters go through that becomes the basis for the animation

**storyboard** – a series of panels often based on a script that provide a visual blueprint for the animation

**studio** – a company that produces content

**submission form** - a form acknowledging the submitter controls all rights in the work and agrees that if the company develops something similar even if this idea is not purchased, he or she cannot seek damages

**subplot** – a collective term to refer to anything that is not a main, or A-Plot (i.e. B-Plot, C-Plot).

## T

**television** – a receiver for content over the broadcast airwaves or through cable

**theme** – in the case of story, this refers to the overall intent of the tale

**timeline** - an external force or event to the characters will establish the guide for how things unfold

**trademark** – identifies the source of goods or services; ideas cannot be trademarked

**transition** – the movement from one scene of a story to another, which may or may not involve the passage of time

**treatment** - the summarized story in prose form

**turnaround** – in development, this refers to an option on an intellectual property to have expired making it available for reacquisition depending on the terms of the agreement

## U

**UGC** - see User Generated Content

**upload** – placing materials, such as completed animation, in a computer repository where they can be shared

**user generated content** – anything people upload and share in an Internet environment, though depending on where it is placed, they may lose some or all rights in the intellectual property for doing so



## **V**

**villain** – the person who presents an opposing challenge to the protagonist; this may or may not be the antagonist

## **W**

**webisodes** – short episodes that play on the Internet, but can also usually also be distributed using mobile devices (see mobisodes)

**work-for-hire** – a situation where a person hired to work on an animated project gives up any and all opportunity for an ownership stake in an intellectual property

**world building** – the comprehensive planning of a creative world that is written in a bible

**writer** – person who writes the script for the animated project



