

# **BUDGET JUSTIFIED: THE WASTE, FRAUD, & ABUSE OF GOVERNMENT WORKERS**



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**<http://CrowdPublish.tv>**

**BUDGET JUSTIFIED: THE WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE OF  
GOVERNMENT WORKERS**

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To all my former co-workers

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## Preface

Throughout my entire twelve years of Catholic education, I tested in the top one percent of the nation on standardized tests. By the end of those twelve years, I was entirely clueless as to what careers were available or what people did for their jobs.

My physics teacher told me I should be an engineering major. I didn't know what an engineer was. I didn't even know what a 'major' was. So when I went to Arizona State's campus to register for college classes, I asked a professor what engineers did.

"There'll be a sewer project down the road from here around the time you graduate."

Huh?

Why did my high school teacher think I should work in a sewer? I looked at my list of classes: calculus, Basic programming, chemistry. I didn't see what any of them had to do with a sewer. So I kept that class schedule and figured I'd worry about avoiding sewer classes once I got to college.

Because of my lack of information and inability to imagine the workplace until I'd already been in college awhile, upon finishing college I wanted to tell stories about the kind of things engineers do on a daily basis that were a complete mystery to me only a few years prior. Kind of like the television shows and movies about police, doctors, detectives, and lawyers, I wanted to show engineers solving critical problems, making our lives better, saving third world countries from famine and waterborne disease – through better drinking water and sewage systems, designed with calculus, software, and chemistry.

Sexual assault is not the story I wanted to tell. I wanted to tell people about women being leaders, not objects. I wanted to make it seem typical for women to work with technology, as opposed to having women in technical fields being seen as a novelty.

But those weren't the stories I had. The unfortunately reality was that I saw too many female engineers get treated as office sex objects. I didn't have the opportunities to do great technical work or to lead important projects. We didn't solve critical problems nor make anyone's life better. The FAA managers I worked for weren't interested in those sorts of things as much as they were interested in bullying their staff and contractors.

Instead of being a valuable technical resource, I got groped repeatedly. A coworker masturbated in front of me, then I was fired the next day without any warning – only days after my bosses had told me I was doing well. They said I was fired for my blog. Perhaps I was. They were probably afraid I'd write about all the shenanigans going on in that office. And they were paranoid that someone with authority to take away their funding would find out about it.

Well, if they didn't like the blog, then they'll hate the book. And the movie.

So the stories that I have about women engineers aren't what you'd expect from someone who wanted to portray women engineers as strong leaders. But if

women engineers continue to hide what goes on in their lives, if we deny what happens to us and sweep it under the rug, we will never solve the harassment problem. And we can forget about opportunities to solve technical problems.

My story isn't just about sexual harassment or assault. I doubt that sexual harassment ever happens as an isolated incident. It's about the working atmosphere within that office, and likely within most of the FAA. In what kind of office does masturbating in the conference room seem like a normal thing to do?

*Budget Justified* will help you witness what kind of office. It's a workplace where everyone is treated like they're as valuable as spent semen. Where men are rewarded for kissing figurative ass and women are rewarded for kissing literal ass. Where the work people do is ejaculated into the garbage. All supported by your taxpayer dollars.

I could have crawled away, shrunk into my corner, and kept my mouth shut, hoping not to have to deal with it again. But harassment – sexual or otherwise – and sexual discrimination have been a pattern throughout my career. If I went to another engineering firm, it would be the same story. People are putting up with this kind of treatment in many workplaces across the nation. This story needs to be told.

During my time as a visiting professor at a local university, I took graduate level screenwriting and video production courses. At the time, Al Gore was predicting two minute clips would become more popular than television. Shortly after that, I found out about YouTube. So when the story for *Budget Justified* fell into my lap, I decided to use it to experiment with a series of two to four minute videos to post on YouTube.

I wasn't sure if I'd be able to pull it off. I kept the setting simple so I could shoot most of it in my house with unmonitored cameras. At a filmmaker event, I found out about web sites where I could post casting calls for volunteer actors. I started shooting as soon as I found them, cleaning up the script as we went, because I wasn't sure if the actors would soon move away or quit.

I came across viral YouTube videos of drama going on in a teenage girl's life, captured with a hidden camera. It turned out that her camera was not hidden, rather she had scripted the whole drama. Since *Budget Justified* is a true story, I decided to make it look like I'd hidden a camera on my office bookshelf and captured everything as it happened. However, even though the camera angles, lighting, and script aren't at the level of professional videographers, they're still too clean to fool anyone – no close-ups of elbows or ears.

I had considered several titles for the web series. The first titles contained some form of the phrase 'sexual harassment' such as *Sexual Assault: Hidden Camera* or *Sexual Harassment: All in a Day's Work at the FAA*.

But sexual harassment was only one of many symptoms of the real problem. It was part of the culture of harassment and waste instigated by the FAA managers taunting the staff and ignoring everyone's work. *Budget Justified: A Story of Harassment - Sexual and Otherwise - at the FAA* seemed like a better title. The idea came from a quote I made up and included at the end of email

sent from my personal account, “The meaning of our lives is to justify where our bosses spent their budget.”

I suppose I could’ve put something about ‘masturbation at work’ in the title, or stated that women engineers were being hired as prostitutes. I couldn’t call us ‘Ladies of the Night,’ because we were working during the daytime. Of course ‘Ladies of the Day’ doesn’t make sense.

How about *Budget Justified: The FAA Hires Women Engineers as Hookers...* Ludicrous at face value – readers would turn away with the impression that the story was a sensationalistic rant. But that title might not be far from the truth. So I tried something slightly more academic for the somewhat brainy crowd: *Budget Justified: Waste, Fraud, & Abuse of Government Engineers*.

Technically, we weren’t all engineers. Some of us were mathematicians, others were physicists, and a few were economists, although we all did pretty much the same math stuff, during the rare days we had something to work on. Since this story is relevant to everyone – employees, contractors, even the taxpayers – I used the more general term ‘Workers’ for the title.

I had already been working on a novel about a woman engineer before this story happened, so a book was a natural extension of the movie. This book covers the screenplay I wrote for the *Budget Justified* web series. In the following chapters, I tell you about some of the things that happened during taping and expand on the intention of the scenes. I also explain how the scenes relate to the way things happened in real life.

All characters in *Budget Justified* are actor interpretations. The situations and conversations actually happened, albeit with a larger set of characters than those represented in *Budget Justified*. It would’ve been too confusing to include everyone I’ve ever worked with, thus I made up completely new characters with their own personalities and combined them into common archetypes of people working for the FAA and contractors: curmudgeons, slackers, iron fists, brownnosers who get ahead, promotion whores, those without hope, and of course gropers. They all stem from different ways of handling low self esteem – which sadly festered inside many of my coworkers the longer they worked in such a demoralizing atmosphere.

At the end of each episode, I’ve included a corresponding blog entry. The blog and videos are posted at [BudgetJustified.com](http://BudgetJustified.com). Toward the end of this book, I include the blog I wrote about harassment that I posted anonymously on the internet during the last five weeks I worked in FAA offices.



## Episode 1: Boss's Affair

Lisa is an engineering subcontractor working in FAA offices. She hid a video camera to document the groping her officemate does when no one's looking. What else will the camera find at the FAA?

EXT. FEDERAL AGENCY HEADQUARTERS

Opening credits for all episodes: Capitol is in the background. Zoom in on a window of a federal building. Play goofy music.

### Shooting the Scene

This was shot on September 11, 2008. It was a nice sunny day to go downtown. The date was coincidental. So was the building.

I didn't care what building I used for opening credits, as long as it looked like an office. I scoped out Pennsylvania Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and the National Mall. They each had direct views of the Capitol. I needed to be on the west side of the Capitol so I wouldn't have a view of a bunch of silhouettes in front of the early afternoon sun. The National Mall didn't have any office-like buildings, so that was out. The office buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue weren't as close to the Capitol as the ones on Maryland.

The office building with the best view of the Capitol in the background happened to be... FAA Headquarters. Shortly after lunch, hundreds of federal employees milled around. I stood on the sidewalk and aimed my video camera at the FAA building. On the seventh anniversary of the aviation attacks on the Pentagon. I was concerned that a security guard – or much worse: a former coworker returning from lunch – would approach and ask what I was up to. But this is Washington, where authorities are more concerned about my seventy year old mother entering a museum with a bag of airline peanuts than real threats that don't achieve security theater. Nobody bothered me.

### In Real Life

I didn't work at headquarters. I worked a few blocks away. I don't know who works behind the window shown in the opening credits. Could be a conference room or a storage room for computers from the 1960's.

Nah, couldn't be storage for computers from the 1960's. Those computers are still in use at the FAA.

INT. WINDOW

Shot out of a second story window of Federal Agency Headquarters. Looking down, we see BARRY, a fifty-something government engineering manager in a suit, and JANE, a twenty-something professional-looking

engineer, as they walk toward the entrance of the building.

LISA (OS - right behind camera)  
Barry and Jane coming to work together?  
Glad I brought my camera.

## Shooting the Scene

OS is Off Screen in screenwriter lingo.

As I held a camera way above my head aimed at Ted (Barry) and Eli (Jane), I stood on the top step of a ladder perched on the top of a staircase that led to an office building entrance. No window involved. Meanwhile, Anthony, who plays the New Guy, held the ladder steady underneath me. I was wearing a skirt. We had just shot a restroom scene where one of the characters makes a comment about my skirt and I didn't have time to change out of wardrobe.

It felt like a ridiculous pose. I teetered up there as elegantly as possible, although I wasn't worried that Anthony might look up my skirt. When he came to audition, I asked if he would be interested in the role of Charlie. He said there was no way he could touch a woman's rear and be able to finish the scene. Not that Dave (Charlie) pulled it off without some embarrassment. I wish more guys were embarrassed about touching women's rear ends.

The original version of this scene didn't have the voice-over. During editing, several people critiqued the first cut of *Budget Justified*. They didn't know what was going on in this first shot. They expected to see me, the lead character. After brainstorming, we determined that this shot needed a voice-over, hinting at what Lisa was up to.

The reason I'm not in the first shot is that this story isn't about me. Yes, it's from my point of view, but I'm not one of the thousands of federal employees and contractors still subject to the follies of government managers. The story is about how federal agencies' management style, or lack thereof, affects the way your taxpayer dollars, and government employees, are used.

## In Real Life

As I wrote this, I imagined the parking garage at my former employer, also an FAA contractor. Our building was in the suburbs where we had no contact with FAA employees. Management preferred it that way.

We were nowhere near a Metro station, so everyone drove to work. Well, everyone except me and two other people (out of several hundred employees). The three of us usually took the bus. But everyone else arrived through the parking garage. And usually not in pairs, as Barry and Jane do here. Parking was free; no need to carpool. So when anyone arrived together, it didn't go unnoticed.

It took me a long time to feel like I had left that job, slipping out slowly, cutting hours to part time to teach at a local university. I had been well-

integrated into the culture at Former Employer. I had lots of friends. Everyone knew me. I was one of the ‘popular’ people there. Not in the high school sense, but because all the staff wanted me to work on projects with them. They knew I always came through with what I said I’d do. Upper management knew I was competent and had faith in me.

That wasn’t quite the case with some of the lower management. Because I knew their foibles and they knew I didn’t care much to validate them. I never confronted lower management about anything they got away with, but neither did I pretend that everything management did was so very clever.

INT. HALLWAY

The entire screen is covered by rattling blinds as the camera is jolted away from the window. Quick PAN TO CHARLIE, a thirty-something engineer, standing right next to the camera.

CHARLIE

Hey Lisa. Whatcha doing with that box?

Charlie nods toward the camera.

LISA (OS)

Oh. It’s just a software box.

Charlie looks toward the window.

CHARLIE

I think our boss has a new girlfriend.

LISA (OS)

Which boss?

CHARLIE

That one.

Charlie points out the window at Barry.

## Shooting the Scene

Dave (Charlie) and I stood in the conference room on the seventh floor of an office building downtown. The view outside was an alley. Not the entrance to a building. If you freeze the frame where the blinds are partly open, you’ll get a glimpse of a brick wall.

Dave is much more quiet and shy in person. It was just the two of us in this conference room while we shot this scene. He didn’t initiate conversation, so I asked him about his other acting gigs while we set up. He spoke about the

movies *Meter Maids* and *Deadlands* with enthusiasm. Even though acting is his side gig, he's pretty serious about it.

Hopefully you've figured out that the premise here is that I'm hiding the camera inside a software box that I carry around the office. Most of the time it's supposedly sitting on a bookshelf in someone's office. Although in reality, the bookshelves were moved away so that we could put the camera on a tripod.

## In Real Life

One morning as soon as one of my coworkers arrived at work, he came past my office and said, "I think your boss has a new girlfriend."

This was a confusing statement to me. First of all, how would he have any information about my boss's love life. Second of all, which boss was he referring to. It was a 'matrixed' organization. I had several project managers, I managed a project that was split into pieces and managed by other staff members, any of the supervisors in my department were allowed to ask me to work on something for them, and when my supervisor was unresponsive, his supervisors would come directly to me for support.

The most likely 'boss,' the one whom I talked to the most, was married. A quiet, decent man who didn't go around harassing women.

It turned out that my coworker was indeed referring to my married boss. My coworker had seen Boss and one of his subordinates, a very 'close friend' of Boss, drive into work together that morning.

"You must be misinformed," I told my coworker. Or maybe I said something more like, "What the hell are you talking about."

In the weeks after that strange declaration of a new girlfriend, I noticed that Boss frequently snuck in and out of conference rooms, his office, and the entire building with his very close female 'friend.' I wasn't the only one who witnessed this. According to conversations with others who worked with Boss, the activities between him and his friend/mistress had been off and on over several years. Sneaking around was more frequent shortly after each of his promotions. It would cool off as soon as she received her subsequent promotions.

I make light of Boss's alleged love life here. I believe the situation was more complex. He and Mistress had been good friends for a long time. Since his marriage wasn't ending any time soon, they knew where they stood with each other. It seemed to be more than a fling, but nothing that would ever become permanent.

Fooling around was part of the FAA culture with its contractors. One of Former Employer's female managers almost lost a marriage over a fling with one of the FAA managers. One of Former Employer's vice presidents had a fling with one of the staff and did lose his marriage over it. Someone got shot in the parking garage for having a fling with another guy's wife.

Interestingly, Boss was only one of several guys in the office that Mistress had been seen sneaking off with at various times of day and night. I don't think he cared. Made it less likely that she'd cause problems with his wife.

INT. WINDOW

Barry and Jane out the window, he puts his hand on her back as they enter the building.

LISA (OS)

Charlie, that one's married.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Dave ad-libbed at the end of each take. The first time, he said, "I don't think he cares." He was lighthearted and I laughed. The second time he said, "She likes them that way." I could've left the ad-libs out, but the second one made a statement about Charlie's character – he thinks women like fooling around with married men. And he wanted in on the action.

The sidewalk shown in this scene isn't in front of a government building. It's on K Street, near all the big lobbyists and big corporations. I liked how the busy street in downtown Washington gave the feel of a city that looked busy on the outside where a bunch of fooling around was happening on the inside.

### **In Real Life**

Our offices were near the L'Enfant Plaza and Smithsonian Metro stations in Washington. On the National Mall nearby, people play Frisbee and go jogging alongside the long grassy field amongst museums and federal buildings. We were in a cul-de-sac near a super-expensive hotel and didn't get much car or foot traffic. But we did see several limos. Rumor has it that Jennifer Lopez got out of one of them.

Many of the men I've worked with over the years had second-class-status opinions of women. Our culture encourages women to take the role of second class – to serve men's sexual demands and to be household servants. I wanted to portray Charlie as someone who likes having women as second class coworkers and feels entitled to use lower status coworkers to boost his self importance.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

LISA, a Tina Fey type, glasses, late thirties, dressed Washington-professional (not Hollywood-"professional") and Charlie walk into their shared office/cubicle. Charlie puts down his briefcase, Lisa puts the camera "software box" on a shelf and goes toward her chair.

Charlie is in the way. He motions Lisa over - entice her closer so he can tell her a "secret."

CHARLIE

Why would they come to work together?  
Barry lives in the Virginia suburbs. Jane  
lives in Maryland.

LISA

Hm. Barry's wife is in Texas visiting her  
mom.

CHARLIE

No wonder Jane got a promotion. Like I  
said. A new girlfriend.

He slaps Lisa on the butt. Lisa is peeved.

## Shooting the Scene

Of course the real reason for getting Lisa to come over to him was so Charlie could get some of his own action. He wants to have what the managers take for granted.

I hope viewers of this episode caught the concept that my character was putting the camera (inside a software box) on a bookshelf and weren't wondering why I was so close to the camera that all you see is my neck. I put the camera on a shelf several times throughout *Budget Justified* to remind the viewer that this is supposed to be stealth footage of something actually happening in the office.

My husband, Randy, was the cameraperson for this scene. I think Dave felt nervous about patting my butt in front of my husband. At first I thought Randy would weird out about it. I was weirded out about it. Especially since I had told Dave to do it by writing it into the script. But Randy was cool about the whole thing. He knows I don't make big video projects for the purpose of getting someone to grab my butt.

I could've gone through a search process to find a cameraperson to shoot this scene, but I chose Randy based on one criterion: He was there. Since the shtick for *Budget Justified* is that the whole thing is captured by Lisa's hidden camera, the cameraperson didn't need all sorts of complex camera skills. And Randy was there because this office is in my house.

The desk set is a bit fancier than what you'd find in a federal government office. The entire partners desk - desktop, file drawers, bookshelves, cabinet doors - is made of sturdy wood. The walls are painted dark green. There's an occasional glimpse of white carpet, baseboards and crown molding. But it was the perfect location for shooting *Budget Justified* because didn't need to arrange for access to the location every time we wanted to shoot.

## In Real Life

Before the days of cameras in every phone, it was illegal to bring cameras to work. Perhaps because they didn't want taxpayers to be able to check up on how their money was being spent.

Though I never had a hidden video camera at the FAA nor in any contractor's office, I kept a record of what was going on in a blog I started after about a month of witnessing consistent inappropriate behavior. Because I knew my reaction to Mr. Friendly's advances was inconsistent. Sometimes I'd tell him to knock it off, sometimes I'd ignore him. I wasn't sure if a reaction, even if it was to tell him he was pissing me off, was exactly what he was hoping to get out of me. Just like some of the FAA managers got a perverse kick out of insulting their employees, Mr. Friendly thought it was funny to upset me.

I hoped that if I could understand and monitor the trend of his behavior versus mine in the blog, I'd figure out how to handle him so I could prevent becoming fearful of coming to work. Plus I wanted to have a document outlining his actions.

Like several people I've worked with throughout my life, Mr. Friendly's behavior was extremely accommodating most of the time, interspersed with occasional bullying stints. When I was in high school, I thought these people behaved this way toward me because of something I had done or something wrong with me. But as I entered college, I acknowledged that these were generally toxic people, no matter how overly-nice they acted when it was convenient.

Mr. Friendly had a knack for making me laugh. He was full of off-the-cuff jokes. He often told me about interesting things that had gone on in the office. He was always willing to tell me about office history and his version of office politics.

Our office didn't have any actual projects going on. None of my coworkers had a role they were responsible for. Thus there weren't many methods for observing office interaction other than going around the office bothering people with chit chat. Occasionally I had some data to look up, or came across a document that needed more context, so I was able to come up with legitimate discussion topics as excuses to drop by coworkers' offices.

But since I was crammed alone into the corner of our floor most of the time, Mr. Friendly's visits to my cubicle were my best source of anecdotal information. Not only was he my office entertainment, he was one of my very few knowledge sources.

## INT. LISA & BRIAN'S KITCHEN

BRIAN, a big guy in his late thirties, wearing dress shirt and tie as though he just got home from work, cuts celery on cutting board at kitchen counter. Knife block, basket of tomatoes, and another cutting board nearby.

Lisa enters, still wearing the white boucle jacket and purple silk pants she had worn to work earlier that day.

LISA

Hi Brian.

BRIAN

Hi Sweetie.

Brian looks toward the camera.

BRIAN

Oh, there's our video camera. I was looking for it earlier. Where was it?

LISA

I took it to work.

Lisa picks up a tomato and knife, starts slicing tomatoes to help with dinner.

BRIAN

Oh. Why?

LISA

There's a guy at work. Wandering hands.

Lisa wiggles hands.

Brian looks at the camera, picks up a big knife, looks it over very carefully. A good weapon if he ever needs it. He sighs and puts the knife back down.

LISA

I wanted to document what I'm going though.

Oh really? Confused look from Brian.

LISA

To be able to stand back and take an objective look at what's happening. Because sometimes I think he's hilariously goofy. Other times I am



pissed. I'm not sure how to feel about it. Or what to do about it.

BRIAN

Why don't you tell somebody?

LISA

I'm a subcontractor. I'm not in a position to go around tattling on a fed. And if I send an email to my HR, I'm lucky if I get a reply. If I leave a voice mail, I never hear back. So am I supposed to email a complaint about sexual harassment? I don't even want to think about where that might get forwarded.

## **Shooting the Scene**

What better kitchen to use as Lisa and Brian's kitchen in *Budget Justified* than Lisa and Randy's real life bright yellow kitchen? But not simply because it's in my house. As luck would have it, there's no wall between my kitchen and living room. So we can watch Lisa and Brian talking toward the camera while they prepare dinner on the speckled stone countertop, rather than a shot of our behinds while we talk at a wall.

I had Andy Kiser (who plays Husband Brian) over to shoot his scenes on a hot day in July. The scene we shot before this was outdoors. I'd been wearing a t-shirt with a pink jog bra underneath. I removed the t-shirt and we rehearsed a few times while Husband Randy set up the camera.

When Randy was ready, he turned on the camera, then Andy and I did the scene for 'real.' Except it wasn't for real. In the middle of the scene, I realized I forgot to put on the white long sleeved jacket I had worn for the previous scene. So in the outtakes of this episode, you'll see that I abruptly interrupt myself mid-dialogue by slamming my hand on the kitchen counter and announcing my faux pas, "I'm not wearing my costume."

Costume! Like I was producing some sort of Halloween movie. No real movie producer would call it a costume. I believe she'd call it 'wardrobe.'

I included outtakes at the end of each episode because not only are they fun to watch, but seeing the actors being themselves makes them seem more human. Especially me. I'm supposedly playing myself but...I'm not speaking off the top of my head. The actors are better at being someone else than I am at being myself.

Perhaps some day the whole story will be rewritten, reshot, and reedited. But by then I'll be so sick of the story, I won't want to be there.

## In Real Life

My husband, Randy, and I have more original nick names for each other than Sweetie. Of course they're too ridiculous to throw in as dialogue at the beginning of a web series. I rarely call Randy by name (and certainly never call him Brian). More likely, I'd call him Huz. To get used to the concept of being married, I started calling him Husband after our wedding in 1994. I've called him Huz ever since.

Unlike Andy, Randy's not a big guy. He wouldn't make knife jokes when telling him about office groping. I didn't want my fictional husband to seem too much like my real husband.

In *Budget Justified*, I often mention contractors and subcontractors. Like most government agencies, the FAA hires lots of contractors. Sometimes the contractors hire several subcontractors rather than employees to soak up the budget – I mean to do the 'work.' In my case, a huge international contractor hired a tiny subcontractor, or headhunter, to find me. Even though I sat in FAA offices with FAA employees, the contract between Huge Contractor and Tiny Subcontractor said I would be an 'employee' of Tiny Subcontractor for six months. After that, I was supposed to be hired as a permanent employee of Huge Contractor. Or so they told me.

'Employee' is in quotes because I had no contact with any of the other employees of Tiny Subcontractor. Tiny Subcontractor was based in another state. The managers at Huge Contractor interviewed me. I was the only person in the office employed by Tiny Subcontractor. In fact, I had never heard of Tiny Subcontractor before, was not acquainted with anyone else who had ever worked for them, and never met any of Tiny Subcontractor's other 'employees.'

Tiny Subcontractor had contacted me by email to ask if I was interested in the job. I have no idea where they found me. Some of the FAA employees and contractors in that office had known me previously. The only contact I had with Tiny Subcontractor, even after I was fired, was by phone, email, or fax. Nobody ever answered their phone, so I left voice mail. They never called back. If I wanted answers, I had to send email. I received an answer to emailed questions only twice, and I had to wait several days before getting a response.

One might wonder whether they even existed. Oh, yeah, they existed. Like the rest of the FAA and its contractors, they took taxpayer money and didn't do much for it besides shuffle the money around.

I thought that after I was formally hired on as permanent staff at Huge Contractor, I'd have official channels through which I could file a complaint – if they could be trusted, and if I had reason to believe I wouldn't be subtly punished for complaining about a federal employee. But I wasn't sure the atmosphere at Huge Contractor would facilitate such a complaint. On my first day of work, one of the Huge Contractor managers told me that the wife of one of my bosses was hot. I need that information because...?

She had previously worked in that office but stayed at home with the kids shortly after she got married. The manager didn't call her intelligent or a

valuable employee or even lovely. Instead, the adjective he chose was ‘hot.’ It struck me as a bad omen regarding the atmosphere of the office.

I didn’t trust that anyone at the FAA would handle reports of sexual harassment well either. After you watch *Budget Justified* or read the rest of this book, you’ll understand why.

At Former Employer, a subcontractor had complained about ‘sexual discrimination.’ One of the managers told me that the behavior she was complaining about should’ve been categorized as sexual harassment. English was not the complainant’s native language, so she wasn’t well-versed in the difference. Since the complaint wasn’t filed as harassment, the perpetrator wasn’t investigated. However, the woman’s subcontract was not renewed and she was ‘laid off’ a few months later. Problem ‘solved.’ She became unemployed, but the perpetrator still had a job. Thus I became very wary of reporting ‘discrimination’ to FAA contractors.

### **Lisa’s Character Blog for Episode 1**

I’m the new woman at work, been here about a month. This is my second job for an FAA contractor since completing grad school and moving my husband of well over a decade across the country. In both of these jobs, within a few weeks of my arrival a male co-worker has put their hand somewhere it doesn’t belong. Apparently the guys here think it’s normal to do that to the new women. Groom us to accept their hands on our asses.

Surely I couldn’t be the only one the Charlie has been sticking his fingers on. The whole game came way too quickly and easily for him. He must’ve practiced on others. So I’m hiding a camera in a box on my shelf – creating a video diary of what’s going on.

Of course, Charlie’s not the only one looking for action. He’s just following the lead of management. Interesting that Barry and Jane came in to work all cozy together this morning.

As the new woman, I don’t know a whole lot of people at the FAA and they don’t know anything about me. I don’t have a network of colleagues to interact with. My official FAA boss hasn’t spoken to me more than once since I started. He’s transferring to a different department soon and doesn’t care what I do. I have several other bosses, but none in charge of my work.

So I hung out with the most fun person who paid me any attention, told me the gossip of the office. Now the person I enjoy talking to the most is the person I need to be most wary of.

I’m documenting this to help me be able to look back at how my perception of the situation changes from day to day, and so that other women affected by this problem know they aren’t alone, even though nobody wants them to talk about it.

## Episode 2: Email Harassment

**The real problem with New York delays. And why does this guy keep barging into my office to talk about sexual harassment?**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

As Lisa works at her desk on her laptop, TIM, goofy, thirty-something engineer, jaded curmudgeon, rushes into Lisa's office.

TIM

Lisa! Did you check your email yet?

LISA

Yeah. Thanks for sending that, uh, colorful article.

TIM

I am so sorry. There was a cuss word.

Lisa's confused.

TIM

I was afraid you'd think it was sexual harassment. They'll fire us for sexual harassment.

LISA

Tim, it was full of quotes from the controllers. I expected there'd be more obscenities.

Tim takes a seat in Lisa's guest chair.

TIM

You know the real problem with delays. Poor morale. If New York management treated controllers like they were worth something, controllers might feel like doing their job.

LISA

That article didn't make me feel too sympathetic for them, going to Hooters

every night. How did the women  
controllers feel about that?

Tim ignores Lisa's concern and keeps talking about  
what he cares about.

TIM

The New York controllers sometimes come  
here for meetings. They're put up at the  
Four Seasons, show up in the morning hung  
over. Got kicked out of the bar more than  
once for harassing the waitresses.

Tim thinks this is hilarious and laughs himself  
silly.

LISA

So, the bars do something when their  
employees get harassed, but the  
government does nothing for the  
controllers.

TIM

No, they do. Can't talk to women. Sexual  
harassment. Management harasses the  
controllers, but controllers can't harass  
the women. Used to be their  
entertainment. Management's taking away  
all their perks.

Really?

LISA

What are the perks of my job?

Tim still doesn't pay attention to Lisa.

TIM

Management gets a lot of complaints that  
controllers are stealing each other's  
lunches. When someone steals a woman's  
lunch, it's sexual harassment.

LISA

I left a snack in the refrigerator last  
night. It was gone this morning. I was

going to blame it on the janitors. But  
no. Must have been sexual harassment.

### **Shooting the Scene**

In the outtakes for this episode, I was surprised that Kevin said a cuss word in the middle of the scene. I included it in the outtakes, but bleeped it out. Probably because I don't normally use cuss words and I'm not fond of them.

However, I'd already included a few cuss words, unbleeped, here and there in the script throughout *Budget Justified*, including something I said in the previous episode – not in the office of course. So I shouldn't have been shocked.

### **In Real Life**

We didn't get laptops at the FAA. We got three-year-old computers. And not even in the first week of work. Even though they knew weeks in advance that I'd be starting work soon, nobody bothered to make sure I had a computer to do my 'work' or to get me an email account so I'd know about meetings or anything else people were supposed to be doing in that office. Nor did they bother to get me access to the building, a nameplate for my cubicle, business cards, coffee, not even pencils. I had to supply my own pencils. People sent email to my Hotmail account. I had to call people every morning to come down and let me into the building. I would've been better off working from home.

My zucchini bread from the refrigerator really was stolen the evening before this conversation happened in real life. I blamed it on the janitorial staff because I'd been told that the janitors occasionally stole personal items during the evenings. Nobody had evidence that the thefts were perpetrated by janitorial staff. It could've been an act perpetrated by coworkers who either came early or left late. Either way, I always kept my desk locked. But not the refrigerator.

Every Wednesday evening, the female janitors barged into the women's restroom while I changed my clothes before going to meet my running group at the track. One time they even changed the toilet paper while I was relieving myself in the next stall. This involves removing a one-square-foot panel from the stall divider, leaving a gap wide enough for the janitor to stick her arm or head through. While I'm on the toilet. Creeped me out.

Yes, someone actually said "management was taking away all the perks" in response to some kind of sexual harassment training that the FAA employees went through. I don't make these *Budget Justified* conversations up. I'm not sure if he was trying to get a reaction from me, if it was his odd sense of humor, or if he was truly disappointed that sexual harassment was supposedly no longer allowed.

The guy often mentioned sexual harassment and fear of getting fired. It made me wonder if there was a pattern of people getting fired in that office. Nobody mentioned anyone specific who was fired, however they did talk about many women who 'left' that office. So... who was it that got fired for sexual harassment. The perp? Or the victim.

I wondered if the guy thought I was hired to set Mr. Friendly up for sexual harassment. I wondered if he was right. After all, I was stuck in the back corner with Mr. Friendly most of the day and I'm sure I wasn't the first woman he pawed. Perhaps the guy wanted to coax me into confiding to him about what Mr. Friendly was up to. Or he might have been trying to warn me that if I told management, I'd get someone fired. Most likely me.

I was pretty sure that Mr. Friendly had several female targets of 'entertainment' in the office. There was no reason why I'd be the only one. Even though I was the new woman, the others would've been new at one time also. So I figured Mr. Friendly had a reputation that the more seasoned women would know about.

It wouldn't have been a good idea to ask Harassment Warner if he knew of any harassment history in that office. Like most of the men there, he got along well with Mr. Friendly. I didn't know whom he'd pass my question on to, and whether someone would spin my question to make me look like a shrew.

One difference between this episode and real life is that Harassment Warner didn't tell me about the New York controllers getting kicked out of the bar at the Four Seasons, a luxury hotel in Georgetown. It was the other way around. I told him about controllers getting kicked out of the ritzy bar for being obnoxiously drunk and grabbing several waitresses' asses. The controllers showed up to a dark computer lab for tech reviews the next morning wearing sunglasses.

## **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 2**

Interesting that Tim brought sexual harassment up within the context of management taking away perks and entertainment from controllers, especially since the staff in our department also feel that their perks are being taken away one by one. Entertainment for whom? Does he think the women engineers were hired to be whores for the men? Or is he trying to be funny, attempting to entertain me.

Part of me does see entertainment value in observing (but not participating in) what the guys do behind management's back. I'm curious about what silly thing they're going to do or say next. I laugh at them, not with them.

Also interesting that Tim connected an obscenity in an article to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment hadn't crossed my mind. Poor taste, bad writing, but not sexual harassment. But they're both linked to immaturity. In settings where people don't have the self control to choose better vocabulary, they don't see a need to be professional about other aspects of their behavior.

In offices where male employees get treated poorly, they in turn treat poorly whomever in their eyes is lower on the totem pole. The women. That chain of mistreatment down the totem pole gives miserable people a sense of power.

Tim mentions sexual harassment just about every time I see him. Perhaps he knows that someone in the office has a history of sexual harassment. Perhaps he wants me to bully me into staying quiet about reporting sexual harassment. He seems to be warning me that the men refuse to work with the women who complain about cuss words and lunch at Hooters.

Now that's an institution that hires women specifically for the purpose of offering female targets to those who want to harass. It's a practice environment, which escalates to guys thinking they're entitled to women's bodies. Many of their patrons are the men who lump all women into the same stereotype. If it's the job of some women to be sexual displays, all women must surely go out in public for the purpose of competing to get violated by men. Right?

## Episode 3: Copy Man

Lisa got a Ph.D. in engineering to get a job making copies.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Closeup of Lisa's diploma. Zoom out to Lisa's desk.

### Shooting the Scene

The night before I shot this, I lamented that I had no interesting outtake footage to include at the end of this episode. Thankfully, my cat solved that problem. Although, I wasn't thankful at the time she hopped onto my desk.

The cat was getting old around the time this footage was taken and has since passed away. Now I wish I had more videos of her jumping into view unexpectedly.

### In Real Life

I included the diploma to show the audience that I earned a real Ph.D.; that the degree is not just a hypothetical degree mentioned offhandedly. I wanted to visually reinforce the fact that this is a true story, that Lisa is not a made-up character, by letting the audience see the tangible artifacts of real life.

I could've made a fake diploma. But I didn't. That's the real diploma I received in August 2000.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa's working on her laptop with her back toward the door. Charlie's sitting in his chair working on his laptop as CHERYL, thirty-something, the FAA's token



black female engineering supervisor, enters. She sneaks up and speaks too loud.

CHERYL

How's it going?

Lisa jumps in her seat.

LISA

Hi, Cheryl. I'm reading through the New York documents. Learning a lot.

CHERYL

Great. I'll let you get back to work.

Cheryl turns to leave.

LISA

I wanted to talk about that.

Cheryl turns back.

LISA

I've been reading a lot, but nobody's mentioned a project yet. I'm not sure what tangible work is expected from me.

CHERYL

You've only been here two months. Just wait for the All Hands meeting.

Lisa isn't so sure.

LISA

OK... Thanks.

Cheryl leaves.

CHARLIE

Checking up on you?

LISA

She means well.

CHARLIE

The truth is, nobody works on actual projects around here.

LISA

Just like where I used to work. Same government client, same nonprojects.

CHARLIE

We wait around for a manager to tell us to look into data and come up with numbers for whatever they're pushing that week.

LISA

Still, I can't accept that I got a Ph.D. in engineering to end up with just a job. Or that if I want to be useful to society, I have to come up with useful goals for my spare time.

Tim enters, discombobulated as usual, with a stack of paper and addresses Lisa.

TIM

Can you help me with the copy machine?

Lisa looks at Charlie, who types on his computer and doesn't acknowledge Tim. Then Lisa looks at Tim.

LISA

I've never used the copy machine.

TIM

I'll get fired if I don't get extra copies to Barry. I'd ask Yvette, but I'm not talking to the bitch. She refused to take notes for me at the New York controllers meeting.

Lisa looks at Tim. Did he really just call Yvette a bitch?

CHARLIE

Yeah, I won't talk to her unless I need her to do something.

TIM

She'd probably accuse me of sexual harassment for being in the same building as her.

Tim leaves as frustrated as he arrived. Lisa watches until he's gone, then she gets up to leave. She addresses Charlie, still staring at his computer.

LISA

Do I look like his secretary?

Let's have a look. Charlie checks out her butt as she leaves. Yep. Female. Therefore minion for his pleasure. Charlie gives the butt nodding approval.

## **Shooting the Scene**

In most of the episodes, you'll see brown papers spread out across the desks or conference table. Not only are they office props, but they're cue sheets of the script for the episodes relevant to each actor, printed in the order that the scenes were shot.

The filmmaking lesson I learned when I shot this episode was to watch people walk in front of each other while setting up the lighting. Unlike the bright yellow kitchen in the first episode, this room was filled with dark colored walls and dark woods, which are difficult to light properly.

The first several episodes were taped during an all-day megashoot. I figured if people couldn't make the shoot when everyone was scheduled to be in the same place at the same time, they couldn't be in the series. I spent the prior week sending out the relevant episodes to each actor, preparing props, designing the set and blocking (where people stood/sat/walked), and creating the schedule for the day so we could cram in as many episodes as possible.

Before the actors arrived, the cameraman brought lighting equipment and set it up. He did a great job and I didn't have to think about lighting. I had several volunteer crew members to assist with food, rearrange the set between episodes, and help the actors get ready for their scenes.

The actors came to the studio (my house) at 8:00 in the morning and took their wardrobe to the respective men's or women's dressing room (my guest bedrooms). Most actors stayed past 5:00pm. Dave (Charlie) had to leave by 2:30, so we shot all his group scenes one after another – bam bam bam – until he flew out the door to his next gig. He barely had time to eat the sandwich the crew made for him.

Since this episode had only Dave, Kevin (Tim), and myself, we shot this scene several weeks after Megashoot Day. I was on my own for lighting and camera. I had to try several lighting schemes before I discovered a trick with my

twelve-dollar halogen lights. I can't find those lights in stores any more. Perhaps they're a fire hazard.

### In Real Life

People liked to sneak up behind me in this office, whether it was Mr. Friendly creeping up to grab my butt or one of my female coworkers stopping by to make me feel welcome. My greeter silently appeared at my cubicle around 9:00am almost every day. I appreciated that she wanted to make me feel part of a team, but I never heard her coming until she bid me good morning loud enough to make me jump in my seat. I guess the carpet muffled her footsteps.

Mr. Friendly was suspicious of her, as he was of all managers and team leaders. He thought she was being anal, that she had taken it upon herself to make sure I was there by 9:00 every morning. There may have been some truth to that. She was the obedient, good worker type. Checkup Greeter was likely trying to be useful under the circumstances. She had a good attitude even though she was aware that the work environment wasn't ideal. She was just glad to have a job that took up eight hours of her day and paid her a nice upper middle class wage.

When I asked Checkup Greeter about projects, she put me off, told me to wait for the all hands meeting. Mr. Friendly and I knew that management didn't assign projects at all hands meetings, so we thought that was an odd response. She probably didn't know what else to say, hoping someone else would come up with something for me to do – although I was smart enough to come up with something myself. We'll hear about that in Episode 16, Perfect Airspace.

Checkup Greeter and another coworker said that everybody else had nothing to work on their first six months in that office either. Was that supposed to make me feel better? That's your taxpayer dollars at work. Well, I'm not everybody else.

If you haven't watched the video clip for Episode 3 yet, you wouldn't know that Sydney, who plays Cheryl, is African-American. Although several of the staff in the government office were either African-American or Hispanic, all of the FAA managers I worked with were either white or Asian. (However one of Huge Contractor's managers was African-American.) While I worked in this office, several events occurred that could've made a statement about race. But I didn't want to overload this story by incorporating too many social issues so I kept the focus on gender.

In *Budget Justified*, Cheryl could represent the 'token black manager' as well as the 'token female manager' in many government offices. In several interviews and jobs I've had, I've felt like the token female because even though I was part of the interview candidates or staff on paper, I was blown off during the interview and often ignored at meetings – if I was even notified about the meetings at all.

There was a quiet woman in the office that didn't speak to Mr. Friendly. Behind her back he called her a bitch. I wondered if he had groped her and

didn't like her reaction. I asked him, but he said he hadn't. Of course I had no reason to believe he'd tell me the truth about that.

An older new guy asked me to help him with the copy machine. My office was in a different area than his, so I couldn't figure out why he came all the way over to my office to ask about a copy machine. He could've asked one of the guys near his office. Did he think guys were too important to spend their valuable time messing with the copy machine?

That may sound like a flip question, but I believe that was the reason. A man might've been offended if he'd been asked to deal with a copy machine. Well, so was I.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 3**

Cheryl needs to feel like she's in charge of something, but she has no knowledge of my work. She doesn't have the right background or experience to do the same kind of work I do, nor the rigorous academic background to be able to supervise the kind of work I was supposedly hired to do. I almost wonder if I'm supposed to take Cheryl's response as consent from management not to do any work.

The new guys just out of college are already operating under that policy. If you ask them to do something, oh they'll make motions that look like they've started the work. But they know nobody's paying attention to what we do. If they had taken a job somewhere else, I bet they'd work their butts off to accomplish something to be a part of the team. But when management forgets they ever asked, the boys don't keep working on the task.

I don't operate that way. The taxpayers are giving up their money, expecting to get something back. If I sit around not doing any work, that's all my life will ever amount to. Sitting around. Waiting for someone else to tell me what to do. Waiting for retirement so I can sit around some more. It's sad that these enthusiastic young men just out of college are learning this kind of work ethic when they have forty years of usefulness potential wasting away.

Tim's awfully paranoid about people getting fired. Is there a history of random firings here? FAA employees can't get fired – there are laws and regulations to protect government employees from power-hungry managers trying to get revenge. But contractors, and even more so subcontractors like myself, can get fired, even if it's mainly for the purpose of amusing the management.

Did Tim really call Yvette a bitch? Sexual discrimination is a more subtle attack on women's place in the office than sexual harassment or sexual assault. With sexual discrimination, you can't tell if the reason you're being singled out or ignored is because you're a woman or if it's some other reason. But it's just as harmful to women. When women's contributions are discriminated against, women's lives become perpetually inconsequential.

## Episode 4: Flaming Heterosexual

**Is this the kind of societal environment we want to cultivate for our children's future?**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa works quietly on her laptop. There's a jar of hand lotion nearby in the background. Charlie and YVETTE, meek twenty-something engineer, end a conversation. Yvette gets up from Charlie's guest chair.

YVETTE

Merci.

CHARLIE

(See ya later.)

à plus

LISA

Bye, Yvette.

Yvette acknowledges Lisa and shyly slinks out of the office. Charlie gets up and closes the door behind her. Lisa looks at door like What's he doing.

LISA

You can leave that door open.

Charlie opens squeaky door offscreen. We hear a young Girl's voice offscreen.

CHARLIE (OS)

Hey, Barry. New employee?

Charlie returns to his desk. Barry and GEORGE, a thirty-something well-dressed yes man, stop in with GIRL, 6 years old, in a frilly pink dress, pink pigtails, holding a stuffed dog.

BARRY

The wife's sick.

LISA

I have something for her.

Lisa takes mini hardhat out of drawer, hands it to Girl. Barry and George exchange a look: Lisa's out of her mind.

GIRL

Thank you.

LISA

You're welcome.

Charlie pats the stuffed dog on the head.

