

Framed Egg #7



this issue:
**anatomy
of a
failure**

What happened?

**Why hasn't there
been a new
issue in so long?**

**Was this magazine
so profitable that its
creator was able to run
away to South America?**

The short version is that I'm a failure.

But my therapist says that's also the self-defeating version, so I guess I shouldn't word it that way.

I set out to make issue #7 of *Framed Egg* with a very specific idea in mind: I wanted to turn a series of tweets about a fictional sitcom into a full script for an episode of that show. I had a basic premise (a police detective who is aided in her investigations by a bunch of internet-savvy helpers), and I had an idea for a plot that would be interesting enough for twenty pages.

I sat down and mind-mapped out the episode I had in my head, and then I wrote out a few pages. And then I didn't touch it. For weeks.

Every now and then I would think about the issue and feel guilty. I would think that I should be working on the script. But I never did. It was harder than I'd imagined, and I'm not a well-disciplined individual. So I just let the whole thing fester.

I missed the deadline for putting out the issue. Then I missed the next month's. And the next's. The whole time I told myself that soon I would finish the script (and thus finish issue #7) and then quickly crack out the next couple of issues and catch myself up. After all, there are people paying me every month for this magazine - if I don't keep

up to the schedule, I'm cheating them out of their money.

Well, I've decided that it's time to stop kidding myself: I am not going to finish the script. I'm not skilled enough at writing television to get it done to a standard I'm happy with, and I'm not prepared to put myself through the psychic pain of wrestling with a project that's made me feel so bad.

But I have a bunch of pages already written, and it feels silly to waste them. So I'm putting them in this issue, along with all the materials from the planning stage of production. Included are the original tweets, the character bios I wrote, the plot outline, and -of course- the unfinished script.

This issue of *Framed Egg* is light on comedy, heavy on failure. I'd **like** to just pretend this whole incident never happened, but I don't think that's the honest thing to do. So let my magazine be forever marred by this black mark on its record.

Issue #8 of this fine periodical will be coming soon, and I will catch up and produce more issues, commensurate with the money people have given me. I will make this right. Because I'd hate to dedicate yet **another** issue to me fucking up.

The original tweets



Posted to @aedison on Dec. 1st, 2012



A wise-cracking cop solves crimes with the help of an online community who provide research and hints – CSI: Crowd-Sourced Investigation.

This is a small dig at a single person in the “curation” community. Typically, you don’t want to create a TV show out of inside-jokes. There’s not so much mass appeal to them. By design.

“Victim was stabbed with a curved blade using robotic precision,” Detective Jakes mused. “CS - what do you know about the Mechanical Turk?”

“Jakes, I’m on the E-How page for disarming a bom-”

“Are you sure that’s a trusted source?”

“There’s no time for citations, Detective!”

“You’re too late, Detective. The wisdom of a thousand crowds couldn’t stop me! Once this DDOS attack completes, the Edit Wars will begin!”

→ The body lay dead, its skull cut off, brain picked out.

→ “No need for your help on this one, Sourcers,” Jake sighed. “This boy was curated.”

Note: You can already see the beginnings of my failure in these tweets. The premise, as outlined by these jokes, seems to be a regular police show that has been stuffed with superfluous references to internet culture. That’s kind of hard to pull off, as it would require writing two shows: one that works as a regular programme, and another that makes fun of the internet.

Character bios

Before sitting down to write the script, I brainstormed some plot points (which we'll get to in a second) and wrote some fictional biographies for the six main and recurring characters, all of whom either work at the police station or help Detective Jakes as civilians.

Detective Susan Jakes

Woman, mid-to-late 20s. Brown, frizzy hair and pale eyes. She's simultaneously trying to act like she's taking her job less seriously since her partner died *and* working with a bunch of tech-savvy civilians to help her do her job better and prevent any more deaths.

Detective Sanchez

A Hispanic cop, a few years older than Jakes, who works vice at the same precinct. He hassles Susan about her working with the outside civilians, but is secretly the fourth member of her team, and intervenes with last-second information when he's worried something is about to go wrong.

Chief Willards

Jakes and Sanchez's boss. He's easy-going, for the most part, and bored with the day-to-day of running a police force. As such, he's willing to let Detective Jakes experiment with the crowd-sourcing, although he's warned her that "CSI" is a confusing name for the team.



A note about diversity.

