

Brandon Gets His Big Break

Chapter One

By

John Eisenhauer

“...And, of course, we look forward to helping you tell your story.”

I took a sip of my coffee and nodded. I was on a Zoom call with a group of publishing execs who were helping me get this book out. I was really pleased that The [Crown Publishing Group](#) was shepherding my book. A subsidiary of Penguin Random House, it had a toney reputation because of its diverse stable of authors and for publishing a wide variety of nonfiction genres that ranged from politics to current affairs to economics. Something that I especially appreciated was that [Mindy Kaling](#) published her 2011 book of comedic essays [Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? \(And Other Concerns\)](#). This was a personal favorite of mine. It was a bunch of quirky and funny autobiographical essays. More than that, I found it to be inspirational. The reason that was inspirational is that it wasn't trying. In telling her story, she articulated her lifelong focus. Ever since she was kid, she wanted to be a comedy writer: she stuck with her vision and did it. I wish that I had had that strength of character. Alas, I didn't.

I feel that Kaling's story is about knowing yourself. A person can't succeed until they have to know themselves. *Success* is not about monetary success (necessarily). Kaling knew what she wanted and turned that into a successful career. If she were largely unknown, she would be just as happy doing standup and reading the [reviews of her one-act plays](#). She would have less stuff and followers on social media followers but would be just as happy. More so. No, that's bullshit. A person wants stuff. A moment ago, I bemoaned that I lacked her 'strength of character': I was being unfair to myself. As you know, I pursued a career as a writer. Before that, I was working towards being a dentist. I would have been a good one if I stuck with it. I always had the strength of character to succeed. But I would not have been happy. Dentists have one of the [highest suicide rates](#) among professionals. But veterinarians have a high suicide fate also. And that job looks righteous. While it looks cool working with the cute animals, you do end up putting a lot of them down. But I digress. I would not have been happy being a dentist. That's the point. I was sidetracked going towards something that I always found to be gross because it was 'an established career'. I only found happiness when I started pursuing my dream. Kaling got it from the outset.

My parents wanted me to be a dentist. It was a respectable career. I'm thankful for my parents. They pushed dentistry on me because they cared about my future well-being. Parenting is an immense challenge. I appreciate that. You want to teach your kid life skills and encourage direction. At the same time, you don't want to push him in the wrong direction: the direction that is wrong for him *as an individual*.

So, yes, Kaling had good parents. But I am making a bigger point...a global one.

I respect good parents.

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Sometimes a parent is bad because they are misfiring. Sometimes, and sadly this is probably more common, a parent is a bad seed. The parent doesn't care. He's dealing with addictions. She's consciously tormenting the kid, physically or emotionally. He's a religious fanatic and feeding the kid a lot of toxic garbage.

A realization that I came to because of the events that I describe in this book is the average person has to come to terms with his past before moving forward.

The sort of things that have to be overcome before a person finds himself – by the way, someone has to come up with a decent set of singular unisex pronouns – is more than bad parents. This would include racism and antisemitism. Often, more times than not, we are talking about a toxin in a person's present and future. If you're a Jew, for example, antisemitism will be with you for your entire life. You will not realize your personal happiness until you come to terms with this omnipresent toxin.

While I am thinking about it, I want to mention what kind of books that I find 'inspirational'. They tell a real story. The story is enriching but is unpretentious: it is...well...real. It isn't trying to be uplifting because that is manipulation not truth. The story could be one of developing a person's vision as is the case with Kaling. Or it could be a story of someone overcoming adversity in the process of realizing one's true essence. Shortly before the events in this book, I read [Page Boy](#) by Elliot Page and put it in the category as Kaling's. The guy has a solid narrative sense. I hope he goes on to write novels or short stories. But I digress (and this is digression): So, this is a second-generation digression.

I did want to go back to what the publishing exec said. He said that this is *your story*. That is one of those unbelievably insufferable expressions. Technically, it is true. But there is a propriety element to the phrase. It seems to imply that my connection to the story is central. My connection is significant, profound even. But it is not central. I wasn't this sweet, decent, and brilliant woman who was brutalized, raped and murdered. That means that this is *her story*. After her tragic demise, I was pushed into this surreal maelstrom of psychotic public attention that was made possible by the insanity that is social media and 24-hour cable news. That doesn't move the pink slip.