CHARLIE

Who's your friend?

GIRL

Charlie Chihuahua.

CHARLIE

Charlie Chihuahua? That's my name too!

Charlie does an imitation of a happy puppy dog; bouncing, panting, playing with the little girl. The Girl laughs and pats him on the head.

GIRL

You're not a Chihuahua.

BARRY

He's good with kids because he has so many illegitimate children.

George fawns over the "joke." Lisa's stunned. Charlie stops paying attention to the girl. Barry, George, Girl leave.

CHARLIE

Flaming heterosexual.

Lisa looks at him - what's he talking about?

CHARLIE

Gotta show us proof he had sex with his wife.

What?

LISA

Like... a... used condom?

CHARLIE

No. Gross. His kid.

Lisa rolls her eyes.

CHARLIE

Wanna know what weddings are?

Lisa opens the jar of lotion and applies.

LISA

No.

CHARLIE

A flaming announcement you're gonna have sex with the same person for the rest of your life. Or until divorce.

LISA

Must be why grandma loves weddings. For the flaming sex announcements.

Charlie picks up his briefcase, ready to leave.

CHARLIE

Why'd you give Barry's girl a toy hardhat?

LISA

It's a cool toy.

CHARLIE

For a girl?

LISA

Yeah.



Charlie picks up his bag, walks toward the door.

CHARLIE

Time for lunch.

He holds out his hand to shake with Lisa. She looks at it, then shakes. He puts her hand to his cheek.

CHARLIE

Mm. Your hands are so soft.

Lisa laughs, rubs her own cheek.

LISA

You are so ridiculous.

Lisa rubs her own cheek to mock Charlie.

LISA

Ooooooh. Soft and soothing.

## Shooting the Scene

No young children were harmed in the making of this scene... Kathleen (Barry's Daughter) was very interested in watching what went on while we shot *Budget Justified*. She was the only kid there and silently watched the adults as the camera rolled. Her mom was offscreen and made sure she was out of earshot before I said "condom."

Kathleen's parents are friends of mine. I had seen her in *The Nutcracker* in a local children's theater production and thought she did a great job. Her older dance partner was too sick to perform that day, but Kathleen danced her part anyway, and didn't get scared or upset about performing in front of a huge audience, doing something differently than the way she had rehearsed it. So I asked if she wanted to be a part of *Budget Justified*.

Ted (Barry) was awesome with Kathleen. He plays a gruff character, but was really kind to Kathleen offscreen so she would feel comfortable with him onscreen. Brian (George) is a child psychologist in his day job, so he asked her friendly questions and made her feel like she belonged there.

I loved the way Brian took on the role of George in the scene, even though he didn't have any dialogue. Out of everyone who auditioned for the role of George, Brian was the one who really 'got' what it meant to be George – a yes-man, acting as though he thinks he's special because he's allowed to follow the boss around.

At some point, I decided to squirrel away my wardrobe and props from *Budget Justified*. Sometimes when going through my closets to figure out what would be better used by the Salvation Army, I'd remember which clothing was

from *Budget Justified* and put those items in a bag in my cedar closet. But sometimes I forgot.

I always had in my head that the lotion from the previous episode belonged in the bag that I kept. Probably because it was the actual lotion I used in the real life office. But I forgot about Charlie Chihuahua. He was one of those ‘Yo quiero Taco Bell’ dogs. I kept him for a couple of years, but after his voice stopped working, he lost his novelty. So I gave him away. Damn, I wish I would’ve kept him.

## In Real Life

Like most characters in *Budget Justified*, Yvette is a composite of several people, several situations. There had been several women that I worked with after moving to Washington, all under forty, who were very meek and didn’t talk to many people. Initially I figured they’d lost their self-confidence because management assigned them tedious, intern-level work. They no longer felt they were good enough to get opportunities to work on better tasks. Now I wonder if efforts to remain unnoticed were a defense against unwanted sexual attention.

At Former Employer, most people occupied shared offices. I was fortunate to have a hilarious younger woman from Cambodia as an officemate. She didn’t create any weird harassment problems.

I often suspected we were assigned to the same office because we were both female. It didn’t really matter to me. I wouldn’t have minded sharing an office with a male coworker – the vast majority of the guys were great. But it only takes one rotten apple to putrefy the whole basket of workplace fruitiness.

At the FAA, I was assigned to my own cubicle. To avoid being overheard, Mr. Friendly often invited me to a tiny conference room to gossip. He didn’t close the door at first. He gradually got sneakier about closing the door part way – to keep people from hearing us of course – then closing the door all the way.

I didn’t notice the door was closed all the way until I got up to leave. Even though he didn’t do anything unseemly behind closed doors the first time, I stopped going into the conference room with him. So unprofessional. That was something Boss used to do with Mistress. It was suspicious to me when I observed them and I wasn’t any less suspicious about Mr. Friendly’s motives.

He’d continue to beg me to come to the conference room, like a high school kid, telling me he had a secret. One time I said, “Fine. I’ll meet you in the conference room in a moment.” But I stayed at my desk. A coworker wandered into the room and asked what Mr. Friendly was doing in there by himself. I don’t know why the guy asked, but it served Mr. Friendly right.

The lotion used in my office had an obnoxiously strong fruity scent, prompting Mr. Friendly to joke about the unusual smell. Sometimes as he was leaving the office for the day, he’d give me a good-bye handshake. One time he caught me right after putting on lotion and commented on how oh so soft my hands were. Perhaps he was being ironic, praising the lotion for once, instead of making fun of my fruity scent as usual.

I don't use that lotion anymore. I have sensitive skin. Makes my hands itch.

Occasionally coworkers brought their kids to the office. I gave a toy helmet to one of the little boys. It had a little red light on it, like the penlight I loved playing with as a child. I wondered what kind of response I would've gotten from the dad had I given the toy helmet to a girl. I used another helmet-light just like it (swag from a conference) to tape this episode. When we were done taping, I gave it to Kathleen. She was thrilled to have it.

Mr. Friendly never made any remarks about flaming heterosexuals. That was actually something I had said to my hilarious Cambodian officemate when she was pregnant. I'd been thinking about events, such as Blue Jeans Day in college or the Gay Pride parade, that were about celebrating being gay. I don't care if people are gay, but I thought it was weird that anyone would make a big event out of it. People don't go around putting on Heterosexual Day. Not according to the paradigm in my head.

But as I thought about it more, I realized that people go around every day making a huge deal about being heterosexual. It's so prevalent that no matter where we go, we can't get away from the heterosexual agenda. Huge engagement rings, bridezilla weddings, showers, babies and more babies, showing off the kids, bridal magazines, ads for toys. I'm constantly bombarded with mommy this and mommy that, society pressuring every woman in their thirties to have babies lest you be excluded from the neighborhood mommy parties. We're a society of massive blue-star-flaming heterosexuals.

And if you're in your thirties and not married, you're supposed to have a wild party life in the singles scene and buy sexy this and sexy that. What about the people who are married without children? Perhaps media doesn't show people in that category because nobody has anything to market to us. Those married without children don't all have the same insecurities for advertisers to prey upon. We aren't concerned about finding someone who wants to date us nor about raising children to have the perfect childhood.

I wasn't in the office when one of the many managers made the remark about an ethnic coworker having several illegitimate children. I heard about it second-hand. But I heard it twice, so I don't think that was made up. I don't know what the intentions behind this comment were. Was the manager trying to make it feel like a Good Ol' Boys club by joking about being with many women, or was he trying to impress someone who didn't like minorities by making an ethnic slur?

#### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 4**

Too many illegitimate children. Is that Barry's socially-handicapped way of bonding with the men in the office? Perhaps it was a reference to a culture of excessive sexual harassment in the office, where men try to have sex with the women in conference rooms.

Which is probably no secret to the rest of the staff. Yet nobody does anything about it. I'm still trying to figure out a way to stop Charlie from

preying not only on me, but all the other new women who come to work here in the future.

Yvette always sneaks away when too many people are around. Perhaps she's shy because she has trust issues. I'm sure she knows she can't trust Charlie. Whom in the office can she trust? Trust no one.

It's enough to cause mental issues if one works here long enough. Control your victims by confusing them about whom to trust. Which is why the women can't tell anyone about what Charlie does behind closed doors.

## Episode 5: Too Many Illegitimate Children

**The staff act like children because the managers treat them as unwanted bastards that get in their way.**

INT. LISA & BRIAN'S KITCHEN

Lisa talks to camera in her bright, cheery yellow home.

LISA

Too many illegitimate children? Geez, no wonder the staff is hostile toward each other. Management encourages it.

I wonder if instead of being hired for my technical skills, which nobody seems to need, maybe I was hired to get Charlie in trouble. Hired for my body parts.

I bet he's causing problems for other women too. It's pretty tough to fire a federal employee. But it's easy to fire a subcontractor.

Lisa points to herself.

LISA

I'm still considered a temp for the next five months.

But what I don't understand is, why are all the new, young guys, just out of a bachelors degree, no experience, getting hired on permanently. I can't get

business cards, a nameplate for my office. They won't even give me an access card to get in or out of the building by myself.

Is it because they don't expect me to be around long enough for them to bother with getting me the stuff all the other new contractors get?

## Shooting the Scene

This scene was not in the initial *Budget Justified* script. I created this episode based on the feedback I received when I showed the movie version to a few friends and asked if the story made sense.

The movie doesn't have a blog displayed next to each scene, as do the episodes posted on BudgetJustified.com. The viewers at my first showing expressed that they wanted to hear more about what Lisa thought of the situation, rather than just watching what happened to her without seeing her reaction. I don't react much at the office because... it's an *office*. I'm trying to keep my actions professional regardless of how everyone else in the office acts. We needed to see me express my real thoughts at my home.

There are two other scenes of me talking to the camera in the kitchen – Episode 23: Four More Months, and a clip in the movie version of *Budget Justified* that appears around Episode 44: Shouldn't Lose Job Over This. It's not included in any of the episodes, so it's a bonus for those who watch the movie version.

I shot and reshot each kitchen scene several times. After watching the footage, I realized I spoke too slowly. Or I sounded mean and grouchy. Or my hair was sloppy, the lighting made shadows on my face from my glasses, etc. Then one day I broke my glasses and had to superglue them so I could reshoot this episode.

Unfortunately, the best take got cut off at the word 'contractors' because the tape ended. But I was so sick of reshooting these scenes and figured I'd never be happy with any of them. At some point after saying the same thing over again too many times, the footage just keep getting worse.

## In Real Life

After working in that office for about seven weeks, they finally gave me an access card so I could get onto the floor I worked on. Before I received the card, I left my floor only once because without the card, I had to call each of my coworkers until one of them answered the phone and took the elevator three floors down to come get me. The card kept a conscientious employee out and the unstable employees in.

It may have taken almost two months to get access to my own desk, but I never got a nameplate. Instead I stuck a printout of my name on white paper to my cubicle with a pushpin.

I wasn't allowed to order business cards either. I went to only two events where business cards would have been useful anyway. At one of the meetings, even the guy just out of college had cards to pass around. I was the only woman in the meeting and looked as though I was unprepared or not important enough to have business cards. I should've made my own cards and left out all references to Huge Contractor and FAA. I could've put 'Lisa the Unwelcome Interloper' or 'Dr. Schaefer the Unintentional Whore' and included my Hotmail email address and personal cell phone number.

After I was fired, my hypothesis was that Huge Contractor hired me through a headhunter agency, rather than as an employee, to buffer them from any legal liability if I got sexually harassed. So if they only expected to keep me for a few months, they'd have no reason to make me a nameplate or order business cards for me. If they hired me to get Mr. Friendly in trouble, they wouldn't want me to stick around once the discipline process was underway. They could easily get rid of the whole problem by firing me too.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 5**

Unfortunately, I don't think anyone in this office is strong enough to handle complaints about Charlie's behavior. They'd likely sweep it under the rug, like they do with everything else in this office. Either that, or they'd make too big a deal of it and everyone in the office will avoid me like the plague.

It's a trust issue. I don't trust the management, the management doesn't trust the staff, the staff doesn't trust each other. There's something going on here that nobody is telling me, and nobody is talking about to each other. Such as – what the real reason I was hired was. Because they certainly don't use any of the technical work done around here.

This is just a government contractor job. I've done this before, I know how that goes, therefore I expect poor treatment. A few years ago if I would've had a job that was going nowhere, I would've considered it a nightmare. And I did. After a year of fighting to find meaning in the work, I gave up. There was no meaning. Being an employee is about getting kicked around.

Being a productive citizen is about trying to find meaning. Let's hope I find meaning before I can no longer wake up from this nightmare.

## **Episode 6: Lost Baby**

Charlie's just a hurt little boy who never learned how to live with or without the women in his life.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie at their desks. A framed picture of Charlie with his wife and dog in front of their palatial house is in the background.

CHARLIE

Hey, want some chocolate?

Lisa puts out her hand, he drops silver kisses into her palm.

LISA

Thanks.

Lisa opens a chocolate and eats it.

CHARLIE

Got a whole bunch in here.

Charlie opens a cabinet and takes out a plastic bag filled with candy, shakes it. He knocks over the picture.

CHARLIE

You can have some whenever you want.

He picks up the picture, looks at it for a moment.

LISA

Generous of you.

INSERT picture of Charlie, his dog, and his pregnant wife.

CHARLIE

Have you ever wondered why there are cat people and dog people, but there aren't any bear or ocelot people?

Charlie stands the picture back up and returns the candy to the cabinet.

LISA

I happen to be a bear person.

Charlie, confused, looks her up and down. Lisa bursts out laughing.

LISA

No. My cat.

Charlie picks up his phone and speaks into it.

CHARLIE

Is this like one of those obscene phone calls?

Charlie hangs up. Lisa, still laughing, shows Charlie the cat picture on her screen.

LISA

No. I named my cat Bear. See.

INSERT picture of cats.

Lisa reaches over and picks up the framed picture.

INSERT Lisa holding picture of wife, dog, huge house. She points at pregnant wife.

LISA

Flaming heterosexual.

CHARLIE

Huh?

Lisa ignores his confusion and puts the picture back.

LISA

How's your relationship with your wife?

CHARLIE

Not perfect, but pretty good.

LISA

How many kids do you have?

Charlie picks up the picture and looks sad.



CHARLIE

That was taken a few years ago. One evening Kathy fainted and wouldn't come to. Some type of brain hemorrhage. We lost the baby.

Lisa puts the picture down, looks concerned.

LISA

I'm so sorry.

CHARLIE

Kathy almost died. I thank God every day that she made it out of the hospital OK. I don't know what I'd do without her.

## Shooting the Scene

I didn't plan what I was going to use for most of the props in *Budget Justified*. I just left out whatever I usually had on my desk – the silver laptop I carried with me everywhere, the black pencil mug covered with stars, the globe, the clear tchotchke I received for graduating from ASU with a Ph.D.

The 'briefcase' that Charlie uses is actually a binder with a handle on the spine. A clever design, I thought. I don't remember where I got that binder. Perhaps from a conference. It was great because it was smaller and lighter than a regular briefcase and held its shape better than a bag. But after we were done shooting *Budget Justified*, I didn't need it anymore. Another item I chucked into the Salvation Army bin.

You may have noticed the picture on Charlie's desk in the background in previous episodes. But you probably did not notice who was in the picture. It's not Charlie. There's no dog, and there's no wife.

The person in the picture is one of my neighbors. She came over to help me create a few props on the day before Megashoot Day. We needed this picture as one of the normal props that are always on the desk. But we hadn't shot a picture of Charlie with his 'wife' yet. So I went with my neighbor out to 'Charlie's' house, which belongs to the Fairfax County Park Authority, and took a picture of her to stick in the frame.

It's a gorgeous remodeled old farm house, probably five or six bedrooms, that was donated to the Park Authority along with all the farmland around it. The upstairs is now used as office space, the garage is for storage. The downstairs and manicured lawn are used for meetings, concerts, and weddings. It's also a polling station.

That darn picture sat on my desk for over six months, until we were finally done shooting all the office scenes. But the picture was only a minor annoyance compared to some of the props. I had my giant bookshelves stuck in the middle

of my dining room for over six months because they were too heavy to move out of the way for each shoot.

Dave (Charlie) said this was the first scene that helped him truly understand the Charlie character better. Since Charlie was a harasser, Dave originally had this cartoon concept of Charlie as some guy who creeps around the office grabbing asses. Isn't that what harassers do? I suppose men might have that cartoon concept of harassers. Because they don't experience, and rarely witness, the harassment. If they don't see it, it couldn't be happening, right?

Dave started to feel sorry for Charlie. Well of course he should. Anyone who goes around harassing others must have a miserable life themselves. Otherwise they wouldn't feel the need to make others' lives miserable.

Many of the scenes that featured only Dave and myself didn't have any bloopers. This was one of those scenes. And since it ended on such a serious note, I felt it was unnecessary to include a blooper in the internet videos for this episode.

### **In Real Life**

We're all engineers in this office. With engineer salaries. So most of my coworkers owned very nice large homes with manicured lawns. We're not a bunch of teachers eking out a salary. Your federal tax dollars are enabling us to live in luxury while we screw around and accomplish little.

Shortly after getting a new kitten whom I named Bear, I was on the phone with an eccentric coworker at Former Employer when he asked about bear and ocelot people. Had I not burst into laughter as I heard myself say I was a 'bare person,' he probably wouldn't have asked if it was an obscene phone call.

Mr. Friendly had been married for several years. His wife had a serious medical issue that resulted in a lengthy hospital stay. But she wasn't pregnant.

Mr. Friendly spoke very fondly of his wife, however, it was obvious he didn't view her as his equal. Perhaps more like a pet. I'm extremely fond of my cats, but I cheat on them every time I see another furry creature. Even the neighbor cats Bear loves to hiss at. I don't care if she sees me petting the other cats who walk through our yard. If she doesn't like it, that's her problem.

Mr. Friendly's wife's academic skills were lacking. He felt he needed to protect her from people in their neighborhood who talked down to her. Apparently he believed she wasn't smart enough to protect herself.

Although he felt it was important to protect her from his neighbors, he wasn't concerned about protecting her from himself. He had such low respect for her intellect that he thought she wouldn't figure out, or didn't care if she knew, that not only was he fooling around behind the bosses' backs, but behind hers too.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 6**

The medical complications aren't Kathy's only problem. It's as if Charlie doesn't think she's good enough to expect a faithful husband. Just like he

doesn't think I should expect a workplace without groping. To him, it doesn't matter what women think, feel, or deserve. The only thing that matters is what he feels like doing. You have to feel sorry for him in a way. He's obviously not aware of how his actions may lead him to lose his wife.

You would think a womanizer would prefer not to be married. Charlie has some level of emotional need for his wife. Although when he said he doesn't know what he'd do without her, he may have meant he wouldn't know what to do without a live-in cook and maid. He's never mentioned if his wife does all the cooking and cleaning, but he has that patriarchal frame of mind that believes women should do that for him.

It's funny that he wants to share candy, reminiscent of my childhood friends on the playground the day after Halloween. There's a "Don't take candy from strangers" component. He's trying to lure me into trusting him. But he's also like a child who wishes he had friends.

## Episode 7: What Work

*There's no work that needs to be done around here. So let's fool around.*

INT. HALLWAY

Barry opens a door and sneaks out, pretending something important is going on with his Blackberry, and closes the door quietly. He tiptoes down the hall, enters another door, peeks out and looks up and down the hallway. And closes himself inside the room.

Jane sneaks out the same first door, closes it quietly, tiptoes down the hall, enters the door Barry went into, and closes it.

Tim comes down the hall, with a stylus and a... that's not a stylus. It's a pencil. He's writing in a paper notebook.

Tim pretends not to see the whole thing. Until they're out of view. He sighs, rolls his eyes exasperated.

### **Shooting the Scene**

A women's organization that I do a lot of volunteer work for let me use their facilities for all the hallway, restroom, and lobby scenes. Damn, the doors were squeaky.

As Jane sneaks into the second conference room, Barry hooks his arm around her. I didn't even notice that until I watched the footage later!

I didn't put that SEX book (shown more clearly in the outtakes) on the shelf. We didn't even notice it sitting there until we were already shooting the scene. So when I was done taping, I couldn't resist zooming in on it.

### **In Real Life**

My office at Former Employer was across the hall from one of the computer labs. More than once I saw Boss sneak out of the lab and into a nearby empty conference room, followed by Mistress.

EXT. NATIONAL MALL

A plane flies toward the Washington Monument as though it's going to crash. As we watch for a couple of seconds, it doesn't come out the other side.

### **Shooting the Scene**

This was shot on September 11, 2008. Nobody seemed to mind that I was videotaping planes by the National Mall on this day. I probably looked like a very innocuous tourist with my ice cream stand popsicle and geeky fanny pack.

### **In Real Life**

The office I worked in was near the Smithsonian Metro station, not very far from where the footage of the monument was taken. Ironical that the tallest monument in Washington is a phallic symbol.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie enters, puts down his briefcase as Lisa works on her laptop. Charlie sits in his chair and goes about his business as though it's normal to arrive to work in the afternoon.

LISA

Where were you this morning?

Charlie avoids looking at Lisa, brushes her off.

CHARLIE

Uh. Meeting at headquarters.

LISA

About?

Charlie is shifty, evasive.

CHARLIE

Nothing.

LISA

Then why'd you go?

CHARLIE

Make it look like I'm involved. Justify  
my middle class welfare.

Lisa's confused.

LISA

Your what?

Now he acknowledges her.

CHARLIE

Government paycheck. To sit around and...

Exaggeratedly twiddles his thumbs, whistles.

CHARLIE

You gonna put it in your novel?

LISA

I don't really want to talk about the  
novel at work. It's OK if people know I'm  
writing it, but I don't want them to  
think I spend time on the novel instead  
of doing work.

Charlie looks around like she's talking about some  
other office.

CHARLIE

What work?

## Shooting the Scene

Shooting this episode was fairly straight forward. Dave was flawless, so  
there wasn't anything to use for outtakes.

## In Real Life

At Former Employer, management didn't know what needed to be done, thus much of the work we did was to make videos about aviation in hopes that upper management would be entertained by them and that the FAA management would think we were working on some kind of aviation technology. But we didn't develop the technology. We only made videos implying that we had already developed it.

The rest of the work was to make up data and charts that justified whatever the FAA had already decided they were going to do anyway. The FAA office I worked in did pretty much the same thing.

The guys at the FAA often went around saying, "What work?" Neither the staff nor the management knew what anyone was supposed to be doing. But we knew we'd get into trouble for not doing it.

I used to say that going to work was like having a mental illness. I said that in my head. Not out loud. Or maybe those were voices in my head saying that.

One of Boss's (many) managers did have a mental illness. That's the only plausible explanation for the paranoid bipolar behavior. One guy used to bring a tape recorder to our meetings because every five minutes the manager's reality changed, contradicting whatever was agreed upon earlier.

During the months I worked in this office, I wrote portions of a novel about a woman engineer during my free time. I'd been working on it for quite some time beforehand with the intention of starting a nonprofit coalition to lobby Hollywood to create a television show about a woman engineer – to do for women engineers what *CSI* did for forensic science. But after I left this job, I realized I didn't need the blessing of Hollywood to create a story about a female engineer.

I've been reluctant to glorify engineering at career day. The culture of engineering employers expects us to be cheerleaders for the profession. Yet we're attracting the wrong future employees if we pretend that engineering is for Pollyannas. We're supposed to tell young women it's fun and that we build cool stuff. But not all engineers find rewarding work – I searched for over ten years. The rest of us are just pulling a paycheck, scraping up middle class welfare, as former coworkers said when referring to our paychecks. Some economists say that using federal dollars to keep engineers employed is good for the economy, even if the engineers aren't doing any work.

We don't need passive conformists sucking up middle class welfare. We need engineers who are committed to being active reformers. Because scrambling to entertain a hundred bosses doesn't result in developing what is needed by a hundred million taxpayers. The right people with the right knowledge could do a lot to transform humanity. But it won't be done by the people who are sitting around waiting for multiple managers to tell them how to do it.

## Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 7

I look out my window at the clear blue sky, the cityscape beyond us. A train rolls by. A monument points at an airplane coming in for a landing. A boat floats on the Tidal Basin in the distance. Buses and shuttles mosey around a traffic circle. A limousine stops to let out someone who may be famous but not very important. Reminders that we are just a few cogs in the machine of society, that a bigger world lies outside of these walls that hide us from opportunities like an overprotective parent.

Too bad I don't have any real projects to work on. If I were working in a team, I could surround myself with the others on the team. They'd tell me about the office culture and I wouldn't have to pay any attention to Charlie. I wouldn't feel so isolated in our corner of the office.

What does everyone else work on around here? I've asked a few people, but nobody gives me a concrete answer. Mostly buzz-words. Which makes me think they do the same thing everyone at Former Employer did. Talk about work they don't accomplish. Repeat brilliant things someone else said or someone else wrote. Lots of talking and reading going on here. Not a lot of doing.

So I don't want to bring up my novel around here. I can imagine getting fired for working on a novel. Or at least getting subtly punished for doing so. They'll either see it as a distraction from my career, or more likely as a threat to theirs.

## Episode 8: Work/Life Balance

**Work/Life balance is OK only after management approves what you're doing during your "life" part of the week.**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Continuation of last episode's scene.

LISA

At my old job, management wanted us to list our outside activities in our performance evaluations. Said it was to encourage "work/life balance." But they tried to steer employees away from activities they weren't exactly fond of.

CHARLIE

Like the novel.

Lisa nods.

LISA

They acted like they didn't want me to publish papers I wrote for my graduate thesis. Wasn't any of their business. I didn't dare tell them I was working on a novel.

CHARLIE

But you worked for one of those places that wants to publish in journals.

LISA

That's just lip service from top management. Lower managers told their staff their writing sucked, sat on papers for months without approving release, banned us from charging company time to write company research papers. I wrote papers in my spare time.

CHARLIE

Work/life balance means they "manage" us into getting fulfillment anywhere but the office.

LISA

That's why I work on the novel. I'm not spending any more of my spare time on something to make them look good. When I'm not here, I do stuff for MY career ten years from now. But when I'm here, I do my piddly little work.

Charlie scoffs.

CHARLIE

What work?

Lisa shrugs, but is positive.

LISA

I'll think of something.



## Shooting the Scene

As I edited this scene, the monotony of staring at two people yakking from my ‘hidden camera’ annoyed the heck out of me. So I put on my fancy makeup and my superglued glasses, changed clothes, and put my camera on my tripod. Then I started the camera rolling and repeated parts of this scene to myself because nobody else was in the room. When I zoom out for the bloopers, it looks like Charlie walked out on me.

I didn’t bother wearing pants for the zoomed-in shots. In the outtakes you’ll notice I’m wearing pink shorts.

## In Real Life

Since I was hidden away in a cubicle all day, unable to get out of the building, not included in many meetings, I could’ve shown up in pajamas. Or just stayed home. I would’ve come up with better ways to improve aviation while sitting in my own back yard. But coming to the office was part of the charade. An attempt to become part of the professional community. It didn’t work.

At Former Employer, I had trouble getting technical papers approved for public release because Boss didn’t want to spend the time to read them. He didn’t get brownie points for reading my papers, thus he had no incentive to do so.

Since the papers I’d written shortly before moving to Washington had nothing to do with Former Employer, I could’ve submitted them for publication without telling management. But technical publications print the author’s employer just below the title. In good faith, I told my bosses about the papers. So of course they wanted to review the articles before submission. Or so they said. Getting them to actually read the articles was like asking a cat to go for a walk. It might happen eventually.

After I published a few conference papers, Former Employer reorganized and assigned me to a department with managers who were micromanaged. Boss was told to closely monitor my papers. He seemed to take that as a warning not to acknowledge responsibility for the approval of anything I wrote. He told me to get other people to review my papers and claimed my writing was so bad that he sent me to a remedial writing class. He didn’t realize I’d been known as one of the best writers in grad school, often consulted by other students for writing advice.

Management told me to take one of my more important papers to the company’s publications department to be proofread. The proofreader sat on it for two months. She was never in her office and the lights were always off.

I had a lot of respect for her boss. He had a strong work ethic and got along with everyone. Since I hadn’t seen the proofreader for weeks, I asked her boss what was going on. She returned my paper within a week.

Shortly thereafter, the proofreader and one of her colleagues, who had also been missing for weeks, were fired.

### Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 8

Normally I don't like to hide things from anyone. I need to be myself. But I've found that some people, rather than concentrate on making their own work stand out, spend their efforts spinning coworkers' activities into something threatening. Brownie points are given for tattling.

So I can't go around bragging about my novel. I need to talk about working on work. If management thinks I'm concentrating on my novel, they may nick me in my performance review, claiming that I'm not spending enough time doing work. Even though nobody is pressing for me to get anything done. Or they might give me months of tedious intern-level work, like my last employer did, to keep me from using my higher-level creative skills and from having spare time to work on my own ideas.

Since none of my managers are too concerned about making sure I'm doing productive work, I spend my time learning about what others are working on, what top leadership thinks we're supposed to accomplish, what the goals of this office are. But most of all, regardless of what others say, I need to find out what would actually be useful to accomplish. Because nobody has told me about anything that has any tangible benefit.

### Episode 9: Town Hall

**Lisa's goes to listen to top management's pretty words.**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie is at his computer. Lisa, wearing a yellow jacket, stands up, picks up her black Society of Women Engineers bag.

LISA

I'm going to the Town Hall meeting. You coming?

CHARLIE

Already went to headquarters this morning. Me 'n Tim are gonna watch it on the computer.

LISA

I think it would be more interesting to observe what really goes on. Not just what they want to show you on camera.

CHARLIE

I'll pass.

Lisa leaves.

### **Shooting the Scene**

I had to make sure I was wearing the same thing in this clip that I wore to the real life meeting. Or at least the same color, which was 'celadon' according to the label on the jacket. Good thing I still owned the same jacket. Not that I planned on ditching all my work clothes less than a year after I got fired.

### **In Real Life**

Of course, the subtle reference to 'what really goes on' is not referring to something happening in the auditorium while the FAA shows something else on the web broadcast. Nor is it referring to something deceptive happening on the broadcast.

The overt meaning was that I wanted to listen to the buzz in the room, the side conversations that don't get included in the broadcast. The veiled reference is that the bureaucratic words do not reflect what's really going on in the agency. I hope this book clarifies to the viewers 'what really went on' while I worked in this office.

There's some irony in that what I show in *Budget Justified* is all that the world gets to see. The viewers weren't in the office to see the real Mr. Friendly grab my ass, the boss accusing him of having illegitimate children, or the boss sneaking around with his female staff in conference rooms. They only see what gets put in the video.

### **INT. AUDITORIUM**

Edited from Department of Transportation video of an actual FAA Town Hall meeting in October 2007:

Pan over the audience, hundreds of people packed in, as they all applaud. You can clearly see Lisa, wearing the yellow jacket, right in the middle of the audience. The very center of the screen is brightened so you can see her better. To make it even more obvious that she's there, Lisa's name is above, with an arrow pointing at her.

FAA Administrator MARION BLAKEY at a podium on stage. A large US flag, Department of Transportation flag, and FAA flag stand on poles behind her.

BLAKEY

Thank you for joining us.

Ten years in the making: New York/New Jersey airspace redesign. Critically important. As you know, it's a major technology and a major workplace transition.

But picks and chainsaws aren't usually what you think of as the tools of aviation.

Keeping up with technologies as only an agency like this one can.

The need for science and math education for our children. Our education program is building a real bridge to the future. And it's making sure that our children can be part of what we know are exciting opportunities in aviation.

I've been impressed by the knowledge, the passion, the perseverance I see in every corner of this agency.

The FAA is delivering a superlative result for the taxpayers on their investment.

I think almost all people want to make a difference. It's a place where things happen. Where people push for excellence. And sure, I'll miss the excitement, the intellectual curiosity, the energy, the satisfaction of knowing that what we do matters in the lives of Americans every day.

Pan over the audience applauding again, Lisa still in the middle with her name above.

Question time. In a view from a camera at the back of the auditorium, an FAA EMPLOYEE asks a question at a microphone, with Blakey on stage in the background.

## FAA EMPLOYEE

The employee attitude survey scores aren't so great. So I'd like to know about your plans to improve it.

Medium shot of Blakey at the podium with flags.

## BLAKEY

You know, you're right. They aren't that great and we've struggled with those scores for a long long time. We can do more.

And yes, have we had budget constraints that have meant that we couldn't do everything that we'd like in terms of financial rewards, of course we have. I mean I think a great many of them just like to be told you've done a great job.

There's a fair amount in that survey that says managers, you know, are not living up to what employees expect and want.

The communication, the leadership skills...

**Shooting the Scene**

Obviously, I didn't shoot the footage of the Town Hall meeting. The FAA created the video. I merely edited it for the parts I found interesting or relevant.

**In Real Life**

As you can see in the video, I attended the administrator's speech. So, this episode IS real life. I didn't plan to be right in the middle of the screen as the camera person the audience. At the time this meeting happened, I didn't even have any reason to think I'd use this video later. Or even watch it. But I'm grateful I was visible in the audience. Thank you Mr. or Ms. Cameraperson.

The New York/New Jersey airspace redesign that the administrator mentioned is one of the projects I worked on at Former Employer. Ten years in the making indeed. Ten years of pretending the FAA was doing something about it.

I didn't want to bore you with the entire hour long video, so I pared it down to only scant highlights. I kept most of the administrator's speech in the order it was given. The order didn't affect the meaning much... except for the part about picks and chain saws. The administrator was referring to work done to recover

from Hurricane Katrina. But in this agency, it was also appropriate for “keeping up with technology as only an agency like this one can.”

Part of the reason I included the video is that I wanted to show I was at the FAA and the FAA created proof of it. I also wanted you to hear the pretty words the appointed politician/managers say and how those words differ from reality.

The FAA video was available to the public on the web from 2007 through 2009 at [http://videoontheweb.faa.gov/aoa\\_interviews/2007\\_Interviews/aoa-town-hall-2007.aspx](http://videoontheweb.faa.gov/aoa_interviews/2007_Interviews/aoa-town-hall-2007.aspx) but is now accessible only through government employee login. However I wouldn't be surprised if they take it down.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 9**

Interesting that one gentleman in the auditorium asked about the results of the employee satisfaction survey. Or perhaps it is more interesting that the survey elephant in the room wasn't mentioned in the speech in the first place. I doubt that Marion Blakey and her speechwriters believed nobody would bring it up. Nor that nobody was thinking about it.

I'm glad I went to this meeting. I got to talk to the people around me and saw a few coworkers from Former Employer. Being there made me feel like I was a part of the agency's main activities. Having an office several blocks away in a rented building can sometimes feel like you're disconnected from everything that goes on at headquarters.

I wonder what the administrator thinks, “Keeping up with technology as only an agency like this one can,” means. I think that means the agency is full of fogeys that don't want to keep up. Has she seen the technology that her agency uses? Is she aware of how it compares to what modern technology can do?

Strange that the administrator said the agency can't give people bonuses, and that people really just want to be told that they've done a great job. Yet the managers, who will still get bonuses this year, aren't living up to expectations, and there's no leadership or communication. And she still claims that the agency is delivering a superlative result on the taxpayers' investment.

When she mentioned the passion in every corner of the agency, she must have been referring to Barry and Jane sneaking off into every corner. Or Charlie dragging women into every corner.

With a woman as the administrator of the agency, you'd think that the FAA would've become a better place for women to work by now. I cringed when she talked about the educational program for exposing children to the exciting career of aviation. I don't want to expose children to this kind of 'excitement.' I fear for them.

## Episode 10: Lip Service

Now that we heard all the pretty words from top management, let's gossip about what we really think.

INT. AUDITORIUM

Continuation of what was edited from FAA Town Hall meeting:

FAA FRIEND, an outgoing woman (who happened to have had a cubicle next to me in FAA offices) stands at a microphone, addressing Administrator Blakey.

FAA FRIEND

I have twenty-five years in the agency, and I can honestly say that you're the first administrator that really cares.

I was one of the few that got to work during Hurricane Katrina, so I was witness to the long hours you were putting in. Because very often I was following you into the parking lot, and sometimes I got to leave a lot earlier than you did. And I was working 12 to 14 hours.

So having the opportunity to work with you, like two weeks after you arrived in our agency, and not only wanting to be in the talent show by saying a few remarks, you participated. And you weren't afraid to make a fool of yourself with the...

FAA Friend makes circular motions with her hand. The entire audience erupts in laughter.

FAA FRIEND

Bells on your rear end.

The camera goes back to Administrator Blakey.

BLAKEY

Someone with more talent is gonna be there.

The camera goes back to FAA Friend.

FAA FRIEND

While we may not have always agreed with the decisions that you've made - to hear one word: NATCA - to say that, you know, they're upset. You'll be one of the best administrators in history.

Pan over the audience applauding again. A somewhat closer shot of Lisa. She's chatting with the guy next to her.

BLAKEY

Thank you very much.

The camera goes back to Administrator Blakey.

BLAKEY

I do remember the talent show awfully well where all my talent consisted of was having a set of bells on my backside.

We can wrap it up, guys, Because...

Footage of the audience laughing. Lisa is highlighted on the right. Hear that obnoxious nasal "Hyehhaaaa" laugh that stands out from the rest? That's Lisa.

BLAKEY

I'd hate to think where this would go from there.

Audience applauds.

### **In Real Life**

The woman in yellow (FAA Friend), making the comments at the end of the Town Hall meeting, is one of the many women who left this office shortly after I began working there. She's a former air traffic controller. Based on the conversations I heard over the cubicle walls, she was smart and confident. She had opinions about what needed to be done and how to get things done.

In person, she's not brown-nosy, however in the video she gushed more than I would've expected. Her intent may have been to add some professional courtesy, to have the administrator leave with a positive impression of the staff, to counter some of the complaints of the previous questions.



But I think it goes a bit deeper than that. As a former female controller, FAA Friend felt that NATCA, the air traffic controllers union, expected the FAA to coddle the controllers and that NATCA was a roadblock to real progress. Unlike previous administrators, Marion Blakey was tough on the union and didn't cave to their outrageous demands. FAA Friend respected Marion Blakey for standing up to NATCA.

Without that context in the video, FAA Friend comes across as though she's part of the culture that rewards kissing up to managers. Which is an accurate view of how federal government culture works. At Former Employer, even the guys at the top of the food chain who had been there over twenty years and had been promoted several times, lamented that they no longer knew what the criteria were for promotions.

"Promotions are given to whomever walks past the managers' offices the most," I told them. They said there was a lot of truth in that.

The promotions seemed random, except of course the promotion of Mistress. She was seen walking not only past managers' offices but in and out of their offices from behind closed doors as well. She was also seen sneaking out of hotel rooms with FAA employees.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie and Tim are chatting. Lisa returns, they talk at her. She half-pays attention.

TIM

Saw the administrator's talk on the intranet. Full of shit.

CHARLIE

Lip service.

TIM

Blaming a shortage of engineers for the lack of progress this year.

CHARLIE

What the hell is the organization doing with the engineers it's got?

TIM

A little of this...

Tim pretends to pick his nose.

TIM

And a little of this...

Tim sticks his butt at Charlie and scratches it.

Lisa opens her laptop and ignores them.

CHARLIE

And what was that bull about a "new" mandate for New York design?

TIM (to Lisa)

Your former employer was supposed to do that. Worked on it for ten years. You know what they came up with?

No answer from Lisa. Tim makes a big zero with both hands.

TIM

Big fat zero.

All they did was make a bunch of videos that said the government should come up with a plan. Then they got more federal dollars to avoid coming up with a plan.

Aha. Now Tim's got Lisa's attention.

LISA

I worked on that project. You know what the goal was, don't you?

TIM

Yeah. There wasn't one.

LISA

To get as much money out of the government as possible. Unlimited budget. Everyone charged to it.

TIM

I see... If they had fixed the problem, the unlimited money would stop flowing in.

CHARLIE

Now those meeting notes make sense. I wondered why they charged designs over California to the New York budget.

TIM

Part of the reason nothing was done in ten years is that the union doesn't want change.

CHARLIE (to Lisa)

Several years ago, the union argued to Congress on behalf of your former employer. Got them a bunch of funding. Now they do anything the union says.

TIM

And if the union doesn't want them to come up with a plan, they won't come up with a plan.

## **Shooting the Scene**

Kevin (Tim) kept reading from his script. It was distracting to me while I was acting, but upon watching this episode, I decided that worked well. Tim's the kind of guy who looks at the desk while he's talking.

If you watch the video, you'll see that Kevin ad libs a few things. I thought it was hilarious that instead of picking his butt, Kevin pulls on his ears and plays with his manbreasts.

## **In Real Life**

When I got back from the town hall meeting, Mr. Friendly complained about how it was all lip service. Blakey's a politician. Lip service is her job. Honestly, I thought it was a fine speech. Sure a lot of it was bull, sort of a pep talk, although I doubt it made many employees feel all that peppy.

Blakey took on the position of FAA Administrator when no one else would. The FAA is such a messed up agency that President Bush had a very difficult time finding someone to replace Blakey's predecessor. Some pundits said it was because the position of administrator was like the CEO of a corporation, but CEOs make thousands of times more money, therefore potential candidates would take corporate jobs instead. However the same could be said of any elected or appointed federal government position. And those jobs have no shortage of candidates. Because they can get lucrative lobbying and speaking contracts when their term is up.

Former Employer used to hire ex-controllers to travel around the US to go out drinking with currently-practicing controllers. On days when the ex-controllers came in to the office, they'd show up at a few meetings, but didn't contribute a whole lot. They generally didn't report back on what happened out of town to the rest of us; several of them didn't have strong briefing skills anyway. Tangible work wasn't expected of them.

One time as I waited for a brief paper I had written to emerge from the vacuous mouth of our department's printer, a stack of printouts over an inch thick slowly crawled out instead. The first sheet in the stack revealed who spammed the printer – an ex-controller who had an entire empty office dedicated to him. He didn't bother to keep anything in there since he was in the office only about once a month.

The hundreds of white paper tongues that stuck themselves out at me one at a time described restaurants and golf resorts in other US cities, castles in Germany, golf resorts in France, and other tourist information. When waiting proved futile, I left the printer room and stopped by a coworker's office. "What job does Harry do for our department?" I asked.

My coworker responded, "Did he leave his printouts in the printer again?"

In this episode, Charlie and Tim mention several things that long-timers have mentioned to me over the years of my FAA contracting work. Such as the union arguing to Congress on behalf of Former Employer and airspace designs over California getting charged to the New York/New Jersey airspace redesign.

When I worked on the New York/New Jersey airspace redesign, The FAA tasked us with analyzing different designs around New York. There was always congestion around New York, especially during summer thunderstorms.

The project had dragged on for ten years with no solution. From what I could tell, the whole thing was a political game among controllers from New York Center, Cleveland Center, Washington Center, and Boston Center. Their goal was to make sure nothing changed. So they'd keep coming up with more designs to analyze because they didn't want us to finish the project. They didn't want a recommendation to make anything happen differently than the way it's always been done.

And Former Employer was more than happy to comply. The task leaders told us to keep analyzing more designs, charging more hours to the New York project, because it meant more money for the company. We were enabling the controllers' political game. This doesn't strike me as a good long-term business strategy. Because when upper management at the FAA looks back on what was accomplished, if the answer is Not Much, they aren't going to come back to us to help them solve future issues. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe that's exactly the kind of contractor the FAA wants.

Several people in the FAA office complained to me about how Former Employer spent ten years on the project and came up with nothing except to ask for more money to keep doing nothing. The sad thing is that the staff at Former Employer spent long hours, sometimes eighty hour weeks, building computer models of all these options that nobody was seriously considering.