When creating the characters, I tried to make them diverse in terms of ethnicity, age, and gender. I wanted them to look like normal people (or, at least, for the reader to imagine them looking like normal people). This lent a self-consciousness to the character creation, which might come through in these bios (see the self-satisfaction in making the black guy a former CEO?). In trying to be “diverse”, I think I ended up with tokenism.

So, again: failure.

Nadine Laddock

Late 30s stay-at-home mom with a husband and two kids. She’s heavier than she’d like, with short hair (the result of a recent incident with a messy child and some chewing gum). She used to work as a receptionist at the police station, which is how she knows Detective Jakes.

Philip Dixon

An African-American in his early 40s. Spends most of his time playing MMORPGs, mostly at night. He used to be a CEO, but stopped working after his wife died in a car accident and he became agoraphobic.

Lucy Cale

A 23 year-old from a Dominican family, she’s working at the local library after graduating early with a masters degree. She is completely bored with her desk job.



The plot thickens... and then thins... and then disappears altogether.

Initially, I planned for the script to have a cold-open that would introduce all the characters and show them solving a small crime –a spate of pharmacy thefts– before getting to the main plot, which involved a murderer taking out members of Detective Jakes’ team! (*Cue dramatic music.*) However, in plotting out the cold open, I realized that there was enough in it to take up the whole episode, and jettisoned the murders. This wasn’t meant to be heavy entertainment, after all.

As I worked from the plot outline and wrote the script, I discovered the main flaw in the show’s premise - it is *no fun* watching people figure things out on computers and then text information to someone else. I had to insert scenes where Jakes confronted cashiers who didn’t want to provide important details, and shake-downs with union representatives. The only character taking action was the Detective, and everyone else just stared at their laptops or, in the most boring example of a civilian’s real life escapades, *attempted to go to sleep.*

This was not making for exciting television.

As Detective Susan Jakes discusses her use of the crowd sourced team with her boss, Chief Willards, a montage shows the team members checking their cell phones, waiting for Jakes to contact them. A pharmacy is robbed, and the Detective springs into action. Slowly, she and the team piece together a recipe list from the stolen goods - someone is trying to make meth, but the recipe they're using came from a disreputable website, and it's missing a crucial ingredient.

As the first batch puts a drug user in hospital, Jakes and her team race to find the corrected recipe and, thus, figure out what the thief will try to steal next. They whittle possible pharmacies down to the one location that has the final ingredient, but in the process learn that the thief has been bragging online that he has a gun.

Police surround the store, and are about to take in guns of their own, when Sanchez anonymously texts Jakes and lets her know that the suspect's gun is a fake, and his internet postings were a prelude to an unsuccessful attempt to purchase a *real* weapon. The SWAT team is called off, and Detective Jakes strolls into the drugstore and cuffs the perp.

Brace yourself, here comes the actual script.

And so, after all that pre-amble and dissection, the next nine pages will show you the aborted screenplay itself. Maybe I'm being too harsh of a self-critic, and there's actually something there. Maybe the jokes are funny, and the action compelling.

More likely, reading these pages will be an exercise in frustration for you. Because if you are a fan of mine, you think (rightly or wrongly) that I'm capable of some pretty cool stuff, when I put my mind to it. And this time, I just haven't delivered. Apologies.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

CHIEF WILLARDS, an early-forties male in an impeccable suit, is walking around his office in a relaxed manner and addressing DETECTIVE SUSAN JAKES, a 28 year-old frizzy-haired woman, who is searching the room for somewhere to plug in her phone.

DET. JAKES
You're sure there's no spare outlet, or anything?

CHIEF WILLARDS
(ignoring her)
All I'm saying is that you need to be mindful that none of this interferes with your actual police work.

DET. JAKES
It's just that my battery's at about fifteen percent. The little warning message keeps coming up.

CHIEF WILLARDS
That's just the kind of thing I'm talking about.

CUT TO:

INT. NADINE'S KITCHEN - DAY

NADINE LADDOCK, a short-haired, late-30s, heavy-set woman, is trying to calm down her two kids while her husband, ZEKE, distractedly makes breakfast.

ZEKE
Are you going to be able to take them to school today?

Nadine checks her phone, puts it away, then checks it again.

ZEKE
Honey?

NADINE
(sighing)
Uh, I guess so. I guess so.

CUT TO:

INT. PHILIP'S DEN - DAY

PHILIP DIXON, a fifty year-old African-American, is pulling his curtains closed and kicking his shoes off. He yawns, checks his cell phone, and then grabs a sheet from a nearby table and drapes it over a birdcage in the corner.