But that is the reason why this book ended up being written. People are brutalized, raped and murdered every day. It all goes unmourned. Attention might be paid...might be. But just for a news cycle or two. Throw in some extenuating factors - like a juicy trial - or all the crazy shit that happened subsequent to the barbarity in this book the story gets more play. If two people were slaughtered in Brentwood California in 1994, but the assailant was never caught, the story would have played for a couple weeks on area outlets like *NewsBreak Brentwood*. But if you throw in a murder trial of a celebrity, there is live coverage of that trial for over four months on the national news. That reflects a sick society. The fact that this book came into existence is another reflection of that reality. Except this book is not simply a reflection of a sick society but a manifestation of it. But we are all sick. I like slasher movies and books like *Helter Skelter*. Maybe a person can only embrace the light by owning his dark side.

This book gets experimental in style. For example, I break the narrative into interrelated timelines.

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That does not show disrespect to the subject: the death of someone that I loved. But she loved me as well. And she loved me, in part, for those sensibilities. I want to thank The Crown Publishing Group for the editorial discretion that it gave me.

You'll notice that some segments start with "Brandon Speaking": those events happened to me directly and are told in first person. The other sections are told in third person. In those sections, I do my best to somewhat muzzle the offbeat tone. But that tone reflects who I am and that is an element of the story.

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Brandon Speaking

After I abandoned my plans to become a dentist, I ended up pursuing a career as a comedy writer. But I am kicking this story off with my 'big break'.

I had been a working writer for a while now. My first project was as a writer's assistant (an entry level gig that hopefully leads to a coveted staff writer position) for a good sitcom. I quit that job to be a staff writer for a sitcom that was a piece of shit. Quitting a quality show for a bad one – in order to score that better job title – was one of the great regrets of my life.

But now I was a staff writer for a new dramedy that was hotly anticipated.

I was on the ground floor of a new and exciting project: I had been hired as a staff writer – someone with real artistic input – on this season's big ticket. While having done some interesting stuff, this was my 'big break'.

The woman who was the creator and showrunner of this cool project was a personal favorite of mine. And I was at the initial staff writers meeting and was talking to her.

So, there I am. [Ilana Glazer](#) – the frickin' co-creator and star of [Broad City](#) – was sitting next to me on the couch. I was plotting.

"So, sweetie, fix yourself something....", She said and motioned towards the coffee table parallel to the couch. There was a stack of individual serve platters, napkins, and silverware. Next to that was a large bowl of guac and a separate bowl of tortilla chips. There was also a platter of roasted grapes with goat cheese on crostini. Being a simple man, I fixed a platter of guac & chips.

We had been pretty much making small talk but then she shifted the conversation towards the topic at hand.

"I envision a retelling of *Friends* that is multi-ethnic. I mean...that's New York. Also, a mix of gay, straight, and trans characters. You know...they're all part of the central group of friends. It's about really digging into the dynamic of how such a diverse group interacts."

I nodded enthusiastically. The broad outline of the project was already discussed through a combination of emails and DMs.

Wanting to demonstrate my familiarity with Ilana's work, I casually interjected:

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“Sure...It’s like the character that [Arturo Castro](#) played. He was gay. Your character was bi, Abbi was straight, until she wasn’t, and you guys explored the whole dynamic.”

“Thanks.”, Ilana said. “The character that Arturo played was called Jaimé Castro...great guy, really enjoyed working with him.”

I continued:

“I like *Broad City*’s authenticity. Both in the diversity of the characters and the urban feel...very real.”

“Thanks...” , Ilana said. “It’s what Abbi and I were shooting for.”

“You have all of these really great ideas for the reboot.”, I said. “Do you have any concerns about how they will be accepted?”

“No...no...” , Ilana said. “You have to believe in yourself, Brandon, and follow your bliss...your path. That’s the secret to succeeding in life.”

She continued:

“Yeah...the original *Friends* was just light fun. We’re going for a darker dramedy feel.”