The task leaders had more power, or more potential for promotion if they said a lot of people reported to them. Since someone at the FAA in charge of doling out funding considered the New York project very 'important,' there was no cap on the budget. Therefore, management encouraged the staff to charge hours to the New York budget, sometimes even if the task was not obviously related to New York. They had to make up tasks to keep people on the project.

The more hours charged, the more money the company brought in, and the more brownie points the managers would get from the company vice president.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 10**

One good thing about Marion Blakey is that she didn't let the union walk all over her. Which is unusual for a government administrator to do, since they aren't responsible for corporate profits. What difference does it make to her if she gives the union anything they ask for?

Unfortunately, the union still makes a lot of our efforts meaningless. We work to improve technology to make their job easier and more efficient. They fight against anything that changes the way they've always done their job, or anything that would alleviate the 'shortage' of controllers.

It's in the union's interest to support policies that require hiring more and more controllers. It means more dues, more power. If we make their jobs easier by automating part of their tasks – the part that computers do quicker and more accurately than humans – then we don't need to hire as many controllers. The union will never go for that.

Some say that privatization would solve the problem of lazy controllers. But whether they work for Big Government or Big Business is not the issue. The issue is accountability, rewards, and performance measures. And both Big Government and Big Business are known for embracing incentives that encourage bad behavior.

Unions used to be part of the solution. Now they're part of the problem. Union executives advocate on behalf of themselves, not the members they represent, with the mantra that improvements are harmful to employees. Who is advocating on behalf of the taxpayer? Certainly not the FAA managers.

I'm not surprised that neither Charlie nor Tim were interested in going to the auditorium to participate in the talk. They're not into participating, doing, improving, or changing. They're into sitting on the sidelines and complaining about what they see, without trying to develop solutions. Perhaps they've been here too long, and have seen what happens when someone tries to come up with solutions.

### **Episode 11: Grab Behind Tim**

What does management do with our work? Stick it up each other's butts.

INT. TIM'S OFFICE

An old computer monitor, and a big messy pile of folders and newspapers everywhere. You can't even see the desk. Maps all over the walls. Tim types on his computer, engrossed in whatever is on the monitor, facing away from the camera.

Lisa and Charlie stand behind Tim, back to the camera, watching Tim's computer screen.

TIM

Trying to get this to add up delays for last month. We pay contractors to tell us lies. Especially your (nods to Lisa) former employer. I don't need to buy lies. I can make up my own.

Tim types.

TIM

Now let's enjoy this expenditure of CPU.

Tim continues to stare at the computer in front of him. Charlie grabs Lisa's butt behind Tim's back. Lisa moves away.

LISA

What did Barry want you to do with these new performance measures?

Charlie moves with her and does not remove his hand until Lisa does it for him.

TIM

Count New York delays.

LISA

I mean, what happens with the results?

TIM

I think the managers show each other the charts we make.

Charlie grabs Lisa's butt again. Lisa removes his hand.

LISA

But what do they DO with the charts!

TIM

That's it.

Charlie moves his hand toward Lisa's butt, but she sits in the closest chair.

LISA

C'mon. What do they do about the counts?

CHARLIE

They can't do anything about the counts.  
They just need to have something to show  
when they go to their manager meetings.

### **Shooting the Scene**

This was a funny set to 'design.' Basically, I took everything out of my file cabinet and dumped it onto the desk. The point was to cover the furniture so you couldn't tell it was the same exact desk that Lisa and Charlie use. Then I got some maps that my husband brought home from work and taped them haphazardly on the walls so you couldn't tell we were in the same room as Lisa & Charlie's 'office.'

It worked. Several people who critiqued *Budget Justified* had asked why Tim got such crappy furniture when Charlie and Lisa had a nice office. I had to explain that the furniture wasn't the difference. Tim's office *was* Charlie and Lisa's office. The same sturdy wooden desk and cabinets, the same walls. The difference was that Tim was a slob.

We did one long close-up of Dave continually grabbing my rear. I think he was starting to feel embarrassed because he made a comment that there's only so many ways he can grab my butt. But he did a good job of it this time. At previous shoots, he barely got near me, but this time, he really grabbed. I told him he had to. He needs to look like some type of a threat to me, otherwise people would think nothing happened worth getting disturbed about. People would wonder why I bothered to go through the effort of making a movie about it.

You'll notice that in the video clip for this episode, what Kevin (Tim) says regarding the CPU isn't quite what was in the script. Kevin may have felt that the wording didn't fit with Tim's character. He may have been right.

### **In Real Life**

The comment about enjoying expenditure of CPU was made by a brilliant, eccentric European gentleman at a software training course a bunch of us went

to the week before I got fired. Since Tim's character is neither brilliant, enthusiastic, nor foreign, that line comes across much differently than it did in real life.

There were three guys at the FAA who organized their offices so horribly, you couldn't walk in without tripping over a stack of stuff. I couldn't understand how they ever made it to their own chair. I never saw them sitting in their offices, so perhaps their chairs were superfluous. But if you asked them for a document, they knew exactly where to find it under the piles.

One of the guys often complained about Former Employer giving them lies in exchange for large contracts. "If I wanted lies, I'd make up my own," he'd say to me.

He'd probably complain publicly after *Budget Justified* comes out, except he'd be paranoid that he'd get fired. Which is the third concern he used to bring up over and over. Sexual harassment, lies, and getting fired. There must've been a reason he talked about those three things so often.

At the FAA and at Former Employer, I often (politely) asked about what was done with the charts and the results we created. Nobody seemed to know. One day while a coworker showed me more charts, Mr. Friendly came up ostensibly to look at the charts. Instead he kept grabbing my rear. As the new woman in the office, I certainly did not want to make a scene by yelling, "Keep your hands off my ass!" Someone would've asked, "So, what were you doing that made him touch your ass?" and wouldn't have accepted "Nothing" as an answer. If I had said, "Looking at charts," someone would've told me I shouldn't have been looking at charts.

Since there were no immediate repercussions, he kept putting his hand on my backside, no matter how hard I twisted his hand as I moved it away from where it didn't belong. He didn't care if there would be future repercussions.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Lisa and Brian eat dinner at their patio table. Porch swing behind them. The sound of thunder and rain in the background.

BRIAN

What did they say you were supposed to do at sexual harassment training?

LISA

They don't have sexual harassment training for subcontractors.

BRIAN

Ask someone what you should do.



LISA

Who?

BRIAN

Well, who's your boss?

LISA

I don't know.

BRIAN

I think that's something you should know.

LISA

I have about nine of them. And none of them are responsible for my work.

BRIAN

Say something to that woman that checks up on you every morning.

INSERT Cheryl sneaking up on Lisa.

LISA

Cheryl can't even do anything, like when people who tell her they have no work to do. She might even blab to people who'd make my life miserable.

BRIAN

Sounds like it's already miserable.

Lisa nods.

LISA

It's upsetting that I can't have a normal relationship with my coworkers without worrying about whether I'm going to get groped each day.

BRIAN

Just avoid him.

LISA

Like don't show up to my office? Go running screaming into the night whenever

he comes near? Then who are they going to call the bitch.

Lisa points to herself.

LISA

I'd have no one left to talk to.

BRIAN

OK. Easy for me to say.

LISA

When they hired me on through a subcontractor, basically a temp firm, something about that struck me as suspicious.

BRIAN

What are you saying?

LISA

The easiest way to get rid of the problem would be to get rid of me.

## **Shooting the Scene**

This scene is just like something I'd do. No break for dinner. Instead schedule dinner as part of the job.

We had everything set up on my deck in the back yard because it was a hot day and the sun was beating on the front porch. I wanted to have scenes outdoors because I hate being stuck inside an office or even in my house when I can do my work just as well at an outdoor café or on my deck. Just as we began to shoot this scene, it started to rain, so we moved to the front porch. Luckily we had already shot the upcoming scenes where we trim the bushes in the front yard, walk in the forest, and get on a bus.

The rain worked with this scene. That's real thunder in the background. We had considered having a barbecue, but decided against it because we didn't want to deal with the smoke. Glad we didn't bother setting up the grill.

## **In Real Life**

I never had a discussion with my husband on the front porch about this while eating dinner. But at least I knew I could trust talking to him about the situation, unlike the rest of my coworkers.

I didn't want to upset my husband about something he wasn't a part of, something I hoped would go away on its own as quickly as it started. So I played down the seriousness of the situation when talking to him while I was

still employed there. Even though there was nothing he could do about it, I wanted him to be aware that something was going on because I knew I'd have to do something about it eventually.

### Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 11

I tell Charlie that I don't like it when he grabs me. He tells me he's sorry, he knows he shouldn't be doing that. Then he grabs me again later, as though he needs to get in the last word. To show me he doesn't take orders from me. A power game. He wants to make sure I understand that women have no voice around here. What was all the talk about being sorry? Lip service.

If I've got to work in the same office as this guy and his friends, I can't be hostile. I mean, if they call women as meek as Yvette a 'bitch,' imagine what I'd become known as. I don't really care if anyone calls me names, but if coworkers brand me as being undesirable to work with, I'll become 'politically dead,' or even more powerless in this office. Nobody would pay attention to the serious work I do. So I have to play it cool. Be personable, sympathetic, without being encouraging. Unfortunately, it doesn't take much to encourage this guy. He takes standing in the same office as him as encouragement.

No professional woman wants to call attention to anything that goes on in the office that makes her appear cheap. But I can't get work done if I'm focusing most of my mental efforts on hiding from harassers. I can't get to know coworkers and the managers won't learn about my work if I tried to hide myself from the office.

Based on how past grievances in the department have been handled, I don't trust that they'd take care of the situation if I reported Charlie. Shoot the messenger. I have to handle it myself. I'm a subcontractor. I can't make waves. They'd get rid of me because they can.

### Episode 12: Don't Pat My Head

*If we can't control ourselves, we can at least try to exert control over each other.*

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Yvette sits next to Charlie in his guest chair. Tim walks backwards toward the door as he talks to Charlie.

TIM

OK. I'll get the golf passes.

Lisa enters, holds her arm up just as Tim's back bumps into her. He jumps in surprise.

Lisa pats Tim on the head. Annoyed, he leaves. Lisa sits and Yvette leaves. Charlie checks out her rear.

George enters.

GEORGE

I heard you worked on the New York project at your previous job.

Charlie gets up and leaves.

LISA

Sure did.

GEORGE

Did you actually get into the code?

LISA

Sure. I programmed it to simulate six different delay propagation scenarios.

GEORGE

Really? That's exactly what we need. Would you be able help us with that?

LISA

Of course.

GEORGE

You sure? They're always taking people off the New York project. I can't be spending months training people just to have them leave a week later.

Lisa looks concerned, confused.

LISA

No training necessary. I know the code inside and out.

GEORGE

Great! I'll set up a meeting so you can brief the managers.

Tim enters as George leaves.

TIM

Don't pat my head. That bothers me.

LISA

Whatever.

Lisa leaves.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Originally, I didn't have Charlie checking out Yvette's rear end written into the script. And since I wasn't looking at him, I didn't know Dave (Charlie) had done so until I reviewed the footage. Of course he's going to look at her butt! That's who Charlie is.

We had to shoot that head-patting so many times. The first time we shot this, Kevin (Tim) and I bumped into each other just as Laura (Yvette) walked in front of us. You couldn't tell what had happened in the confused jumble of three people colliding into each other. In the next several takes, I crossed behind Kevin. He is a lot taller than I am; you could hardly tell I was in the room.

I didn't know how bad it was until after everyone had gone home and I reviewed the tape. I couldn't use any of those first takes, so the next time Kevin came over to shoot some scenes we reshot the head-patting. Neither Laura nor Dave were present, so we zoomed in and got a close-up. You can certainly tell what's going on now. Our big heads take up most of the screen.

### **In Real Life**

This episode is a reenactment of the time an FAA task leader asked me to help with some software he needed to modify. Unbeknownst to me, someone had emailed around the office several technical papers I had written. I'm not sure who sent them or why they didn't mention it to me. Anyone would've considered it a compliment to have their work shared throughout the office, so there was no reason why the papers needed to be passed around behind my back. Honestly, I doubt there were any sneaky intentions behind emailing my work. Rather, it was an indication of the lack of communication throughout the department.

Upon reading my technical papers, the task leader found out I had experience with programming the guts of the software he needed help with. He asked me to make the same modifications to the software that I had already done for Former Employer. Since I had no access to the code I had previously written, he wanted me to start from scratch, working on a 1970's version of the code that he owned.

The 1970's software project was unrelated to the New York project – the New York project had the opposite problem. Instead of having everyone being

taken off of the New York project, managers put everyone *on* the New York project. Because of the unlimited budget, of course.

I didn't know what to think when the manager told me a lot of people were taken off of his software project. When I asked why people were being yanked from his team, he told me about a woman contractor who had worked in that office for only nine months before getting transferred to a different client.

"Why did she leave?" I asked.

He responded, "She was disappointed in the work we do in this office."

Yeah, I was disappointed too. But based on my previous experience with the FAA at Former Employer, I had already known it would be disappointing. Is it still called disappointment when you already had low expectations?

Later I asked another coworker why Nine Month Woman had left. "She wanted to telecommute to spend time with her kids," he told me.

I'm not sure why different coworkers gave me different stories. One story sounded like she had bigger career expectations, the other made it sound like she had mommy expectations. I found out later that she has a Ph.D. in math and went on to start her own company.

One of my coworkers had retired from the FAA and was subsequently hired by Huge Contractor. Several months before I was hired, Retired Guy was taken off all projects for the FAA office I was working in, without explanation. Nobody in the office could figure out why the FAA manager didn't want Retired Guy working on his projects anymore. All the managers said he was doing great work. I'm sure that was exactly the problem. The results of Retired Guy's analyses was often proof of some truth that FAA management didn't want to hear.

One evening I went to speak to one of the managers after most people had gone home. On my way, I walked past the office of a smart, quiet coworker with whom I got along well. He was in his cubicle with his back toward me. I wanted to quietly let him know I was still there because I wanted to talk to him after I finished my discussion with the manager. Waving wouldn't work, because he wasn't looking toward me. So instead of disturbing the silence by speaking a greeting, I tapped my coworker. After I finished my discussion with the manager, I went back to find Patted Head, but he'd already left for the day.

The next morning as soon as I entered the office, I saw him chatting with a few of our coworkers. In front of them, Patted Head told me, "Don't tap on my head."

Why did he say that to me in front of others? It felt like he was trying to show authority over me for the others to witness. Some people I've worked with talked down to women in front of coworkers often. Made them feel like they had underlings.

So I blew off Patted Head and walked away.

As I walked away, it occurred to me that Patted Head wasn't the macho power-trip type. He was merely mentioning something to me upon our next encounter. I appreciated that he felt our working relationship was important enough to say something to me if it bothered him, and that he had felt

comfortable saying something directly to me rather than tattling to management. That would've made both of us look childish.

INT. TIM'S OFFICE

Tim's at his desk, loafing. Lisa knocks, enters.

LISA

Tim, can I talk to you?

TIM

Sure.

Lisa enters and sits in.

LISA

I'm sorry about patting you on the head.

TIM

No problem.

LISA

I shouldn't have blown you off when you said you didn't like it. I thought you were trying to show George you have some authority over me, trying to tell me how to behave.

TIM

No. Just don't like being patted on the head.

LISA

Sometimes people control others' puppet strings to make themselves feel powerful.

I just wanted you to know that I'm glad you felt comfortable saying something to ME about it.

TIM

They'd probably fire me if I tattled about someone tapping my head.

LISA

Where I used to work, task leaders called their staff every hour - staff who had

PhDs and good salaries - and told them stuff like, "Go open twenty files and save 'em in a different format." Just to feel like they had control over something.

TIM

Around here, nobody has control.

## **Shooting the Scene**

For one of the takes, I flubbed my lines and said "power over something" instead of "control over something." Kevin (Tim) caught it and said, "Around here, nobody has power over anything." I was glad he had the presence of mind to catch that.

Sometimes while I'm acting, I don't feel present enough in the situation to hold a conversation. I'm concentrating on saying lines with emphasis. I suppose if I had more experience acting, I'd go with the flow of the conversation and say whatever feels natural for the topic. Going into this project, I thought I'd be the most authentic person to portray myself. But in hindsight, I wonder if an actor would behave more like me than I act like myself.

## **In Real Life**

Later in the day, after Patted Head announced that he didn't want me to tap on his head, I went to his office to apologize for blowing him off. I considered him a valuable colleague and a reasonable friend - rare in that office - so I felt it was important that he felt he could approach me without worrying about whether I would dis him.

Patted Head occasionally told me interesting things about his personal life. I appreciated that he trusted me enough to do so. In *Budget Justified*, I wanted to show that I had a good rapport with several of the guys. I thought some of the things Patted Head had told me might be good fodder for *Budget Justified*. But I didn't include anything that would violate his privacy. Because he never violated mine.

My task on the New York project had been to manage a text file of flight waypoints that was used by simulation software. I told one of the many task leaders that a junior-level person would be better suited to managing text files. Someone just out of college who needed training, not someone with a PhD, several years experience, and a high salary.

The task leader responded, "This project is too important for a junior-level person."

What that really meant is they needed to charge high-dollar hours. If the results were so important, I would've been in on the meetings with the client to help understand why we were doing these menial tasks in the first place. No, instead the staff doing the analysis were hidden in a corner, given barely enough



information to do a few specific simulation runs, without much context for why we were doing these runs.

Soon afterward, I found out that an intern already *had* been working on that task. None of my team members even knew we had an intern. She had never been notified of our meetings. If I was ‘in charge’ of the text file (I always knew that my PhD would open such important opportunities), why was someone whom I’d never heard of also modifying a version of the file?

Apparently mistaking me as the intern one day, a task leader on the New York project called me every hour and told me to do busy-work. I didn’t make up the task of opening twenty files and saving them in a different format. Why didn’t the task leader tell the intern to do that? If they didn’t have any tasks appropriate for someone with a PhD, why did they keep hiring more people with PhDs? Because the real purpose we were hired was to justify why Former Employer got such a huge budget from the FAA.

After a year of doing intern-level work, I finally went to Boss to say that my skills would be of better use on other assignments. He knew the New York project was a mess and agreed. He tried to get me assigned to another project, but then somebody sabotaged some of my work and the task leader told Boss I needed to stay on the New York project to fix it. That’s when I left to go teach at a university.

I can’t blame on the task leaders too much. They were grasping for ways to please management. The task leaders couldn’t figure what management wanted because management didn’t know what management wanted. They kept the information exchanged at meetings with the FAA secret from the rest of us. Perhaps because there was no useful exchange of information. If the staff had found out what was really discussed, we’d lose more faith in our management’s leadership.

## Lisa’s Character Blog for Episode 12

The software George wants me to work on is over twenty years old, written in FORTRAN (a programming language that died thirty years ago), and nobody’s upgraded it to something that would work with modern technology. We’re doing things the same way they’ve been done for the past twenty years. Reinventing the same wheel over and over again. At least the code I wrote for Former Employer was written in C in the 1980’s.

Luckily I’m usually able to put myself in a position to take on more technical work than other women. I’m one of the very few woman with a PhD in a technical field. Women are often tasked with the ‘girl’ work and not so much of the technical work. I’m glad my technical papers made their way around the office and to George’s inbox so he could include me on the software work that I already have a lot of experience with.

Unfortunately, I’ve had task leaders who thought that because certain tasks were technical and tedious, they were challenging. Tedious is frustrating

and demoralizing, not challenging. Some of the men I've worked with think if they spout out a few technical terms for tedious details, they seem really impressive to their coworkers. And I've seen management fall for it. Please. Let's see the purpose of the forest and not get lost in the technical trees.

## Episode 13: Crackbarry

**Authority has checked out mentally, distracted by addictions. Meanwhile, Charlie's out enabling authority to continue to avoid solving their real issues.**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa works on her computer alone. Barry & George come in behind her, Barry playing on his phone. He doesn't look up the whole while.

LISA

Hi Barry. Hi George. Did you look at the briefing you asked me for? About the delay propagation work I did four years ago?

BARRY

Hi Lisa. Have you seen Charlie?

LISA

He had to go to uh, headquarters.

Barry and George leave. Lisa shrugs, talks to camera.

LISA

At least he always remembers my name.

Yvette peeks in, sees Charlie isn't there, turns to leave.

LISA

Hi Yvette. Need something?

Shy, Yvette returns, shakes her head, mumbles.

YVETTE

No.

Yvette leaves.

## Shooting the Scene

It's tough directing while I'm acting. Especially while my back is to the other actors. Pete, as an experienced cameraman, did a great job of helping me out from behind the camera. And the actors were so good that they didn't need much instruction.

The main direction they needed was to figure out where everyone had to stand to fit in the frame. After trying a few positions, we decided that George and Barry would have to stand behind me in order to get their faces on screen. Since they were all distracted by the phone instead of looking at me, it made sense for them to stand around me instead of having their back to the audience.

## In Real Life

The office director often stared at his phone rather than notice his staff around him. He seemed to think that as the boss, it was Us against Him, and that it was his job to oppress us. So he didn't want to talk to us; he wanted to avoid us.

The office director was cordial to me when I started working in FAA offices. He always greeted me by name, which I thought was a good habit for a manager to have toward his staff. So it wasn't as though he didn't know who I was.

I sometimes wondered if he was shy around women, or didn't know how he was supposed to treat women, so he preferred not to treat us as anything at all. At every engineering job I've ever had, there were always a few men who completely ignored me, pretending I wasn't part of the office.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa's about ready to leave, puts her laptop in her Society of Women Engineers bag. Charlie enters and closes the squeaky door, slams down his bag, sits in Lisa's guest chair.

CHARLIE

I'm tired of fixing my parents' battles.

Lisa looks at her watch.

LISA

You were at your parents' all day?

Charlie leans over and whispers a secret.

CHARLIE

When I was in high school, I ran away to get away from their bull. They thought I'd come crawling back. But I made it just fine on my own.

LISA

Wow. Your parents had no idea where you were.

CHARLIE

They didn't care. Dad used to whip mom. I always had to break it up. Couldn't tolerate mom just standing there. Taking it.

LISA

How are your parents doing now?

CHARLIE

Dad's too old to bother with beatings. And doesn't hang out at the bars.

Lisa is cautious about bringing this up.

LISA

How about your wife?

Charlie gets it.

CHARLIE

Oh, no. She's the sweetest thing. Anyone touches a hair on her head, he wouldn't hear the end of it from me.

Thanks for talking to me about this. It's nice to have someone to vent to.

LISA

Any time.

Well, I'll see you tomorrow.

CHARLIE

I'll walk you out.

Charlie and Lisa stand up. Charlie opens squeaky door and exits. Lisa picks up camera.

### **Shooting the Scene**

If you look closely, you'll notice that I wasn't wearing a watch in this scene. But I look at my 'watch' anyway. There wasn't a door on the set either, so I put a door sound in there, hoping the audience would figure out that Charlie closed the door when he came into the office.

Since the movie set is in my living room, instead of a door, there's only empty space, my front window, and the camera. I use a horribly squeaky door noise because when we shot the hallway scenes the doors were atrociously squeaky. So I pasted in the same sound for my fake office 'door.'

### **In Real Life**

Whenever Mr. Friendly disappeared for most of the day, his usual excuse was that he was at headquarters. I don't know if he was there doing work, socializing, or if he wasn't at headquarters at all. I didn't care to find out. As long as he wasn't bothering me.

There was another coworker who skipped work once or twice a week without letting anyone know where he was. One time he told me he had been visiting his uncle the whole day. I'm not sure why he admitted it to me; I hadn't asked for his whereabouts. Possibly because he was a government employee, a minority, and knew that management would get in trouble for taking action against him.

Mr. Friendly told me that his father used to go to bars and come home to beat his mother before he finally ran away from home. I was concerned that the habit may have been passed on to him, that he thought wife-beating was a normal thing, so I cautiously asked if that were the case. He vehemently denied it.

Mr. Friendly seemed to be telling the truth – not that I believed he'd ever admit to me that he beat his wife. But I think he understood very well that wife-beating was not the life he wanted to live.

INT. LOBBY

Charlie exits elevators. Lisa is behind the camera holding it in her "software" box.

Jane exits another elevator, walks through lobby and out the building.

Barry comes out a side conference room door. Lisa and Charlie stop in their tracks. Barry looks around to see if anyone is there, follows Jane out.

Charlie looks at Lisa (camera) confused. What was that about?

### **Shooting the Scene**

Dave (Charlie) and I only had so much space to walk, so we shuffled out of the elevator slowly. All scenes shot in this building occurred after hours, as not to disturb the workers during their business. Luckily I was able to schedule this while it was still summer, so it was light outside the entire shoot.

I turned on the camera's light because the natural light coming in the front door was brighter than the lighting in the lobby and I wanted to be sure to see Dave's face in the shot. But the camera degrades the quality of the video when using the light. Maybe it's a battery power issue.

After business hours, the lobby doors automatically locked. In the outtakes, Eli (Jane) runs back to the door after Ted (Barry) left the building so that they wouldn't get locked out. As though I was going to leave them out there and make faces at them through the glass.

### **In Real Life**

One evening as I was leaving work at Former Employer, a male junior-level employee in my department sat alone in a conference room near the exit to the parking garage, watching people exit. He wasn't working on a laptop, he wasn't reading, he was just sitting there watching everyone leave. The conference room belonged to a different section of the company, so it was an unusual place for him to be.

The next day I mentioned to a coworker that I had seen Junior sitting in that conference room as I left. My coworker said she had exited the building that evening alongside Mistress, and had also seen Junior sitting there, doing nothing, as she left. Then as she drove out of the parking garage, she saw Junior and Mistress get into the same car. "This wasn't the first time I saw him waiting in that conference room," my coworker said.

Junior worked closely with Mistress. They were about the same age, but since Junior didn't have a college degree and Mistress had a graduate degree, she was senior to him. I wondered about the dynamics between Junior and Mistress – several coworkers and I had occasionally observed obnoxious public flirting between the two of them.

Since I rarely drove to work, I usually left through the main lobby on the way to the bus, instead of passing the conference room on the way to the parking garage. I didn't bother walking through the exit to the parking garage on a regular basis to observe their behavior. Even though their behavior may have affected the workplace environment and the rewards given to others in our department, there wasn't anything helpful I could do with knowledge of the nature of their relationship.

The two of them often bragged about staying in the lab across the hall from my office until three in the morning to make software enhancements that saved

the rest of us around fifteen seconds of analysis. The night before April Fools' Day one year, I stayed after work to wrap a few friends' offices in caution tape, including Mistress's office. The next morning, I found out that April Fools' Eve was one of those three-in-the-morning nights.

Mistress came to me all paranoid. She had returned to her office in the middle of the night to a desk roped off by yellow plastic tape and didn't know when I had been in there. "Did something go wrong in my office?" No, nothing was wrong. "Did you hear anything last night?"

Hear anything? Uh, what kind of sounds did she expect me to hear?

I explained that I'd been at the office until only 6:30 the previous evening and that there were several other people down the hall who also had caution tape wrapped around their desks. It was April Fools, after all. She seemed very relieved.

So... Junior and Mistress were making some kind of noises in the lab after I had left? Perhaps they shouldn't brag about alone in the lab until three AM.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 13**

There go Barry and Jane again. It might not look so bad if they didn't look so guilty. Were they afraid someone would follow them? I don't think anyone wants to go near whatever they're up to.

Charlie complains that Barry pays more attention to that piece of electronics in his hands than he pays to his staff. Barry didn't even acknowledge that I asked him a question. Maybe he didn't remember asking me to do any work for him.

Am I covering up for Charlie? I had it in my head that the right answer for whenever he's not around is that he's at headquarters. Maybe that's the 'right' answer, but not the true answer.

Charlie is an adult. Barry doesn't need to babysit him. Or maybe he does. If Barry stood over Charlie every minute of the day to make sure he was doing work, what work would Charlie be doing? Normally I'd say, if Charlie was meeting his deadlines, nobody would have any right to complain what hours he sat at his desk. But deadlines for what?

Just because Charlie doesn't have any deadlines right now doesn't make it OK for him to sneak off for non-work-related errands. The taxpayers aren't paying him to go visit his parents. Visiting parents during work isn't something you can mention at the staff meeting when Cheryl asks, "So, what did you accomplish this week?"

I don't have deadlines either, so I take it as an opportunity to learn about what work can and should be done by talking to coworkers and reading the documents the agency is working on. That way I can be more productive when I do have a deadline. Or I'll be able to propose real solutions to what needs to get done.

I wish Charlie wouldn't close the door when he has something he doesn't want others to hear. I can understand that he didn't want everyone down the hall to hear him talking about his parental issues, but everyone else was already gone for the day. Nobody was going to hear him.

Charlie definitely has issues that go way back. This history of violence against women must be embedded in his brain from seeing his mother getting abused. And she's still with her abuser. So when Charlie compares what his dad did to women, a pat on the rear is no big deal. After all, he's not leaving bruises. Sometimes I feel as long as he doesn't leave bruises on me, I shouldn't complain. Because if I did complain, I'd get some kind of punishment, even if it's not bruises.

## Episode 14: Don't Work on Anything

**One manager assigned something for Lisa to work on. Then the manager's boss tells her not to work on it. What is she really supposed to do? Make coffee? Play trash bin basketball?**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa's at her laptop. Barry enters, playing with his phone, looks at Lisa's computer screen.

BARRY

What are you working on?

LISA

George asked me to modify the New York design software.

BARRY

Don't work on that. We don't need that anymore.

Lisa's confused.

LISA

Okay? What should I work on instead?

Now Barry is confused.



BARRY

Uh, how about... Well, I have another project. It's about flight scheduling.

LISA

Sure... What do you need done?

He's stumped.

BARRY

Talk to Tim. He'll tell you what to do.

Barry wanders out of Lisa's office.

### **Shooting the Scene**

This scene was one of the few we did in one take. Partly because this was one of the scenes shot on Megashoot Day and we were crunched for time. Also because since we weren't as crunched for time when shooting other scenes, we filmed each of them several times in case something was wrong with the first recording that went unnoticed during the shoot.

### **In Real Life**

This kind of direction was representative of many projects at Former Employer. Management would tell the staff to work on something. Then they'd forget that anyone was working on it. A few weeks later, after wondering why the manager hadn't scheduled any meetings to discuss progress, the staff would mention it in passing. The manager would say they no longer needed the work and didn't want the staff working on it any more. A senior coworker warned me of this problem shortly after I started working there.

There were variations on this pattern. Sometimes the staff would brief an interim result. If the result didn't support the action that the manager was pushing, he/she would tell the staff to quit working on the project. Several supervisors 'managed' the results to match what they wanted.

After I went on leave to teach for a year, I received a performance evaluation listing three tasks I hadn't completed before I left. One was complete, but the task manager had sabotaged it to keep me charging to the New York project. The second was a task that a senior manager told me not to work on. The other was a project I had never heard of. Since I wasn't around to defend myself while I was teaching, I was the scapegoat for the second project. I didn't go back to that company after my one-year teaching stint ended.

Before I was hired, there was a project that a young engineer led. At some point, all his managers told him to stop working on it. But it was such a great idea, he convinced his coworkers to continue the project in stealth. Finally the

project was completed and the young engineer brought it to the FAA. They loved it and implemented it.

Of course, the management said they'd thought it was a great idea all along – even though they didn't know anyone was still working on it. After that success, the young engineer was highly respected and is now one of the top technical leaders of the company. When success requires going rogue, it's time to question the management and reward procedures.

One piece of advice he gave me was, "The job of the staff is to make up for bad management." That advice applies in so many situations in life.

INT. TIM'S OFFICE

Tim reads the newspaper. Lisa enters exasperated, sits in Tim's guest chair.

LISA

I just came out of a discussion with Barry confused about what I'm supposed to do.

TIM

That's because Barry came out of that discussion even more confused about what you're supposed to do.

LISA

He said to ask you what I should do.

TIM

Get me some coffee.

Lisa's highly peeved.

LISA

He mentioned a flight scheduling project.

TIM

No, nope. I already finished that. Briefed Barry's bosses, they said Thank you very much, and that was the end of it.

LISA

Why would he tell me to work on it?

TIM

The managers want all the staff to work on their projects. But they don't know what they want done on those projects. If you ask them what to do, they make up some nonsense.

LISA

So what work do you think I'm supposed to do?

Tim exaggeratedly picks his nose.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Nosepicking was what Mr. Friendly had once listed as one of our job duties. I like what Kevin (Tim) decided to do at the end of this scene better.

Instead, Tim plays wastepaper basketball. Which I prefer because I'm not into nosepicking humor. If you go to [BudgetJustified.com](http://BudgetJustified.com) and watch this episode, you'll see Tim crumple up a piece of paper and throw it toward the camera. There was no garbage can there. We did this scene several times, with Tim saying something different each time, depending upon where my paper ball landed. Once it hit the top of the camera.

### **In Real Life**

The line, "[boss] came out of that discussion even more confused about what you're supposed to do," was a direct quote from Mr. Friendly after a meeting where we were supposed to discuss my role on a project. I suspected that Mr. Friendly was right.

I didn't work in this office long enough to observe the politics of how managers fought for staff to assign to their projects. I doubt they needed to. None of the managers had enough tasks to overload the staff.

However at Former Employer, task leaders felt they had more power if they had more people charging to their projects. Because on paper, it looked like they were leading more people. The task leaders often didn't know what they wanted done, so they'd make something up to string the staff along. They hoped the staff would figure out something useful to do and that management would give the task leaders the credit.

I got a project management award the year I had my own budget assigned to me. I think it was because the amount I spent was closer to my budget target than the other task leaders got toward their budget goals. And because the budget analyst knew I was nice to everyone.

More than once I saw task leaders brief upper management about work done for projects they didn't lead, claiming it was their idea and part of their project. Neither the people who did the work nor the real managers of the work

were invited to the briefing. So they had no idea that other task leaders were taking credit for it.

Yet these briefings impressed upper management. Since several briefings mentioned the same work, upper management believed that the task leaders were coordinating (a favorite management buzzword) with each other. Made it sound like everyone was a team player.

At every job I've had, the secretaries got coffee. In some jobs, even the women engineers got coffee for the bosses. I was told by these women not to question the bosses if they asked me to fetch coffee.

Not only would the secretaries bring coffee, they'd bring lunch to the bosses in the middle of meetings. I didn't think much of the practice when I observed it. At least, not of lunch being brought to a manager. Higher-level managers went from meeting to meeting all day, often without lunch breaks. One of the occurrences that stuck in my mind was a time when one of the secretaries seemed so subservient as she brought lunch, I thought she expected a beating any moment.

I had my novel about a woman engineer critiqued in several of the writers groups I've participated in. Nearly everyone had a cow about a scene where the bosses told his secretary to get him coffee. They said nobody ever does that any more, that the secretary would complain to HR. One person even deigned to say I must not have ever worked in the real world.

What world did my writers group colleagues work in where the employees could complain to HR about their bosses and not get punished? When you make your bosses look bad, it shows up on your performance review. Then if you ever want a promotion or another job, the managers think you're the problem. Because an employee who sticks up for herself is a problem. Makes it tougher on their conscience when the managers want to get away with skipping work to play golf. Or sleeping with the staff.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 14**

Apparently Barry and George didn't coordinate regarding what tasks I'm supposed to work on. Well, I don't report to George, so it probably didn't come up. In fact, I don't report to anyone. Who is responsible for making sure I get my work done? Nobody.

I'm disturbed that George tells me to do one thing, then Barry tells me not to do it without offering an alternative task. The managers don't know what I should be working on, but I'll get dinged in my performance review for not working on it.

Then Barry says Tim should give me a task. Tim's not a manager. I have no obligation to him and he has no incentive to make sure I'm working on tasks appropriate for my level of experience. Does Barry see Tim as having authority over me because I'm a woman?

Looks like I'm going to have to make up for bad management. I can't expect my bosses, my parents, or the President of the United States to create jobs, tell me what needs to be done, fix all my troubles, or be responsible for my life. Because they won't. If I want to do important things, I have to do important things. I can't wait for someone else to tell me what's important.

## Episode 15: Behind Locked Door

**This isn't the only place Lisa's ever worked where the managers were up to funny business.**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie sits next to Lisa in her guest chair.

LISA

At one place I used to work, there was this grad student who liked to tell me stories about some woman he had an affair with.

CHARLIE

In graphic detail?

LISA

Ew, no. Not about that. More like about car chases. The sleaziest discussion was a lame joke about an obscene chicken.

CHARLIE (sarcastic)

Ooh, chickens are so naughty.

LISA

We were both computer geeks. We played pranks by sending each other email addressed from Bill Clinton.

CHARLIE

I've got some jokes I'll email you.

Charlie picks up his laptop so it faces him and types. Lisa frowns - will she be receiving inappropriate jokes?

LISA

One time I stopped by the guy's office, he was next door, so I waited at his desk. When he got back, he screamed at me to get out.

CHARLIE

What was his problem?

LISA

He wanted anyone within earshot to think HE had authority over ME.

CHARLIE

What a jerk.

LISA

The next day, our boss told me about some woman who had left a picture on his desk of another woman taking off her shirt.

CHARLIE

Maybe it was Jane.

LISA

It was supposed to be a warning about something. Maybe Computer Geek said something about me? Incase I complained about him?

CHARLIE

What did you do about it?

LISA

Stopped talking to the people in my office. Freaked me out. I felt very isolated. So I hung out with people down the hall. Nobody cared. My boss avoided me, jumped into doorways when he saw me coming.

I had no idea what I was supposed to work on.

CHARLIE

Sounds familiar.

LISA

A year later that boss went to jail for kickbacks.

CHARLIE

You've got to be kidding.

LISA

When people don't have any positive goals, they come up with other ways to fill time.

CHARLIE

I wonder what OUR bosses work on.

LISA

Probably something they don't want us to know about.

Knock on the door. Lisa looks confused.

TIM (OS)

Hello?

Charlie gets paranoid.

CHARLIE

It's Tim!

Tim keeps knocking.

TIM (OS)

Charlie!

Lisa gets angry at Charlie.

LISA

You locked the door?

Charlie shrugs sheepishly. Lisa goes to open the door.

LISA (whispers)

That's embarrassing.

## Shooting the Scene

I didn't think about how ridiculous my comment about car chases with regards to a coworker's affair sounded until I watched the footage and saw Dave with a confused look on his face.

This scene is about the USDOT research office where I worked in 1996. The reason I mention it in *Budget Justified* is that I wanted to bring up the parallels between the FAA office and the office where my boss got arrested. It didn't make sense to reenact a scene that occurred outside the FAA, so I included the information as a conversation.

Many of the episodes of *Budget Justified* are heavy on talking heads, light on action. So don't use the scripts from this book as an example of superb scriptwriting. Not that I thought you were going to. It's not bad for internet, small-screen videos. Not a lot of uh, physical action is supposed to happen in an office. This episode is one of the more dialogue-intensive episodes of *Budget Justified* and much of it got deleted for the movie version. Luckily Dave's acting keeps the scene interesting.

## In Real Life

Computer Geek was young. I think he was trying to impress me by portraying himself as a wild child. I'm not sure why he thought I'd be impressed about wild stories; I wasn't wild myself. Computer Geek would tell me about driving 90 mph to the airport with his married lover and about how much he could drink. I was married and didn't drink.

I don't know what happened the day Computer Geek screamed at me to get out of his office. Whatever was going on with him, that was the point after which people started avoiding me and the other female grad students. Even the office secretary treated us like non-entities and made jokes about the grad student area being a black hole where no information from the rest of the office could be passed in (even though black holes work the opposite way).

The day after Computer Geek screamed at me, I got that weird talk from the boss warning me not to give out pictures of women taking off their shirts. The boss never mentioned why he brought it up. Perhaps Computer Geek was afraid I'd retaliate and made up wild stories to discredit me. If Computer Geek had said something to the boss or the rest of the staff about me, no one ever let me know about it.

After working there for four months – it was a one-year assignment – the boss gave me a list of four two-sentence bullet points to work on. Every time I tried to go talk to him about what the brief descriptions of the bullet points were supposed to mean, he hid from me by jumping into other people's offices or locking his door.

Working there was a nightmare. I didn't know what I was supposed to work on. Two of the bosses played head games, both saying that I was assigned to the other, and both pretending they had already told me what to work on. One of them went to jail two years later for kickbacks.



I have no evidence that something as blatantly illegal as kickbacks was occurring in the FAA office. However I wouldn't be surprised if something was going on, besides sexual harassment, that lands someone in serious trouble in the future.

Mr. Friendly sent me dirty jokes in several emails. I don't appreciate dirty jokes, but it didn't bother me much either. I just thought he was foolish for sending them because he was documenting his own harassment actions. Someday someone will FOIA my email (Lisa.CTR.Schaefer@faa.gov), or FOIA his email, and see what he sent. However, some of the jokes were sent to my personal email address. Mr. Friendly had my home email address because that's how everyone had to send me documents my first few weeks there.

The woman next door to my cubicle often complained about tiny noises, such as dings coming out of my computer, or sucking noises (see Episode 34: Too Much Sucking). Mr. Friendly suspected she could hear our conversations and often took me to a conference room when he wanted to say something he didn't want her to overhear.

One time someone knocked while we were in there. Why did he feel he needed to knock before coming in? Turned out the door was locked. I didn't even know the door had a lock. Weirded me out. Mr. Friendly and I behind locked doors. What was the guy supposed to think? I'm new at the place, trying to build a professional reputation. And this guy locks me in the conference room.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 15**

Most of the time, I like having Charlie around to talk to, in spite of the dumbass things he does. I have to be aware of Charlie for who he is - entertainment value. I know I'd only be disappointed if I expected him to adhere to moral standards. I can't mold him into the kind of guy I'd normally hang around.

Hopefully when we move to another floor - which we were supposed to have already done, but now they're saying it'll be another three months - I'll have a different officemate and Mr. Friendly won't come around to tell me his little 'secrets' anymore.

Sometimes I wonder if people here tattle about others in the office to shift the manager's focus away from something bad they themselves did, to get the managers angry at someone else. I haven't been here long enough to have built up a support network yet. I'm not sure whom I could trust with any 'tattling' I may need to do.

I'm worried that anything I say would get twisted so that the New Woman (me) is to blame, not the guy who's been their buddy for the past ten years. The resulting rumors could make me look worse than him. Nobody knows me well enough to know otherwise. Some people will say I asked for it. Others will say I wanted it. And some will say I deserved it.

A lot of parallels exist between this office and the one where my boss conducted illegal activities. I wonder what the real reason is for the atmosphere of fear that pervades this office.

## Episode 16: Perfect Airspace

Lisa comes up with an idea for a real project to work on: a solution to reduce delays in New York. It's a problem Congress deems as critical. But with management's lack of priorities, can she get buy-in from the rest of the staff to work toward a solution?

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Cheryl and smiley NEW GUY, twenty-something, dressed better than everyone else, stand near doorway. Lisa shakes new guy's hand. Charlie is genuinely helpful, shakes New Guy's hand.

CHARLIE

Feel free to stop by any time. I'll come by your office this afternoon and help get your computer set up.

NEW GUY

Thank you very much.

Cheryl and New Guy leave.

CHARLIE

I don't know why we keep hiring. Barry says he needs more people to do the work. What work?

LISA

I came up with this over the weekend. I call it "Perfect Airspace."

Lisa makes grand "perfect airspace" hand motions. Charlie moves guest chair closer so he can see her computer screen.

LISA

Congress wants us to fix congestion in New York. We need to figure out how many

aircraft could get through New York  
airspace if we designed all schedules  
around New York.

INSERT Animation of aircraft flying around  
chaotically, labeled 'Chaos' on left side of screen;  
versus aircraft flying around orderly, labeled  
'Order' on the right side.