PHILIP
(to the bird)
I'm pretty impressed that you've adapted so well to this sleep cycle, bud. I mean, most parrots would be squawking their heads off right about now-

Of course, the parrot begins shrieking, upset at having to sleep through the day.

Philip grabs some ear plugs.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY LOBBY - DAY

LUCY CALE, a barely-twenty year-old of Dominican descent, is slumped over her desk. She is "helping" a library patron.

LUCY
I could look it up for you, or you could grab one of the fifty computers around here and do it yourself.

The patron nervously looks over to a computer station surrounded by other people waiting for their turn, while Lucy grabs her cell phone and scrolls through it.

LUCY
Although it seems I have nothing better to do. What book are you looking for?

CUT TO:

INT. UNDISCLOSED LOCATION - DAY

An unidentified hand finishes typing out a message on a generic cell phone.

ON THE SCREEN

I'll be home late. Boring work stuff. Miss you. x

The hand puts away that cell phone and then pulls out another, checks the messages app, and then puts it away too.

CUT TO:

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

A CASHIER is holding his hands up as a GUNMAN yells at him while pointing a shotgun at his head.

GUNMAN

I need every box you have. Folks can go without their prescriptions for a couple of days.

CASHIER

We don't have many on the premises! It's a restricted medicine!

GUNMAN

Yeah, no shit. Just hand them over.

The cashier turns and scans the shelves behind him for an unassuming white box. He gingerly stretches it out towards the gunman, who snatches it away.

The gunman flees, running past several bystanders who are crouched on the ground with their hands over their heads.

CUT TO:

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

DET. JAKES

Boss, to interfere with work there'd have to be some work, and things have been pretty slo-

A uniformed OFFICER enters the office.

OFFICER

Chief Willard, there's been a hold-up on Harlon Street.

CHIEF WILLARDS
(to Det. Jakes)
This is what happens when you
complain, you know.

DET. JAKES
(holding up her phone)
Now I really need somewhere to
plug this in. Gotta get the team
together.

CHIEF WILLARDS
I was meant to tell you, by the
way. You have to change the name
of that thing. It's confusing.

Jakes doesn't hear, as she's too busy typing on her phone.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) INT. NADINE'S KITCHEN - DAY - Nadine is helping her kids with their coats, car keys in hand, when her phone buzzes on the kitchen table. She stops what she's doing, and smiles.

B) INT. PHILIP'S DEN - DAY - Philip is in bed, hands on his head as he tries to block out his parrot's squawking. His cell phone trills, and he sits up and removes one hand from his ear. It sounds off again, and he smiles.

C) INT. LIBRARY LOBBY - DAY - Lucy is ignoring the library patron from earlier, instead looking at her phone. She drops it and pumps her fists.

D) INT. UNDISCLOSED LOCATION - DAY - The mysterious hand picks up its second cell phone. We finally see the message everyone's been receiving.

ON THE SCREEN

ROBBERY AT PHARMACY. PART OF A PATTERN? NEED TO CROWD-SOURCE THIS ONE. YOU'RE ALL ON CALL.

BEGIN MAIN TITLES - CSI: CROWD-SOURCED INVESTIGATION

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Det. Jakes arrives and surveys the relative calm of the store. Everything is tidy, customers are calm, and the cashier who was being threatened only a few minutes ago is smiling behind the counter.

DET. JAKES
Excuse me, am I in the right
store?

CASHIER
That depends, miss - what were you
looking for?

Jakes flashes her police badge.

DET. JAKES
A crime scene. Do you have it on
backorder, because I'm not seeing
anything here on the floor.

The cashier seems nervous.

CASHIER
Oh, that actually... that wasn't
really a big deal. One of our
customers overreacted and called
you guys in, but... but it was fine.
We're fine. We can afford to lose
a few flu meds.

DET. JAKES
Why don't you let law enforcement
decide if everything's fine? Can
you tell me which specific
medications were taken?

CASHIER
I'm sorry, I just- I'm not
supposed to talk to you.

DET. JAKES
Dude, you're making my job
extremely diffi-

The detective notices a gap in product on the shelves
behind the cashier. The camera follows her eye and we see a
label for the missing medications:

RITEMED ISYPROFEN PILLS - 300MG

Jakes grabs her phone and snaps a picture of the label. She
sends it to the crowd-sourcers.

DET. JAKES
(to cashier)
Thanks, you've actually been very
helpful.

The cashier, confused, watches Jakes leave the store.

CASHIER

But... but I wasn't trying to be!