Ilana smiled. She stood up and said brightly:

“Let’s go to the living room. I want you to meet the rest of the creative team.”

As we got off the couch, she motioned towards the archway that opened into her living room. Her house was classic Spanish style architecture. The walls and ceilings were a creamy off-white stucco finish that was nicely offset with dark brown timbers. The windows, and doors (like the archway to the living room) contributed to the overall feel. The character and charm were further highlighted by the ornamental iron work, wooden doors.

With one hand she motioned towards the archway and – with the other – she touched my forearm with her fingertips.

“I want you to meet some of the people working with us.”

“Cool.”

“Oh...perfect. There’s our Phoebe.”

“Who plays Phoebe?”

“[Josie Totah](#). We are going to address transgenderism with our Phoebe.”

“Fuck. That’s great.”

I was genuinely psyched since I was a fan of Totah. Also, as an aside, you can swear when working on a show. You don’t want to overdo it: you come off as a poseur. If I had become a dentist, I could never swear on the job.

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“Wow...this is so cool. I can’t believe that I’m meeting you! I’m such a fan!”, I said as I shook her hand.

“Oh, come on, you must be meeting a lot of celebrities.”, Josie said sweetly.

“Well...yeah...but I’m still a bit of a newbie to a writer’s room.”

“Really? This is your first gig?”

“No...I was a writer’s assistant on [The Mindy Project.](#)”

Josie rested an open palm on her chest: “Oh, my god! I love Mindy! We worked together and she’s the coolest!”

She continued:

“So, is that your only writer’s room credit?”

“Well...I was also a staff writer for...*2 Broke Girls.*”

After an awkward pause, she said: “...*2 Broke Girls.* Starting off...a lot of people take embarrassing gigs. You shouldn’t think less of yourself or feel shame.”

I opened my mouth to protest but couldn’t. After all, we were talking about *2 Broke Girls*. I mean she would have been perfectly in her rights to spit on me and walk away in disgust. I know that was a nutty thing to say. But I didn’t like that show, to be honest, and was pretty embarrassed that I was part of it. What really bothered me was that I left a better show for ‘Girls’ to get a better job title.

“Besides, I did an episode. Youthful indiscretion.”

“So...I just finished watching [Champions.](#)”, I said. “It was really good.”

“It really was good and...”, She said and then her voiced dropped precipitously. “...And that was a monumental period in my life.”

I would have loved to have pursued that. That really was a conversation reserved for friends or – at least – acquaintances. And we had just met. I pressed on:

“I really liked the reboot of [Saved By The Bell](#) that you were in. I really appreciate how you guys incorporated the subject of class inequity into light comedy. Oh...and you were an Executive Producer.”

“Well...my title was Producer but thanks for field promotion. I was proud of it. Speaking of pride...”, She took a sip of her drink. “I’m especially proud of the four episodes of [Glee](#) that I did.”

“You know...I’ve never seen *Glee.*”

Her expression darkened.

“You’re not going to spit on me, are you?”

“Um...what?”.

“Oh...nothing. So, you’re Phoebe?”

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Amy, Jane and Jim were having dinner.

“Pass the burgers”, Amy said as she gestured towards the platter of fried meat patties (some covered with melted cheese and some naked).

As Jim transferred the platter, he said:

“So, you’re a carnivore this week? Not vegan or vegetarian or...what’s the one where you only eat veggies and fish?”

“Pescetarianism.”, Amy said. “And that makes me sound flighty. But...yeah...I’m eating meat right now.”

“I hope Brandon is adhering to my advice.”, Jane said. “Just because this first meeting is at his boss’ house doesn’t change the fact that this business. He wants to be the appropriate mix of professional and casual. You only get one chance to make a first impression.”

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Brandon Speaking

Errant sneeze.

Today was the highpoint of my career as a comedy writer. And that sneeze could not have come at a worse time. I was talking to Josie Totah who was cast to play a major role in a new streaming series for which I was hired as a staff writer.