LISA (OS)

If we schedule the airspace, not just  
airport arrivals and departures, you  
reduce the variability, which reduces  
delays.

Lisa points at a Chaos airplane going in circles on  
her screen.

LISA (OS)

This one goes into a holding pattern  
because the airspace isn't scheduled and  
they show up at the same time.

CHARLIE

A contractor was removed from our project  
for trying to solve problems.

LISA

It's my job to come up with solutions.  
I'm paid too much to sit around...

Lisa pretends to pick nose.

CHARLIE

They'd rather see you doing nothing. The  
union doesn't want change.

LISA

I understand the union and airlines will  
block any change they don't control. But  
we have to at least look into what the  
airspace could handle if everything went  
well.

INSERT Screen shot of a few 1940's cars on a big  
road.

LISA (OS)

Unscheduled airspace was adequate when traffic was light. But now we need more structure. Too many planes want the airspace at the same time.

INSERT Video of taillights on I-66, creeping along very slowly.

LISA (OS)

Think of it this way. We could keep traffic cops, each watching a small part of New York.

Closeup of Charlie squeezing Lisa's knee, she removes his hand.

LISA (OS)

Without any ability to account for whatever traffic might be coming next. Their eyes can't see the big picture.

INSERT Animation of smooth-flowing traffic.

LISA (OS)

Or we could put a sophisticated, automated traffic signal out there that knows where all the traffic is, and can compute separation so aircraft know where to be and when to be there.

CHARLIE

How'd you come up with this?

LISA

I've been working on chaos versus order stuff for fifteen years.

INSERT Critical path slide - a US map with two or three lines marking air traffic routes spanning the country. The lines in the west are thin. Lines past Michigan are medium. Lines near New York are thick. The map is labeled:

(Thin line) Free-flowing: Variability has little effect

(Medium line) Some traffic: Some variability OK  
(Thick line) Congestion: Can't accommodate  
variability

Lisa points toward Wyoming.

LISA (OS)

Out west there's not as much traffic, so  
we don't need to impose as much order  
there.

Lisa points toward New York.

LISA (OS)

But closer to New York, aircraft get on  
the critical path.

Charlie puts his hand on Lisa's knee. She removes it.

LISA

When one small thing goes wrong, you  
reach the edge of chaos. Throws the whole  
system out of whack.

Closeup of Charlie putting his hand back on Lisa's  
knee. She removes it.

LISA (OS)

In that hearing with the new  
administrator, Congress said New York  
schedules are fiction.

Charlie puts hand back on her knee.

LISA

They gave a deadline for proposing a  
solution.

Lisa grabs Charlie's hand, picks it up, and slaps it  
onto his own lap.

LISA

I'm trying to telling you about real work  
here!

## Shooting the Scene

We were in a rush to get through this scene because Dave (Charlie) had to be somewhere. It didn't turn out so great. I left a flub in there because I didn't have anything to replace it with. Luckily I didn't need much of the footage because I rerecorded the voiceover and shot the electronic slides by myself, then threw in a few shots of Dave's hand on my knee.

Anthony (New Guy) is a wedding singer on weekends. So he wouldn't have to change clothing on his way out the door, he requested that his character wear a suit. Fine by me. Sort of like the young guys who talk about how important they are and say the right buzz words when the boss is around, but they actually spend most of their time listening to music, talking to friends, or taking a nap.

In the outtakes for this episode, Anthony is getting ready to leave the studio (my house) to go sing. Watch Dave's reaction when Anthony says he's going to wedding practice, but not getting married.

The Perfect Airspace slides used in *Budget Justified* are not the slides I developed to communicate my Perfect Airspace idea while I was at the FAA. I created different slides for *Budget Justified* because I didn't want anyone saying that I put work developed by a contractor into this movie.

## In Real Life

Since the managers didn't have any projects for me to work on, I figured out a project that needed to be done. I had the experience, education, and creativity to be able to come up with an idea without anyone's direction. I developed my Perfect Airspace slides over a weekend (my brain is on when it's on), approximately two weeks before I was fired. Perhaps I was fired because I had ideas for solutions? I didn't charge the hours because I wasn't allowed to get overtime.

Two weeks wasn't long enough to develop the idea further on taxpayer time; the last two weeks happened to be full of workshops, conferences and training sessions. A lot of good that does – send someone to a training session then fire them before they can use the knowledge. So in my opinion, the concept of Perfect Airspace belongs neither to the FAA, Huge Contractor, nor the subcontractor I worked for. They didn't ask me to do that work, nobody supervised the work, nobody mentored or guided the work. The concept was developed all on my own.

At my job interview, one of the male managers who worked for Huge Contractor told me that the political situation at the FAA was sticky because the FAA director liked to steal everyone else's ideas and claim they were his. Of course, as a woman, I had a completely different set of political problems to deal with in this office. Was the manager trying to get me into a Don't Trust FAA Management frame of mind?

I wasn't sure what the manager expected me to do about the idea-stealing client. Tell him my ideas first so he could steal them before the FAA director did? I decided to announce my Perfect Airspace idea at a few staff meetings

before I mentioned it to managers. That way at least the staff would know where the Perfect Airspace idea came from.

Perfect Airspace gave me a context for stopping by people's offices to ask about their expertise. Most people were more than willing to share information. Since there wasn't anything else to work on, they didn't disparage the concept. But it wasn't requested by a manager, thus there were no guaranteed brownie points associated with it. So nobody jumped on the bandwagon to help out either.

Mr. Friendly always tried to be helpful to the new guys and made sure they had computer equipment and software. A bunch of new guys were hired during the three months I spent in the FAA office.

Huge Contractor hired a young man, fresh out of undergraduate school, a month after they hired me. They hired him directly, not through a subcontractor. He was given a card for access to the building his first day. He also had a computer waiting for him, an email account, nameplate, and they ordered him business cards. Although like everyone else, he had to supply his own pencils and coffee.

The staff often complained that the director was hiring too many people without anything for anyone to work on. We weren't accomplishing anything, yet high-level FAA managers kept giving our office more money. One of the very-long-time FAA employees whispered to us that when he asked the director about new hires, he told him that the office "needed more people to do the work."

"What work?" the coworker said to us.

It occurred to me that I might've been hired as a scapegoat for the work not getting done and that they had no intention of keeping me past three months. After all, I was hired through a subcontractor/temp firm. It's happened to me before. (I was hired for three months as a female name on a proposal for a government contract. When they found out they didn't get the contract, I was fired. I should've been suspicious after I'd been working there for a month and got a letter from their main office saying they had no job for me.) And I've seen other women get assigned to projects, then left out of the loop, to justify their subsequent blame for project failure.

## **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 16**

I wonder what kind of task they'll give this new guy to work on. He's still young. I hope this agency doesn't ruin his work ethic. I should ask him to help out with the Perfect Airspace idea, at least to give him some context for something to look into and learn about.

Charlie genuinely wants to be helpful, especially to the new people who haven't been tainted by management yet. He's been here a while, so he knows everyone and greets them with a hearty smile. Whenever anyone on the staff needs his assistance with an immediate task, he's ready to help right away. With longer-term tasks, he loses his attention span quickly.

In the past I've mentioned the lack of attention, direction, and communication with management. Charlie thinks I'm complaining that I have nothing to do. That is not the case. I have plenty to do because I know what is and is not important to accomplish. No, I do not want him, nor anyone else, thinking I have nothing to do.

I tried to explain that I'm goal oriented, and I don't like being given a demand to look for some data when I don't know what it's going to be used for, or if they intend to use it at all. Charlie doesn't relate to that kind of work ethic. I want a goal to work toward and can figure out on my own how to do it. The problem is that I don't know what my goal is for this year, nor anyone else's. If I make up my own goal, nobody is going to care about it. So maybe my goal is to look busy so nobody treats me like I'm unnecessary.

I'm not going to complain about the lack of direction in this job to the managers. I know that won't result in positive action. I'll make the best of the unstructured time I have in this office and take it as an opportunity to work on my Perfect Airspace concept.

I realize this project will take a long time to get going. Grad school prepared me to be able to cope with long term projects. The Wright brothers didn't build their aircraft in a week.

## Episode 17: Can Tell You're a Runner

### Does Lisa need to worry about a potential stalker?

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie enter. Lisa is wearing business clothes and running shoes. She places her Society of Women Engineers bag on the desk. Charlie enters with briefcase.

CHARLIE

Running shoes at work? That's not your style.

He points at her feet.

INSERT closeup of running shoes on Lisa's feet.

LISA

I'm going to track practice after work.



Lisa takes dress shoes out of her desk cabinet and changes into them, placing the running shoes into her Society of Women Engineers bag.

CHARLIE

Practice for what?

LISA

Races. Every Saturday my running group goes out for twelve to fifteen miles.

CHARLIE

Fifteen miles!

LISA

Last year I ran a marathon. Sounded impossible at first. Once I built up to twelve miles, I had trouble with my foot muscles. But I kept trying. And finished. Took me over five hours.

CHARLIE

I couldn't go that far in ten hours.

LISA

Some of the people in my running group can finish in less than three. I'm one of the slowest. And widest.

Charlie looks her over.

CHARLIE

I find that hard to believe.

Lisa points at her shoulder bones.

LISA

Bone structure. I mean they have narrower bone structures.

CHARLIE

When's your next marathon?

LISA

Not planning on one. I don't like training like mad then slacking off

afterward. I'd rather be consistent. Half marathon every weekend.

Charlie grabs her butt quickly, lets go.

CHARLIE

I can tell you're a runner.

Lisa jumps away.

### **Shooting the Scene**

I felt like Mr. Rogers, changing my shoes like that. That's not really the mood the scene was meant to convey. *Budget Justified* isn't going to be used as a kids show any time soon.

It was distracting to speak my lines for the camera while I was dealing with what to do with my shoes and bending over to remove and replace shoes. I felt like I was talking into the floor instead of the mic.

### **In Real Life**

When Mr. Friendly talked like this, making inappropriate comments about my legs or saying something I was wearing looked good on me, I didn't respond. I stood in shocked silence. There was no response that could sound professional or even normal. I'd change the subject or walk away.

I didn't want other people in the office to know he'd made those comments. It would make me seem like the office decoration, or worse: the office whore. It took away from my real purpose in the office. Or at least the purpose I thought I'd been hired for, the purpose for which I'd spent twelve years in college and seven years in the work force. Perhaps unbeknownst to me, my purpose in the office actually was to be a grope toy. A hired whore.

I had told Mr. Friendly about my weekly track practice because I occasionally came to work wearing running shoes. Since I walked a mile to the Metro on the way to work, it made sense to wear the running shoes rather than carry them. I kept a pair of heels in my cubicle so I wouldn't have to drag those back and forth to work.

Since then, I've gotten rid of most of my high heels; I do so much walking and standing. Heels constrain the options for activities I can choose to participate in after I leave the house. Plus, they aren't any good for my feet, especially if I run twelve miles every week.

EXT. TRACK

Lisa in a ponytail, tank top, shorts, and running shoes, sits on the track and stretches as feet run past in the foreground.

LISA (VO)

I hope he doesn't figure out what track I go to, then show up to watch me. I don't know him well enough to know whether he's the stalker type.

Lisa runs with the camera – the track from her point of view. People say hi as she goes past.

LISA (VO)

What would I do if he did show up to watch me?

Lisa runs around the track past the camera.

LISA (VO)

Should I sneak away and get on the Metro before he noticed I was gone? I'd still have to see him at work tomorrow.

## **Shooting the Scene**

Everyone who says hi to me on the track is...me. I said hi to myself a bunch of times, then played around with audio speed and pitch. The sound for this scene came out completely different than I expected. Very echo-ey. It doesn't sound anything like that when I'm at the track. But it's so ominously perfect!

I selected a specific trackmate to shoot this scene because he takes a lot of photos for the running group at our races. He has professional equipment and I knew he'd do a nice job of framing the shots.

As I was wandering around the Metro station with the camera at dusk, some guy got in my way. I think he did that on purpose because he saw my friend with the camera and wanted to get in the shot. Sort-of made it look like he was following me – appropriate for this scene.

I also took footage of a guy running around the track while juggling. Running without juggling wasn't challenging enough? He doesn't come to track practice often, but happened to be there the evening I brought my camera. However, juggling wasn't relevant to the topic or tone of the episode. So I put him in the opening credits of the movie version, as a part of life in Washington.

## **In Real Life**

In the summer of 2006, I joined a runners group because I was training for a marathon on my own. Once that was over, I didn't feel like I ever needed to run a marathon again. I still meet the runners group on Saturday mornings for twelve mile runs. During marathon training season, the rest of the group runs over

fifteen miles. I don't need to do that to myself. I take short cuts. And most of them still finish before me.

In summer I usually run around the track wearing no more than a jog bra, shorts, and shoes. However I absolutely did not want to broadcast my white shiny stomach to everyone who watches *Budget Justified*. So I wore the least absorbent tank top I owned, enduring the extra heat insulation hovering around me while we shot this scene. Then I immediately removed it for the real workout.

INT. METRO

We enter an almost-empty Metro train and move toward a seat.

LISA (VO)

Would he follow me home on the Metro?  
It'll be dark by the time I come out of  
the station.

Slow down to a creepy slow motion view moving through the empty train car.

EXT. METRO, NIGHT

Lisa emerges from a Metro station in her running clothes, in the dark.

LISA (VO)

If I run home through the forest, nobody  
will be around to witness him.

## Shooting the Scene

I didn't want to get into legal trouble if someone watched *Budget Justified* and complained to Metro about taking stealth footage. I knew I could sit on the Metro with a camera without being monitored by Metro police. Tourists bring video cameras onto trains all the time. But those videos aren't intended as part of a bigger story.

Nobody complained about Borat's staff taking footage while he was filming his movie. They complained after he made a lot of money on his movie. When there was a pot of cash available, a bunch of drunken college students, who had already given Borat permission to use footage of them, wanted a cut.

So I asked the people at the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority if it was OK to record video on buses and trains. It was public property, so the woman I spoke with told me it was fine as long as I didn't disturb other Metro patrons or block their access. No problem. Nobody was going to blink an eye at

me standing on the escalator with a little hand held camera. It's much less disruptive than strollers or yakking on cell phones.

Not long after I shot this scene, the awesome *Arlington Rap* went viral on YouTube. Metro train footage was all over that video and nobody complained.

## In Real Life

Due to extreme traffic congestion in the DC area, and since coworkers living beyond the last Metro stop had to drive most of the way to work, several people worked a very early schedule to beat the traffic. Track practice started later in the evening, so if Mr. Friendly had wanted to follow me to the track, he'd have to entertain himself for several hours after work and concoct an excuse to his wife for what he was doing out so late.

Turns out, Mr. Friendly never contacted me outside the office. Seems that the whole thing was a game for him to play during work hours because he was bored and disillusioned. Lucky for me, he wasn't interested in continuing his games elsewhere. But I didn't know that at the time. He could've been a murderer for all I knew.

EXT. FOREST, NIGHT

Flashlight scans the trees in the dark.

LISA (VO)

He might do more than a little grabbing.

I hope he doesn't have a violent streak.

Run past trees with camera and flashlight. Sound of running footsteps and an out of breath runner.

## Shooting the Scene

I tried shooting this at dusk, but since I don't have a fancy lens on my camera, the video was a solid black screen. Instead, I took footage as I ran through the forest with a flashlight on a cloudy afternoon. The visibility in the forest to my naked eye was great. But the footage looks like it was taken at night.

## In Real Life

During the time I worked in the FAA offices and for several months afterward, I kept a close eye on every single person who appeared at the track, everyone I passed on my way to the Metro, and everyone who was on the Metro. I don't believe that Mr. Friendly was violent, but I didn't discount the possibility that he could show up to hide in the bushes and watch me go around the track.

As a woman, I'm leery of every nearby man I've never met, especially after dark. However it's more likely that someone I saw frequently, who had history

of misogyny, would stalk me than some random person who happened to be on the Metro.

If I can't go to and from sports or professional meetings on my own, the terrorists of misogyny win. But I constantly keep my ears and eyes open for everything around me on the way and a phone poised to dial 911. Sometimes I carry pepper spray in my hand with my finger on the nozzle, although I'm afraid it would more likely be grabbed by an attacker and sprayed at my own face.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 17**

What if Charlie wants to become my stalker? I haven't known him long enough to be able to completely judge his character. I know I can't trust him to respect me, but I don't know if he'd go so far as to follow me to track practice or follow me home. If I saw him at the track, I'd weird out. Does he not care that he's scaring me? Of course not. Scaring me is what makes it so fun for him.

After I become a full-fledged employee, I'd like to tell someone about the way Charlie treats me. But based on how everything else is run in our organization, the so-called 'authority' of FAA management would likely handle it just as scarily. I know I need to deal with him myself first. As the new woman, I don't want to be ostracized professionally because of their fear of being accused of sexual harassment. Instead, I have to live with my fear of being attacked.

I find it very irritating that as I was talking about sports, my body as a structure or a machine, and he was talking about my body as a sexual object. This isn't just Charlie's take on the matter; it's the way all of society sees the role of women's bodies. If I were a man talking about participating in sports, about his body being wider than his teammates, nobody would construe the discussion into sexual innuendo. If this type of treatment of women is common in 2007, I wonder how it was for women thirty years ago, when a woman would spend her whole career as the only female in her office.

I feel isolated when he violates me. I want to hide from the workplace, disconnect myself from what's going on. And that's just the position he wants me in. So it's easier for him to get away with it.

## **Episode 18: Charlie's Affair**

**How many affairs has Charlie really had? And, what is his definition of affair?**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie look at his computer. He grabs her knee and lets go.

CHARLIE

I can't stop thinking about you.

LISA

It'll get old once the novelty of having me around the office wears off.

CHARLIE

I don't think so.

Lisa backs away, glares at him.

LISA

Have you ever had an affair?

CHARLIE

Once.

LISA

How did it start?

CHARLIE

Attraction.

LISA

A reason. But not an excuse.

CHARLIE

We worked together. Like us.

LISA

Yeah, except not like us. WE are not having an affair.

Charlie puts his hand on her knee again.

CHARLIE

I ended it with her a while ago.

Lisa moves his hand.

LISA

Why did you want to have that type of relationship with her?

Charlie considers this for a brief moment.

CHARLIE

She was discreet.

Lisa's facial reaction: oh, of course, rolls eyes.

LISA

How did it end?

CHARLIE

She got transferred, now works at headquarters.

Headquarters? That got Lisa's attention. Suspicious.

LISA

Headquarters. Was she married?

CHARLIE

I think she had a boyfriend. But she wanted us to get more serious. Wasn't enough passion with the other guy.

LISA

Sounds like one of those people who screw up their lives 'cuz otherwise they'd be bored.

Charlie nods.

LISA (suspicious)

So. Headquarters. Do you still see her around?

Charlie puts his hand on Lisa's knee.

CHARLIE

Yeah. We keep in touch.

Lisa pats his hand and moves it onto his own knee.

LISA (suspicious)

I'm sure you do.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Damn, I blink too much in this episode. I never notice any other actor blinking. Do they practice keeping their eyes open? Use special eye drops?



This scene was originally a monotonous shot from the same camera angle that went on too long. I put in one close-up of me to emphasize the part of the scene where I suspect Charlie is lying, so you could watch my head think.

## **In Real Life**

As soon as Mr. Friendly told me the chick he had an affair with worked at headquarters, I was really suspicious. FAA headquarters was only a few blocks away, so Mr. Friendly strolled over there frequently and was gone for several hours at a time. At least, that's where he always said he had been. He rarely discussed the details of the business he conducted at headquarters. For all I know, he may have been out playing golf. Or harassing a slew of women.

I occasionally reacted to Mr. Friendly's touchy-feelyness by asking him probing personal questions. Since Mr. Friendly was invading my privacy by grabbing me in the office, I had no qualms about asking him outright whether he'd had any affairs. Of course I wasn't foolish enough to believe he'd tell me the truth about his affairs, or any other office gossip for that matter. He claimed his affair had gone on for a year. I think he had more than just one. He probably thought that the 'right' answer was one affair. If he had said he never had an affair, I wouldn't believe him. If he told me he had more, that would prove I was just another feather for his hat.

Mr. Friendly mentioned that the woman he had an affair with wanted to get more serious with him. If she had in fact had said this, then the so-called affair Mr. Friendly conducted with her may have been consensual. He also said she was 'discreet.' Did that mean she too was afraid to let anyone in the office know what he was doing to her? Or that she didn't think anyone would want to believe her if she reported him? Management at Former Employer was in blatant denial over the suspicious activities of Boss and Mistress.

I didn't probe for details on what she may have meant by "more serious" or if those were even her words. Perhaps she meant that she didn't want to carry on in the office, rather carry on outside the office. Or maybe she meant something completely different, such as wanting a serious, mature friendship rather than fooling around in the office like horny teenagers hiding under the bleachers.

## **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 18**

So, what does Charlie do at his 'meetings' about nothing at headquarters? Are there really meetings, like with several people, or does he just show up at the building and socialize with whomever he finds? Or show up and grope whomever he finds?

Charlie said he liked the affair woman because "she was discreet." I'm sure that means he liked her because she let him get away with it.

I doubt that he's ended the alleged 'affair.' He's trying to fool me into fooling around with him. I probably believes that if he confides in me about an affair, real or imagined, I'd feel like I was his special friend. And in his world,

special friends offer benefits like blanket permission to feel each other up without warning.

I find his knee-grabbing behavior condescending. Is he trying to desensitize me to getting touched? Is he trying to tell me I'm not smart enough to be in charge of who gets to touch my body and when?

I wonder if what he calls an affair was not the same thing I would call an affair. My definition includes sneaking off places outside the office to be together, not necessarily always for sex, but sometimes sex. But most of all, in order for it to be an affair, it must be consensual. I do not consider groping behind locked doors in an office setting as an affair.

## Episode 19: Ladies Room Documents

**Why does management get away with sneaking around? Because they hire underlings who are too afraid to question them.**

INT. HALLWAY

Jane opens a meeting room door, peeks out, looks around, steps into the hallway, closes the door quietly behind her. She tiptoes down the hall, enters another door, and quietly closes it.

New Guy sneaks out of the meeting Jane was in and stands in the hallway, talking on his phone.

Barry sneaks out the same door, closes it quietly, tiptoes down the hall.

Tim walks down the hallway, passing Barry, glaring at him and dawdling as he watches Barry go into the same conference room Jane closed herself in. He's disgusted with what he witnesses around here.

### Shooting the Scene

During the walk-through of this scene, I watched the actors on the video camera mini-screen, making sure they were all on camera, so I didn't notice the details of what each person was doing. When I looked away from the camera, I thought I saw Kevin's (Tim's) hand by his nose.

"What are you doing!" I shouted.

"What? I was being in character," Kevin said. "Tim's the kind of guy that would pick his nose."

I was totally not expecting the scene to take that twist. I laughed so hard, I had tears rolling down my face. We did a few more takes. But each successive take got more and more disgusting, eventually upstaging Barry and Jane sneaking into the conference room together. New Guy even says, “I think he found gold.” After a few takes, it just grossed me out. So I didn’t include it in the episode. But you can see it in the outtakes.

## In Real Life

This scene is a reinforcement of a similar scene in Episode 7: What Work. I included the boss slipping in and out of hallways a second time to show that sneaking in and out of conference rooms wasn’t something I had seen only once.

Neither was it something Mr. Friendly had seen only once. Thus following women into a supply room and locking the door was common office behavior to him.

INT. HALLWAY

Lisa enters women’s restroom. She turns back and looks at camera, just shaking her head in disbelief.

## Shooting the Scene

The rough cut of this episode went from sneaking around in hallways straight to a shot of the bathroom floor without any transition. It didn’t make sense. Where in the hell did a tile floor come from?

So I put some brown paper on the door of the bathroom that my husband uses every morning, put my camera on my tripod, and taped myself walking into the bathroom.

I didn’t take the paper off the door for several weeks – I had done such a nice job of wrapping my bathroom door and attaching a sign that said ‘Women’ that I wanted to leave it there in case I saw a use for it in other episodes.

One morning my husband told me, “I’m feeling self-conscious about walking into the women’s room every day.”

A few days later I noticed an extra piece of brown paper on the door. It covered the ‘wo’ of ‘women.’ My husband had converted his bathroom into the men’s room.

INT. RESTROOM STALL

Cheryl’s foot taps at two roaches running across the floor.

CHERYL (OS)

Shoo! Shoo!

Her foot taps and stomps on the bug on Lisa’s side of the stall. Lisa runs her hand under the stall door.

CHERYL (OS)

Lisa, is that you?

LISA (OS)

Hey, Cheryl.

CHERYL (OS)

Very funny.

## **Shooting the Scene**

Ted (Barry), Dave (Charlie), and Anthony (New Guy) hung around in the lobby of this office building while Eli (Jane), Sydney (Cheryl), and I played with toy roaches in the ladies room. I tied them together with a string that Eli pulled across the floor while Sydney tapped her foot in one stall. I stood in the next stall holding the camera in one hand while rubbing the bottom of the stall with the other.

It's too bad I didn't write Jane as a humorous role. Eli is a natural comedian. She kept cracking jokes and doing weird things with the bugs, almost making Sydney and I roll on the floor with the roaches. Ted, Dave, and Anthony threatened to come into the ladies room to find out what was going on.

## **In Real Life**

I've never seen roaches or rats at the workplace, but I've heard stories about other people seeing roaches and rats in several of the buildings I've worked in.

INT. WORKPLACE RESTROOM

We see Lisa's reflection in the restroom mirror. The 'software' box rests next to the sink and is also reflected in the mirror.

The toilet flushes and Cheryl comes out of a stall.

LISA

Just a little senator-from-Idaho humor.

CHERYL

I don't understand why people engage in risky behavior.

LISA

It's not the riskiness of meeting a, uh, sex partner, in a restroom, so much as the weirdness.

CHERYL

I don't know why anyone would do anything risky.

Cheryl leaves. Lisa waits until she's gone, looks at camera.

LISA

I don't think she'd take it too well if I told her what Charlie was up to.

Lisa finds a stack of papers on a counter behind her and flips through them. She looks surprised, intrigued. Omigod! Look what I found!

### **Shooting the Scene**

What in the hell is that weird sideways owl face at the bottom of the screen?

Since I was using the mirror in the shot, I wanted to show viewers the 'software box' that Lisa hid the camera inside. I made a logo that said Owl Simulation Software and taped it to a cereal box. I was going to cut a hole in one of the owl's eyes and have the camera look out the eye.

But the camera didn't sit in the box well enough to look out the owl eye and I ended up putting the owl at the top of the box because I had to cover up the brand of cereal.

With the camera inside the box, I couldn't see the flip screen that showed what was visible in the shot. My biggest concern was to make sure the camera wasn't visible, otherwise the audience would wonder why Cheryl didn't ask what the video camera was doing there.

Turns out that only the very top of the box appeared in the shot. Just this bright white printout of an owl, no text explaining that it was supposed to be a box that software had come in.

Sydney had a swollen sprained ankle the day of the restroom and hallways shoot – by strange coincidence, so did Eli (Jane). Sydney arrived wearing tennis shoes. Since she was coming from work, I assumed she'd be wearing office-appropriate shoes. Normally, we don't see anyone's feet in any of the episodes, so tennis shoes would've been fine. But in this case, Cheryl's shoe was part of the scene. So I stood in the bathroom stall barefoot and gave her my shoe. Even though her foot was swollen, it worked because my shoe was soft and stretchy.

The restroom in which I shot this scene didn't have a counter where a stack of papers could be left behind – if the papers had been left on the sink, Cheryl would've noticed them too. But there was a holder for paper toilet seat covers in view of the mirror, so that ended up being a good place to leave the stack of papers.

The papers that I used for shooting this scene were actually the script for *Budget Justified*. Ironically, I left the script behind in real life, sitting in the toilet

cover holder of the public restroom, and didn't realize it until the next day. I hope whoever found the script was as surprised and intrigued as my Lisa character.

## **In Real Life**

Although several conversations between me and the woman who often came to 'check up' on me (see Episode 4: Flaming Heterosexual) occurred in the restroom, this conversation happened while riding in a van between a meeting at headquarters and our office. The driver had a radio talk show on and the topic of Larry Craig came up.

When she kept repeating her shock over people taking risks, I wanted to say that I couldn't understand how people can get through life in constant fear of taking a risk. But kept my mouth shut because it wasn't as though saying something would light a fire under her to try something new.

She always had good intentions and seemed to want me to feel that I could come to her whenever I needed. However she was obedient to authority, so if I had told her about Mr. Friendly, she would have deemed it her duty to tell someone up a level in the chain of command. Someone who would have the authority to make it difficult for me to continue a career in that field. Either way, she didn't have any power to do anything about Mr. Friendly.

## **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 19**

Cheryl's comment about avoiding risky behavior indicates to me that she's well-suited to remain in the role of government worker for the rest of her life. Don't question authority. Don't call attention to yourself. Don't try new things. Don't change the way things have always been done.

What would Cheryl do if I told her that Charlie's bothering me? She'd tattletale to someone who would give her brownie points for tattling. She'd do whatever The Man tells her to do. And whatever that is, it would keep the managers out of trouble... but not me.

What about the risky behavior of the managers? Sneaking around from office to office can't go on too long without people noticing. Heck, people are already noticing. Barry and Jane are relying on the risk-avoiding attitudes of the staff: nobody wants to engage in risky behavior by tattling on their bosses. So the bosses can get away with whatever they wish. They're entitled to.

Interesting that this is problem traces all the way at the top of the government totem pole. Even a senator from Idaho has the habit of sneaking around for sex, and pulls rank when he's caught. "You can't arrest me. I'm a senator." As though senators aren't required to obey laws.

That's why Charlie thinks it's normal. Hey, if Barry can chase Jane around the office, why can't Charlie chase women around the office? I wonder how Jane feels about being chased. Does she go along with it to be in on the

choicest projects and for access to the information that management doesn't tell the rest of us? Or does she go along with it for fear of retaliation?

## Episode 20: Picking on the Staff

There's lots of proof that management is picking on the staff. And if the staff wants to get out of that situation, they'd better keep track of that proof.

INT. WORKPLACE RESTROOM

Camera focuses close up on documents bound by a binder clip that Lisa found in the previous episode.

LISA (VO above a whisper)  
It's a bunch of email to Alice Bentley.  
One from Yvette, saying that Barry's  
checking up on Alice behind her back.

Lisa turns the page, points at a few key words.

LISA (VO above a whisper)  
Another from Jane. Some cryptic message  
telling Alice that Barry wants her to  
stop working on some unspecified project.

And an email saying that Barry's trying  
to get other staff members to check up on  
Alice. Why doesn't Barry just tell Alice  
himself?

Lisa flips through the remaining pages, skims the red  
comments in the margins.

LISA (VO above a whisper)  
Here's a technical document that Alice  
wrote. Looks like Barry had Jane mark it  
all up saying Alice did a terrible job.  
But it doesn't say anywhere exactly what  
it is that's so bad about the document.

Lisa closes the document.

## Shooting the Scene

This time I didn't used the script of *Budget Justified* as the documents I found in the restroom. I scribbled a bunch of red comments on scrap paper I had lying around the house.

## In Real Life

During the three months I worked in FAA offices, five of the six women older than I either left or were in the process of leaving. They were all very bright, experienced long-time employees.

After everyone else had left work one night, I found a binder over two inches thick, full of email printouts, memos, and other things. I opened it to find out whose it was. I found an email from a female coworker documenting disparaging comments that a manager had made about 'Alice.' The manager harassed the coworker with questions about Alice, kept coming by her office to check up on Alice while she was in meetings, trying to get information that could be used against her. But of course there was no such incriminating information against her. Alice had advanced degrees, over twenty-five years of experience at the FAA, and was well-respected by all of the staff.

I didn't look the rest of the binder too closely. Once I saw the email, not only did I feel like I was snooping, but I thought I'd be better off not knowing what else was in there. Mr. Friendly had mentioned that Alice was trying to get transferred, and was documenting evidence of age discrimination perpetrated by the managers.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie is at his laptop. Lisa enters, flipping through the document.

LISA (above a whisper)  
Look what I found in the restroom.

Lisa hands him the document. Charlie looks at it.

CHARLIE  
This is Alice's documentation. Barry's  
picking on her for every little thing.

LISA  
I haven't met Alice yet.

Lisa looks at Alice's employee profile on her laptop.

INSERT ALICE's picture on the computer screen.



CHARLIE

She's been here over thirty years. Before Barry was hired, she got all sorts of awards. Age discrimination. She's documenting her case.

LISA

I checked her office. It's locked.

Charlie hands the documents back to Lisa.

CHARLIE

Lock this in a drawer and give it to her tomorrow morning.

Lisa sticks the documents in a drawer, turns keys.

LISA

Seems like everyone's mistreated around here.

## **Shooting the Scene**

The picture of 'Alice' that appears in her employee profile was taken on Megashoot Day. She was one of the crew members. She can also be seen walking out of the conference room with the rest of Barry's staff after the All Minds meeting in Episode 30: All Minds Meeting Still Continued, because, as we just showed on the employee profile, she's in Barry's department. Unlike Charlie, she's at the meeting on time. So you know she's not a total slacker.

She isn't in the scene until the very end of the meeting because she sat way in the back. She didn't want to be on camera, as you can tell by the look on her face in the profile picture.

## **In Real Life**

I considered warning management about 'Alice's' documents. I figured I'd get brownie points for doing so. But the binder didn't belong to management. Plus, I was sure that their treatment of 'Alice' would become much more unjust if they had found out about her documentation.

Shortly after I was fired, 'Alice' was transferred.

## **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 20**

Even if I did get temporary brownie points for tattling, it's not likely that Barry would do me any real favors in return. He'd tell me I was a good little girl, smile upon me for a few days, then forget I had kissed his ass whenever it

suited him to forget. Alice is a really nice person. If anyone ever needed a favor, she'd be much more likely to help out than Barry would.

Alice's documentation included a critique of a report Alice had written. But the comments were unconstructive criticism of Alice, without analyzing her work. He didn't specify which project she should stop working on. Perhaps Barry doesn't know which projects she's working on.

Alice doesn't deserve to be treated like a naughty child. What did Alice do to raise the ire of management? Exist as an intelligent woman who is well-liked by the staff?

Alice has been here for decades. She's put up with this type of treatment for so long, she probably expects it. The difference between then and now is that the work environment at other employers – in fields other than engineering – has improved dramatically for women. And just like the FAA's pace of adopting new technology, this office hasn't improved its respect for women.

I suspect that the work environment in many offices isn't as good as they purport. The code phrase "I left to care for family" really means "I was sick and tired of being disrespected for two thirds of my valuable time every day." But it's not politically correct to say the latter.

I put Alice's papers in my desk and locked it so nobody finds it. I don't think anyone has rifled through my desk. Yet. Several years ago a former boss rifled through my desk right in front of me. Wouldn't tell me what he was looking for. He finally walked away when he stumbled across a maxi pad.

## Episode 21: Taking Care of Business

If you're going to conduct your own business ventures outside of the office all evening, that's fine. As long as you show up for work. And by showing up, we mean occupy your chair during business hours. Sleeping in the chair is optional.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie's back is to the door. He rifles through a file drawer.

CHARLIE

Barry can kiss my French ass. And so can George. And tell George to kiss my French ass.

Lisa walks in, taps Charlie on the shoulder. He jumps. Lisa makes shush signals and motions for Charlie to follow her. Charlie shuts up and follows her. Lisa grabs the camera.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Dave (Charlie) ad-libbed several different lines for this segment, basically the same stuff about kissing his ass. It was funny that Dave said George had a French ass, since I gave George a French surname. You'll find out what the surname means when you read about Episode 26: Gone Golfing.

### **In Real Life**

One of my coworkers occasionally made jokes about telling people to kiss his [ethnic] ass. It was an imitation of some comedian I'm not familiar with.

INT. TIM'S OFFICE

A big pile of papers covers every inch of the desk with a paper airplane on top. An old junky clock says 2:00.

Tim's sleeping on his desk pile. Charlie walks in, picks up his arm, it flops back onto the desk. Loud snore.

CHARLIE (to camera/Lisa)  
Not my job to monitor him.

Charlie puts the paper airplane on top of Tim. Lisa enters the view, puts a stack of papers on Tim, starts folding more paper airplanes.

INSERT Charlie turns the clock to 11:00.

CUT TO Tim, covered in a pile of folders and paper airplanes as if he were an extension of his messy desk.

Lisa and Charlie walk out, slam the noisy, squeaky door.

Tim wakes up with a jolt, paper airplanes fly everywhere. He looks at his clock and freaks out. Tim runs out of the office, knocking papers off his desk, chair hits the floor.

## Shooting the Scene

Originally, the scene ended after Charlie's line. Dave suggested putting the clock in there, advancing the time, then turning off the lights and slamming the door on the way out. The part about turning off the lights didn't happen at any of my jobs. It happened in a class Dave took.

Note I didn't write anything about sucking thumbs. While Kevin (Tim) sleeps, he sucks his thumb. That was his idea. Hilarious!

## In Real Life

I occasionally threw paper airplanes at my coworkers in nearby cubicles. Seemed like a requirement for working at the FAA.

There was a young contractor who slept at his desk more often than not. We should've turned out all the lights and left him there.

Coincidentally, Kevin previously starred in a commercial for a mattress retailer. In the commercial, Kevin sleeps at his desk when his boss wakes him by yelling, he jumps up, hits his head, and is knocked out.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie enter, laughing like crazy, trying not to make any noise. We hear Tim stomping and yelling while running down the hallway.

TIM (OS)

My wife's gonna kill me! Wha, why's the sun still out at eleven o'clock at night?

Charlie and Lisa laugh even harder.

CHARLIE

He's starting his own business on the side. Throwing big parties with his buddies. Had one last night. DJ, security guards, plenty of alcohol. And lots of hot women. They charge people to come, keep some money for themselves, give the rest to charity.

LISA

Maybe that's why he doesn't always show up for work. He's making arrangements for the parties.

CHARLIE

Either that or sleeping off the hangovers.

## **Shooting the Scene**

Kevin wasn't in the studio when we shot this segment. His nap and subsequent yelling and screaming were recorded earlier and edited in. When we shot this clip, Dave ranted about his French ass, then we walked off screen, then turned around and walked back on camera, fake-laughing. I guess that's why television and movie characters don't laugh much.

## **In Real Life**

A young FAA employee and his friends occasionally threw huge parties to raise money for charity, went to bars to find attractive young women to sell tickets to, and kept some of the profit as a bonus. He usually didn't come in to work the Friday before the party, and sometimes didn't come in the following Monday either.

Like everyone else, he didn't have much work to do. He may have been spending some of his time at work arranging these lavish parties. Whenever he was in a meeting, he'd get a personal call on his cell phone and walk out. Even if there were high level managers present at the meeting.

I figured that when the young man didn't show up to work, he was out making party arrangements. It would've been more effort for the managers to force him to show up to the office, so they didn't say much about it to him. After all, his absence wasn't affecting the managers. The taxpayers give them money either way.

## **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 21**

What would Barry have thought if he'd snuck up behind Charlie while he was cussing in the office? It's so rare for Barry to come down our hallway, Charlie probably figured there was little chance Barry would hear him.

What would happen if I slept in my office? I'd get someone's hand on my ass. As a woman, I need to be alert every hour I'm not in my own house.

Perhaps nobody bothers Tim about sleeping in his office because they've already given up on him. Because Tim has given up on them.

I wonder how much time Tim spends arranging parties while he's at work. Since he doesn't have any projects or goals to work on, it's easy to spend time working on goals outside the office. I wonder how many other people in the office spend the majority of their time on personal business.

Another reason why I'm concerned about coworkers finding out about my novel. If other coworkers spend time on outside goals while at work, and they see that I have a non-work-related goal, they may assume I'm spending time at work doing non-work-related things. Not only am I discouraged from having work-related goals, I'm discouraged from having outside goals. As though I'm a hostage to my job because others abuse their work time.

One of these days, the wrong person – or perhaps the right person – will find Tim sleeping in his office and the rest of us will get punished. Because they'll institute a new policy that affects the people trying to do real work. It'll become our job to monitor each other. We won't be able to go to the restroom without a babysitter. But these policies won't affect the people who don't care.

## Episode 22: French Affairs

**Charlie locks Yvette in his office and talks dirty in French.**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie works on his laptop as Lisa enters. Charlie points at his screen.

CHARLIE

Could you help me with a few things in this document?

Lisa sits in Charlie's guest chair.

CHARLIE

I already got some comments from Yvette. I got these comments too.

Lisa points at Charlie's screen.

LISA

Who's Diane?

CHARLIE (lowers voice)

She's the one I fooled around with

Charlie makes a lewd gesture.

CHARLIE

when we worked in the other office. Who works at headquarters now. I asked her for comments too.

LISA

So you value her opinion.

Charlie nods.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

Strange. We hear what Lisa's wondering:

LISA (VO)

Hmm. Diane, me, and Yvette. What does he think is going on between himself and Yvette?

### **Shooting the Scene**

I wasn't expecting Dave (Charlie) to make such a commotion with his lewd gesture. You may notice that I'm holding back a giggle while he grunts and jerks around.

It looks like Charlie's screen is black. That's because it is. I didn't want to plug it in because there were already so many cords draped all over the place and we didn't have enough nearby outlets. That laptop was seven years old and the battery no longer worked. Nobody needed to see the text of Charlie's email, so a blank screen was representative of the amount of work Charlie does.

### **In Real Life**

Mr. Friendly was applying for other jobs within the FAA and asked me to look at his application. He told me he also showed it to the woman with whom he had an affair, along with another woman in our office. He usually spoke with that other woman in a foreign language. I often wondered what they talked about.

I also wondered if he had tried anything inappropriate with her. One time I even asked him if he had tried to fool around with her.

"She's too young," he replied.

That's the reason? How about the fact that he was married. Of course, he may have still tried fooling around with her regardless.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie and Yvette sit at Charlie's desk having an animated conversation in French. Charlie eats from a box of raisins on his desk.

YVETTE

(I already briefed Barry on the analysis. He didn't want to hear anything about my results.)

J'ai déjà un compte rendu de l'analyse à Barry. Il ne voulait pas entendre quoi que ce soit de mes résultats.

CHARLIE

(Typical Barry. Demands results, but doesn't want to know what they are.)

Typique Barry. Il veut des résultats, mais il ne veut pas savoir ce qu'ils sont.

Charlie holds up the raisin box.

CHARLIE

(Would you like some raisins?)

Voulez vous des raisins secs?

YVETTE

(I love raisins.)

J'aime les raisins secs.

Charlie pours raisins in her hand, cupping his hand under hers, catching one that falls. She eats a few. A few fall on the floor.

YVETTE

(Oops.)

Pardon.

CHARLIE

(You're leaving rodent droppings.)

Tu laisses des crottes de souris.

They giggle.

Knock at door. Charlie & Yvette look at door but don't move.

LISA (VO)

Charlie, let me in. (pause) Why's the door locked?



Pause, more knocking. Yvette punches Charlie, who still sits there.

LISA (VO)  
Charlie? What are you doing in there?  
C'mon. It's my office too.

More knocking. Charlie ignores Lisa. Yvette's too meek to do anything - after all, it's not her office.

LISA (VO)  
Charlie, stop goofing around.

### **Shooting the Scene**

In the casting call for Yvette, I had listed French language skills as an asset, but not a requirement. I didn't expect to find anyone who actually could speak French. I don't know how I got so lucky, but Laura (Yvette) speaks French. However Dave does not. He read phonetically from a cue card for this scene. Without any previous rehearsal! But he looked totally natural and sounded amazingly fluent, at least to my un-French-trained ear.