EXT. PHARMACY PARKING LOT - DAY

The detective is walking to her car as her phone rings.
It's Nadine.

DET. JAKES

What's new?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. NADINE'S STUDY - DAY

NADINE

I added the isyprofen to the list of stolen products, and I'm still not digging up any recipes or experiments... Nothing documented, anyway.

DET. JAKES

There've been far too many pharmacy robberies recently for this to be random. Someone's cooking up something. Or trying to, at least.

NADINE

Are you sure we're working with a full list of substances? Maybe they haven't finished shopping... or there are robberies that aren't getting reported?

DET. JAKES

If stores don't file a police report, insurance won't refund their losses. It doesn't make sense that someone would be covering thefts up. Does it?

NADINE

You should talk to Philip, he knows more about corporate stuff. I'll keep trying to find the cookbook our thief is working from.

DET. JAKES

And I'll...

Jakes looks around, realizes she's been standing still for the whole conversation.

DET. JAKES (CONT.)

...stop loitering in a parking lot.

INT. PHILIP'S CAVE - DAY

Philip is holding the phone with one hand, going through his Rolodex with the other.

PHILIP

Oh, there's all sorts of reasons
companies cover up shrinkage,
Detective. You should talk to...

Philip finally finds the index card he's looking for in the Rolodex, and pulls it out, triumphant.

PHILIP (CONT.)

Jason Laskey at Ritemed corporate
offices. He's the union rep.

INT. RITEMED CORPORATE - DAY

Detective Jakes strides past cubicles until she arrives at Laskey's desk. He looks up.

PHILIP (V.O.)

Union guys always know what's up.

JASON

Can I help you?

DET. JAKES

Sir, I need any information you
might have about a series of
thefts at your stores in the past
few weeks.

JASON

I think you should see... I'm not
really in charge of security...

DET. JAKES

I've spoken to security, and they're not telling me what I need. I'm hoping an upstanding gentleman like yourself can be more helpful.

Laskey looks nervous.

JASON

I don't- I don't want to get my guys in trouble.

DET. JAKES

Trouble? Is this an inside job?

JASON

No, god no. But management is coming down hard on anyone who gets held up. I don't want my boys to get fired.

DET. JAKES

I'm not looking to blow any whistles. I just need a complete list of stolen goods. I'm trying to stop whoever's doing this. You want that, right?

JASON

You can't tell me what I want! But, coincidentally, yes - I do want that.

Laskey rummages through his desk, and finds a scrap of paper. He hands it over to Detective Jakes.

INT. LIBRARY LOBBY - DAY

Lucy ignores a patron while she types furiously on her computer.

PATRON

You're supposed to be helping me! I'm pretty sure my taxes pay your salary!

LUCY

(offhanded)

And I'm pretty sure that if you're at the library, you don't pay taxes.

Lucy calls the detective.

LUCY

Jakes? I found a drug forum posting with a recipe that matches the full list of stolen ingredients. But there's a problem - it's wrong. If someone manages to cook a batch with this guide, they're gonna end up killing someone.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

A JUNKIE prepares a pipe, lights it, and smokes it. He looks pleased for a moment, then upset. Then very upset. He looks quizzically at the pipe, then falls to the ground, gasping for breath.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Det. Jakes is on the phone.

DET. JAKES

Nadine, did you manage to get the room number this guy's in?

As she walks down the hall, Jakes spots the junkie in a bed, writhing in pain as an ORDERLY tries to hold him down.

DET. JAKES (CONT.)

Never mind, I think I found him.

Jakes hangs up the phone.

DET. JAKES

(to orderly)

Can this guy talk?

...and that's where I gave up. Probably worn out by all the INTERCUTs and MONTAGEs. Those are a bitch to write.

Okay, so, that's over with. Any lessons learned?

- 1) If I'm going to try and do something big and grand, I should put a little more thought into it than "yeah, these tweets could be expanded..."
- 2) Tokenism always sucks.
- 3) The Winter months are not my most productive, especially when paired with:
 - a) my bi-polar disorder, and
 - b) my purchase of an X-Box.
- 4) I like putting sub-lists in lists.
- 5) None of my readers angrily demanded their money back, which means they either:
 - a) didn't care, or,
 - b) like me enough to know that even though I may take my time, I eventually do the things I say I will.
- 6) I really, *really* like putting sub-lists in lists.

Seriously, thank you for your faith in me, and for reading this far. I will catch up on all delayed issues, so keep an eye out.

-Avery