Anyway, it was an errant sneeze. You know, one of those big-ass honkers that comes out of nowhere. Explosive, violent and loud. And, since it was completely unexpected, I was unable to successfully take the prophylactic step needed to stem the explosion of snot. There was that disruption in my breathing. The *Ah-Ahh-Ahhh*. That was pretty damn indiscreet and almost as invasive as the sneeze itself. The prophylactic step was partially executed. I lifted my free hand with the unspoken plan of pinching my nostrils. Before I could the sneeze happened...that explosive, loud and violent honker of a sneeze.

Right before my sneeze, I had realized that what I initially believed to be a staff meeting was a cocktail party. In the emails and DM’s that presaged it, I was told that this was a ‘pre-production meeting’. Sure, there was a bit of a party energy which I initially took to be the meet ‘n greet portion of the evening. I assumed that it was scheduled into things. You know, you go to some seminar and are given a schedule with an entry like **’08:00 AM – 08:30 MEET ‘N GREET’**.

Instead, it was a party for the people who were working on the *Friends* reimagining. It was the first opportunity for the people involved to talk business.

And at this informal business meeting, my hand was covered in snot: I was having a *deer-in-the-caught-in-the-headlights* moment.

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“Wow...God bless you, sweetie.”, Josie said. “There has to be a napkin around here.”

As if on cue, a person from a neighboring conversational cluster walked over and handed me a clean linen napkin.

As I wiped the schmutz off my hand, Josie said:

“Oh, hey, I want you to meet [Aidan Gallagher](#). He is our Ross.”

“Oh...hi.”, I said to him. “I’m working in the writer’s room...new guy. My name’s Brandon. I’m meeting so many cool people. Um, does anyone have some Purell?”

Both Josie and Aiden held out little containers.

Having crammed the schmutzy napkin in a pants pocket, I took Josie’s Purell bottle and cleaned my hands. I returned the bottle to her as she handed me my drink back. The process was awkward, but I did my best to be cool. As this was going on, Aiden gave his group the ‘finger guns’ and said:

“Hey, guys, I’m going to hang with Josie and the new writer.”

“I’m loving [The Umbrella Academy](#).”, I said to Aiden. “Don’t worry, I’m not going to tell you how I think the next season should go.”

“Oh...bless you, son.”, Aiden said.

“Besides, last season was a bit confusing, and I watched it months ago. I’d have to rewatch it before being a smart-ass.”

“Or at least read the wiki.”, Aiden said with exaggerated solemnity.

“So, like I was saying earlier, our version of *Friends* will be pretty different from the original.”, Josie said. “Dramedy instead of farce. Characters will be very different...darker and more complex.”

Aiden added:

“The characters are really fundamentally different. The connection to the original is that the characters will share the mannerisms of the originals and have similar looks. We’re incorporating elements of the original backstories while incorporating new shit.”

She took a sip of her drink and continued:

“Phoebe is going to mirror Kudrow’s take: flighty, silly, and oddly insightful. As Aiden said, we wanted something that really transferred over. Mannerisms and appearance aside, my Phoebe is going to be fundamentally different than the original.”

“Phoebe’s transgendered.”, Aiden volunteered. “That’s really different. And Josie is much more of a musical talent than Kudrow.”

He added after the slightest pause:

“Well, you are!”

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Josie flushed slightly but stayed on course:

“So, our *Friends* will be different than the original. And one way is that the group will have a more...well...fucked up...um...convoluted dynamic.”

“Yeah.”, Aiden interjected. “I mean in the original everyone simply got along. And in a real group there’s pockets of tension. Some members of the group just don’t get on...or have issues with each other. But, to maintain cohesion, feelings must be sublimated. And, at some point, the shit comes out.”

“Phoebe and Ross have real issues.”, Josie said.

“Ross has an issue with Phoebe’s sexuality.”, I ventured.

“Yeah...something that I deal with.” Josie said. “People that I deal with socially or professionally...hell, especially professionally. They pretend to understand and accept who I am, but they don’t. You know that they’re thinking some really intense shit...maybe something hateful...but they keep it to themselves.”

I could have sworn that she gave me a hard look. Maybe I was being paranoid. But she had reason to be distrustful of new people who came into her orbit.