On Megashoot Day we blew through every scene as fast we could. This was the only scene I wasn't in until the end of the day. So I got a snack and changed clothes. Dave and Laura were on their own with nothing to go on besides what I had written in the script. The cameraman and assistant hadn't looked at the script. I wasn't there to knock on the door and yell at Charlie, so the cameraman and assistant were left wondering why Dave and Laura sat there eating raisins in silence with strange looks on their faces.

They finished the scene as I returned. I didn't know how it turned out until I uploaded the footage to my computer the next day. I laugh every time I watch Charlie giving Yvette the evil look. The scenes that I'm not in are the best. Is that because I suck, or is it because I like watching the other actors but watching myself...not so much.

### **In Real Life**

Nobody spoke French in my office on a regular basis. Mr. Friendly and the young woman spoke a different foreign language. I wanted to use French in this scene because the *voulez vous* part sounds like the *risqué* line in the *Lady Marmalade* song, and raisins in French sounds like "raisin sex."

I knew several words in the foreign language that Mr. Friendly spoke, but nowhere near enough to ever have a clue what they were talking about. Their relationship seemed benign to me. But I'm sure my relationship with Mr. Friendly also seemed benign to everyone else.

## Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 22

When my interaction with Charlie revolves around work-appropriate activities, everything goes fine. He seems to value my input on his work.

I find it interesting that he sent his document to me, the woman he had an affair with, and Yvette. Apparently he has some degree of respect for our intellect, whether consciously or unconsciously. In fact, at some emotional level, he feels a need for us. Perhaps Charlie himself is the person for whom he has little respect.

The woman with whom Charlie claims to have had an affair sent him an email in response, so she must still be on good terms with him. I'm not sure why he told me her identity. Maybe he needs someone to talk to. Or maybe he thinks that if he tells me secrets, I'll be more likely to let him feel me up. He hasn't had good relationships throughout most of his life. As a result, he's developed poor relationship skills. He probably views an affair as no big deal, something that everyone in the office does.

He doesn't know how to express friendship with a woman without being physical. I'm glad I've had several friendships with men, built on respect, that were models for how to build a professional friendship. Charlie needs examples of appropriate professional relationships.

## Episode 23: Management Doesn't Want to See Our Work

*When Charlie's ignored by management professionally, he'd rather spend his time unprofessionally.*

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie and Yvette chatter. Lisa works peacefully at her desk. Barry and George walk in, Barry ignores everyone and fumbles with his Blackberry. Yvette gets up and ducks out the door.

BARRY (to Charlie)

Are you done with that study yet?

CHARLIE

Yeah. The productivity increased.  
Controllers would be able to handle twice  
as many aircraft. See?

Charlie hands him a report off his desk. Barry waves his hands at the report and covers his ears.

BARRY

Aa-aa! I did not hear you say that. This study never happened. Do NOT talk about this study to anyone. Ever.

Barry and George leave, but make a point of taking candy from the bowl first. Lisa watches them, then watches Charlie. He seems as though nothing happened, just the same-old same-old.

LISA

He asks you to do a study, but he doesn't want the results.

CHARLIE

If those weren't the results he wanted, he should've told me what the results were supposed to be beforehand. Like he usually does.

Lisa shakes her head in disapproval. Charlie turns his laptop around so Lisa can see.

CHARLIE

What do you think of this algorithm I programmed?

INSERT animation of computer-separated aircraft.

CHARLIE (OS)

A controller could never do this.

LISA

This is good. The guys I used to work with invented a great system to automate separation. But the government never used it.

CHARLIE

All the advances in video games and entertainment technology, and we're still using air traffic control from the '50's.

LISA

Controllers do the decision-making that humans do well. And computers should do

the tedious computation that computers do well.

CHARLIE

There was an automation test project at the airport in Dallas. They landed those babies so fast. Controllers loved it.

Then the union said what if management compared controllers to the computer. The union ordered that system shut down so fast. Nobody ever used it again.

LISA

I have a report about that project. CTAS, right?

Lisa gets up and looks through her bookshelf (where the camera is sitting). Charlie gets, up, walks behind her, stands behind Lisa and puts his hands on her shoulders. She wiggles away.

Lisa pulls out (gets handed) a copy of a report off the 'bookshelf.' Charlie puts hands on Lisa's hips. She takes them off, but he puts them back. She walks away from his hands and out of the office.

CHARLIE (shouts out the door)

Hey. I didn't lock the door this time.

## Shooting the Scene

Sometimes the way I imagine things as I'm typing a script doesn't look the same on camera. Since the camera was at shoulder level in the 'software box' on the 'bookshelf,' my hips weren't on camera at the end of the scene. It didn't make sense to put Dave's (Charlie's) hands on my hips. We decided to have him put his hands on my shoulders, which wasn't as offensive. That's just as well. The groping theme gets shoved down your throat throughout enough of the other *Budget Justified* episodes, although less so in the movie version.

Dave's facial expression, with his tongue visible and gaze below Lisa's neck, makes the shoulder rub seem somewhat offensive, though slightly cartoonish. That was OK, except I don't want to represent Charlie as the stereotypical pig. Because no one ever is.

## In Real Life

Whenever I needed to get away from Mr. Friendly, I'd head for the women's restroom. I knew he wouldn't go in there during work hours. Most of the time when Mr. Friendly entered my cubicle, he did so to gossip. However, on the three or four occasions where he quietly snuck up and stuck his hands on me, I quietly grabbed his hands and moved them away. Of course, he put his hands right back on me. Then I walked off and headed for the restroom.

There was a department at Former Employer that had a reputation for giving the FAA predetermined results. In fact, at an All Hands meeting, one of the company leaders got up and told everyone that the FAA was pleased with their projects because they wanted to spend money on something, Congress questioned it, when our company did an 'impartial' analysis, our results 'coincidentally' showed that the FAA should spend the money the way they wanted. Coincidence my ass.

The FAA kept asking for studies, giving shorter and shorter deadlines each time. And each time, Predetermined-Results Department would say OK, giving them results with less and less analysis behind the studies. They didn't bother telling the FAA they were asking for an unreasonable amount of work for the deadline allotted. I suspect the FAA didn't care that not much analysis would be done on these studies.

One of the staff members asked the company leader, "What's the risk of misleading the FAA with all these quick-result analyses?"

"We have enough chips to prevent hurting our credibility," the leader answered with a smile.

Chips? The staff had been shown a training video a few days earlier in which the speaker made a big deal about building rapport with coworkers. The video said that every time you do something to help another, it's like putting poker chips in your account with that person. If you do something to make them angry, you're taking chips away.

A curt response about chips was an inexcusably fluffy answer to a serious question. Essentially, the manager was saying, It doesn't matter if we screw up because we've been kissing FAA management's asses for so long.

Besides, the FAA wasn't looking for studies that weren't misleading. They were commissioning studies that were misleading. The FAA wanted those results so they could mislead Congress.

I don't know why the company leader even mentioned that project. Everyone knew it was a crock. The Predetermined-Results Department didn't fool the rest of us. Unfortunately, during a re-org, I got traded to that department. They should've known better. I wasn't even allowed to work on those Predetermined-Results projects. The reason they told me was that the manager of the Predetermined-Results projects "doesn't like to be questioned."

One of the guys who worked for Huge Contractor did a study on the response times of an office when it was staffed by FAA employees and then after it was taken over by a contractor (a competitor to Huge Contractor). The

results showed that the response times went down by around 99.75 percent. One four-hundredth of the time!

“What made the FAA employees so much slower?” I asked.

“They’d sit around yakking with each other and wouldn’t answer the phones or read alerts,” one of my coworkers told me. “People had to call back later. The contractors were told they’d be fired if they didn’t answer phones on the first ring.”

The guy who did the study wrote up a report and showed the results to management at Huge Contractor and at the FAA. The FAA director didn’t ever want to see that report again nor did he ever want anyone else to see that report. Of course not. The report said that letting a contractor replace FAA offices was orders of magnitude more efficient than continuing to have the FAA managers lord over their offices. The more offices the contractors take over, the more FAA managers lose their fiefdoms.

CTAS is a real project that coworkers talked about, pretty much in the way Charlie described it. A great implementation of an idea that everyone loved. But the controllers union leaders shut it down because it didn’t serve their interests.

One of my coworkers came up with an algorithm to have a computer calculate aircraft separation near an airport terminal. Nobody had any interest in showing that to the controllers union. They knew there’d be no point.

### **Lisa’s Character Blog for Episode 23**

Apparently our office isn’t the only one within the FAA where management tells the staff to quit working on a perfectly worthwhile project. I heard about CTAS while I worked for Former Employer. The management and the staff were always trying to come up with technical solutions to solve political problems.

If Barry wants Charlie to quit working on the project, it must be because Charlie’s results don’t prove that Barry should ask Congress for more money. Or the results make someone else’s department look better, which would result in them getting the money Barry wants. Performance metrics here don’t reward truth. They reward making the other guy look bad.

Charlie is helpful when asked and fun to joke around with. Would the guys in this office be in denial if they found out he was attacking me in the office? Most guys have the stereotypical view of a sexual harasser as a guy who goes around the office making crude comments, unbuttons his shirt, wears gold chains, and grabs all the women while the men watch. But that would be too obvious. He wouldn’t be able to get away with it if he advertised that he groped women.

I don’t think Charlie started out at the FAA as a bad guy. The situation in this office isn’t any better for him. He sees management getting away with shenanigans, so it’s a cultural norm for him, and everyone else in the office, to misbehave.

Check out what's going on in your office. Your sexual harasser might be the great guy down the hall, maybe a little goofy, who helps everyone out and is easy to get along with.

## Episode 24: Four More Months

Management affects what gets done (or doesn't get done) and how the staff treat each other. Why hasn't Lisa gone around blabbing about what Charlie's been doing: poor management. Why isn't anything getting done around here: poor management. Why is everyone's career hell: poor management.

INT. LISA & BRIAN'S KITCHEN  
Lisa talks at the camera.

LISA  
Just four more months. Then I'll be permanent with the contractor and I can report him. But report to whom? Cheryl?

Insert shot of Cheryl telling Lisa to wait for the all hands meeting (Episode 3: Copy Man).

LISA  
She's very competent. But ineffective.  
George...

Insert shot of George following Barry around (Episode 4: Flaming Heterosexual).

LISA  
Kisses up too much.  
Barry?

Insert scene of Barry insulting Charlie (Episode 23: Management Doesn't Want To See Our Work).

LISA  
Passive aggressive.  
Jane?

Insert footage of Jane sneaking around in a hallway (Episode 7: What Work).

LISA

Ha.

Yvette's too shy.

Insert scene of Yvette cowering (Episode 23: Management Doesn't Want To See Our Work).

LISA

Tim doesn't care.

Insert scene of Tim sleeping (Episode 21: Taking Care of Business).

LISA (VO)

Plus, Tim's good friends with Charlie.

Lisa talks at the camera.

LISA

HR? The only time I talked to them was about getting a badge for access to the building. They screamed at me to stop bothering them.

Everyone else in the office is doing something just as bad as Charlie. Or worse. I'm sure if I complain about the way anyone in the office acts, they'll tell me I'm free to leave.

## **Shooting the Scene**

This is one of the kitchen scenes not written into the first draft of the script. Since I'd never produced a movie before, I had no idea if I had the resources to get it done. I wasn't sure if actors would disappear for better opportunities before we shot all their scenes. So I started taping as soon as I had a draft, cleaning up each of the subsequent scenes before the next shoot.

After a scene was taped, there was no rewriting. I wasn't going to ruin the good will of the actors by asking them to keep coming back every time I rewrote something, making them wonder if the project would ever be over. Of course, now that I've seen the footage of the entire *Budget Justified* web series, if I were



going to do it again, I'd rewrite at least half of the script. I suppose that's why remakes of movies are worth doing. It can always be done better.

By the time it occurred to me to include the incident where one of the FAA employees screamed at me about my access badge, most of the scenes had already been completed. I would've liked to include a scene of Jane screaming at me in a bizarre unjustified rage. Much more dramatic than me being a talking head about it in my kitchen.

This episode should have been a conversation between Lisa and Brian, to complement the other scenes where Lisa and her husband hang out at home. However Andy (Brian) lives over fifty miles away. I didn't want to ask him to return to shoot a two minute scene every other day just because I had a bad hair day. I like the idea of Lisa having a few conversations with just the audience, to make them feel like Lisa's doing this for them as participants, not just observers.

My reviewers expressed frustration that Lisa wasn't reporting Charlie to his superiors. This surprised me because I thought everyone knew that women are more often punished for reporting harassment than the harassers are punished for committing harassment. I hadn't realized that the subtle but important point of *Budget Justified*, that management and their debauchery was the root of the problems in this office, was masked by Charlie's debauchery. Charlie wouldn't even be acting this way if he felt he had a role within the organization.

I needed to hit viewers over the head a little more with the office atmosphere, and hit people over the head less about Charlie's antics. Make the viewers question what good would reporting Charlie do. In the movie version, I deleted most of the groping scenes and got rid of Episode 18: Charlie's Affair altogether.

It's understandable that Barry, who represents higher management, would not be immediately interpreted as the antagonist. Because he's a passive-aggressive antagonist. Passive-aggressive conflict is difficult to write well. The conflict of *Budget Justified* is created by Barry, however it's experienced through the staff's mistreatment of each other as a result of Barry's passive-aggressive leadership.

## In Real Life

The first job I had out of my bachelor's degree lasted three months. The tasks they gave me were to type memos and enter charge numbers into a spreadsheet. When I went to one of the bosses to ask for more responsibility, he couldn't think of anything else I could work on.

"Why don't we just make tomorrow your last day," was his conclusion.

I was flabbergasted. I wasn't sure if he was even high enough up to make that kind of decision. But I should have known better. The lower level managers were hiring and firing people left and right. After I thought about it for an hour, I was just glad he didn't scream at me, like he did to the CAD guys three times a week. If that's how they treated their employees, it would've been a mistake to go to the higher bosses begging for my job back.

On the first day of work for one of the new guys hired by Huge Contractor, an FAA employee took him to get his card for access to our building and asked me to come along so I could inquire about the status of mine. The meeting went pretty much like this:

“Hi, this is New Guy,” our colleague introduced him. “We came to pick up his access card.”

“Nice to meet you, New Guy. Welcome to the FAA. Here’s your card.” A woman gave him his card, then our colleague introduced me.

“Hi, this is Lisa...”

“If you want access to the building, you need to go to someone else! Your paperwork is being held up by the director! Don’t talk to me about it!!!” Uh, nice to meet you too.

I’m not exaggerating.

Our colleague was a really nice person, but was too quiet – and shocked – to defend me. I tried defending myself, explaining that even though I’d been there over a month, I had never come to her before, and didn’t deserve to be attacked. Of course logic had no place in her world, so my response only incited more yelling from her. So we walked off without my badge.

Does the FAA always put more effort into accommodating men than women, regardless of relative level of experience? The encounter was so strange, I suspected the woman had mental issues.

I worked there almost two months before I was free to come and go to work on my own. I couldn’t go to meetings in nearby buildings, or even on other floors, without prior arrangements for a way to get back onto our floor. I couldn’t even leave the building for lunch. I was trapped.

I didn’t have Columbus Day off because the subcontractor I worked for didn’t offer that as a holiday. But everyone else in the office – FAA employees and contractors – had the day off. Plus, I wasn’t allowed to take vacation until I had been there for ninety days. Since I didn’t have an access card and nobody else was going to be in the building, I had to charge time and stay at home reading stuff. I didn’t have permission to telecommute either, but I wasn’t going to ride the Metro for forty minutes to sit in front of the building all day – which one of the managers offered as a serious suggestion, in case a security guard happened to come by and let me in. Wouldn’t that have been quite a *Budget Justified* scene – me sitting in front of a locked building, reading an FAA document for eight hours.

## **Lisa’s Character Blog for Episode 24**

After I completed my Ph.D., I moved myself and my husband across the country thousands of miles from our family, for what I thought might be an opportunity to do something important for society. Instead, my bosses and coworkers are wasting my time, my career, and my life playing childish games. I’m spending my mental efforts on ways to protect myself from social, career,

financial, and physical harm when I could be out writing my novel and inventing technologies.

Charlie says I think too much. The truth is, I'm a much better problem solver than he is used to dealing with. Maybe he needs to analyze a little more. I don't think he can project a year into the future as well as I can. He lives in the moment without thinking of consequences.

Whatever is going on above Barry must be at least as dysfunctional as what goes on within this office. Such as the kickbacks that were being taken by the last Department of Transportation office I worked in. There must be reasons why Barry runs the department as he does. There's always a bigger context behind every person's actions. Which makes me think that the problem is above Barry. Even if Barry wants us to think that he's all-powerful over us.

## Episode 25: Tim Walks In on a Dirty Secret

*Tim shuts up and walks away when he sees Charlie whispering to Lisa.*

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie work on their computers.

CHARLIE

I have a dirty secret.

Lisa looks at him. He motions her over, but she doesn't move. Charlie sighs, goes and sits in her guest chair.

MID SHOT. Charlie whispers in her ear.

CHARLIE

Three pigs fell in the mud.

Charlie laughs, Lisa rolls her eyes, smiles. The smile is scared from his face as Charlie looks up.

WIDE SHOT. Tim stands over them, shocked. He leaves. Lisa and Charlie look at each other.

CHARLIE

What was that about?

Lisa shrugs, goes into the hallway.

LISA (OS)

Tim, come back.

Tim and Lisa return to the office.

CHARLIE

Did you want something?

TIM

I was, uh, going for a walk.

CHARLIE

Why'd you leave?

TIM

You were looking at each other funny.

LISA

Charlie was telling me secrets. Worse than an old lady. Stick around.

Charlie walks out. Lisa motions to Tim to have a seat and shows him her Perfect Airspace slides. Tim sits.

MID SHOT. Lisa points back and forth to Tim and her.

LISA

We're going to a simulation software training course in a few weeks. We could use that software to analyze my Perfect Airspace.

TIM

Perfect Airspace?

LISA

My idea to figure out how many aircraft could go through New York. On a perfect day.

TIM

We had a girl here who got fired for trying to come up with solutions.

## Shooting the Scene

I almost freaked when Kevin (Tim) said ‘girl’ instead of ‘woman.’ I’m not a girl! I’ve been an adult for over twenty years.

Originally I had written ‘woman’ in the script. Luckily, before I corrected him, I realized that Tim’s character would’ve said ‘girl,’ not ‘woman.’ Kevin knew his character better than I did.

In the outtake during the closing credits for this episode, I’m acting much stiffer than usual. We had only one camera that day, so between scene cuts, the cameraman had to zoom in for a closer shot. My posture and facial expression after the cut had to match whatever I was doing before the cut. The outtake was taken during the zoom, so I was trying not to move.

The cameraman told us to start over at the part where someone did a thing with an arm. Had someone been doing something with their arm? I had no idea what he was talking about. I wanted to say as few words as possible, without changing my facial expression, so my question came out all baffled-sounding as, “Who’s doing a thing with an arm?” with this stupefied blank look on my face.

## In Real Life

During one of Mr. Friendly’s gossip sessions, as I leaned forward, resting on my elbows pressed into my thighs, looking toward the floor, a coworker silently entered Mr. Friendly’s cubicle. He said nothing and left. I didn’t see the coworker because my back was to him the whole while.

After the coworker left, Mr. Friendly called him and asked what he wanted. “I was going for a walk,” he said.

Going for a walk? In the office? Eh, why not. I thought that was so amusing that I wandered into the coworker’s office several times over the following week and told him I was going for a walk.

“Why did you leave?” I asked.

“You guys were looking at each other funny.”

I’m not sure if Mr. Friendly was looking at me funny. I wasn’t looking at him at all. Maybe it wasn’t as much what he saw, but that the coworker suspected Mr. Friendly was scaring off the women and he didn’t want to be a witness to whatever Mr. Friendly might be up to.

An FAA employee who was approaching retirement kept talking about potential firings. Occasionally he mentioned firings in the context of a law that said federal employees couldn’t get fired due to a Reduction In Force (RIF) if they were within a certain number of years of retirement. This law was implemented to protect federal employees from being denied their retirement benefits by spiteful managers.

Because of all the hiring going on in that office regardless of the lack of tasks or goals to work on, the about-to-retire employee was concerned that there would be a RIF in the near future. It was a valid concern. The older, long-term employees were left out of the loop much more often than the younger

employees. Perhaps because the younger managers didn't know how to manage older, more experienced staff members.

I wondered why he seemed so paranoid about the topic. Had several people been fired from that office? Nobody had mentioned that firings had happened. But there was a lot of turnover in that office.

There was a joke running through the office that people got in trouble for coming up with solutions. Because every time someone got close to solving something, they were told to quit working on it. And one contractor was banned from working on projects for this office. Nobody would tell him why. Everyone he had asked told him he did great work. Maybe that was the problem.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 25**

Even though I don't always believe things Charlie tells me, I'm often curious about what he has to say. He's my main source of office information. Sometimes I try to ignore Charlie, hoping he'll go away. But I'm worried he takes the silence as an unspoken agreement that it's OK to bother me.

It's scary that a woman got fired for coming up with solutions. Fired for competence. People who are good at what they do are threats.

Tim is always talking about people getting fired. Is that a common occurrence in this office? Several other coworkers have talked about people leaving this office. The reasons are unclear, but no one else used the word 'fired.' Maybe several people have been fired, but everyone else is being politically correct about discussing those former coworkers.

Tim better not call me a girl. I'm over eighteen and finished college three times. Is that what we are to these guys, a bunch of high school girls hanging around the office to be their cheerleaders while they get all the promotions and raises?

## **Episode 26: Gone Golfing**

**Don't bother telling the managers about solutions because they're out playing games.**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

INSERT Animation of aircraft flying around chaotically, labeled 'Chaos' on left side of screen; versus aircraft flying around orderly, labeled 'Order' on the right side.

LISA (VO)

If you schedule the airspace, you reduce chaos.

INSERT Screen shot of 1940's cars on a road.

LISA (VO)

Unscheduled airspace was fine - in the 1940's - when there wasn't much air traffic.

INSERT Traffic congestion on I-66: tail lights backed up, barely moving.

LISA (VO)

But these days there's too much traffic to still do air traffic control the same way we've always done it since the '40's.

INSERT Animation of flowing traffic.

LISA (VO)

If we organize the flows, we reduce delays.

TIM

What're you showing me for? You should ask Barry.

LISA

He doesn't even want to see the work he tells us to do.

TIM

You're right. Don't bother. This airspace scheduling will never happen.

LISA

I figure if the staff buy into it, the concept won't go away. I should at least figure out potential benefits.

TIM

Did you show it to George yet?

LISA

No. Let's go show him.

Lisa gets up.

TIM

He isn't in.

She sits back down.

LISA

Where is he?

TIM

Playing golf.

LISA

Like a meeting on a golf course?

TIM

No. Like nothing better to do on a golf course.

LISA

Come on. He's not gonna go play golf when he's supposed to be at work.

TIM

Does it all the time.

LISA

I don't believe you. And they didn't fire him?

TIM

They don't fire managers. When they get mad, they fire the staff.

### **Shooting the Scene**

I didn't like the way I talked about the Perfect Airspace slides during the shoot, so I rerecorded myself later. It's not easy to talk about slides and still sound interesting on video. It's slightly better in a real meeting. You pay attention to what's going on in the room in a meeting differently than you do when watching a movie.

In a meeting, you're not just passively watching electronic slides in front of you. You're looking for people's reactions, the questions they ask, and you



listen for an opportunity to engage in discussion. At least I hope the meetings were interesting, for the sake of the coworkers who sat in my cubicle listening to me talk about Perfect Airspace.

When Kevin (Tim) goofed up his lines, he always stays in character, probably because his character is a goof-up. When describing where George was he said, “He’s got nothing better to do so he’s out playing golf with nothing better to do.” Yeah, that’s about right. So I used that in the outtakes.

## In Real Life

The guys I worked with at both Former Employer and in FAA offices often complained that we did the same projects over and over again, with different project titles, because nobody paid attention to the results the first time around. Or the second time around. Or the third... They complained that we were proposing the same solutions that had been presented over ten years ago.

Another common discussion was that there’d been no significant advances in air traffic control since the 1940’s. And that the FAA was still using machines built in the 1960’s to do it.

One of the FAA managers kept golf clubs in his office. He was frequently absent, although I never checked to see if his golf clubs were also absent. Several of my coworkers said he spent most of the summer on the golf course. Nobody, not even his bosses, could find him. He had a Blackberry, so I’m not sure why they couldn’t get in touch with the guy.

Another coworker occasionally brought golf clubs to work, like a way of trying to get in tight with the golfing manager – Lookie what I like to do too – in hopes of getting invited to skip work.

Some of the FAA staff were also missing while the manager was out playing golf. The other managers occasionally complained when staff members went missing, but not much.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GEORGE’S OFFICE

INSERT George, wearing a polo shirt and plaid shorts, leaving his office with golf clubs. Baby announcement on his door. Kid’s name: Barry.

## Shooting the Scene

I don’t own golf clubs. I asked the cast and crew if one of them could bring a bag of clubs on Megashoot Day. Brian (George) happened to own a set and volunteered to bring them. I’m glad he did. This was the very last scene we shot on that long, grueling day and everyone left after they finished their last scene. I’m glad nobody had to wait around for their golf clubs.

Since we see George’s name on his door in this scene, I had to make up a last name for him. I chose “Nezbruner” because “nez” is French for nose and “bruner” is French for brown. A term describing the way many people got into lower management positions.

## In Real Life

Incredulous, Brian asked me if someone actually named their first-born child after their boss. I know how preposterous this sounds, but I am not making things up. Funny thing is, the woman who named her first-born after her boss no longer works there. I hope she didn't change the kid's name to that of her current boss.

## Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 26

Some of the guys have asked what in the hell could I possibly be working on. I told them that I've already developed my own project. I haven't even been here two months yet. I'm mentioning it to everyone who stops by, hoping I can get someone interested enough to help out. The newer guys feel lost; they don't know what they're supposed to be working on at all. Perfect Airspace is something they could contribute to.

Unfortunately, nobody knows what results in brownie points, so it's possible that people won't want to spend their time on something that none of their many bosses told them to do.

I know this chaos vs. order stuff sounds too mathematical, too theoretical. Like most of the stuff that comes out of the mouths of Ph.D.s. But I'm working toward something that has a practical application. I'll use a real computer program with real data to calculate real results and make real recommendations. It's going to take a lot of effort to get somewhere with it. Because it is a complex, complicated problem. But it's a real problem.

Tim's not the only person in the office who has mentioned that the managers go out to play golf. That must be why Charlie feels he can disappear to 'headquarters.' Why not? We don't miss him when he's gone and we don't miss the bosses when they disappear. Why should the staff stick around? The staff is just following the example of the leadership.

## Episode 27: Billion Dollar Coffee

The ultimate kiss-ass. You can't buy coffee for your boss, but you can name your first-born after him. An incentive not to bring more people into this world.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa's at her desk. Tim enters, finger in mouth, like he's gagging on something big.

LISA  
What's wrong with you?

Tim keeps gagging uncontrollably.

LISA  
Oh. You must have seen what George named  
his firstborn son.

Tim nods, gags even more.

LISA  
What would he have named it if he had a  
girl?

TIM  
Barryina. Barryanne. Raspbarry.

Tim makes a raspberry pllll noise and sits in Lisa's  
guest chair.

Jane walks in, jovial. Tim continues to make  
raspberry noise at her. Jane blows him off and talks  
to Lisa.

JANE  
Going to the lunch after the All Hands  
meeting?

LISA  
Yeah, should be fun to hang out with the  
whole gang.

JANE  
Eight bucks.

Jane holds out her hand. Lisa's confused.

JANE  
I'm going around the office collecting  
everyone's money.

LISA  
My email said lunch was provided.

JANE

The feds are covering lunch for their people. Not for contractors.

Lisa goes through her wallet and gives Jane \$8.

JANE

Thank ya very much.

Jane leaves. Tim mocks her as she leaves.

LISA

Man, our company nickels and dimes us for everything. We pay for water because water from the tap has lead. We pay for coffee...

TIM

Contractors can't buy feds a cup of coffee, feds can't buy contractors a cup of coffee.

LISA

What's the big deal about coffee?

TIM

Congress says too much influence. They're worried if I buy feds coffee, they'll give me billion dollar no-bid contracts.

LISA

But lobbyists can buy Congresspersons a trip to the Bahamas.

TIM

Exactly. Lobbyists buy Congressmen.

LISA

And contractors put a hundred grand in the fed's Swiss bank accounts.

TIM

Not legally.

LISA

Ah, well that must be why my former boss got five years in the slammer.

TIM

That really happened?

Lisa nods.

TIM

Don't tell Barry. He'll fire you.

Lisa rolls her eyes.

TIM

Lisa, you've got it easy. You can quit, stay home with babies.

LISA

Why would I want to do that? I don't have babies. Why don't you quit and stay home with babies?

TIM

That's what my wife's for.

## **Shooting the Scene**

Holy cow, I did not expect Kevin to spit all over everything for this episode. Great for outtakes. I laughed so hard I cried after replaying the outtakes for this episode. You've gotta go online (<http://BudgetJustified.com>) to watch this episode if for nothing else, to make fun of the outtakes.

I thought Kevin would've been more subtle – just one small raspberry. Then he came into the scene making a scene. Annoyed the hell out of me during the shoot. But it would've been boring if he hadn't made a scene.

Footage is so much better when the actor's aren't micromanaged. Like managing staff with Ph.D.s. They know what they're doing, can figure out what needs to be done, and can do a much better job when nobody is telling them what to say or how to behave.

## **In Real Life**

FAA management arranged an All Hands meeting for the office I worked in. The FAA was providing lunch, free of charge to the FAA employees. Contractors who worked in that office were also invited.

But because of laws meant to prevent gifts from influencing contracts between the government and its contractors, the contractors had to pay for the

cost of their lunch. Still, an email went around to everyone in the office, including the contractors, that said lunch was provided. So when one of the contractors came around asking for money, I thought something wasn't right. I didn't think she was the type to steal money from coworkers, but I didn't understand what she was up to.

I asked one of the FAA employees why contractors had to pay for their own lunch. He said, "Congress enacted a law because buying coffee for federal employees could influence billion dollar contracts."

And that doesn't apply to elected officials because as we all know, unlike career managers, elected Congresspersons are totally uninfluenced by the lavish gifts bestowed upon them by wealthy donors.

In *Budget Justified*, sometimes Tim represents a fifty-year-old African-American in a real-life situation, sometimes he represents a twenty-year-old white guy. In the first part of this scene, he represents me.

When I saw the baby announcement on the door of one of the brownnosers at Former Employer, I went gagging down the hall, making a scene as I entered a friend's office. I didn't have to say a word. She knew immediately what I was gagging about.

All in good fun, one of the jokester bosses poked fun at the brownnoser, asking why she didn't just name the baby after the VP of our company instead, making up female forms of his name. Like Barryina (although Barry wasn't the boss's name).

The comments about me staying home and making babies didn't happen in my Washington jobs. They happened in the 1990's in Phoenix. The first time was in 1991, when I was an undergraduate, working at an internship where the men were disgusted with the uselessness of their jobs. One young man, in his late twenties, said I was lucky because like his wife, I could "always quit and stay home with babies."

At the time it seemed like a normal comment to me. I was brought up to think that women either belonged in the kitchen or at a typewriter (typewriter – how quaint). At that internship, I was assigned to work with the secretaries while the male students worked with the engineers.

Another time someone suggested I could stay home and make babies was in 1994, at my first full-time job. I was taking classes part time toward my masters degree in civil engineering while working for a small engineering firm. When people from other firms and agencies stopped by our office, they assumed I, a twenty-three-year-old woman, was an assistant to the firm's secretary.

One of the drafters, who had an associate's degree and whose wife was a stay-at-home mom, told me, "Someday you'll want to stay at home with kids, just like my wife always wanted to."

Eh, that's nice, but I wasn't his wife. I wanted to try out a different kind of life. At that age, I felt it was my duty to avoid spreading misinformation. Matter-of-fact, I told him what my intentions were. "What I really want to do with my

life is to get a Ph.D. in something like electrical engineering or computer science.”

“Be realistic,” he responded, as though I was dreaming about moving to Jupiter or becoming a lion.

Maybe it was unrealistic for him. But I started getting realistic with that Ph.D. the following year, immediately upon graduating with my M.S.

The secretary at that company was smarter than the engineers. She told the guy that I wasn’t getting a graduate degree to get my MRS, to sit around the house without productive employment. However what she didn’t know was that my engineering jobs would mostly become unproductive employment.

### **Lisa’s Character Blog for Episode 27**

The purpose of Tim’s wife is to stay home and making babies? Please. The sad thing is, many of the guys I’ve worked with truly believe that’s what wives are for. And it doesn’t occur to them that’s a sexist attitude. What’s worse is that many women believe it’s true. Because their husbands wouldn’t deign to raise babies. Why should they interrupt their lives for something women would do for them?

Interesting that Congress says we’re not allowed to buy as much as coffee for our FAA coworkers, yet Congress says that Congress is allowed to accept expensive vacations. Congress is just leading the government middle-management by example.

Rumors of firings, sexual harassment, and now bribery, albeit in the form of coffee. Is there something going on in this office that Tim knows about? Perhaps that’s the reason Barry leaves Tim out of the loop as much as possible – he doesn’t want Tim to know any more than he already does about what goes on in this office. When you work in Washington, there’s got to be a scandal involved somewhere.

I think I just handed over my lunch money to Jane without her beating me up for it. They probably pay the caterer with the office credit card. Does she deposit my eight dollars in the same bank account that my taxes go in? So, maybe instead of paying my eight bucks for the water fund or the coffee fund or the lunch fund or the United Way or whatever the fund of the week is, I should tell them to take it out of the taxes I pay instead of spending our engineers’ time on bullying each other for stuff.

And why is Jane the engineer going around the office asking for money. Sounds like a better fit for a secretarial job description. Or does Barry assign tasks based on gender, not education and experience.

George couldn’t have named his son after Barry without expecting some jokes behind his back. Or jokes in front of his face. How many brownie points does one obtain from naming their first born after the boss, and do those points last for as long as the child lives with that name?

## Episode 28: All Minds Meeting

**Instead of bonuses this year, you get ribbons and mints. But if you kiss management's ass (and other parts), you just might get a promotion.**

INT. MEETING ROOM

This is a very fun meeting. The managers all joke around, although it's difficult to tell if Barry is trying to be funny or just rude. It's from Lisa's point of view, so she sits at the end of the conference table in the back of the room, moves the camera, takes a few inserts of the staff.

Yvette and Tim sit nearest the camera, across the table from each other. Cheryl and George sit in the front of the room. Lisa stays quiet for the entire meeting, observing and capturing the meeting with the camera inside her 'software' box.

Banana peels, coffee cups, and notepapers cover the table in a big mess.

Barry, stiff and somewhat nervous, comes to the front of the room. He reads from an index card.

BARRY

Welcome to my annual All Hands Meeting.

A door on the left opens. Charlie emerges from the doorway, late to the meeting of course. He waves at the rest of the staff around the table. Everyone grins. Life of the party is here. Camera follows Charlie, patting Barry on the back as he passes behind him. Everyone laughs.

Charlie greets everyone as he saunters to the other side of the conference table. Everyone returns the greeting. Charlie waves at Lisa (camera) and sits next to Yvette. Barry watches until Charlie is seated.

Barry clears throat, repeats, glaring at Charlie.



BARRY

Welcome to my annual All Hands Meeting.  
Or as I prefer to call it, the All Minds  
Meeting.

George, sitting in the front of the room, leans  
forward so everyone around the table can see him.

GEORGE

Because we work with our minds more than  
our hands.

TIM (whispers to Lisa/camera)

Work with our minds or just mess with our  
minds?

Barry ignores George, reads from card.

BARRY

We have a new org chart. I posted it for  
everyone to see.

Barry points to a printout on the wall.

INSERT Barry pointing at a piece of paper on the wall  
that has a diagram with boxes, small print.

TIM (whispers to Lisa/camera)

I can't read that.

BARRY

In our department survey last year,  
people mentioned that the office looked  
like a third world country. So I got new  
furniture. I hope everyone is happy with  
the new appearance.

Everyone mumbles agreement.

BARRY

On the survey this year, my office  
responded that the majority of you don't  
know what you're supposed to be working  
on. If you don't know, read the mission  
statement on the back of your business  
card.

Jane giggles. George and Jane get up and hand out boxes of mints with "Alignmints" printed on the lid of the boxes. Cheryl stays seated at the front of the room.

BARRY

I'm not giving out bonuses this year. So try to think of something else for rewards. I tried ribbons. But when I walked around the office, I saw them all in the garbage.

Jane giggles.

INSERT Tim opening his box of Alignmints

BARRY

Any questions before we have each of the managers present their work?

Tim holds up his hand with Alignmints.

TIM

What's this Alignmints stuff?

BARRY

Alignmints. To get us aligned with the government's goals. Any more questions?

Tim puts his Alignmints on the table and shoves them to Charlie. Jane raises her hand. Barry motions toward her.

JANE

Do you have any insight for us on how you became the manager you are today?

INSERT Tim looks at Lisa/camera with a disgusted look on his face.

BARRY

Great managers aren't made. They're born.

Jane giggles. Tim fake gags.

## Shooting the Scene

This was the very first scene shot for *Budget Justified*. It was early morning on Megashoot Day and everyone was just getting to know each other. I brought doughnuts, coffee, juice, bagels, fruit, etc. for everyone. We had a brief introduction before we started shooting and everyone took their breakfast down to the fake meeting room in my basement for a real meeting where I introduced everyone and made a few announcements.

Since several of the actors are federal employees in their real lives, they liked the idea of having coffee cups and banana peels strewn all over the table, as though it were a real meeting in a real federal office. So rather than have the crew crawl over everyone during our meeting to clear garbage, we left everything there, banana peels and all, during the shoot.

Aaak! Nobody laughed when Dave (Charlie) entered. The rapport hadn't been built up among the cast yet, as it did throughout the day. I don't think I communicated clearly enough to them that their characters all like Charlie, think he's a great guy. Before the shoot, the only thing the actors knew about Charlie was that he was a sexual harasser. But the characters weren't supposed to know that. I edited laughter in later. We were on a very tight schedule, so I didn't have time or energy to do lots of takes.

The door to the left, where Dave enters, is a tiny broom closet in my basement. There were plenty of coming out of the closet jokes that morning.

## In Real Life

Alignmints! You can't make this stuff up. At a huge meeting at Former Employer, they handed out boxes of mints with a picture of a department staff meeting covered by the word 'Alignmints.' I'm not sure if they were supposed to be funny, or if someone in HR thought they were a serious motivator. One of the buzzwords at that time was to get 'aligned' with the goals of the FAA. Most of the people at Former Employer had a good sense of humor, so my guess is that HR thought the Alignmints would be good joke material. They were right.

I was going to include the Alignmints in my novel, a thriller about the employer using the government engineering work to carry out a terrorist plot. I had taken a screenwriting class from a Hollywood screenwriter, Gilles Wheeler, two years before I worked in FAA offices. I wrote a screenplay of the novel as my semester project. One day while we discussed my screenplay, I showed him the box of Alignmints from the meeting at Former Employer and offered him a mint. He must have known they'd eventually belong in one of my screenplays because he said, "Cool! Now I can say I've eaten an Alignmint."

The Alignmints were better fodder for comedy than for a terrorist novel, so I include them in *Budget Justified* instead. *Budget Justified* wasn't originally supposed to be a comedy either, but working at the FAA was such a joke, how could this be serious.

The term "All Minds" meeting was also coined by a clever coworker at Former Employer. Since we all had masters degrees and Ph.D.s, he felt the

staff's minds were a more relevant body part than hands. I thought it was considerate of the management to acknowledge my coworker's suggestion by calling the meeting an All Minds meeting. Although it does conjure the image of a Star Trek mind meld.

At the all hands meeting in the FAA office, the office director was confrontational toward the staff: "If you don't know what you're supposed to do, read the back of your business cards." Like that's supposed to be helpful. Those were his exact out-loud words. His implied, unsaid words were: "You bunch of dimwits." Yet we all knew why he didn't give anyone a straight answer regarding what we should be working on. He had no idea what needed to be done either.

The office director taped a color printout to the wall and tried to explain what it meant. No one could read it. The managers under him had a computer projector set up for their presentations. The director should've used it. He's an engineer, but doesn't know how to use a projector?

Before I arrived at that office, the director had given out ribbons as awards for good work. The staff didn't care for that too much. They said it was like the managers were giving out stars or smiley faces, as though their work was as significant as kindergarten homework.

I don't know what that office looked like before the new furniture arrived. It didn't look all that new to me, but I don't need to be coddled with fancy surroundings. The director did compare the office to a third-world country. I got the impression he was quoting one of the staff.

Nobody was as brown-nosey at the real-life all-hands meeting as Jane is in this episode. But I've seen people get this brown-nosey at other meetings. Barry's response is representative of the managers who think they are blessed with their position because they must be better than the staff. It's like children feeling entitled to what's in it for them, without thinking about what the real responsibilities of their position entails.

To be honest, I enjoyed this meeting at the FAA. Otherwise I wouldn't have made fun jokes about it in my blog (see Episode 32: Blog). I sat near some of the managers and we all had an informative conversation.

## **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 28**

I'm not sure what to think of the Alignmints. On one level, I think they're funny, in a corny sort of way. Good fodder for jokes. But if they weren't meant to be laughed about, then they're just weird. Maybe Barry was hinting that the staff's breath stinks.

Tim was right. Nobody could read the chart at the front of the room. Strange that an engineer in charge of a highly educated staff would tape a small paper chart to a wall. As Administrator Blakey said, "Keeping up with technologies as only an agency like this one can," (Episode 9: Town Hall). Perhaps Barry didn't really want us to see what was on that chart.

If I can't even get a business card from the contractor who hired me, I certainly don't have an FAA business card to look at. I was glad to find out what the mission statement was. But it's not a very effective mission statement if nobody knows what it is.

By referring us to the mission statement is on the back of the business cards, is Barry telling us we're empowered to come up with our own solutions to FAA problems? He also mentioned the employee satisfaction survey – which someone brought up at the Town Hall meeting last month (Episode 10: Lip Service). I get the impression that the employees don't feel very empowered to come up with solutions.

## Episode 29: All Minds continued

**Don't bother listening to the smart woman. Management doesn't want her around either. Give credit for the work to the guy who entertains us.**

INT. MEETING ROOM

Cheryl is in front of the room giving her presentation to the staff around the table. Unexplainable delay chart projected onto the wall behind her.

CHERYL

My team has been working all year on counting the hours of delay in New York. The administrator was pleased with the new charts we developed.

New chart behind Cheryl: Bar chart labeled 'Controller Time.'

CHERYL

This is a chart that Tim has been working on collecting data for the past year.

George fawns over Barry, talking to him. They ignore Cheryl.

CUT TO Charlie sleeping.

CHERYL (OS)

I was really pleased with this work  
because we had been trying for months to  
find a way to display this data.

CUT TO New Guy texting friends.

CHERYL (OS)

We discovered that when more controllers  
are on duty they can take breaks more  
often.

CUT TO Tim taking notes.

CHERYL (OS)

Over the past twelve months the managers  
held meetings to approve what we call the  
bubble chart.

CUT TO New Guy gets up and leaves the meeting to take  
a call. A Bubble Chart is displayed behind Cheryl.

CHERYL

We moved several bubbles to the blue area  
and rearranged the bubbles in the red  
area.

FADE OUT, fade in to George standing in front of the  
chart of controller time.

GEORGE

I'm going to take credit for this chart  
too. Since we're a matrixed organization,  
I can say Tim did this work for me too.  
Right?

Everyone laughs. New slide behind George: Logo-like  
graphic labeled 'Balanced Scorecard.'

GEORGE

Everyone repeat after me: Balanced  
Scorecard.

EVERYONE (mumbles)

Balanced Scorecard.

George puts hand by ears.

GEORGE  
I didn't hear you.

EVERYONE (louder)  
Balanced Scorecard.

GEORGE  
OK. Pop quiz.

George points to Tim.

GEORGE  
Tim. What's the question?

TIM  
Balanced Scorecard.

GEORGE  
That's the answer. What's the question?

TIM  
You didn't ask the question.

George makes a missed-golf-swing motion.

GEORGE  
Wrong!

Everyone laughs. Tim gives camera a What the hell look.

GEORGE  
The question is, what do we use to  
translate vision into action.

CUT to Tim getting in camera's face and makes a fist  
in front of his eye.

TIM (to Lisa/camera)  
I'll translate his vision into action.

Tim punches toward the camera.

GEORGE

OK. New answer: So controllers can spend more time on vacation.

Everyone laughs.

GEORGE

Charlie, what's the question?

CHARLIE

Uh, why should the government give controllers a raise?

Everyone laughs.

GEORGE

Good question. The correct question is, What if the controllers spend less time on break?

Everyone laughs. New chart labeled 'Budget Justified' appears behind George.

GEORGE

My job, basically, is to justify the budgets of the rest of the managers.

Everyone laughs. New chart appears: bubble chart.

TIM

Hey, if you're going to take credit for the controller chart, I wanna to take credit for this work too.

Everyone laughs.

BARRY

Quiet!

### **Shooting the Scene**

That huge 'd' from the text of the Balanced Scorecard slide projected onto Brian's (George) head is hilarious! I didn't even notice it was there until I started editing the footage, days after the shoot. I couldn't have done that better if I had planned it.



The first time I read the dialogue, it sounds very blah in my head. But Brian and Kevin put so much life in their performance, it's hilarious to watch. Now when I reread the dialogue, I have Brian's and Tim's voices in my head. I laugh at those voices in my head even though I'm not watching the video.

## In Real Life

Much of the work done in this office and at Former Employer was to make charts. Delay charts were popular among management.

I occasionally asked what was done with the charts. The response was typically along the lines that they would be used to help the FAA make decisions, although nobody seemed to know decisions about what. We were told to just make the charts. Not to inform the leaders on any specific decisions.

Since we didn't know what kind of charts would be helpful, many staff members took stabs in the dark. People made up more and more different kinds of charts, whether managers asked for them or not, hoping they'd come up with the chart that the management liked the best. If the charts were pretty or complicated, the staff member got an attaboy and their chart would make its rounds through the office, appearing in several meeting presentations. Pretty charts were more impressive to show the client, even if nobody used the information from the charts.

One of the staff members at the all hands meeting presented an incomprehensible chart about controller vacation time. After she explained what the chart meant, it made sense, but when I first looked at it, I thought the point was that if controllers didn't go on break so often, they could take more vacations. While the chart did show that was true, it also proved other things – things that may not have been labeled because the union wouldn't have considered the conclusion politically advantageous.

One of the more popular charts was called the Bubble Chart. It was a big deal in that office, so it appeared in many presentations. Several people put copies of the Bubble Chart up on the walls of their cubicles. I had a Bubble Chart in my office. The all-hands meeting lasted for a few hours, forty minutes of which were devoted to the Bubble Chart. The Bubble Chart described which offices were responsible for which outcomes. I'm sure there were many previous meetings devoted to arguments about who goes on the Bubble Chart and where.

After one of the female managers and all her direct reports were bullied out of this office, one female manager remained. Her presentation at the all hands meeting sounded competent, yet boring. The director talked to the other managers and played on his Blackberry during her presentation. All the male managers, except the director, were cracking jokes for their presentations. Why didn't the female manager crack jokes? She had a great personality outside of the meeting. Was it because the director bullied women-who-cracked-jokes out of the department?

One of the male managers asked the staff goofy questions in the middle of his presentation and the staff was expected to shout the answer. We weren't loud

enough, so he cajoled us into shouting it louder. The answer to one of the questions was Balanced Scorecard. Balanced Scorecard was a big program that was supposed to translate vision into action. Unfortunately there wasn't much vision to translate.

I understood the Balanced Scorecard program to mean that management wanted a way to track whether the high-level feel-good words of a vision statement could be implemented through the tasks that the staff did. A good idea in theory. But since nobody knew what they were supposed to be working on, clearly nobody had defined the steps necessary to translate vision statements into action items.

When the next male manager got up to give his presentation, he teased the previous manager by giving us an answer and told us to shout the question. Before anyone had a chance to respond, he shouted, "Wrong!" The managers of this department all got along well, so everyone thought that lampooning the previous presentation was hilarious.

Then he said, "I'm going to take credit for everyone's work because this is a matrixed organization." (That's how everyone ended up with nine bosses). We all burst out laughing again. A well-respected senior staff member made a joke in response, saying he was going to take all the credit because he had been there the longest.

We laughed again. The director shouted, "Everyone be quiet!"

Really? Tell the staff to shut up when everyone is having a good time? The senior staff member announced his retirement a week after I was fired.

The manager continued his presentation. "My job is to justify the budget of the other managers."

I took note of that remark because at Former Employer I had often said that the reason federal employees and contractors had jobs was to justify our managers' budgets. Hence the title of this book and movie.

## **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 29**

I hadn't known that George was such a funny guy! In a goofball sort of way. Poor Tim. He seemed to think George was picking on him. George was trying to make Tim feel like a part of the meeting. Trying to laugh with him, not at him.

So, I learned that Balanced Scorecard is for translating vision into action. What a crock of buzzwords. That and a billion dollar government contract will get me a cup of coffee around here. I don't see much vision in this office. And I don't think anyone would approve of the kind of action I've seen in this place.

Everyone was awful during Cheryl's presentation. Especially Barry. He's supposed to set the tone for this office, but yakked with George through her entire talk. What kind of leadership is that. Maybe his bosses yak through the meetings while he tells them what his staff has been working on. That's why nobody knows what's supposed to be done around here. Nobody listens.

I wonder if Cheryl's not allowed to crack jokes. Were George's jokes during the meeting viewed as coming from 'the team,' but jokes by Cheryl come from 'intruder,' a threatening force? There are different rules for accepted behavior in this office for women. Women should be seen and not heard. And the men do whatever they want.

## Episode 30: All Minds still continued

**Told you that entertaining the managers and fooling around gets you bonuses and promotions.**

INT. MEETING ROOM

Lisa's Perfect Airspace map with aircraft flying around New York is projected onto the wall. George finishes his presentation.

GEORGE

And finally, I'd like to thank Charlie for his work on the New York project.

TIM (whispers to Lisa)

Isn't that your Perfect Airspace map?

Barry gets up. George takes a seat.

BARRY

Thanks George. Every time I look for George, he's on the golf course.

Jane giggles.

INSERT George, embarrassed, putting head in his hands.

BARRY (OS)

So I'm glad to see he's been working on something this year.

Barry mumbles to George in background.

TIM (whispers to Lisa)  
I wasn't making that up. Next he'll  
announce Cheryl as Miss Shopping Bags and  
Jane as his Mistress.

CUT to New Guy taking another personal call and  
walking out of meeting.

NEW GUY (on phone)  
Heyyyy.

CUT to Charlie giving Lisa a look, pointing at New  
Guy like who does that new guy he think he is?

BARRY  
This year we have one promotion. As of  
yesterday, Jane's promoted to AC5.

Half-hearted applause.

Jane stands up, bowing, thanking. Barry still reads  
from his index cards.

BARRY  
Thanks for coming to my All Minds  
meeting. My door is always open. Feel  
free to drop by any time.

TIM (to Lisa/camera)  
Told you he'd promote her to Mistress.

TIM (to Charlie)  
She got promoted at the last All Minds  
meeting.

People get up, talk to each other quietly in the  
background, leave the meeting.

CHARLIE  
That was for entertaining controllers at  
the Four Seasons.

YVETTE  
She was missing for over an hour. Then  
Alice and I saw her come out of a hotel  
room with the slimy controller.

Yvette shudders.

TIM

I heard that one of the woman controllers saw her coming out of a different controller's hotel room and called up Barry to complain.

CHARLIE

Barry doesn't care.

TIM

He probably told her to do it so we'd get the government contract renewed.

CHARLIE

This time Jane's promoted for entertaining Barry while his wife was on vacation.

INSERT shot from Episode 1: Boss's Affair with Jane and Barry walking toward the building.

## Shooting the Scene

Anthony (New Guy) left the room and entered the same tiny broom closet that Charlie had entered from at the beginning of the All Minds Meeting. I couldn't have the staff leave the meeting through that door at the end of the scene, filling it like a clown-car closet. Instead, they leave through sort of a wall on the right side of the screen.

It's not really a wall. It's floor-to-ceiling brown butcher paper. My husband and I taped it there to hide the staircase behind it. I figured that a staircase at the side of a conference room would make it look like we filmed the scene in my basement. I was afraid the tape wouldn't hold. If my fake wall had fallen during taping, that would've looked worse.

Anthony comes back to the meeting as everyone is leaving. Makes it look like he missed out, like he's too late to catch everyone and he's following them out the other door. In reality, I didn't think I needed to make him stand around in the tiny closet while we shot Charlie, Tim, and Yvette talking. In fact, if you look closely, you'll notice that Anthony comes back into the meeting twice. I figured it looked like he was just hanging around in the doorway, getting out of the way while the others leave the room.

We shot this episode twice. I ended up using both shots of New Guy walking out to take a call – one in this episode, and one in the previous episode during Cheryl's presentation. It gave his personal business more impact by taking more than one call during this meeting.

## In Real Life

In the middle of a meeting with contractors who came all the way from a distant suburb to speak to us, a young FAA employee got up to take a personal call. His bosses were in the meeting and he wasn't assigned an FAA cell phone, so it couldn't have been FAA business. He had a side business of throwing huge parties. It's possible that the call was related to planning the parties, hence the call was important enough to him to walk out during a meeting with his bosses. After the meeting, one of the other FAA employees commented to me that the young guy often walked out of meetings to take personal calls.

I couldn't believe that during the all hands meeting the office director actually said – out loud for everyone to hear – that one of the managers under him skips work to go play golf. The golfing manager himself looked shocked, even embarrassed, that the director mentioned it to the entire staff.

Before the all hands meeting, I didn't believe Mr. Friendly when he told me that the managers skip work to play golf. Sounded preposterous that a manager would skip work. I thought Mr. Friendly was saying it to badmouth the managers. But the director's statement during this meeting confirmed that Mr. Friendly wasn't making it up.

There was a rumor going around that a female controller called up a high-level boss at Former Employer claiming that Mistress had been sneaking in and out of one or two male controllers' hotel rooms.

This was a problem for several reasons. First, contractors shouldn't be having sex with FAA employees in exchange for renewing FAA contracts. Second, Mistress was supposed to be working on an impartial analysis to settle a dispute among controllers from Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. So if she's sleeping in the rooms of one or more controllers, all of the controllers are very likely to question her impartiality.

However this was not a problem for Mistress. Because Boss always vouched for her. And so did several of the non-female controllers. Resulting in a few promotions for Mistress. The rest of the female staff felt a bit weird about congratulating her for these promotions. If you don't congratulate her, you look like a jerk. But if you do, you feel like you're perpetuating the unspoken policy that the most reliable way for women to get promoted is to sleep around with FAA employees, bosses, and subordinates.

## Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 30

The all hands meeting was a great place for Barry to announce that George is always out playing golf. Not. He should've had that discussion in a private one-on-one meeting. Mentioning it to the entire staff and all the contractors was just another passive-aggressive method for Barry to handle his direct reports.

The new guy keeps sneaking out of meetings, playing on his crackbarry. He learns fast. Soon he'll be sleeping at his desk, leaving in the middle of the day

to play golf, grabbing my ass, sleeping with Barry. These are the work habits he'll develop for the rest of his career. Remind me not to hire him when I start my own company.

It disgusts me that Jane's attempt to get promotions by fooling around with the boss works. Makes me want to withdraw from the work environment. By going along with everything, pretending I don't notice, I feel like I'm condoning it. Or being played for a naïve fool. Just because nobody is saying anything about it to their faces, do Barry and Jane truly believe that the staff doesn't notice?

Several staff, including myself, have questioned the value of attempting to solve political problems with math. Perhaps Jane took this one step further, trying to solve political problems by having affairs with multiple parties. However I doubt that will result in an effective long term solution. How long will she have to keep up the affair to avoid retaliation for ending it?

When a boss sleeps with one of his employees and the employee gets rewarded, that sends a message to the rest of the staff that whoring yourself out to the bosses or the client is the kind of behavior that is encouraged. Doesn't do much for morale.

It was gracious of Cheryl and George to credit the staff for making the charts, although if they paid better attention to what the staff was up to, they'd have had a better grasp of who made which chart. I'm not sure if Charlie told George that he came up with a Perfect Airspace project, if someone told George that I'm working on Perfect Airspace but he wasn't listening, or if George was trolling the office file sharing system for stuff to present and wants to announce that his staff is working on it before any of the other managers have the opportunity to take credit for it.

What I want to know is, what did anyone *do* with the charts? Seems like the purpose of the charts was to make it look like the people in our office have been working on something this year. To justify the managers' budgets.

## Episode 31: The Morning After

**My door is always open. Except when it's not.**

INT. BARRY'S OFFICE DOOR

Barry's nameplate is on the door. Charlie tries to open the door - it's locked. He looks at Lisa (camera) and shrugs.

LISA (OS)

Maybe he's not in there.

Charlie knocks. Weird noises - chairs squeaking, book falling onto floor. Jane and Barry mumbling. Charlie looks at the camera, confused.

Barry opens the door. His hair and tie are disheveled. He moves out of the way and Lisa (camera) moves into the office. Jane sits in Barry's chair, hair messed up, wearing a skirt, legs crossed. She gives Lisa (camera) a sheepish smile.

### **Shooting the Scene**

The door to Barry's 'office' is the front door to my house. I put brown paper on it so it wouldn't look like the front door to a house. We had to do a few takes because sometimes we got the siding of the house in the shot. If you look at the left side of the screen as Charlie walks in, you'll notice a bit of staircase in Barry's office.

I had to make up a last name for Barry, as I did for George's office door in Episode 26: Gone Golfing. I chose "Poingfer," which sounds even more ridiculous than George's last name, Nezbruner. "Poing" is French for fist and "fer" is French for iron. Iron fist. Because that's how Barry rules his office. No tolerance for questioning his decisions or methods.

### **In Real Life**

At the all hands meeting, the office director said his door was always open. Mr. Friendly stopped by the director's office the next day, but the door was locked.

I never walked in on Boss, but a coworker had said that one time she knocked on his door and nobody answered. First there was silence, then she heard a big shuffle inside. When my boss finally opened the door, Mistress was sitting at his desk, looking very embarrassed.

I suspect that a large part of the reason Boss managed me into leaving that job was that he was concerned that I might've known something was going on between him and Mistress. Of course, other people suspected also. But ever since high school I've had the impression that everyone respected my opinion a bit more than others. So whatever anyone else thought of him or Mistress didn't bother Boss so much. But if I had solid reasons to question his character? Well, that was a threat.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE  
Charlie and Lisa enter.



CHARLIE

If Barry can have his little fling in the office, we should be able to have our little fling in his office too.

Lisa and Charlie get settled in their respective chairs.

LISA

It was fun having everyone together at the All Minds Meeting. The managers were funny.

CHARLIE

Barry was supposed to tell us the results of the climate survey. There's no transparency in this office.

LISA

It was classy of the managers to credit their employees. And I was glad to find out what the department mission is.

CHARLIE

The problem isn't the mission statement. The problem is we don't know our workplan. What are we supposed to be working on?

Lisa does the dorky Perfect Airspace hand motions.

LISA

Perfect Airspace.

CHARLIE

Don't expect anything to come of that any time soon.

LISA

I'm OK if it takes fifteen years.

CHARLIE

In fifteen, twenty years, we'll still be doing things the way we've been doing them for the past twenty years.

LISA

And if I don't work on The Perfect  
Airspace, we'll still be doing things the  
same way for the next thirty.

Charlie looks around at the office furniture.

CHARLIE

Nobody said they wanted the office  
redecorated.

Tim shouts from across the hall.

TIM (OS)

I wanted it redecorated. The kitchen  
chairs were full of stains.

INSERT shot of broken chairs.

Charlie rolls his eyes, points toward Tim's office  
like, Listen to this guy.

LISA

Charlie, you complained yesterday about  
the color of your cubicle.

CHARLIE

I'd rather have a bonus. Or at least  
coffee. Even lead-free water. They pay  
themselves \$5000 bonuses. They don't  
value us. We're just their toys.

LISA

I saw an article in the Post about  
bonuses meant to encourage retention of  
government scientists. All the bonuses  
got taken by the managers.

CHARLIE

All the managers have to do is sign a  
form that says, "Hand over the money."

Charlie holds out hand, wiggles fingers.

LISA

What was that about ribbons?

## CHARLIE

Every time we completed a project, he'd hand out ribbons. Like for turning in your homework in kindergarten. They ended up in the garbage because that's where Barry puts all the work we do.

**Shooting the Scene**

Dave (Charlie) ad-libbed his line as he walked into the office. He said something different each time. I included the take with the most shocking comment.

**In Real Life**

This scene is pretty much what happened after the all hands meeting. Mr. Friendly bitched to me about everything he hated about what was said, or not said: the director didn't talk about the office climate survey, the mission statement on the business cards doesn't tell anyone what their workplan is, nobody asked for new furniture, the director spent money on a flat screen that he put in his own office so nobody else could use it and on new furniture for the conference rooms. But there was no money left for staff bonuses, instead they all received ribbons, which were merely insulting. Yet the managers still got their bonuses.

I'd seen ribbons in one guy's office. He wasn't a brownnoser, just a pack rat, with an office about as organized as Tim's. Everyone else must have thrown their ribbons away or kept them hidden.

During Mr. Friendly's diatribe, one of the guys down the hall said he had wanted new kitchen chairs because the old ones were disgusting, with bits of dried food and sauce embedded on them. And Mr. Friendly himself had often complained about the color of the cubicles.

**Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 31**

We should have these All Minds meetings more often. I liked the opportunity for everyone to get together and talk about what they do. Maybe we don't have them more often because we don't do enough to have anything to talk about at more than once a year.

According to an article I read in the *Washington Post*, the problem with bonuses meant for highly educated technical staff going to the management happens in other agencies also. I wonder if sexual harassment among the highly educated technical staff is a problem across agencies too. The *Post* article didn't mention that. Why don't other women talk about the harassment they experience? Why is it never reported in the news? It's because it's still as accepted as it was in the 1960's. It's because the women get punished for bringing it up worse than the men get treated for perpetrating the crime.

Seems like a little cozying is what management not only condones, but encourages, in order for women to get ahead. Jane has a master's degree in engineering. It disgusts me that this is the level to which she has to stoop to gain favor from management. And thanks, Jane, for perpetuating bad stereotypes about women.

Using sex helps some women get promotions, but it demeans the women who aren't sleeping around for promotions. It creates an atmosphere that says the purpose of the women in the office is sexual gratification for the men.

It wasn't our fault we caught Barry and Jane in the act. He told us his door is always open. I've seen how this type of thing has played out before. Charlie and I will receive some type of indirect punishment because Barry knows that we know something's going on between them. Of course Barry will never state the real reason for poor performance evaluations or low raises. Instead he'll criticize our behavior and our work, with the purpose of making us appear inept and unreliable. So in case we report him, Barry can brand us as troublemakers.

Who am I kidding. Report Barry? Nobody ever reports their boss and comes away unpunished.

I totally didn't expect Charlie's comment about the two of us getting it on in Barry's office. My first reaction was to laugh because I didn't see it coming. I'm not consistent in my reactions. Sometimes his remarks are funny. Other times they may not be funny, but it doesn't bother me at the time. However I often get angry later, when I realize he's not kidding. And even if he were kidding, what would that say about his opinion of my role in this office?

Outside of work, I don't care so much about the jokes. I don't lose anything over them. But those jokes outside of work are made by the same people who deal with me at work. It means I'm not respected as an equal, nor respected for my work and abilities. Therefore I miss out on raises, promotions, important projects. I'm having an impossible time of trying to make a career out of a job where I'm not needed. My work isn't taken seriously and I don't have equal opportunity to contribute.

## Episode 32: Blog

Blogs are a great way for employees to communicate. But management doesn't want us to communicate. Because if we do, we might start a mutiny.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie sits in Lisa's guest chair, sidles up to Lisa, talks cutesy.

CHARLIE

I missed you over the weekend.

Lisa pushes him away, takes a piece of green paper out of her bag and hands the paper to Charlie.

LISA

What do you think of the blurb I wrote about the All Minds meeting?

Charlie reads.

CHARLIE

Cute. I like the part about the controllers going on vacation.

LISA

You couldn't tell what Cheryl's chart was about without an explanation.

CHARLIE

What's this for?

INSERT Charlie holding printout of blog entry dated Sunday, October 21, 2007; titled "All Minds Meeting."

LISA

An excuse to keep in touch with friends and relatives. It started as practice for an opinion column about engineers and their importance to society. But, then I gravitated to a 3rd Rock meets Dilbert style.

Did you know that Scott Adam's employer kept him on a long time after Dilbert became famous?

CHARLIE

Maybe you'll be famous.

Lisa: pffff. Charlie points at something on the paper.

CHARLIE

You might not want to say the name of your contractor firm.

LISA

Hm. I took out everyone's names. My relatives don't know anyone in this office.

CHARLIE

At least you didn't write about when Barry said George is always out playing golf.

LISA

I couldn't make that sound humorous. Just wasteful.

CHARLIE

And George still gets his \$5000 bonus.

Charlie hands the paper back to her.

CHARLIE

You should get people around the office to sign up for your blog.

LISA

Yeah. At my old job, I had my web link in my email signature. People would stop by, ask about my stories. Was a good way to get to know my coworkers.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Why is the blog printed on green paper? The reason for using green paper, and for having Charlie mention that a weekend had passed, was to show that I always wrote my blog over a weekend, never at work, and I didn't use the brown paper from the office that you see throughout *Budget Justified*, I printed it out at home.

## In Real Life

I was very careful not to use office resources for my blog or anything else personal. I was quite aware that if someone wanted to use me as a scapegoat in the future (that's the kind of atmosphere I've always worked under), they'd look for any tiny transgression I might have committed.

But when you spend every ounce of energy walking on pins and needles around someone else's unspoken rules, and you're constantly guessing at what those rules may or may not be, sometimes you slip up for something you believe in.

I showed my blog to a few coworkers. I used it as a way to keep in touch with colleagues, relatives, and old friends. Like professional organizations, which are voluntary activities outside the office, so was my engineers blog. I even mentioned the blog as one of my career activities in the resume I submitted when I interviewed for this job. I saw my blog as something to build upon for my future career. Especially since I was writing the novel – outside of the office, of course.

But perhaps employees' activities within professional organizations are monitored more closely than I'm aware of. Perhaps when I attend the meetings of professional organizations, I'm only allowed to see the select employees that big corporations send to those meetings. Managers at Former Employer picked and chose who got to go to certain meetings. I got to go to plenty of conferences during my first two years there. Then the manager who hired me quit.

I may have been willing to remove or edit a blog post if my bosses had asked me to. But I wouldn't have taken the demand too kindly. I felt that control over a blog that talked about the social aspect of my job, the jokes we tell in meetings, was too Orwellian. Nobody at work had the right to take the blog away from me.

I gave a copy of the blog post, which I had printed out at home, to Mr. Friendly to read. He went to the blog site and saw the previous entry, which contained a link to a professionally made YouTube video I appeared in for a women's organization. He seemed to think it was a big deal that I was in a video, that I had a web site, and had writings on the internet, saying I was famous. As though he had no idea how to put videos, web sites, or writings on the internet. "Keeping up with technologies as only an agency like this one can."

Originally I had mentioned a 'manager' in the blog (see blog entry below). Mr. Friendly corrected me, saying that the head of the office was called a 'director.' I thought he assumed I didn't know better, as though I wasn't paying attention to what everyone's title was in the office. So I changed 'manager' to 'director' in the blog entry. I didn't want other coworkers who might read the blog to think I didn't know what I was writing about.

I kept other job titles and organization descriptions general. Readers didn't need to know which particular office I was referring to or which people attended the meeting. I didn't make it clear in the entry whether I was referring to a meeting at the FAA, a meeting at Huge Contractor, or if it were a meeting of

some nonprofit organization. The meeting happened to be at the FAA, however due to the vagueness of my descriptions of the job titles and meeting purpose, several colleagues had assumed it was held at Huge Contractor.

But the FAA director got paranoid.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 32**

Not sure why Charlie thinks I'm famous for putting stuff on the internet. Like he thinks The Man has to bless whatever gets uploaded to the internet. That jibes with the federal worker mentality. That we aren't good enough to decide for ourselves what can and will be done.

At Former Employer, a few key guys were featured in department newsletters and picnics for being funny, sort of like George in the All Minds meeting. Our VP loved them. He let the Funny Guys sing songs that made fun of management and our project at company picnics. Instead of singing funny songs, I write a blog.

These Funny Guys were the same managers who would put one woman on each of their projects, then hold secret project meetings in their offices without her. Then when the guys didn't finish what they said they'd do, they'd blame it on the woman. I wonder if the funny songs would have been as happily encouraged if the songwriting employees had been women.

Management at Former Employer encouraged us to write our thoughts and activities on a company-wide blog platform. Some of the entries were exaggerated self-promotion. Sometimes people were funny. But most of it was boring. I didn't participate on the company blog much; I didn't think anyone read it except managers trolling for scapegoats.

Barry's lucky I didn't include his comment about George playing golf in the posting I sent to family and friends. There must be some good joke potential in his remarks, especially since he works for the government. But the tone of the blog entry was lighthearted and I couldn't come up with anything cute to say about managers skipping work. There's nothing cute about tax dollars being spent so well-educated engineers can spend their summers on a golf course when they're supposed to be managing projects.

### **Blog Posting for Friends and Relatives**

From June 2006 through September 2008, I kept a sort-of monthly blog to keep in touch with friends and relatives. Since then I've accumulated a lot of Facebook friends and use that method for updating people, and for finding out what they're up to. I like Facebook because it's more interactive than blogs.

Since I devote most of my time to career-related activities, almost all of my posts are career-related. I define my career loosely. I'm a long-term thinker, and consider my career to consist largely of activities that aren't necessarily dictated by an employer.



I pasted the entry for October 2007 below because it's about the all hands meeting I went to.

### **No Hands Meeting**

This week we had the first All Hands meeting since I started this job. The department director kicked off the meeting by talking about the new chairs and flat screen he bought for the conference room and that it was his goal to continue to improve the office with new decorating features. Then he asked us to think of new ways to reward good work with something other than bonuses because he wasn't going to spend any money on bonuses for the staff. He had tried giving out first prize ribbons, but most of them ended up in the garbage.

The department director mentioned that the results of an office climate study showed that the staff was unclear about how our work fits in with the mission of the government organization. He said if we didn't know, we should look at the back of our business cards because the mission statement was printed there. I'm not allowed to have business cards yet, so I had to look at someone else's.

Then one of the staff members gave a 40 minute presentation about a bubble chart. This year management improved the bubble chart by moving the bubbles around. My favorite chart was the one that compared the number of air traffic controllers working with the number on break and the number on vacation. There were usually about the same number of controllers on break as there were working. But, as the chart proved, if fewer controllers went on break, more controllers could go on vacation.

Next, the managers took turns at delivering stand-up comedy routines. They each showed the same things on their presentation slides, taking credit for each other's work. "Because it's a matrixed organization," one manager said. He explained how the purpose of most of his work is to justify his budget and the budgets of the rest of the managers.

After the meeting, the department director announced that the department was providing lunch for everyone. I don't know about everyone else, but one of my nine supervisors (matrixed organization) made me pay eight bucks for lunch. Maybe she used it to pay herself a bonus.

### **Episode 33: Congressional Mandate**

Why bother working toward real solutions when management won't pay attention. The effort would be punished. It's much more rewarding to fool around.

INT. CHARLIE & LISA'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie sit at her computer.

CHARLIE

Not our fault airlines schedule too many planes into New York.

He puts his hand back on knee, she takes his hand off.

LISA

Maybe they could get more planes in.  
That's why we need to find out how many planes could fit on the critical paths.

CHARLIE

If they used bigger planes, they wouldn't need so many. Save fuel.

INSERT critical path map. Point at thin lines.

LISA (OS)

The noncritical paths can handle more variability. Airplanes don't get in each other's way out here.

Lisa's finger points at thick lines. Charlie puts his fingers all over the screen. Lisa slaps his hand.

LISA (OS)

The highly critical path can't deal with variability. Too many airplanes.

INSERT figure of orderly spaced airplanes near NY.

LISA (OS)

Everyone has to get there when they're supposed to be there.

INSERT figure of randomly spaced airplanes near NY.

LISA (OS)

If they show up randomly, a bunch will arrive at the same time. Controllers will have to vector them, waste fuel.

CHARLIE

The VPs already told their favorites to put briefings together with the information they want to hear.

Charlie slides his hand under her skirt so the hand is completely covered. Lisa grabs his wrist and pulls his hand out.

LISA

Stop it.

CHARLIE

We're here to make it look like someone's working on it. Smoke and mirrors.

LISA

Why wouldn't the VPs want solutions?

CHARLIE

The new administrator's around only a few years. After that, his pet projects won't matter.

Charlie gets on the floor and tries to slide her skirt up, kisses her knees. Lisa struggles to keep her skirt down, tries to move her knees to the side.

LISA

No. No.

CHARLIE

Don't be shy.

LISA

Shy is not the problem.

Charlie pulls harder to slide her skirt up with both hands while Lisa pushes against Charlie with her feet, pushes his shoulders away with her hands. Charlie puts his hands between her knees to push her legs open.

CHARLIE

Don't worry. The door is locked.

Lisa goes for the door, lets go of skirt.

LISA

You locked the door again?

Charlie slides his hands up her thighs, pushing skirt up to reveal her thighs as she scrambles out of the office.

CHARLIE

You had your chance. This date's over!

### **Shooting the Scene**

As I watched this scene a year after taping I noticed: there's a laundry basket under the desk! Not because I left laundry there. That laundry basket belongs in my office. It's a great footstool. I need this because, as we all know, furniture is designed by men, for men. Even though I'm slightly above average height for women, my legs dangle off chairs and it cuts off circulation to my legs. But if I lower my chair, then the desk is too high for typing.

In this scene, Dave (Charlie) wouldn't kiss my knees, even though it was in the script. He was kissing his own hands through my skirt. I thought it was funny he kissed his own hands, but it did make shooting the scene easier on both of us.

Originally I planned this episode to be a continuation of Episode 16: Perfect Airspace, where it was supposed to be the same day, same conversation. After Episode 16 had already been shot – during the hectic Megashoot Day – I realized that I wasn't wearing a skirt and that Dave and I were behind the desk from the camera's point of view. Damn! How to fix this scene?

Simple. We turned it into a new conversation, as though it happened in our office weeks later. Sit on the other side of the desk and change wardrobe. Which worked just as well because Episode 16 was too soon to have him going up my skirt.

I didn't write Charlie's last line. Dave felt he needed to say something after I ran out of the scene. I let him say whatever came to his mind. If it didn't work, I could always cut it out. He said something different each time. The line I used, "This date's over," was appropriate because I had wondered if Mr. Friendly thought his office antics were something he would have done if he were trying to date a woman at the office.

### **In Real Life**

I didn't cram my Perfect Airspace idea down anyone's throat, but I did share my thoughts about it occasionally. Mr. Friendly listened, although he wasn't too interested. Such things were beyond his attention span. I didn't

expect him to care about it. After all, it wasn't as exciting as fooling around in the office.

One time as Mr. Friendly gossiped to me in the conference room, he dropped onto the floor unprovoked, and tried to lift my skirt up.

"No! No!" I grabbed the hem of my skirt and pulled at it, stretching it all out of shape while he kept pulling my skirt up, struggling against me to slide my hem higher.

"Stop it!" I whisper-shouted so passers-by wouldn't wonder what I was doing in there with him. "You're going to tear my skirt!"

"Don't be shy," were his exact words.

"Shy is not the problem," I responded.

The problem was that he had no respect for whether I wanted my skirt up or not. He felt it was his right to do whatever he wanted with my clothing on my body.

I was really worried that he'd rip my skirt and I'd have to answer coworkers' questions about why I walked out of a conference room with torn clothing. At some point, his strength won out over mine and he wiggled my skirt far enough up to see my underwear. Unlike when Dave was kissing his hands during the taping of this scene, in real life I wasn't able to get out of the chair. I would've had to separate my legs, allowing Mr. Friendly to get his hand or head between them.

I did not want to go running out of the supply room screaming. I was afraid to walk out at all because I didn't want someone seeing me emerge from behind a closed door while he was in there.

Later, I told Mr. Friendly that I was afraid to wear skirts to the office because of him. So he said he felt bad, sorry that he was making me worried about what I wore to the office.

Lip service. (In the figurative and literal meaning of the phrase.) Couldn't have felt too sorry. His 'feeling bad' didn't stop him from putting his hand up my skirt or down my blouse later.

I no longer wear skirts. Women shouldn't be subjected to such a foolish, uncomfortable garment.

EXT. LISA & BRIAN'S FRONT YARD

Lisa wields a hedge trimmer. Brian uses loppers.

LISA

If I go to the government HR or the contractor's HR, people in the office will avoid working with me. They'll think, New woman in the office, first thing she does is cry sexual harassment.

BRIAN

Do you think any of the guys might be able to keep an eye out for you?

LISA

Like I can't take care of myself?

BRIAN

No, no. Like a witness.

LISA

I don't want any of my coworkers to see that.

Lisa turns on hedge trimmer, shouts, then turns it off.

LISA

At my old job, you got on the list of bad little employees if you pointed out a problem. I have to find my own solution.

BRIAN

Except if he's a problem for other women, it might help to rat him out.

LISA

I doubt I'm the only one with this problem.

## **Shooting the Scene**

This is my front yard. One of my neighbors must have heard us because she came around, out of view of the camera, to see what the heck we were doing.

That damn rosemary bush takes over the whole flower bed. It was four inches tall and one twig wide when I first planted it. Two years later, it was four feet wide. I allowed it to grow for a month before I shot this scene so I'd have enough to butcher on camera. I finish it off like a hatchetwoman in the outtakes.

## **In Real Life**

I hate managing plants. It's nature. It's supposed to grow. I used to do more yard work when I first moved to Northern Virginia, but I let it go and my husband ends up doing most of it because he gets sick of looking at the plants before I do. I used to pay someone to mow the lawn, but they tore it up by driving their tractors through the mud in my back yard after it rained. They couldn't just skip mowing that week? As a result of tearing up my lawn, instead

of losing one week of mowing fees, they lost the whole next seven plus years. Too bad I can't decide not to pay seven plus years worth of my taxes that were sent to the FAA.

My husband doesn't say things like 'rat him out.' And most of the time he leaves it to me to take care of myself. He doesn't think I'm a helpless waif. I mean, what could he do about this anyway? This wasn't his office. If he poked his nose into it, he'd make everything worse. I wouldn't want to become the woman whose husband kept coming around because she couldn't handle going to work by herself.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 33**

I once read about a study where a mouse dropped into the ocean had no brain chemicals indicating that he felt fear before dying. There was nothing he could do about the situation, he just accepted his fate. But a mouse dropped into a bathtub could see the edge. He still had hope. He had the adrenaline to fight to get to the edge before he died.

I feel like the mouse in the ocean.

Office-groping is not a date. Charlie has never even bought me lunch. If Charlie took a woman on a date (married or not), would he tear off her clothing, as though that was part of the deal? If he pays for dinner and she accepts, does he think she's implied he has a right to get sex out of her, even if he has to take it by force?

Charlie isn't able to imagine how today's actions affect tomorrow's outcomes. Perhaps because nothing we do in this office has an outcome. I can plan a task now, even if I think it will take fifteen years before there's light at the end of the tunnel. But to Charlie, the groping is fun now. He doesn't understand that the consequences a year from now won't be worth any of the kicks he gets from demeaning me today.

I'm concerned that even though I tell him not to touch me, he thinks it must be OK because I haven't complained to management. Have I become his enabler? I need to say something, otherwise he'll continue to be a problem for the women in this office, and probably other offices. But once I tell someone else, the way it gets handled is beyond my control. Blame the victim. Punish the victim. Shoot the messenger.

### **Episode 34: Too Much Sucking**

We're in competition with the other half of the government agency for funding. So we make dancing monkeys and download tunes.

**Because it's too much of a bother to install software that will help us solve air traffic problems.**

INT. TIM'S OFFICE

As usual, a big pile of papers, a foot high, covers every inch of the desk.

Lisa enters chewing gum, puts the camera on a shelf. Charlie enters, sucking on a paper clip. Tim eats Alignmints.

CHARLIE (to Lisa)

You carry that stupid software box everywhere you go.

Lisa shrugs.

TIM

What's that sucking?

CHARLIE

Everything's sucking.

TIM

No, that sound.

CHARLIE

It's our brains getting sucked out.

Charlie makes a sucking noise, pretends to pull his brain out of his head.

LISA

Charlie's sucking on a paper clip.

CHARLIE

Lisa's sucking gum.

LISA (to Tim)

You're sucking Alignmints.

INSERT Tim's desk - manila folders, newspapers, paper airplanes scattered everywhere. The box of Alignmints lies on top. Next to the Alignmints is a newspaper article about FAA whistleblowing.



TIM

Too much sucking going on here.

LISA

That's no lie.

Charlie motions at the mess of papers everywhere.

CHARLIE

Where's that delay propagation paper you were going to give me?

INSERT pan over Tim's desk showing Alignmints, newspaper article.

Meanwhile, Tim digs around, making a racket of rustling papers. He pulls out a paper from the bottom of the mess of papers, hands it to Charlie. Lisa looks over at it.

LISA

Hey. Let me see that.

Charlie hands it to her, tries to look innocent.

INSERT Lisa holding technical conference paper: "Flight Delay Propagation Analysis With the Detailed Policy Assessment Tool" written by Lisa Schaefer.

LISA

Hey. This is one of the papers I wrote. Over six years ago.

Lisa hands the paper back to Charlie. Charlie points at Tim's computer screen.

CHARLIE (to Tim)

Whatcha working on?

INSERT video of FAA Administrator Marion Blakey's head on a dancing cartoon monkey holding balloons. Animate with the absolute worst screenshots of Blakey from the Town Hall Meeting video used in Episode 9.

TIM

A video of stuff Barry wants to show to his bosses. To make it look like his half of the organization does work.

CHARLIE

Can't let the competition get us.

TIM (to Lisa)

A couple of years ago, they split the government agency into two.

CHARLIE

Stovepiped. Both do the same thing.

TIM

And when the new administrator decides to get rid of one half, they'll just fire the rest of us.

Lisa nods. Sure they will. Charlie points at screen.

CHARLIE

Is that the administrator's head on a dancing monkey?

INSERT same video of Blakey's head on a dancing monkey with balloons.

TIM

They said to put that in there.

LISA

They did not.

TIM

Yah huh. In our video training course. If you want to get people's attention, put in animals, kids, and old people.

CHARLIE

They didn't mean all on the same... creature.

LISA

Tim, did you install that software for the simulation training course we were at yesterday?

TIM

Nah. Couldn't figure out that bloatware.

LISA

We could use it for the Perfect Airspace analysis.

Tim opens a computer application. Loud noise blasts out. Everyone jumps. Tim turns it off.

LISA

What was that?

CHARLIE

A tune store.

Lisa hits herself upside the head.

LISA

Tim! You figured out how to install music sharing, but not the software we need to do our job.

## Shooting the Scene

This is my absolute favorite episode. Sucking, dancing monkeys, calling Administrator Blakey old, news articles about FAA whistleblowers, bloatware. Even the title kicks ass. A couple of people who reviewed the initial cut of *Budget Justified* thought that this episode didn't push the story forward enough. Perhaps not, but I think it's awesome character reveal. Especially on Tim's behalf, representing the kind of work, or lack of, that people spend their time on at the FAA.

In the weeks before shooting this scene, the FAA was frequently in the news for whistleblowing complaints. I had collected several *Washington Post* sections containing the headlines and scattered them across the desk. But the shot of the headline during the closeup of the Alignmints box lying on the desk was not random. That was a carefully arranged insert with the headline prominently displayed next to the Alignmints at an angle easily readable to the viewers.

The technical paper used in the video is the first page of an actual technical paper I published, with the name of Former Employer crossed out. It was one of

the papers circulating the office, mentioned in Episode 12: Don't Pat My Head. I didn't know it had been circulating around the office for several weeks until I saw a copy of it lying around someone's office.

As we were shooting, I decided it was funnier to hit Tim in the head instead of hitting myself. I was afraid I'd hit him too hard, but Kevin (Tim) told me it would look better if I gave him a good whack.

## In Real Life

I was considering performing a complex analysis for my Perfect Airspace project, so I asked my favorite smart guy in this office about some simulation software he had used.

"That's just some bloatware we got from NASA," he said.

Bloatware? His tone was so dry, I almost didn't catch the derogatory remark.

"It takes up too much computing power to be useful," he explained.

That was the problem with most of simulation software I've worked with. It requires lots of detailed input data that you don't have. So you end up making up data, usually such that the results will support the conclusion that the FAA managers have already made. Which means the results are all a big guess. I don't have to run a simulation software and take months to analyze the output to make a big guess.

The FAA employee who often mentioned firings brought up the topic within the context of a split in the FAA that happened a year prior. The split stovepiped the functions, therefore both halves of the FAA did a lot of the same work. Only now they did them without communicating with each other.

The two halves of the FAA were in competition with each other for funding. So the managers wanted their staff do the same work that the other half did, but wanted them to do it better in hopes that someone at a higher level would take the funding away from the other half and give it to our half.

One of the guys hired just out of college came to me because none of the managers had given him anything to work on. I gave him software to install on his computer so he could do database queries. Several weeks later, he still hadn't installed it on his computer. Mr. Friendly offered to install it for him. When Mr. Friendly showed up to his cubicle, the young man was playing with a music sharing software he had installed on the FAA computer.

A woman who had a cubicle near me had sensitive hearing and complained about every beep and blip my computer emitted (soon afterward she transferred to a cubicle near the kid with music sharing software). One time she came into my cubicle while Mr. Friendly, another coworker, and I were talking.

"What's that sucking?" she asked.

We all stood there a few moments, looking at her in confused silence. Did she really just ask, "What's that sucking?"

"That sucking noise," she clarified.

The coworker was eating M&M's, Mr. Friendly had a paperclip in his mouth, and I was chewing gum. After explaining this to her, the woman said, "There's too much sucking going on here."

I don't know if she was trying to be funny, but if she was, she succeeded. I cracked up so much that I went into the break room with tears running down my face. When I tried to tell a coworker what my problem was, I was laughing so hard he couldn't understand a word I said.

At Former Employer, I had attended a workshop session called 'storytelling.' The session was to help us learn to present our work in an interesting fashion. The workshop leader told us to put grandparents, kids, and animals in stories to make others sympathetic to our message. So the staff at my table made a presentation to the rest of the attendees about the FAA administrator with her head on top of a dancing monkey. Be careful what you ask for.