“So...Ross...is...” I said as I was floundering for the right words. I was talking business but appreciated how readily a simple business discussion could turn offensive in a situation like this.

“He’s creeped out by Phoebe.”, Josie said. “The full extent of his issues is not immediately clear. And that’s developed over the first season. But, right off the bat, we can tell that he’s freaked by her. Over the first few episodes, it becomes clear that the dude is pathological about it. Brandon, as one of the writers, you’ll be developing this.”

“Ross is something of a loner.”, Aiden adds. “A guy who is a museum curator...Well, not exactly the curator but he’s definitely being groomed to run the pre-history wing. But no social life. Kinda agoraphobic...”

Josie interjected:

“He has a real issue with people. Monica, his sister and the group’s alpha, brings him into the circle to help her brother.”

“Monica is definitely the group’s alpha. I don’t think anyone really likes Ross. And the tension between him and Phoebe is palpable.”, Aiden said.

“He has an issue with trans people because he’s agoraphobic?”, I asked.

“No...no...no.”, Josie said. “He does because he does. He’s like a lot of people. Something that we are trying to do here is to explore that. I have a Producer and Consultant credits. I’ll be stopping by the writer’s room, Brandon. I’ll be advising the writers from a *trans* perspective. My focus will be the Phoebe character.”

“Ultimately, Ross grows. But it’ll be a process...a real source of tension in season one.”, Aiden added.

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We spoke for a while longer before Josie and Aiden drifted away. I took a sip of my drink and thought about my upcoming first day in the writer's room which would be next Monday. Streamers were very different network stuff thirty years ago. More complex. I would need to bring a clear vision to the writer's room.

From behind me, I heard a voice.

"Hey, Brandon! I want you to meet someone!"

It was Aiden.

After I took a few steps towards the two, Aiden continued in a normal voice:

"I want you to meet our Monica...[Odeya Rush](#)."

I shook her hand.

Odeya was an actress born in Israel: she and her family moved to the States when she was nine. Her family moved so that her father could take up a job as a security consultant in Alabama. Much has been made, on the internet, about her likeness to Mila Kunis. Specifically, she was a ringer for Kunis when she was on *That 70's Show* (1998-2006). More specifically, she looked like Jackie in the later seasons. She didn't look like the adorably bratty Jackie in High School who was being two timed by Michael Kelso. She looked like the young professional Jackie who had *learned-a-few-life-lessons-and-now-was-beginning-to-make-her-way*. I always felt that it would be a missed opportunity if Odeya didn't play Mila's niece in some movie.

After the three of us engaged in some small talk about both mine and Odeya's careers – a conversation she easily 'won' – we started in on the new Monica.

"Our new Monica is unlike the old one.", She said.

I took a sip of my drink and said:

"So, what's Monica's deal?"

Aiden and Odeya both pouted for a moment. It was obvious that they both knew what they wanted to say but were unsure where to start.

"Okay...you know the deal about Monica's apartment in the original?", Odeya said.

"Um...how it was unrealistically big and cool and a struggling chef in New York could not possibly afford it?", I said.

"Absolutely!", Aiden concurred.

"Yeah.", Odeya said. "Now, the original was largely blocked between Monica's apartment and the coffee shop. And we're keeping the same dynamic in the reimagining..."

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“...Right. We want to keep that same basic flow as the original...”, Aiden said.

“And it can’t be like *Broad City* where Abbi and Ilana had shithole apartments...”, I volunteered.

“...Yeah, *Broad City* leaned into a lot of 2-character scenes...”, Odeya started.

“...Ilana and Abbi at Ilana’s...Abbi and Bevers at her crib. The occasional party scene where the joke is how the crib is too small...”, Aiden said as he emphasized his point by turning his free hand into a tomahawk and making several metronomic chops.

“Okay...so the concern’s practical. We concoct a credible justification for why Monica has a nice place...so we can do scenes with six people.”, I concluded.

“Yeah...but the fact that Monica has a nice place is an expression of who she is and how she connects with the gang.”, Odeya said.

“Right! And that translates into her having a way, way, cooler place than the original. It’ll be more like Barney Stinson’s penthouse on [How I Met Your Mother](#).”, Aiden said.