Several of the engineers, scientists, and economists got brownie points, even promotions, for making videos of work we didn't do. Most of the videos had little useful information, leaving the rest of the staff wondering why taxpayer money was used to develop such videos.

One of the economists working on the video production projects would telecommute from his boss's house (according to the in/out boards) to create the videos. How was the rest of the staff supposed to access the project leader when they were playing with camcorders at his house? They didn't. The project leader didn't want to be accessed. Because he had no vision for actually implementing the pretty story that the videos told.

The rest of us thought these videos sounded like something high school kids did, hang out with friends in their garage, playing music or video games. Or like something you'd see in *Wayne's World*, making amateur videos in your friend's basement. (Hm. Sounds suspiciously like making *Budget Justified*.) Then guess who would get the promotion after the next performance review. The garage band members. Not those of us who were actually coming in to the office to do something to improve aviation.

Sometimes the guys hanging out at the manager's house would parody pieces of popular movies like *Star Wars* in their videos. After I went to the storytelling workshop, I said I was going to submit the first ten minutes of *2001: A Space Odyssey* to our bosses as the deliverable for my next project.

If the videos that my former coworkers made were used to communicate work that we had actually accomplished, I would've been fully supportive of their effort. Instead, the videos were used to fool the managers and the FAA into thinking that the staff had done some kind of analysis or developed a way to implement what they showed in the videos.

### Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 34

Most of the work we do around here is dancing monkeys. Fast-moving pictures with no meaning behind it. It might look like we've done some work to

make that vision happen, but we don't have monkeys that dance. Only a bunch of undisciplined primates in monkey suits.

I wonder what this alleged 'other half' of the FAA is working on. Geez, Tim could've been working on getting the analysis software up and running on his computer. Instead he's making meaningless videos and listening to tunes. Competing with the other half of the FAA for funding makes productivity worse than it already is. There really is too much sucking going on around here.

I'm glad my research papers are getting around the office. But why are people passing it around the office without talking to me about it? It's as if they don't want to talk to women about technical work. They'd rather talk to me about making copies and getting coffee. I don't even drink coffee.

## Episode 35: Missing Tim & Bosses

### If the managers skip work, why shouldn't the staff?

INT. TIM'S OFFICE

Lights off, nobody home. Just a pile of papers and Alignmints.

### Shooting the Scene

I wanted to tape myself walking into Tim's office, flipping through a blank calendar. But I forgot to schedule that shot while his office was set up with the old monitor, ugly maps, and piles of folders. That old monitor had blown out since then and I'd gotten rid of it. So I just used footage from another episode.

### In Real Life

People were missing from the office all the time. They may have had legitimate reasons for the most part. But the FAA had no formal method such as an in/out board for notifying coworkers of one's whereabouts.

Former Employer had a great electronic in/out board on their intranet where people could enter where they were, when they'd be back, and contact info for while they were away. It was also a great tool for posting funny pictures and animated icons next to coworkers' names.

One time while I was experimenting with the intranet in/out board, I completely deleted a coworker from the department's list while he was on vacation. Nobody noticed he'd been removed from the list until he returned and wanted to change his status back to 'in.' He immediately came over to my office. Why am I always the first suspect?

"You must've been fired while you were gone," I told him.

Unfortunately, we couldn't figure out how to put his profile back onto the in/out board. We had to go to the IT department to ask them to put his name back on the list. After that, personnel entries were no longer deletable.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie's at his computer. Lisa enters, putting the camera on the 'shelf' and sits at her desk.

LISA

I haven't seen Tim since Friday.

CHARLIE

Probably recovering from the weekend.

Huh? Lisa pauses, confused.

LISA

It's Tuesday afternoon.

CHARLIE

He didn't show up yesterday either.

LISA

Doesn't it appear on our in/out board when you take leave?

Lisa messes with her laptop.

INSERT in/out board for 'Department 66.' Charlie, marked out, (but is clearly sitting at his desk) has rude comments entered into his comment space, saying he won't return for another year. George is marked 'in' but has still entered that he's at a 'very important meeting with FAA administrator' and he will 'be there all night.'

Lisa points at Tim marked as 'in.'

CHARLIE

Shh. He didn't take leave.

Lisa gives him a look of disbelief.

CHARLIE

He's been doing this for the past two years. Management knows. They said something to Tim. But he doesn't care.

LISA

You'd think they'd document it. He could get fired over this.

CHARLIE

He could. But he won't.

LISA

How do you know?

CHARLIE

Because management does the same thing.

### **Shooting the Scene**

My husband, Randy, was the cameraman for this shoot. He helped direct, since he was able to observe the action without worrying about delivering lines. For the first take, I forgot to say. "It's Tuesday afternoon." That was Randy's favorite part of the scene! He wouldn't let me continue without it.

I created the in/out board with a spreadsheet. I hadn't originally intended to assign last names to the characters, but I had to make up several last names for the sake of the in/out board. I decided not to deal with funny animated icons next to people's names, even though people at Former Employer, especially me, often pasted gaudy animations onto the electronic in/out board. The in/out board was already busy enough, especially since it appeared for only about five seconds.

'Department 66' is not the name of an FAA office. It was the name of the department I was reorged into at Former Employer.

### **In Real Life**

In Episode 21: Taking Care of Business, I mentioned that there was a young man who frequently didn't show up for work and that he was often planning parties. He skipped most Fridays, although sometimes he was missing two days in the same week. He didn't notify anyone that he wasn't going to be coming in, and he didn't take vacation on the days he was gone.

INT. ELEVATORS

INSERT Cheryl and Jane coming off elevator, chatting and laughing loudly, with shopping bags from fancy department stores.



CHARLIE (VO)

The "ladies lunch bunch" disappears for three hours and comes back with shopping bags from Neiman Marcus.

### **Shooting the Scene**

This was shot in an office building after regular working hours so we wouldn't be in anyone's way. But some woman kept coming in and out of the elevator saying she was in a hurry. We weren't able to call the elevator from the lobby after hours, so we kept having to wait around until someone else came down.

### **In Real Life**

I never saw the ladies' lunch bunch. That's what Mr. Friendly called a group of female managers who worked on his floor several months before I arrived. He told me they took three-hour shopping lunches several days a week. And that they weren't quiet or subtle about it. Everyone saw and heard them leave early, and everyone saw and heard them return with their loot.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie at their desk.

LISA

Sounds like that embezzlement, the DC government woman who stole millions of dollars over ten years and used it for what - to buy hundreds of shoes.

CHARLIE

Could be.

INT. DOOR OUTSIDE GEORGE'S OFFICE

INSERT George leaving his office with golf clubs.

CHARLIE (VO)

And there's George, who's usually out playing golf. All summer. Barry doesn't do anything about that.

INT. OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie at their desk.

LISA

What a chump I am for trying to come up  
with my Perfect Airspace.

Lisa makes fun of her own grand Perfect Airspace hand motions.

CHARLIE

I don't see you as the type to take three  
hour shopping sprees.

LISA

I have something more useful to do with  
my time.

Lisa taps her Perfect Airspace slides on her laptop screen.

### **Shooting the Scene**

I get a lot of use out of that footage of Brian (George) walking out of my house carrying golf clubs.

### **In Real Life**

In 2007, around the time I worked in FAA offices, there was a story in the *Washington Post* about a woman who worked for the District of Columbia who had embezzled millions of dollars and nobody noticed it until after she had been embezzling for over ten years.

She wasn't even subtle about it, showing up to work wearing expensive clothing, jewelry, purses. She gave lavish gifts, telling her coworkers that she had inherited a lot of money from a wealthy relative. Nobody even questioned the name of one of the fake companies she wrote District checks to: Bilkmore.

I had no connection to the woman caught for embezzlement. I mention her because when Mr. Friendly told me about the Ladies Lunch Bunch, I first thing I asked him was if he had heard of the DC embezzler woman and if he thought the Ladies Lunch Bunch was up to the same thing. He didn't think so. They didn't have to embezzle. The FAA handed them lots of money. It was called salary and bonuses.

But I have worked for embezzlers in the past. In 1996 I was a Graduate Research Fellow at the Federal Highway Administration. My bosses avoided me and I didn't have any clear projects to work on. With such little communication, it was easy for them to hide illegal activities from me and the rest of the research staff.

A year after I left, my boss, his boss, and several government contractors were arrested for a bribery and kickback scheme. The contractors had deposited

money into pass-through companies for my boss and his boss in exchange for millions of dollars in contracts. My boss, his boss, and several contractors were sentenced to a few years in jail. One of the contractors skipped the country and is now running a container port in Beirut. I wonder what's in those containers.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 35**

No wonder Tim's paranoid about getting fired. He doesn't show up for work twenty percent of the time.

I hope Cheryl and Jane's shopping trips aren't funded by an embezzlement scheme. I bet there are hundreds of federal contract bribery and embezzlement schemes still going on today that nobody will ever catch. If the contractor Jane is working for offers her sex services in exchange for contracts, rather than money, is that bribery? Or pimping? What if she gets raises, paid for with taxpayer dollars. Doesn't matter where the money is coming from, a hooker is still a hooker.

If I'm the only one doing work around here in my own little hole, this office can't accomplish any projects big enough to have any impact. In order to convince other coworkers to help out with Perfect Airspace, I need to get them to care. It's impossibly tough to get anyone to care around here when the managers don't care. Because the managers' managers don't care either.

How does my coworkers' work ethic affect the way managers treat me? Since I'm at a similar rank on the totem pole as Charlie and Tim, perhaps the managers assume I have the same work ethic. They assume I'm here to collect my government welfare, so I can go shopping and go home to make babies at the end of the day. Then wake up the next morning and sit at my desk for a token eight hours. If I feel like showing up for work at all. The managers aren't going to bother to challenge me. Nothing's in it for them.

I'm so jaded by previous jobs that I don't mind how dysfunctional this office is. When I started my previous job, I got angry when people didn't show up for work without taking vacation and had no repercussions. Now, I almost don't care either. Insanity is coming to work for the same organization every day and expecting different results.

### **Episode 36: RU OK**

Don't worry about goofing around in or out of the office. The managers aren't going to bother to come to work to find out what you're doing. Or not doing.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa comes over to sit in Charlie's guest chair and puts the chair back between them.

LISA

I sent you an email with 500 lines of code for my Perfect Airspace analysis.

Charlie whispers in Lisa's ear.

CHARLIE

I think you're cute.

Lisa's not here for games.

LISA

I want to plug it into the simulation software so I can emulate scheduled airspace.

Charlie puts his hand on her leg. She sighs, pats his hand patronizingly.

LISA

Charlie. How much respect do you have for your wife?

CHARLIE

A lot.

Lisa looks at his hand on her leg, points at it very firmly. He just looks at her like, so what, my hand is here.

Lisa glares at him, Aren't you going to move the damn hand? But he insists upon keeping his hand there.

LISA

Then why the fooling around?

Charlie thinks for a moment. Lisa removes his hand and puts it on his own leg.

CHARLIE

Attraction.

Exasperated, Lisa rolls her eyes, tsk.

Charlie stands.

Lisa ignores him, takes over his computer and opens the code.

LISA

The code simulates the exact 4-D  
trajectories of all aircraft near New  
York airspace...

Meanwhile, Charlie moves his hands above her shoulders, out of her vision, as though he's about to grab her.

TIM (OS)

Charlie!

Charlie quickly pulls his hands away. Tim rushes in, discombobulated as usual.

TIM

Dude, I don't know what this means.

Tim hands Charlie a printout of an email, which he looks at, confused. He reads aloud.

CHARLIE

R U OK?

Lisa stands, looks over Charlie's shoulder at printout. Charlie hands the printout to Lisa.

INSERT Lisa holding email printout, the header says the sender was George. Underneath, it says "R U OK." That's the whole message. George didn't write anything else.

LISA (OS)

Isn't that the morning after drug?

Tim grabs the printout from her.

TIM

It's from George. What should I say?

LISA

What were you and George doing last night?

CHARLIE

George always sends us these cryptic messages from his crackberry.

LISA

Cuz he's bored and lonely. He misses you, Tim.

Lisa mock-kisses her hand loudly.

CHARLIE

Just say that you're... analyzing the traffic over the New York fixes.

LISA

Say you miss him too.

Lisa kisses her hand again, even louder.

TIM

Dude, he didn't leave any voice mail.

CHARLIE

It's not like George has been doing work the last few days either.

Of course not! Tim is so relieved. He calms down.

TIM

That's true. That is so true.

Tim nods and leaves. Lisa's still laughing.

LISA

R U OK. What's the context? Yeah, dude. I'm OK. But I don't think you're OK.

CHARLIE

George was probably checking up on him yesterday.

LISA

So? I can't answer my phone every time it rings.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but George knows Tim doesn't always show up for work. Not like George always shows up for work.

INSERT George leaving the office with golf clubs.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Although I didn't write it into the script, in the take I used, I kiss Tim's hand the second time instead of mine. Of course, I didn't kiss anyone's hand in the office in real life. Sometimes I throw a few surprises at Kevin just to see how he'll react.

### **In Real Life**

I often asked Mr. Friendly questions about his wife. I figured it would make him feel weird about groping me if we talked about her frequently. It didn't work as a long term tactic, but it usually worked as an immediate method for getting his paws off of me. Then he said he had a lot of respect for her. Right after groping me.

One time when he put his paws on me I asked. "Can I meet your wife?" I figured he'd feel even more weird about groping me if his wife knew who I was.

He said I might get to see her because she occasionally dropped by the office. "How would you feel about me being there when she stopped by?" I asked him.

"Nervous." Of course he should. But he should've felt nervous about sticking his hands on me instead.

She never did stop by while I was there. Too bad. I would've loved to see that play out.

One of the times a young guy returned to the office after being missing for two days, he received a cryptic email from the boss who was frequently AWOL on the golf course. Golf Boss often sent abbreviated messages from his Blackberry that no one could understand. Golf Boss hadn't been in the office those two days either. But of course Young Guy didn't know that – because he'd skipped work.

The morning Young Guy returned, he came to Mr. Friendly, all paranoid, showing him the brief email message from Golf Boss. “He didn’t even leave a voice mail” Young Guy said. “What should I tell him?”

I came over to see what the problem was. The only thing the message said was “R U OK”. What the hell does that mean?

I laughed my head off – I had no context. For days afterward, I made jokes that the boss was bored and lonely, and wanted to send email to his staff because he missed them.

Mr. Friendly told Young Guy that he hadn’t seen Golf Boss around the office for the past few days either. “Tell him you’ve been in the office doing your work the whole while,” he advised Young Guy. Golf Boss would never know the difference.

Later, Mr. Friendly gave me the context. The managers had talked to Young Guy several times about skipping work without taking leave. Golf Boss had been tasked with monitoring whether Young Guy showed up or not – even though Golf Boss often skipped work and the other managers knew it. Perhaps that was supposed to be a way of monitoring whether Golf Boss came to work. Mr. Friendly hypothesized that Golf Boss sent this particular message to check off the ‘Monitor Young Guy’ box on his task list for the week.

### **Lisa’s Character Blog for Episode 36**

If Tim came to work when he was supposed to, he wouldn’t have to go around half the time paranoid that he’s going to get into trouble. I can live my life with my head held high because I know I’m a useful person and I spend my energy and time contributing to society. When I associate with others who do the same, I’m offered opportunities. Because they know I’ll do something useful with the opportunity. But here, the culture is about mistrust and sneaking around. People try to take as much as they can from society and each other. Management is stingy with the opportunities. They don’t even trust anyone enough to give them water or coffee.

I’m talking work, Charlie’s feeling up my knee. How does grabbing my knee show any amount of respect for either me or his wife? Or for anyone who has to run the FAA while he’s fooling around. Or for the taxpayers who fund his government welfare. To Charlie, this is all just a foolish game.

### **Episode 37: Free Tickets**

Those who don’t appreciate the perks granted by management make up perks of their own.



INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie talks to Yvette on his side of the desk while Lisa works on her side. Jane enters holding up a ticket. Yvette gets up and leaves.

JANE (to Charlie)

I can't go to the simulation conference banquet. Want my ticket?

CHARLIE

When is it?

JANE

Wednesday night, seven o'clock.

CHARLIE

Nah. Too late in the evening.

Jane looks at Lisa, holds ticket toward her. You want it?

LISA

I'll take it.

She hands ticket to Lisa with a friendly smile.

JANE

Sold!

Lisa just scored a free fancy meal!

LISA

Thanks!

Jane leaves.

CHARLIE

Only so many tickets to go around. I don't know how the managers pick who gets to go to these things.

LISA

Jane just offered one to you. You didn't even want it.

CHARLIE

They give the perks to the same people every time.

LISA

They let you telecommute. They don't give that perk to very many people.

Charlie motions for Lisa to come sit in his guest chair.

LISA

I can hear you just fine from here.

Charlie motions harder, Lisa shakes her head, stays in her seat. Charlie gets up, closes the squeaky door, and sits in Lisa's guest chair.

Lisa gets up and opens it, sits across the desk from Charlie in his chair.

LISA

Just tell me what you've got to say.

Charlie sighs, looks around suspiciously as if someone might hear.

CHARLIE

Nobody except Jane has been promoted in this department for three years. Barry said, if we wanted a promotion, we had to get a job offer from another company. So that's what Susan did.

LISA

And Janet.

CHARLIE

And Liz. They brought in their offers, and Barry said nice knowing ya.

Charlie salutes.

CHARLIE

After Susan left, I had to do her job and mine, but no promotion.

LISA

Shouldn't be too hard, since neither of you had much work to do.

CHARLIE

I'm farming the work out to Yvette.

Tim enters, holds up two tickets.

TIM

Charlie, got two passes to play golf on Wednesday. Wanna go?

CHARLIE

Oh yeah!

Lisa shakes her head.

LISA

Tim, how are you getting to the offsite meeting next week?

TIM

I'll stand on a corner, wait for a beautiful woman to pick me up. You driving?

Lisa gives a blank stare, looks at Charlie, looks at Tim.

LISA

I'm taking the Metro.

### **Shooting the Scene**

As we shot this episode, we rearranged the choreography a bit. You'll notice that in the blooper shown during the credits for this episode, Dave and I are sitting on opposite sides of the desk from where we're sitting during the footage used for this episode. In the first take, Dave didn't get up to close the door.

Charlie's habit of closing the door is important to the story. Charlie pretends he's closing the door so nobody will hear us talking, but it's really his attempt to groom me to get used to being with him behind a closed door.

## In Real Life

Several woman in my office at the FAA had applied for promotions. The director told them they had to bring in other job offers before he could justify giving any promotions. When they did, the director told them there were no promotions; they should take the other job offer. They were smart and competent employees. They were probably better off somewhere else anyway.

After getting closed into the conference room with Mr. Friendly more than once, I stopped going with him into the conference room to let him tell me gossip. If he had something to say, he had to say it in my cubicle where there were no doors to close.

Another guy in the office wasn't as sneaky as Mr. Friendly about his creepy or sexist comments. Along with several coworkers, I was signed up to go to a training course. There were a few conversations regarding how all of us were going to get there.

Right in front of another gentleman, the unsneaky guy said, "I'm going to wait on the corner and see if a beautiful woman comes to pick me up. Are you driving?"

I looked at the other gentleman to make sure he caught the guy's comment. He didn't say anything, just watched me to see how I'd react.

I answered matter-of-fact, "I'm taking the Metro."

One of FAA employees had a ticket for a conference banquet he was unable to attend. He went around the office offering the ticket to other FAA employees. Since I didn't know who had paid for the ticket, and because I was a contractor, I wasn't sure if it would be appropriate for me to ask him for the ticket.

A coworker complained that the tickets to this conference and other perks were always given to the same people. I didn't know why he was complaining. The guy had offered Complainer the ticket, but he turned it down.

FAA employees who had a long commute were allowed to apply for permission to telecommute one day a week. However Complainer was granted the telecommuting perk over other people who were rejected.

A coworker told me that contractors were allowed to go through the vendor exhibit hall at the conference, and we didn't need tickets. Even though I wasn't registered for the conference and didn't have a banquet ticket, I decided to go to the exhibit hall as an opportunity to network.

When I arrived at the exhibit hall, there were stacks of free banquet tickets being given away on site. Turned out that anybody was welcome at the banquet. Not just the 'same people.' Perhaps the 'same people' always got the perks because the same people always communicated that they wanted the perks. Instead of turning them down and complaining about it.

At the banquet, I sat between one of my FAA managers and a retired FAA Vice President (one level below political appointees). Upon retirement, the VP became the CEO of a contractor. As I chatted with him during the banquet, I had no idea what his current or former position was. I just thought he was a pleasant fellow.

Seated on the other side of the CEO was a gentleman in a high position at Former Employer. A very nice guy, he was also pleasant to chat with at the banquet. My FAA manager played on his Blackberry throughout most of the evening.

At the staff meeting the following Friday morning, I told coworkers about the banquet and mentioned the name of the pleasant fellow that I had chatted with. Of course, my coworkers knew who he was. They thought it was funny that I was sitting next to the CEO, having a pleasant conversation about technical work, the whole while not having a clue what his position was. Probably wouldn't have fazed me if I had. But looking back, I wonder if my FAA manager was irked – or threatened – that a woman, lower on the totem pole than he, was not acting subservient to the men who had been handed positions higher on the totem pole.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 37**

Does it make Charlie feel like he has power over Yvette when he tells her what to do? Maybe it makes him feel like a manager; they don't have enough to keep themselves busy either, but they tell us what to do. Although, more often they tell us what work *not* to do.

Different people get different perks. Charlie was granted permission to telecommute because he asked for it. Maybe that's why he doesn't get the other perks. When he's telecommuting, he isn't around to hear about other perks to ask for.

Perhaps Barry is trying to get rid of Charlie, along with all the other people he told to bring in other job offers. I don't know why more people haven't left this office. Barry doesn't like anyone here. I don't think he likes Jane or George all that much; he just likes fans to follow him around and make him feel important. Jane and George don't like Barry either – they're subservient to his face but talk about him behind his back. They just like the perks they find out about when they're around him.

What am I supposed to do when Tim says he's going to wait for a beautiful woman to come along. One time a male coworker said he was uglier than I was. Sort of funny. I guess it would've been weirder if Tim had said he was going to wait for an ugly woman to show up.

### **Episode 38: Women Lost All Confidence**

The women have learned to accept that their fate is to be second class citizens. One of these days, their pent-up anger is going to blow.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Yvette sits in Lisa's guest chair. She's given up. Perfect Airspace slides on Lisa's monitor in background.

LISA

Where I used to work, women on the New York design project would stay up all night for last minute changes. Even though we knew nobody would ever use the results.

YVETTE

What about the men on the project?

LISA

The men refused to work on that project. Career black hole. The women were just trying to keep their jobs. I heard you're resume's out there.

YVETTE

I don't know who would hire me. I don't have skills except this simulation software. Besides. Barry lets me work from home to spend time with my kids.

LISA

Your husband could work from home.

YVETTE

He wouldn't do that.

LISA

Then why should you?

YVETTE

Just bought a five bedroom house. We can't afford to risk my husband's job.

LISA

But you're OK with risking yours.

YVETTE

Plus Barry lets me work part time. I couldn't do that at a new job.

LISA

Aa, Part time is a demotion. Designed to keep women in the mommy track, where your husband wants you, so HE doesn't have to manage diapers.

Yvette shrugs, doesn't know what to say.

LISA

What work does Barry have you doing?

YVETTE

Well, nothing. Charlie told me to enter data into software input files.

LISA

Data entry. I thought you had a masters in computer science.

Yvette nods.

LISA

He should give that an intern. What if you didn't do it?

YVETTE

Charlie wouldn't include me on his projects. I'd have nothing to do. Barry might fire me.

LISA

You could work on my Perfect Airspace project.

Tim enters.

TIM

Ladies, I need a woman's opinion on the color for my new couch.

Yvette and Lisa glance at each other.

LISA

My couch is black.

YVETTE

Would you stop it with the sexist  
comments, Tim!

Yvette gathers up her notepapers in a huff and leaves.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Laura was a good choice to play Yvette because even though she speaks quietly, she's clear and easy to understand. I loved the way Laura went from calm and collected to blowing her lid. I wasn't expecting her to get so riled.

I often laugh a little when I watch the footage of this scene. When Lisa and Yvette are talking, right before we zoom out to see Tim, his hands enter the scene above Laura's head.

I wanted this scene to show that the women who were shy at various places I've worked eventually warmed up when they got to know me.

I absolutely do not want to portray the Lisa character (myself) as a victim. I took control of my situation by trying to fix what's going on at work. By fixing the Perfect Airspace, and by fixing the harasser. I'm a problem solver. Not a complainer. I took things into my own hands. Because no one else would.

In this scene, I contrasted Lisa and Yvette to show that Yvette had already given up on her situation, and on herself. She accepted this job as her fate and thought she no longer had any options to do anything better. Whereas Lisa was still thinking of ideas, trying to come up with ways to improve her situation.

### **In Real Life**

At most of my former employers, except maybe Baskin Robbins, women were assigned the scut work and the men were given career-enhancing responsibilities. Even when the women were more educated and more qualified for enhancing their career. Yes, I'm talking about the twenty-first century.

The New York project was the worst. All the men and I left that project because it was a waste of our time. The women were so demoralized after working on that project that several of them whimpered that they didn't have the right skill set to be able to get hired by a different employer.

There was one man left on the New York project because he was leading it. He'd been at the company for almost twenty years, hired as soon as he finished his Ph.D. He was scary smart and had little tolerance for people who were slow-witted, thus there were several people under him that did not get along with him. He and I got along famously.

He was highly respected within the company and was doing very well for himself. His smarts got him promoted to one of the top technical positions in the company. He lamented to me about his goals upon finishing grad school. "I thought I'd have earned a Nobel Prize by now."



I laughed, as though a brilliant guy with a Ph.D. in physics going on to earn a Nobel Prize were preposterous. But it wasn't. In mid-chuckle, I stopped. "Actually, that's not funny," I said. "Because you could've."

I knew that if he'd been working on the right research, surrounded by the right mentors after he finished his Ph.D., he could've discovered the secret to time travel or teleportation or Higgs Boson. Instead he was helping our employer justify its existence by getting the FAA to pay us to stall solutions that the controllers union didn't want implemented.

Out of the blue at lunch one day, a middle-aged guy asked one of the single women if she cooked. "Stop making so many sexist remarks," was her answer.

I'm sure he didn't have a clue that he was a chauvinist. I'm not sure what's worse: someone who makes chauvinistic remarks because he likes to be rude, or someone who really thinks it is a women's job to spend her time cooking and decorating the home so that the men don't have to.

My first impression of the middle-aged guy was that he was a chauvinist. On his first week of work he came to ask me about the copy machine, as in Episode 3: Copy Man. I questioned why he had come to me, but gave him the benefit of the doubt.

But a few days later, he came to me and said, "Because you're a woman, I'd like your opinion on the color for my new couch."

Um, why does he want to talk about his couch with me?

I said, "My furniture is black, so you probably wouldn't want my opinion."

And as you'll see in Episode 40: A Promise, my couch really is black.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 38**

I don't give a flea's cock about Tim's couch. The purpose of women in the office is not to talk about home décor. It's to do statistical analyses and solve technical problems. Because god knows the men aren't solving any problems here.

Some of the people here are the most brilliant, hard-working, yet useless people I've ever met. If they were working in the right research institution, they'd have cured cancer, stopped global warming, and propagated advanced education to the third world by now. But they're at the FAA. Where nobody cares how hard they're working, what they're inventing, or whether they exist.

I'm not sure why Yvette needs a five bedroom house. Even in the suburbs it must've cost her almost a million dollars. Live below your means. It decreases your chance of having your employer hold you hostage to your salary.

Working part time isn't a perk. It's a demotion. Society expects women to spend their valuable time serving the careers of their husbands or bosses. The real perk would be to get husbands or grandfathers to do the childcare.

Very few men would ever do that. Society subtly punishes them for doing so. On the other side of the coin, women are punished by other women for spending time at work instead of with their children, and subtly punished by

their employers when they're away from the workplace to care for children. And if women decide to forego all that and not have children, they get ostracized for choosing that.

Breeding just makes environmental problems for everyone. I have no interest in spending my intellectual energy on feeding, dressing, driving, cleaning, or potty training.

Yvette's young enough that she never had to deal with demoralizing sexist workplace issues like I faced in the late '80's and early '90's where I and my female classmates were assigned to the secretarial bay while we watched our male classmates with lower GPAs go on field reviews with the engineers. We were the only women in our offices except for the secretaries. We couldn't point out the discrimination. If we did, they would've isolated us more than they already painfully did.

## Episode 39: Hands Up Skirt

**When the management treats us like children, we behave like children.**

INT. LISA & CHARLE'S OFFICE

Barry, George at his side, digs through the candy dish on the desk while he shows George something on his Blackberry. He talks to Charlie. Lisa's working on her laptop, back to them.

BARRY

Just do what you're supposed to and maybe you'll get your raise.

Barry takes candy and walks out the door. George takes a piece of candy, salutes Charlie, and leaves right behind Barry.

CHARLIE (mimicking)

Just be a good little boy and maybe you'll get some candy.

Lisa picks up a piece of candy, hands it toward Charlie, then pulls it away.

LISA

You have to be a good little boy.

CHARLIE

Why does he keep playing with that stupid crackberry?

LISA

He's just shy.

CHARLIE

Did you hear that Alice quit?

LISA

All the women older than me are leaving.

CHARLIE

She's been trying to leave ever since Barry took over our office. We used to have a great interim leader. He wanted everyone to be part of the solution. Then they replaced him with Barry, who's part of the problem.

Lisa's phone rings. She answers. She stands and removes items from her bookshelf, looks through folders.

LISA

Yeah. Thanks for the data.

Charlie comes over (crosses camera) pokes Lisa. She ignores him.

LISA

Say, do you have any map data files for jet routes near New York?

Charlie puts his hand on Lisa's knee, she tries to brush him away, but he doesn't leave.

LISA

Whatever you can find would be fine.

Charlie runs his hand up Lisa's leg.

LISA

Can I call you back in a few minutes?

Lisa slams down the phone.

LISA

Stop being a jerk! I don't go around shoving my hand in anyone's pants. You don't get to shove your hand up a woman's skirt unless she invites your hand there.

CHARLIE

Invite me, baby.

LISA

You can't get invited! You'd have to spend lots of evenings out or take me on a really nice vacation.

CHARLIE

I can't do that. I have a wife that expects me at home.

LISA

Exactly my point. You will never earn the right to put your fingers wherever you please.

## **Shooting the Scene**

This scene was shot on the first day of taping, so it was the second time I had met Dave (Charlie). I was a little worried because I didn't know him well enough to have any idea of how he would handle this scene.

It turns out, he barely put his hands near my knees. Probably too nervous. I should've reshot this with his hand farther up my leg. But I didn't feel like making Dave feel my legs up any more than he had to. The whole thing creeped me out too. He never quite became comfortable shooting these groping scenes.

## **In Real Life**

When I told Mr. Friendly that our boss was shy, I partly meant he was insecure. He avoided talking to us. He saw the manager/employee relationship as something that should be adversarial: all employees don't want to do their work and it was the boss's job to coerce them into doing it. He wasn't leading us to do anything important, so he didn't want to deal with us, fearing that we thought he was useless. So instead, he tried to make us feel as though we were the ones who were useless.

I rarely wear skirts. They're foolish, uncomfortable garments that leave your crotch exposed when you sit or walk up Metro escalators. One of the few times I bothered to wear a skirt to the office, while I was standing at my desk

talking on the phone, Mr. Friendly sidled up to me. In a millisecond, he stuck his hand all the way up my skirt. Damn bold. He found a maxi pad there. If he'd known me well enough to be allowed up my skirt, he would've known what he'd find.

I didn't want to start shouting into the phone because the guy on the other end would've thought I had mental issues. "Sorry, my coworker just jabbed his hand up my crotch," seemed like an inadequate explanation.

When I got off the phone, I yelled, "Stop being a jerk!" Strangely, Mr. Friendly seemed hurt that I called him that. I rarely got loud with Mr. Friendly because I didn't want others to overhear. But this happened on a Friday and a lot of people had gone missing. We were the only two in my corner of the office that day.

I shouldn't have had to, but I tried explaining to Mr. Friendly that there are times when it's OK to touch a woman —after you've been dating each other for awhile and neither of you are married to someone else. Men can't just go up and grab a woman, no matter how well he knows her, and think she'd be OK with that.

He didn't get the point. He thought I was asking him to spend money on me.

INT. RESTROOM

Lisa washes her hands. Cheryl enters.

CHERYL

The skirt looks more professional. You should wear skirts more often.

## **Shooting the Scene**

This scene was scheduled at the last minute. We were going to shoot this scene in Sydney's (Cheryl) office, but her bosses didn't want to have us shoot there. When she told me we couldn't schedule a shoot at her office, I said we could meet down the street from where she worked, but the only time I had that office reserved was right after she got off work the following day.

I forgot to tell Sydney to bring a change of clothing for each of the two restroom scenes. The scenes are far enough apart to escape notice of wearing the same wardrobe in both scenes. Shh. Don't tell anyone.

## **In Real Life**

One of the guys commented that I looked more professional on the day I showed up to work in a skirt. I didn't feel more professional after getting a hand up my skirt.

### Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 39

They have training to tell employees not to harass each other, but there's no manager training to tell management not to create an atmosphere of hostile fear. Barry isn't going to get more work out of Charlie by chiding him as though he were a child.

Now the child is looking for toy to play with in the office.

Hands up my skirt was a control maneuver. I was talking about technical work with a brilliant coworker I respect. Charlie feels threatened by him because he's not as smart. He hangs on physically because he knows he cannot hold my attention intellectually. He wants me as *his* office chick and not lose my attention to someone who has information that I'm more interested in.

He should know that if I actually were his office chick, I'd expect him to do something special for me in return. But when you sneak up and stick your hand in the crotch of a woman whom you're not in a relationship with, she knows you'll always think of her as your whore. I didn't come to the FAA to be a whore.

I'm supposed to feel special because Charlie shares office gossip with me. I wonder if he put more effort into the woman he had an affair with. Even if I were dating him, it wouldn't be appropriate to stick his hand on my leg at work. But I'm not dating him. We're both married. If being married is an excuse not to spend time or money on a woman, then it damn well better be a reason not to stick your hand up her skirt either.

Take a look around your office. Think about which people seem like 'good guys.' Then take a very close look at every detail in how the women react around them. To prevent themselves from being ostracized from the work culture, the women will try to make it seem like everything going on around them is normal. But some of the men who may seem like 'good guys' to you, probably aren't good guys to the women.

### Episode 40: A Promise

**Doesn't physical intimacy imply some kind of promise? But if you've promised marriage to someone, what kind of promise are you expecting when you try to get intimacy from someone else?**

INT. LISA & BRIAN'S LIVING ROOM

Brian and Lisa sit on their black couch. A chess set is on the coffee table. Lisa leans up against Brian, with her laptop on her lap.

LISA

Apparently I'm sending mixed signals. Although I can't imagine what they could be, because no signal says it's OK to grab me in the office.

I wanted to make the point that you have to build trust before attempting a physical relationship. You don't just start groping. And that Charlie and I will never get to the point where it would be appropriate to be physical because we're both already married.

BRIAN

He doesn't care how you want to be treated.

LISA

I don't think he'd get my point unless I kicked him in the crotch. I don't want to get into a brawl at work.

BRIAN

You shouldn't have to avoid wearing skirts because of one jerk.

LISA

It's like Catholic grade school. The nuns made us wear plaid skirts.

INSERT high school picture of Lisa wearing Catholic school skirt.

LISA (VO)

The boys would flip them to see our underwear. But instead of teaching the boys how to respect us, they told us we had to change our behavior and wear shorts underneath. And no matter how cold it was, we weren't allowed the choice to wear pants.

BRIAN

It's just a game to him. He's trying to find out what he can get away with.

LISA

Like I'm his toy in the office. Some of the managers have their toys.

BRIAN

So he wants dibs on the new "toy" in the office.

LISA

That's what we all are. Someone's toy to play with.

Brian pushes around the chess pawns on the coffee table with the king, knocks them over.

BRIAN

Pawns to control.

LISA

When you touch someone intimately, it's a promise. You're going to treat them as someone special in your life.

BRIAN

What if you're married to someone else?

LISA

I don't know what that means. Trying to get me to promise to be his best friend at the office? What happens when I leave the office?

He always tells me his little secrets - office gossip, or thing going on in his private life.

BRIAN

Oh, I tell you my secrets, you show me yours.

LISA

Yeah, maybe. He WANTS a confidante. But based on the other women in his life, he hasn't learned how to treat a woman as anything but an object.



Brian points to the laptop.

BRIAN

With the example set by the media, he might think grabbing is the norm. Society doesn't act like intimacy is something private or tender any more.

LISA

Same with the example set by management. Skipping work, grabbing asses, giving lies to Congress... It's all a normal day's work.

### **Shooting the Scene**

It was still raining while we shot this scene, which we taped immediately after Episode 11: Grab Behind Tim. Luckily I planned this one to be indoors, so we could see my black couch (mentioned in Episode 38: Women Lost Confidence) and to have the chess set there so Andy (Brian) could knock pieces over.

Again, my real life husband was the camera man for this scene. I was worried that I'd feel weird about me snuggling some other guy in front of him and that it would reflect in my acting. I also wondered if my husband would try to rush us through the scene.

But we all seemed cool with it and shot several takes, no big deal. There's a huge difference in what's comfortable and acceptable in different lines of work. You'd never see anyone snuggling a coworker at an engineering office. Grabbing, yeah. But not snuggling.

Based on feedback I received at a critique screening, I decided to put a couple of lines into this episode. Andy (Brian) wasn't present for my insert shot (notice his hand is missing), so I draped a yellow shirt on the arm of my couch. The shirt was from Former Employer.

### **In Real Life**

This is my real living room. I'd better not need any more extra lines thrown in because we've repainted since this was filmed.

My husband and I often snuggle on this couch while we read the newspaper. He still gets the paper version. But since *Budget Justified* is for digital media, I have us read a computer.

The insert photo is of me senior year of high school with my friends near our lockers. It's one of those crooked shots, which resulted in my head being partially chopped off. It was 1988; we didn't have digital cameras that showed if we needed to take another picture. It was the only picture of me in that skirt that

I had. Since I was the one running around campus with my candid camera, I didn't take any pictures of myself.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 40**

When we were kids, we were taught it was normal for boys to grab and harass girls. It was glamorized in movies – the cool girls were sex objects for the cool boys. I was never the sexy type. I was the brainy type. A nice girl. Nobody would have lifted up my skirt, grabbed my breasts, or pinched my ass.

Some boys grow up learning that it's manly to objectify women. They make a game of getting as many girls to have sex with them as they can and have their friends take videos of it. Then they send it around to their West Springfield, Fivay, or Cape Flats High School classmates who think it's all a joke. And some girls grow up learning to compete for getting objectified.

The way women are treated in popular media gives the next generation of women who have the potential to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, and political leaders the message that no matter what they try to achieve, they exist for men's pleasure. That men have the right to do whatever they want to them.

### **Episode 41: Send Bill to Barry**

**Charlie had to share his previous woman with Naked Kitchen Man. So why not make his current woman share Charlie with Office Women? Because it scares Office Women away.**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie sit on opposite sides of the desk.

LISA

I heard there was a woman who worked here only a few months.

Charlie thinks for a moment.

CHARLIE

Oh, yeah. Shweta. She was really nice. But we didn't work together.

LISA

Why did she leave?

CHARLIE

I don't know. Wonder how she's doing. I should give her a call.

## **Shooting the Scene**

Shweta is a common woman's name in India, so as an engineer, I was familiar with the name. It didn't occur to me to tell Dave not to pronounce it 'Shweeta' before rolling the tape. Sounded like a Bogartesque mispronunciation of 'Sweetheart.' It's supposed to be a Bogartesque mispronunciation of 'sweater.'

## **In Real Life**

In Episode 12: Don't Pat My Head, George mentioned "They're always taking people off the New York project." When the real-life manager told me that they kept taking people off his project, he mentioned that one contractor quit after only nine months. So I asked around, why might she have left.

First I asked Mr. Friendly, who said he didn't work with her, so he didn't know why she left. Yet for some reason he felt he knew her well enough that he said he wanted to give her a call after she had been gone for several months.

Because I questioned the information anyone in that office gave me, I asked another guy in the office why she left...

INT. TIM'S OFFICE

Tim's reading the newspaper. Lisa enters.

LISA

Shweta, the woman who left after only a few months. Why did she leave?

Tim tries to think of what to say.

TIM

Uh... she wanted to telecommute a couple days a week. You know. Sit around the house with babies.

LISA

No, I don't know.

TIM

Barry wasn't OK with that. So she was assigned to a different client.

## **Shooting the Scene**

I like these short scenes. Can't mess them up too much, therefore you don't need to do many takes.

## **In Real Life**

When I asked the other guy why she left, he said she wanted to stay away from the office. Although the word he used was 'telecommute.' "So she could spend time at home with her kids," he said.

I mentioned this woman in Episode 12: Don't Pat My Head, also. She's the one who had a Ph.D. in math and went on to start her own consulting firm. So, obviously she didn't leave for the sake of staying home to play with babies.

I never met 'Shweta.' She was gone before I came to work in FAA offices. I didn't find out about her Ph.D. in math through the grapevine. People didn't talk much about the people who left the office once they were gone. I found out about her background and consulting firm on my own by looking her up her uncommon name on Google.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie's still sitting at his computer. Lisa enters.

LISA

What kind of relationships did you have before you got married?

Big sigh. Prepare for a painful story.

CHARLIE

Lived with a woman for ten years. I finally left after I came home, her son asleep in the next room, and there was a naked man in our kitchen.

LISA

Did you ever cheat on her?

CHARLIE

No.

Oh really. Sure you haven't.

LISA

Because...? You didn't have the confidence to find someone better?

CHARLIE

She was my responsibility. Couldn't leave her to fend for herself.

LISA

She was an adult.

CHARLIE

She had the kid. Which wasn't mine.

LISA

How do you know?

CHARLIE

There were others besides Naked Kitchen Man.

LISA

And now that you have a good wife, you have confidence to find someone else.

Charlie nods.

CHARLIE

You should've been a psychiatrist. Send the bill to Barry.

## **Shooting the Scene**

The problem when everything goes smoothly in a scene is that it leaves no interesting outtakes to play during the credits.

## **In Real Life**

Curious about how much he would reveal, I asked Mr. Friendly about his relationships before his marriage. He told me about a woman that he had lived with for a decade. She gave birth during their relationship. But several times he came home from work to find other men in their apartment while the child was there. One of the times, the guy was naked.

Mr. Friendly denied the child was his, but the Naked Kitchen Man explanation didn't convince me. If she were a boy, would he claim the child as his own? The child would be out of high school by now. I wonder how her life has turned out.

Mr. Friendly said he never cheated on that woman. Of course, he had no reason to tell me the truth. He probably fooled around on her too, but didn't want me to know how much of a player he has been all his life.

It was strange that this woman he wouldn't marry didn't have a job. Why would any woman allow herself to be dependent on an unreliable relationship? I didn't ask what happened after he left and she had to make a living on her own. I got the impression she had very low self esteem and little education. I wonder how that woman's life has turned out.

After this conversation, Mr. Friendly told me I should've been a psychiatrist and that I should send a bill to the FAA office director.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 41**

That was a good story about Naked Kitchen Man. I wouldn't be surprised if most of his friends during that point of his life, living in big city slums, had that type of relationship. I grew up on a farm. While we had our own dysfunctional problems, I didn't grow up thinking that sleeping around was a normal way of life. I grew up in a repressed Catholic community. Nobody talked about those things.