“Yeah, this stuff was worked out before I was cast.”, Odeya said. “But, as Ilana laid it out, the apartment was central to the original and will be here too. Instead of making a couple lame-ass asides about ‘rent control’...”

“...and, let’s face it, a struggling chef couldn’t afford that airplane hangar of a New York apartment even with rent control. Can you imagine the utilities bills for that place?”

She continued:

“So, yeah...the girl’s rich. It’s all about how and why she got the money. She had the drive and hustle to succeed...by her mid-twenties. What does that say about her and her motivations? Her friends are not destitute but have incomes of typical twenty somethings. While they always were her good friends, Monica’s financial success – which means an amazing apartment to hang out in – colors the group dynamic.”

“Now...you’re not saying that the central characters are a bunch of opportunists?”, I asked.

“No...no.”, She replied. “But if you have a group of friends, and one of them comes into a shitload of money, the dynamic is affected. And our Monica, unlike the original, is a strong-willed alpha. Not the sniveling neurotic that Cox played.”

“‘Sniveling neurotic’ seems harsh.”, I said.

“Oh, but she was!”, Odeya said, concluding the sentence with an explosive laugh and eyeroll. “She only asserted herself when she was able to dominate the insecure Chandler. And there wasn’t even a fun dominatrix vibe. She was a total neurotic about it.

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“Sounds like you hated the original Monica.”, I said.

“No...no. I didn't hate her. She was a very funny character. But I would not have taken the role if the new Monica was two-dimensional. Now, she's pretty fucked up but also self-assured and successful. She's complex and continues to develop over the series. This is 2023 and not 1998: shows are a lot more complex and challenging. There's simply a lot more going on...a lot more to unpack. The shit isn't so, um, surfacy.”

So...do Monica and Chandler get into a Dominant/submissive – a D/s – thing?”

“Well...not in the first season...”, Aiden said.

“Hey, there you go Mr. Staff Writer...pitching ideas.”, Odeya said. I like it. Push that in the writer's room! Don't be shy!”

I looked at my drink as I digested what Odeya just said. My two conversation partners were silent as I did so.

“How did Monica make her money?”, I asked.

“She's a social influencer and uses her money to buy into one of one of New York's trendiest eateries...not a 'restaurant'. Right Aidan?”, Odeya said.

“Right. Now, in our version, Monica graduates from [The Institute of Culinary Education](#)...and that's real and prestigious by the way. Her dad agrees to pay full boat on her education if she graduates valedictorian in her High School class.”, Aiden said.

“Which she does. But her father was not just going to pay for college. The kid had to earn it.”, Odeya said.

“So, Jack Geller – same name as the original – assumes that she'll go into medicine or law – and is totally pissed that she wants to go to a culinary school. But Jack is a 'word-is-bond' guy.”

“Her internship is at [Tavern On The Green](#) leads to a job as an assistant chef.”, Aiden said.

“Nice.”, I said. “And *Tavern* is also real.”

“Right.”, Aiden said. “We're doing the same thing that they did in the original. You know...when Rachel worked for *Ralph Lauren*.”, Aiden said. “Monica starts posting cooking vids on *YouTube* and *TikTok* She expands into interviewing top chefs and New York trendsetters. I see her as a *Guy Fieri* type.”

“Phhht...I think she's more [Priyanka Chopra](#).” Odeya said. “Anyway, this is pretty much backstory. It's covered in dialogue. When the story starts, she's established. She's not simply solvent: she's New York elite. But hangs with her crew. The compelling thing here is what drives her.”

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“Which is...”, I prompted.

“She was fat as a kid. Like the original.”

This quickly devolved into an inquiry about the appropriate terminology for a person that ‘is perceived as overweight’ with an especially annoying tangent into the societal causes of teen suicide.

“Fuck it...I’m just going with ‘fat’.”, Odeya said. “It torments her as a kid and causes her to achieve. It doesn’t make her a pathetic bitch like in the original.”

“Wow...fess up.”, I said. “You simply hated the Courtney Cox version.”

“Well. Funny character. But...”, Odeya pursed her lips and then continued. “...look I was a Jewish girl in Alabama...an immigrant from Israel. That was rough. And the trauma pushed me to achieve and didn’t cripple me. The original Monica was just sad. This Monica is a winner. Yeah, sure, she has issues. But she is coming to terms with her demons and that makes her a bigger winner. All winners have issues. They continue to win by coming to terms with them. By growing...getting stronger. I have a connection with this Monica and not the original. As I said, I wouldn’t play the original. But I feel that I can make a statement here.”

“I think that everyone who is playing a major character is trying to say something.”, Aiden concluded.

As I spoke to people about the *Friends* reimagining, I really started to understand why I was filled with anticipation: it was going to be a smart dramedy.

At this point, I had been involved in two major sitcoms: one was smart and the other stupid.

I came to the attention of Hollywood through a blog that I was writing called *Consumer Follies*. It was a mix of ‘70’s National Lampoon irreverence and socialist politics (I’ve moved to the right since then, into the Obama’s neighborhood). I was not a cute girl who could dance and doesn’t mind stripping for the anonymous pervs. Instead, I’m a somewhat dumpy-looking Gen Z guy. I can’t dance and only a small handful of the pervs would want to see me gyrating in a G-String. Tik Tok was not my path to success.

The *Consumer Follies* site became popular with a certain demo. It was big with people wasting their parents’ money in college and guys in high school who were overly fond of masturbation. It also appealed to lefties, my tribe.

Using Twitter, I would DM famous people the link to my post. Most of them just blocked me. Mindy Kaling responded.

And this ultimately led to my getting on with the ‘smart sitcom’.

Okay, technically Mindy did not DM me. Her showrunner and producer [Matt Warburton](#) did. Having a guy like Warburton reach out to you is a huge deal. He is a figure in the entertainment industry. How big? Well...check out his page on the IMDb website. And, if you don’t love IMDb as much as I do, you’re evil...Hitler evil.

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Warburton was a big deal. But it's cooler to say that Mindy DM'd because of her name recognition. And she was one of my favorite 'famous people'. She was crazy smart and talented. It was obvious that she was a decent person. In this society, decency is a rare trait. Warburton was also a big fan of Consumer Follies.

After some initial DM's on Twitter, Warburton and I emailed, and he ultimately hired me as a Writer's Assistant on *The Mindy Project* (2012-2017). He felt that my sense of humor was compatible with Mindy's. That opinion meant more to me than getting the gig (no...it didn't). Writer's Assistant is basically an entry-level position that can lead to Staff Writer. After two seasons on the show, I was offered a Staff Writer position on *2 Broke Girls* (2011-2017).

I quit my smart sitcom, Mindy's thing, to take the gig at 'Girls'. While it meant a cooler job title and more money, I went from doing smart to doing stupid. I regretted that.

So, I had some solid experience. But this Staff Writing gig on Ilana's fledgling dramedy was my big break. It was the right job title and the right project.

What I mistakenly believed was going to be a staff meeting of a still embryonic dramedy – a reimagining of *Friends* – turned out to be a party at Showrunner Ilana Glazer's house.

Instead of being a work meeting for the writers, it was a party for everyone involved.

The evening quickly segregated out. Different groups, and this was probably by design, claimed different parts of her house. The gaffers/camera/lighting/electrical crowd inhabited her guest house. Staff Writers, like me, took to Ilana's ample living room. Along with the funny t-shirt brigade – of which I was a member – producers, core actors and directors enjoyed a sedate cocktail party in her living room. The 'gaffer+' gang was having a raucous kegger. Even though they were partying in the physically separate guest house, the whooping and hollering (intermixed with 70's metal, 80's glam and the odd techno track – yes, they had a DJ.) could be heard. Yes, I was a tad jealous. But ultimately, I was getting much more out of the cocktail party as I picked the brains of my co-workers.

Aiden, Odeya and I talked some more about their characters. Subsequently, I spoke to the actors who were to play Joey, Rachel, and Chandler.

I said my goodbyes, shared a nice hug with Ilana, and drove to a neighboring city that was ten miles away. My polyam family lived in a small house in Elysian Valley, commonly known as Frogtown.

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