Charlie's past social community and present workplace aren't conducive to psychological wellbeing. But it's not my responsibility to fix him. I don't have to rescue everyone from their problems. I'm not looking for a people-fixing project, I'm looking for a technology-fixing project. Of course, most political problems can't be fixed with solutions designed to fix technology.

If Charlie didn't work with Shweta much, why did he think he needed to give her a call? Something's fishy there. Perhaps I'm the one who should give her a call.

I wonder how many women who leave their jobs 'to spend more time with their kids' actually leave because they've been harassed out of their careers. It's politically correct to say you want to stay home and be a mommy. But most women would be mortified to tell anyone about harassment. Because either nobody would believe them, or they'd get subtly punished, or shunned.

## **Episode 42: Management by Passive Aggression**

**Pick your battles, but please don't pick them with me.**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa is wearing a tank top. Her blazer is draped over the back of her chair. Charlie comes in, takes off his jacket, relaxes in Lisa's guest chair.

CHARLIE

Used to look forward to coming to work,  
but each day I dread it more.

LISA

What's changed?

CHARLIE

Tired of managers treating us like children. When we move to the seventh floor, Barry's giving me the office by the kitchen.

LISA

Barry doesn't care where you sit.  
Probably thinks you like the kitchen.

CHARLIE

Too noisy. I like this office because managers don't come through to check up on us.

LISA

It would be nice if the managers let us know they care about our work.

CHARLIE

Barry put me there to piss me off.

LISA

Pick your battles. Act like you're happy he put you near the kitchen.

Charlie stands.

CHARLIE

I'm gonna talk to Jane and make her move me near the stairwell.

LISA

How about IN the stairwell?

Charlie's suddenly happy.

CHARLIE

Hm. Nobody'll find us there, bad girl.

Charlie leans over, out of Lisa's view, carefully brushes her hair aside and kisses Lisa on the neck.

CHARLIE

Mmmm.

Lisa leans away.

LISA

How's your wife, Kathy, doing?

Charlie backs away.

LISA

Charlie, I may not be angry right now,  
but I will be later.

Charlie stands over Lisa looking down her tank top, moves it along with her bra strap off her shoulder and puts his fingertips inside the neckline of her tank top.

Lisa grabs the bra strap, but Charlie slides his fingers under the strap. She grabs his hand. He rests his chin on her shoulder and uses a sing-song voice.

CHARLIE

Tim didn't show up again today.

Lisa replaces her tank strap and stands up.

LISA

Charlie, maybe in the slum where you grew up, everyone went around groping and kissing married people, but in the slum I grew up in, that was weird.

Charlie grabs Lisa's hands, pulls them over her head, and pushes her against the wall. Lisa struggles. He restrains her wrists with one hand and puts his finger to her lips.

CHARLIE

Shh. Nobody's gonna walk in.

Charlie tries to kiss her on the lips. Lisa turns her head to the side.



LISA

You realize, this will ruin our working relationship in the long run.

Charlie tries to kiss her again. Lisa kicks her leg around, pushing him to the floor.

LISA

Charlie, now I am angry about this.

### **Shooting the Scene**

If you look closely, you'll see white scrapes on the green wall. We scraped up the wall shooting this scene, throwing each other against the wall.

At first I wrote this where Charlie pushes me against the desk, but it didn't look right on camera. There was no logical camera angle to catch that view very well. Dave slamming me against the wall made a better visual.

### **In Real Life**

Mr. Friendly went to find out what the seating arrangement would be after we moved to a different part of the building. He didn't like the corner he was assigned to. He thought he was put there as punishment. Maybe there really was some passive aggressive intention in assigning Mr. Friendly to sit in the corner. But I didn't see any disadvantage to his new cubicle location; the issue was too minor to care about. He went to go complain anyway. He'd look petty doing so, but that was his problem.

One time while I was in the storage/conference/illicit-activity room, he snuck up behind me, pushed me up against metal cabinets, and kissed me. I was so embarrassed, I didn't know what to say. I was too embarrassed to react. I just mumbles something about his wife and slowly slunk out of the room and headed for the women's room.

Believe it or not, I wasn't at the point yet where I felt too much fear to be able to drag myself into work. Although if I had stayed there a few more months, I know I would have felt extreme mental suffocation about going to work, as I did in the last few months of the emotionally unstable atmosphere of Former Employer.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 42**

Does he not care if he gets kicked in the crotch? Perhaps he has such low esteem that he feels he has nothing to lose. Mentioning his wife doesn't even stop him. When management treats employees like children, we start acting like children. Charlie is a hurt child, waiting in fear for the next verbal assault from management. While I wait in fear for the next physical assault. Now I'm the one dreading to come to work more each day.

I haven't worn a skirt lately because he takes standing in his office while female as an invitation to grope. I don't like monitoring my every move to avoid unwanted situations. Sometimes it's easier to let him do whatever to avoid a scene, so people don't think I'm the weird one in the office, the one to blame.

Did Barry assign Jane to micromanage seating charts? She should be spending taxpayer time doing engineering work. Another case of Barry and Charlie not knowing the difference between secretaries, engineers, and whores. The only difference in their minds is women's work, men's work, and men's play.

Charlie thinks the bosses are out to get him, so he spends more effort messing up whatever they do than he does on trying to get ahead. Unfortunately, Charlie's solution for soothing his dread is to attack those he sees as being less relevant in this office: the women. Luckily Charlie isn't one of my bosses. If he had more power in this office, this would be much more scary to me.

## Episode 43: Psych Web Site

Whether it's a result of working in this office or the reason he still works here, Charlie has issues. And Lisa has to deal with them because nobody else will acknowledge there's a problem.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa stands to get something off her bookshelf. Charlie enters, puts hands on her shoulders. Charlie speaks in her ear.

CHARLIE

I like your hourglass figure and strong legs.

Lisa laughs, moves away.

LISA

I'm laughing at you, not with you.

Charlie backs away, Lisa turns around.

LISA

It might be real fun to talk dirty, but I am not going to encourage you.

CHARLIE (sexy voice)  
I wanna hear you talk dirty.

LISA  
What would you think if you walked in and heard Tim talking like that?

Charlie shrugs.

LISA  
I'm worried about you. Have you ever had any close friendships with women that didn't involve physical intimacy?

CHARLIE  
(Sighs) I guess not.

LISA  
Hmm. You need to learn how to have a nonsexual friendship with a woman.

Lisa pats her guest chair, they sit down.

LISA  
I have a friend from Arizona State who is my example of a close male friend.

Charlie tries to dig for dirt that isn't there.

CHARLIE  
Were you actually in love with him?

LISA  
I love him. He's a close friend.

CHARLIE  
Did you ever tell him you loved him?

LISA  
I almost did. But I wasn't sure if it would be like, love you, but you can't have me, or exactly what he needed to hear.

CHARLIE  
Do you wish you would've married him?

LISA

Charlie, I may love him, but I know I'm happier with my husband. We've grown WITH each other for the past fifteen plus years.

LISA

You should look at this site.

Lisa pulls up a web site and motions to Charlie to look at laptop screen. Charlie reads.

CHARLIE

Uh oh. You think I need a shrink.

LISA

This is about problems people have building relationships after growing up in an unnurturing household.

CHARLIE

(sarcastic) Oh, and you grew up in a nurturing household.

LISA

Hardly. One of my high school friends used to say I was the teenager who actually was smarter than her parents.

CHARLIE

When I was in high school, we were expected to take care of ourselves. Parents didn't give us handouts.

Lisa pats his hand.

LISA

I'll send you a link to the web site.

CHARLIE

Fine. I'll take a look at it.

### **Shooting the Scene**

I could not communicate the right tone about the Nurturing Household line to Dave (Charlie). He sounded more like he was asking a question rather than

making a sarcastic jab. I think the take I used came pretty close to what I was looking for.

But my stupid reaction to his goofy hourglass figure comment was even worse. I couldn't be natural in any of the takes we shot. Which is part of the reason most of this episode was cut from the movie version of *Budget Justified*.

### **In Real Life**

After I showed Mr. Friendly the psychology web site, he refrained from bothering me for almost two weeks. Then one day he stood over me while he talked to me. At the time I didn't know why, but later it occurred to me he was looking down my blouse. Then he sat down and squeezed my leg. I suppose by then he'd forgotten that I had essentially called him a nutcase. One time he crept up behind me and made a comment about my hourglass figure. I thought it was a weird thing to mention. Occasionally I'd tell him I was laughing at him. He didn't care.

One time I made an offhand comment about talking dirty being a pastime at the FAA and that I didn't want to engage in that type of discussion. Then he proceeded to beg me to talk dirty.

I didn't acknowledge his request. Instead I asked, "Have you had ever had any close friendships with women that weren't physical?"

To which he replied, "No."

"You need to learn how to have a nonsexual friendship with me," I responded.

I tried to explain to him what nonsexual friendships were like. I gave the example of a friend I'd met in grad school. I've always appreciated him not only because we got along well, but because of our friendship, I experienced a great friendship that didn't interfere with my marriage.

Mr. Friendly occasionally told me about the dysfunctional family he grew up with – wife beating, running away from home, alcoholism. One morning I referred him to a psychology web site I'd stumbled across while at home the previous evening. My intention was to communicate that his behavior was not normal by anyone's standards, to nudge him to get a professional to assist him in respecting his relationships with coworkers and his wife or else shape up on his own. I doubt he ever took action on it.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 43**

What does it matter if I loved one of my friends? It's like he was trying to get me to admit something scandalous about my friendships. Wishful thinking on Charlie's part.

The web site got him worried. Not so much the information itself, but the fact that I gave it to him. You'd think that Charlie wouldn't want to do things that make people laugh at him. Perhaps his self esteem isn't high enough for him to care whether anyone thinks he's acting like a fool.

A cartoonish boor is the only picture many men have in their head of a sexual harasser. Because they don't see the harasser as it happens. Men don't think that the harasser could ever be their best buddy in the office. Men don't realize that the harasser could be themselves. But that's who the harasser is. If the harasser didn't seem normal to everyone else, he wouldn't be able to get away with it.

Strange that he hasn't had any nonsexual friendships with women. I'm not sure if that says more about his social life, about how he interacts with women, or about what he thinks of the rights women have over how men touch them.

## Episode 44: Shouldn't Lose Job Over This

**All the women in this office are mysteriously disappearing. Who's next?**

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Yvette sits next to Lisa in her guest chair. Cheryl sneaks into the office and speaks loudly.

CHERYL

Hey ladies.

Yvette and Lisa jump.

CHERYL

Wanted you to know tomorrow's my last day.

LISA

Congratulations.

YVETTE

Why are YOU leaving?

CHERYL

Time to move on.

LISA

To what?

CHERYL

Other things.

Lisa nods. Cheryl leaves. Lisa & Yvette look at each other, shrug.

YVETTE

First it was all the women over forty,  
now the women over thirty. You better not  
leave me the last woman.

LISA

It would be weird to quit after only  
three months.

Lisa sighs, puts head in hands.

LISA

But I don't know how much longer I can  
take working here.

### **Shooting the Scene**

On Megashoot Day, several of my neighbors were doing yard work. Even though my windows were closed, you can hear the faint whine of leafblowers in the background in some of the scenes. I said we could just pretend it was noise from aircraft flying over the building.

### **In Real Life**

The turnover in that office was outrageous for a government office, especially for engineers and mathematicians. I wanted the viewers to see the female manager leaving this office, rather than just listen to the characters talk about all the women in the office who have left.

EXT. METRO BUS

Lisa and Brian board a Metrobus. It's the weekend -  
Brian wears khakis and cabana shirt, Lisa wears a  
tank top and shorts.

### **Shooting the Scene**

My husband was the cameraman and had to chase us onto the bus as the video was rolling. The bus driver closed the door on him and almost drove off. That would've sucked; it was an hour bus ride to return to that stop.

### **In Real Life**

Although I took the bus to work every day when I worked at Former Employer, but never took the bus to social events because the bus that goes near my house only runs during rush hour and doesn't go to a variety of places. But I

often take the Metro to interesting events in Arlington and DC. I don't even want to think about driving or parking in Washington.

I take the Metro much more often than I drive. My husband and I own one car, a 2001 1/2 model. We bought it new and put less than four thousand miles a year on it.

INT. METRO BUS

Lisa and Brian sit in their seat while the bus drives on.

LISA

Nobody knows what's expected of them. Management doesn't give straight answers. Probably because their bosses don't give them straight answers. And I'm getting grabbed because somebody isn't busy and wants entertainment.

BRIAN

If management treated the staff with more respect, I bet the staff would treat each other with more respect.

LISA

I'm looking into who'll be my officemate when we move to the seventh floor. I think the groping will stop when there are more people around.

BRIAN

But he'll still have idle time if doesn't have a project to work on.

LISA

I should shove my Perfect Airspace on him. I'm trying to get other coworkers interested too. But if I gripe about groping, none of the guys will work with me.

BRIAN

It isn't a reasonable work environment. Why don't you quit?



LISA

I shouldn't have to be the one to lose a job over this.

## Shooting the Scene

I wondered how this scene was going to work out. My husband, Randy, sat with the camera in the seat across the aisle from us. We got lucky as far as none of the other passengers walking past us through the aisle. And the camera wasn't as jerky as I had feared.

However the bus was soooo loud. I ended up downloading a noise filtering software and filtered out the sound of the bus engine. When we got back to my place, we tried recording a voice-over, but the words didn't match our lips, so we realized that a voice-over wasn't going to work.

The reason I wanted to have a scene on a bus was that it's one of my passions. Or at least it had been. When I was an undergraduate, my essays for scholarship applications proclaimed I would save the world from being overrun by cars. Twenty-five percent of city land use is dedicated to roads, driveways, and parking lots. But less than one percent of that land is ever occupied by cars. And less than one tenth of a percent of the space taken up by cars is occupied by people using cars. That means that the car 'system' occupies a hundred thousand times more land than it uses at any given time.

The novel I was writing featured the destruction of the car system in major US cities. So when I wrote and shot *Budget Justified*, I wanted to subtly advocate for public transportation. However, the topic is too tangential to all the other points of my platform – whistleblowers, harassment in tech, and freeing ourselves from oppressive employers by creating freelance knowledge. Thus I decided not to include much beyond this episode about public transportation while on my soapbox.

## In Real Life

We were supposed to get our cubicles moved to a different part of the building soon, although management had been telling that to the staff for over a year and it hadn't happened. I figured that when I no longer had a cubicle way back in the corner that nobody visited, Mr. Friendly would no longer have the opportunity to grope. Not only would other people would be hanging around in my cubicle area, but he'd also have to make a bigger effort to get to my cubicle if his desk was no longer near mine.

There were times when I thought I should quit. But I that wasn't a solution to the problem. And if I did quit, I would've lost whatever game someone else had been playing with my career.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 44**

Another woman quit today. I wonder why most of the people who left Barry's office are female.

I always jump when Cheryl comes into my office. I'm sure Mr. Friendly thinks it's funny that I'm jumpy in the office and nobody else knows why. He's amused by any reaction he gets from me. I don't know how long I can put up with it.

I can't imagine working like this for much more than a few months. Nobody knows what they're supposed to be working on. I'm constantly being grabbed. I'm not a part of a work group. There aren't any goals for the department. No targets to meet. No deadlines with expected results. But we're going to move to a different floor in a few months. Other people will be around and I'll be getting yet another boss. Maybe then the group will have more direction and we'll have a clearer idea of what we're expected to work on. Although I don't have any reason to believe my situation will improve if I continue to work for the FAA in any capacity.

I shouldn't be the one forced out of a job to this type of environment. All this talk about creating jobs being good for the economy. Jobs aren't good for the employee. They're good for the employer. Workers need more freedom to leave abusive situations without the only option being loss of livelihood.

### **Episode 45: Takes It Out**

The bosses hide things from their bosses. Then the bosses hide things from their staff. Then the staff hide things from the bosses. Meanwhile, Charlie doesn't hide anything from Lisa.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Lisa and Charlie talk.

CHARLIE

I got taken off a project and a contractor got fired after showing Barry results from privatizing part of the government.

LISA

What happened?

Charlie looks toward the door to make sure nobody's listening and leans in.

CHARLIE

After the COO had a huge company take over the Service Office, response time went down by a factor of one hundred. Barry didn't want the COO to find out.

LISA

Wouldn't the COO want to know he made the right decision?

INSERT shot of org chart. The one that was on the wall during Episode 28: All Minds Meeting.

Under the Secretary of Transportation is the FAA Administrator. Under Administrator is Chief Operating Officer (COO). Under COO are VPs. Under one of the VPs is Barry.

Under Barry are George and Cheryl. Under George and Cheryl... well, the rest of the chart is just a jumble of boxes of Lisa's, Tim's, Charlie's, Yvette's names connected with lines pointing to everyone else in the office. Some lines go off and don't connect to anything. Jane's name is in a box next to Barry, not connected to anyone.

CHARLIE (OS)

Yeah, but the government VPs, the guys right under the COO, are bureaucrats. The COO is appointed. The VPs will be around long after the COO's gone.

LISA

Aha. The VPs would lose their fiefdoms if anything else got privatized.

CHARLIE

That's why Barry doesn't want us to promote change. VP's can't handle it.

LISA

What does Barry want us to do?

Charlie makes kissing noises, kisses his hand then pats his butt with that had.

LISA

Our job isn't to pay homage to Barry. The taxpayers are our customers.

CHARLIE

Then taxpayers need to speak up. Elect Congressmen who'll fix this piece of shit agency.

LISA

Congresswomen.

CHARLIE

Huh?

LISA

But WE also need to lead from the bottom up. Do the work WE know needs to be done.

Lisa does her grand Perfect Airspace hand motions.

LISA

Perfect Airspace.

CHARLIE

In spite of management.

LISA

Exactly. I don't know how our country continues to survive with the quality of our work.

CHARLIE

By giving talks at grade schools, spoonfeeding lies to the next generation about what we really do. As an obligation to our employers to replace ourselves with more drones.

LISA

Then we spoonfeed lies to government leaders about the results of our work. What a waste of brains.

Charlie shoves a pen at Lisa's mouth, like a spoon.

CHARLIE  
Spoonfeed the baby.

Lisa squeezes Charlie's neck, pushing him away. He drops the pen and grabs her breasts. Lisa jumps away.

LISA  
No...No.

Charlie gets up and closes the door. He unzips his pants. Pixilated pants?

LISA  
What are you doing?

CHARLIE  
Come on, bad girl. Stroke it.

LISA  
Wha... What?

Charlie shoves his shirt back into his pants.

CHARLIE  
I can't do this. I'm sorry. I don't have a condom.

LISA  
What? What do you need a condom for?

Offscreen, Charlie breathes heavily. Lisa's looking at him.

LISA  
Oh no.

Lisa looks away, shielding her eyes.

LISA  
I can't believe you're going this.

Charlie breathes louder, speaks in a creepily breathy voice.

CHARLIE (OS)  
I love you.

Lisa peeks toward Charlie, then shields her eyes again.

LISA

You don't know what love is obviously.

Charlie starts grunting between breaths.

LISA

I thought you said you didn't have a condom. What are you going to do with it when you're done?

Charlie's grunts get more frequent. Lisa looks toward Charlie, looks at the camera, then at the floor.

CUT TO a 'liquid' pouring onto the carpet in spurts while Charlie's grunts grow longer.

LISA (OS)

No...

Lisa stares at the floor.

LISA

I am not cleaning that up.

CUT TO Charlie's foot smashing the liquid into the carpet.

LISA (OS)

You're just gonna squish it?

CUT TO Charlie facing Lisa. He zips his pants back up and leaves.

LISA

Who does stuff like that?

### **Shooting the Scene**

I was going to pixilate this, however my video editing software made a big mess of the entire image when I did that. You can't see the front of Dave's pants anyway, so I left it as is.

The ending of this episode wasn't in the original script. The whole event grossed me out so much, I wasn't going to mention that it even happened. But I

came around, realizing that leaving it out would've shortchanged the audience and readers of the most important part of the story.

So the last part was shot without Dave. Just me, sitting by myself at my desk. The uh, 'liquid' was water. I held the camera in one hand while pouring water onto my floor from a cup in my other hand. I was wearing my husband's very old worn out shoe on my right foot and stepped into the scene, squishing the water into the carpet.

## In Real Life

One of the contractors I often talked to had over fifteen years of experience working at the FAA before getting hired by the contractor. He had a great reputation and everyone liked working with him. But for some reason, our office director told the contractor that this guy was no longer allowed to work on any more projects for our office. Nobody would tell him why.

Several people thought it may have been because he did a study that proved that the COO made a good decision by privatizing a part of the agency (the response time study mentioned in Episode 24: Management Doesn't Want to See Our Work). That was a politically sensitive finding, because when government functions get privatized, the career government employees (those who were hired into the position, not appointed by politicians) have fewer employees under them, thus they lose some of their power.

So the main function of contractors became kissing the ass of the FAA managers. It was extremely weird how directors at the highest level of Former Employer would fawn over the FAA managers who held the purse strings. It came across to me as undignified and I lost some respect for them.

Occasionally Mr. Friendly would say, "Love ya," or casually call me sweetheart. I would ignore the comment. Until finally one day I finally called him on it.

"Do you realize you just told me you love me?"

"Uh, um, well," he replied.

He didn't know what I'd want to hear. If he said he really did love me, then I'd expect something from him. If he said he didn't mean it, then he'd risk pissing me off.

But I was too jaded to have any emotional investment in his response. I neither expected anything from him nor cared if he didn't love me. I preferred that he didn't. He didn't even love himself. I merely wanted to point out to him how meaningless his words were.

As I peacefully worked at my computer one day, Mr. Friendly snuck up quietly behind me and grabbed my breast, unprovoked, out of the blue. I removed it, but he just put his hand back onto my breast. I removed it again with the same result. So I walked off and hid in the women's rest room for awhile.

Of course once wasn't enough. He tried it again a few days later, I suppose hoping this time I'd just let him keep his hand there. Instead, I grabbed his hand to quietly remove it from my body, but he grabbed harder, so I couldn't remove

his hand. Finally, I squeezed his knuckles and twisted his hand until it was almost backward and he fell to the floor.

Occasionally I had to go into the tiny conference room because it doubled as a supply room. If I needed pencil lead or a notebook, I'd go in there, hoping Mr. Friendly wouldn't notice. Yeah, one time while I was in there, he actually took it out and said he was sorry he didn't have a condom. What the hell made him think that taking it out would inspire me to yearn for a condom?

Then he grabbed my hand and told me to "Stroke it."

Really!?? And I would obey this command because...? For godsake, I did NOT want to touch it.

Since I wasn't touching it, he did it himself.

He was between me and the door, so I waited until he was done before I left the room. There wasn't enough room for me to squeeze past without touching him – junk was piled all over the conference table, so I couldn't crawl over it without making a racket shoving everything onto the floor. Plus, I was too stunned. So I just stood there perfectly still, hoping he wouldn't creep any closer to me.

As I stood there, I wondered what he planned to spill himself onto or if he planned to carry it though at all. There weren't any tissues. Perhaps a notebook? But no, right onto the carpet.

"Are you going to clean that up?" I asked.

He stomped on it with his foot and ground it into the carpet.

"I guess not," I answered myself.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 45**

Three months ago, I would've been much more astonished if someone had started yanking himself in front of me. But here, stuff like that just doesn't surprise me anymore. Offends me, yes. Extremely offensive. But in a place where staff skip work to organize parties with hot women as a side business, managers are out playing golf all day, all the women are quitting, it's common practice to stick your hand on a women's ass, and if any work gets done in spite of all that, it gets thrown in the garbage, why shouldn't I expect something like this to happen.

Charlie tells me I'm a bad girl. He sounds playful, but he wants me to feel like it's my own fault, that I want it. Or maybe he's trying to convince himself. I wonder if he was sexually abused as a child. Because then he would've been taught to think it doesn't matter if both parties consent to the groping or exposure of body parts.

Odd that Charlie said he loved me. I don't think he said it to fool me. I think it meant nothing to him, just words that fall out of his mouth. Lip service.

How many other spots has he left on carpets around the various FAA offices he's worked in? If you work at the FAA, or anywhere else for that matter, watch where you step. Mr. Friendly is probably still doing it wherever



he is now. And if he's doing it, other men in offices around the world are probably doing it too. The stain could still be fresh. Don't slip.

## Episode 46: Fired

Management makes up some weird excuse for getting rid of Lisa. Is it because she's a threat to the status quo? Is it because she doesn't have enough fear of authority? Or because she knows what really goes on in FAA offices.

INT. LISA & CHARLIE'S OFFICE  
Yvette enters, speaks quietly to Lisa.

YVETTE  
Barry's yelling his head off at George.

Juicy rumor curiosity.

LISA  
Oh?

YVETTE  
They're talking about you.

Irritation.

LISA  
What about?

YVETTE  
I don't know. Something Jane told him.

George timidly enters. Yvette runs out. He stands there a moment. George is stiff, as if he memorized what he's supposed to say.

GEORGE  
There's no easy way to say this, but you can no longer work on this contract.

LISA  
Oh. What happened?

GEORGE

The client didn't like your blog.

LISA

My blog? Which...blog?

GEORGE

You mentioned a meeting.

LISA

What part of THAT blog did someone not like?

GEORGE

The client said it violates the nondisclosure agreement.

Lisa's confused.

LISA

The client. The government agency.

George stares, stonefaced, won't look at Lisa.

LISA

The government isn't involved in a contractor's nondisclosure agreement with its employees.

GEORGE

Pack up your things and hand over your badge. I have to escort you out.

LISA

Pack up? Can't I just work on a different contract?

GEORGE

No.

Lisa waits for more response, gets none. She starts packing her stuff.

LISA

Strange. I sat next to Barry and his boss at the luncheon last week. Everything seemed fine.

George is confused.

GEORGE

Huh.

Lisa looks at him. He goes back to stonefaced.

GEORGE

I can't say anymore about it.

LISA

Barry should come to me if he doesn't like my blog.

Lisa looks at George for a response, but he's done talking.

LISA

Legally, feds aren't supposed to have any say in the hiring and firing of contractors.

Lisa looks at George for a response. He sticks out his hand, Lisa removes her badge and gives it to him.

GEORGE

I have to escort you out of the building now.

The scene spins out of control as Lisa grabs the camera and walks off with it, aimed at the floor. All we see is footage of carpet going by.

GEORGE (VO)

What really bothers me is that my budget is going to lose out on a couple months of overhead profit because I don't have anyone to charge your hours to the project.

FADE TO BLACK.

## Shooting the Scene

One of the crew member suggested that I keep the camera on as I walked out the office, showing weird angles of the floor, wall, etc. while carrying the camera, dangling at my side. Of course, this resulted in a glimpse of a movie light fixture, but since the whole shot was chaotic, you don't really know what you're looking at, and it doesn't matter. It's a view of chaos.

## In Real Life

Yeah, one of the managers at Huge Contractor really said that the bummer of the whole situation was that his department was going to lose out on some profit. He said my firing was unfortunate for *him* because it was hard to find someone to fill the position and Huge Contractor misses out on some money when they don't have enough people charging to the contract. Hello? I just lost a job here, and Huge (multibillion dollar) Contractor is the victim?

Of course not. I'm just a blip to them. That's why I was so easily fired.

As soon as I arrived at my office the morning after Mr. Friendly masturbated in front of me, I was told to go to Huge Contractor's building, a few blocks away from my cubicle at the FAA.

Huge Contractor management told one of the female staff members to come with me to their office that morning. I wondered if she had known what the meeting was going to be about, or if she was blindsided. I'm pretty sure she didn't know what was going to happen. We were both so positive, talking about scrounging up a FORTRAN book; I had recently thrown out the one I had in college, thinking I'd never use a thirty year old programming language again – I turned out to be right.

When I arrived, Huge Contractor management told me, "The '*client*' didn't like your blog." The '*client*' being the FAA, presumably the office director. They didn't say anything about how Huge Contractor felt about the blog.

At first I was confused. I'd been writing two blogs. The first blog was the blog that I updated around once a month with a cute little stories about engineers. I made four entries while I worked in FAA offices. One entry was called Federal Zombies, which was about me commuting to my new job crammed into the Metro with the rest of the worker bees, making the same powerpoint charts as at my previous job with only a different audience to entertain. I also wrote entries about a video I appeared in for a women's organization and funny quotes from former coworkers (high-level managers I had a lot of respect for) about bad management. The most recent entry of the first blog was about the All Minds Meeting, included at the end of Episode 32: Blog, which summarizes what happened and mentions a few jokes told by the managers. I posted that entry three weeks before Mr. Friendly squished his semen into the carpet in front of me.

The second blog had daily entries I wrote on my way home every evening during my last five weeks at the FAA. After Mr. Friendly had been bothering me

for a month, I started to document what he was doing to me in the office. The second blog is pasted near the end of this book, before the Epilogue.

When the Huge Contractor managers told me the client didn't like my blog, I thought they were referring to the second one. I couldn't figure out how they would've found out about it.

To clarify what they meant, I asked, "Which blog did they not like?" Note that I asked which *blog*, not which blog entry.

"It was about a meeting," they replied.

OK. There was a blog *entry* about a meeting in the first blog.

But I couldn't see anything not to like about that one. Damn funny, in my unhumble opinion. I'm sure they would've been furious if they'd known I was blogging publicly about all the sexual harassment going on in the office. As though it were my fault. But the blog about engineers, with my entries about commuting and meeting jokes was so innocuous. Compared to what was really going on in that office, the meeting jokes were a big Who Cares.

So I asked what they didn't like about it.

The wording in the script is exactly what they told me. That the 'client' said I had violated the nondisclosure agreement. They didn't tell me who at the 'client' had said this. I think nobody said it. I think it was something the Huge Contractor managers made up so I'd think it was all my fault. So that I'd think I'd done something illegal and be afraid to talk to lawyers.

Part of the reason they didn't disclose who at the 'client' said that my blog violated the nondisclosure agreement is that it's illegal for the federal government to tell contractors whom they are allowed to hire or fire. If they had said, "Director got pissed off and wanted us not only to take you out of his office, but to fire you for revenge, and show our loyalty to his purse strings lest we suffer the loss of his funding," I would've had basis for a law suit.

Another reason they wouldn't say who said my blog violated the nondisclosure agreement is because it didn't. Note that they didn't say, "Your blog violated the nondisclosure agreement." Instead they quoted hearsay.

The nondisclosure agreement has nothing to do with the 'client.' They don't even look at it. The agreement was between me and Huge Contractor without any consultation with the FAA or other 'client.' The purpose of the nondisclosure agreement is to protect Huge (multibillion dollar) Contractor from me profiting from any technology (software, technical data) I invent or create while under their employment or employment of their subcontractors, regardless of who Huge Contractor's client is. The agreement doesn't mention anything about jokes at a meeting.

There is a law, however, that says employees of all organizations have the right to assemble. That includes the right to tell jokes.

While I sat in the Huge Contractor manager's office, I was so calm about their whole story. How else could I act. Then they told me I couldn't work on "the project" anymore. I wasn't sure what project they were referring to since we had none to work on. There was a contract between the FAA and Huge Contractor to hire engineers to sit in the FAA office, but there were no

deliverables. The contract specified that we were there for generic engineering and technical assistance, to work on whatever spur of the moment buzz word the FAA wanted whether or not they cared about the results.

Based on their wording, I thought Huge Contractor was going to assign me to another client. Instead, they told me to turn in my badge and pack up my desk. Then the Huge Contractor managers escorted me back to my office. It took the FAA a week to get me an email account and seven weeks to get me access to the building, but less than an hour to take it all away. By the time we returned to my cubicle, they had cancelled all my computer accounts. I couldn't even print my time sheet.

I cleaned out my office, careful not to take as much as a pencil that wasn't mine – although the FAA didn't provide pencils or various other necessary office supplies, I'd been using a pencil I found next to the printer. I needed to return a few documents and books that I borrowed from coworkers. One of the coworkers had a cubicle near mine, so as Huge Contractor management stood over watching me clear my desk, I took his document to him.

"I need to return this to you because I'm getting fired right now," I said.

He jumped up and stood in my cubicle with me, as if to give me support while the goons hovered. I also had a book that belonged to someone who worked in another building. I figured they didn't want to escort me to the other building, so I tasked the Huge Contractor managers with returning it.

During lunchtime the week prior, I had purchased several mini pumpkins and gourds at the nearby farmers market and placed them on top of several people's cubicle walls to decorate the office for fall. I let my coworkers keep those. I considered them gifts. I wonder how long those stayed there as a reminder of someone who had been so swiftly booted from the office. I wonder if the gourds were left there too long, rotting in their cubicles like government employees who should have been gone before they started festering.

When I had gathered all my belongings, I was escorted out of the building. On the way to the elevators I saw the director coming toward me.

"How's it goin'," I said.

He didn't reply. I think he was hoping to come see me crying and yelling, making a scene. Instead I was acting like business as usual. Because it was.

I walked toward the Metro with one of Huge Contractor's managers. I didn't feel ashamed of anything I had done, so I didn't feel that I needed to hide or run away from anyone. He said that with my skill set and talent, I shouldn't have any trouble finding another job quickly. I asked if I could've stayed on and been assigned to another contract for a different client instead.

"No," he responded. And that was the last time I saw him.

## Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 46

Another piece of explosive FAA diarrhea bounced off their fan and hit me. How could it miss – it was spraying everywhere; unfortunately I happened to get hit by one of the bigger pieces.

Boo hoo. George's budget misses out on one staff-month of profit. If I had been making multimillions, I could've sued for a golden parachute that I wouldn't have needed. Instead nobody cares and I get squished like a bug into the carpet under a load of semen.

I don't hide what I write. It isn't a secret, for heaven's sake, it's mentioned on my resume and posted on the internet. It's important to me to share it. My coworkers needed a little humor about the All Minds Meeting.

Was I fired as an attempt to silence me beyond the blog? They were probably afraid I'd report Mr. Friendly to the police. They had to fire me immediately to ruin my credibility before I told anybody. If I reported it after I was fired, it would look like I was just trying to get revenge for firing me. So they gaslighted me with some baloney about my blog and nondisclosure hearsay.

As far as I could tell, there were no data or computer programs in the blog. The agreement doesn't mention that you can't repeat jokes you heard in a meeting. If you find secret computer code in their jokes, let me know.

I'm shocked they'd fire me over a few insignificant paragraphs that only a handful of people read. It didn't mention any names, the government agency, nor the name of Huge Contractor. I got along well with both the management and the staff. One of the Huge Contractor managers had even told me a few weeks prior that everyone in the client's office was pleased my work and that the 'client' said I was doing well.

Yet I'm not surprised to get fired over something trivial. They hired me through a temp agency, which makes me think they didn't expect to keep me around. Nobody had any work to do, so getting rid of me doesn't disrupt anything. I didn't think I'd get fired for my blog; I thought I'd get fired for not doing enough work. Or because someone else wasn't doing enough work but couldn't get fired because he's an FAA employee. Or fired as a scapegoat for something else going on that I wasn't aware of.

Maybe I was. Maybe the blog was an excuse to throw me off the track of something bigger that they're hiding. Like a Catholic Church-full of FAA managers who thought they were given the unquestionable authority of gods that could get away with assaulting unsuspecting women and children who have no rights to their priesthood. Or the possibility that I may have been hired not as an engineer, but as bait to get someone fired for sexual harassment. Because there was very little engineering work to be done. But there was a lot of sexual harassment going on.

But I think the most plausible hypothesis is that once they saw that I had mentioned meeting jokes in a blog, they were afraid that I'd been documenting the bullying, sexual harassment, and assault in a blog and disseminating that information. If so, they were right.

So they fired me to convince themselves that I was the problem. They probably thought that if they fired me, I'd crawl into a corner and never talk about having worked there. If so, they were wrong.

## Episode 47: Terrorism of the Workplace

**When you work for The Man, you are not free. Individual thought is not allowed. Control through fear.**

INT. BARRY'S OFFICE

Barry is at his computer. Text "Two hours earlier"  
across screen.

JANE (OS)

Barry! Barry!

Jane rushes in.

JANE

Look what Lisa put on the internet!

Jane sidles up to Barry and opens the blog on his computer screen. Jane points at the screen. Barry reads.

BARRY

What the hell? Who did this?

Jane points to Lisa's picture on her blog. Barry yells. Bleep parts out.

BARRY

Who does she think she is? George!

Jane leaves, George enters. Bleep bleep and more bleeps.



BARRY

George! What the \*bleep\* is this? Since when do you allow my employees to put this stuff on the internet? You should have more control of the staff. Make sure Lisa crawls away and we never see her face again!

End with low, creepy music.

### **Shooting the Scene**

I just liked having lots of bleeps. If you watch the footage as shot, which I roll during the credits of this episode, you'll notice that I bleeped out words like "George," "this," "stuff," "face," and even parts where Ted (Barry) just makes a face, but says no words.

### **In Real Life**

This scene is my interpretation of what happened the day before I was fired. I wasn't there. My interpretation is based on rumors that my now-ex-coworkers passed on to me. This scene and the next are the only ones in *Budget Justified* where I wasn't present. So this is where I break from the hidden-camera premise.

I was told by a former coworker that one of the managers showed the blog to the director. I'm not sure why he showed it to the director. Or why he didn't comment on it to me prior.

However I do know that in that office, tattling was encouraged. Tattling gave fuel to the firings the director used to keep employees repressed with fear. I refrained from tattling when I found 'Alice's' documentation in the women's restroom (Episode 19: Ladies Room Documents).

I think the blog had been presented by the tattler to the office director as – Look what I found! – something big, bad, and scary. Something that everyone in the world was reading, and because of it everyone was laughing behind his back. Which is why the office director had never heard of it before???

I don't think the tattler was trying to get me fired; he was trying to get brownie points. But I don't think the tattler cared that I got fired as a result.

INT. CHERYL'S OFFICE

Desk and shelves completely empty except for the computer and moving boxes. Cheryl & George open the blog. They shrug.

CHERYL

I don't see the problem.

GEORGE

We don't have a choice.

CHERYL

I made my choice. As of tonight, I no longer work for Barry.

GEORGE

Barry's the federal guy in charge of the federal money. We want government money. Show Barry we're team players. We have to fire Lisa.

CHERYL

Does Barry even know what a blog is?

GEORGE

We have to make up something incase lawyers come after us.

Cheryl thinks...

CHERYL

Say it was because...she had a link to her blog...in an email she sent to someone in the office.

GEORGE

I'll say it was in lots of emails.

CHERYL

Call up her friends from her old job. Tell them Barry's side of the story.

GEORGE

We have to make her feel like it was all her own fault.

## Shooting the Scene

Since I was suspending the hidden-camera method for this episode, I had one camera on Brian (George) and one on Sydney (Cheryl), then one take of both of them in the shot. Of course, they had to be careful during the take where the camera was focused on either one or the other of them. Brian's hand was waving a cookie around in front of Sydney during one of the takes. When I watched the footage, I had to wonder, What's that cookie floating around?

## In Real Life

As I was escorted out of the building, Huge Contractor told me to call the subcontractor firm after I got home, after I was out of Huge Contractor's and the FAA's hair.

The subcontractor firm was all, Oh, poor you. The terrible FAA did this to you. "Your blog was really funny. Anyone who would fire you over that must be really insecure. [Huge Contractor] fought so hard to let you keep your job," the subcontractor said. "Update your spectacular resume and we'll assign you another job with a different contractor."

I never heard from them again. This was really his way of saying don't sue us. We're the good cop. We tried to help you. The FAA is the bad cop. But if Huge Contractor actually did want me to keep my job like he had said, they would have kept me on and assigned me to another project. If the FAA forced them to fire me, that was illegal.

## Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 47

So now that we know the generic 'client's' official position on the blog (un-'Liked'), what position is Huge Contractor taking? I don't think Barry is familiar with how blogs work – after all, he didn't know how to put the org chart into an electronic slide (Episode 28: All Minds Meeting), I'm sure he isn't aware of how much stuff there is to read on the internet or how it works. If they didn't like the blog, they're supposed to just click thumbs down. Probably doesn't matter what Huge Contractor thought of the blog anyway. The only opinion they're allowed to have is Barry's.

Whether their position was thumbs up or down, if someone had a questionable interpretation of my blog, they should've communicated with me. Had I been a man, Barry and George probably would've patted me on the back and praised me for writing something so witty. But as a woman, I am 'Other.'

Barry is a coward. It's easier to call up Huge Contractor and bully them; they kowtow to whatever Barry's money says. Barry's not afraid of them. He's afraid of me. And he should be.

There's a reason he's insecure about what I put in a blog. It's because his staff thinks he's the worst director ever, completely lacking leadership skills. And that his boss is an idiot for hiring him. Of course, they don't write that in a blog, they just talk about him behind his back. Of course, I didn't write that in my blog either. Not only that, but I had actually defended him behind his back (see Episode 39: Hands Up Skirt, where I reframed the director's reluctance to communicate with the staff as shyness). But Barry sees the managers' jokes repeated on the internet and thinks the whole internet is laughing at him. Not with him.

Not only does Barry not understand technology or blogs, but he doesn't understand power. Coercing employees into acting out of fear does not bring

power. Leading people to do things because the group can accomplish something of value by pooling their efforts is what makes one powerful. Terror does not result in great accomplishments. It does not gain long-term trust.

Accepting a promotion from a manager above you does not necessarily make one powerful. Especially now in the days of a widely-used internet, power comes from the masses, not from one authority figure bestowing a blessing upon someone.

## Episode 48: Power of the People

The fear of management is sinking into the staff. Their paradigm of power is misinformed. In the age of social media, power is no longer bestowed as an entitlement from Almighty above. It must be earned from the masses.

INT. CAFE

Tim and Lisa order lunch. Waiter takes their menus and leaves.

TIM

I'll probably get fired if they find out I talked to you.

LISA

That's what they want you to think. Instill fear in the staff who remain. If you don't talk to me, the terrorists win.

TIM

Did you just call Barry a terrorist?

LISA

Nothing like firing popular employees to boost morale.

TIM

See, you're the type who sees problems, waste, and tries to do something about it. They have to get rid of you before you solve something and make them look bad.

LISA

They're afraid I'll get them in trouble  
for playing golf and ignoring  
Congressional mandates to solve the New  
York problem.

Someday Barry will run across someone  
more powerful than him and she won't  
stand for the way he manages his office.

TIM

The staff are wondering what happened.  
Half the managers won't say a word. The  
other half are telling us you were a  
naughty little girl because you abused  
email. I'd like to see what's in the  
emails they send around to each other.

LISA

Hm. So would I. Wonder if there's  
anything in there about hiring me as bait  
to get someone in trouble for sexual  
harassment.

TIM

Huh?

## Shooting the Scene

In this scene, my husband is an actor (waiter) in addition to being the cameraman. I said ridiculous things while he took our order at the beginning. I happened to be looking at a painting on the wall of a bowl of flowers, so I ordered what was on the painting.

This isn't a café. It's my guest bedroom. The tables are those cheapo particle board circles on three legs that I use as night stands and the chairs are the same ones used in Episode 11: Grab Behind Tim where Brian and I are eating pizza on my front porch. The bed is crammed up against the opposite wall behind the cameras.

The painting behind me in the video was done by my favorite artist, Ginny Crandall, my grandmother-in-law. She was prolific in the '70's and '80's and sold many of her paintings at banks and restaurants in Southern California. We have several pieces of her work all over our house; a really small one appears in the kitchen scenes.

## In Real Life

I don't know what gossip was exchanged among the FAA managers after I was fired, but it seemed they knew I'd been fired for a stupid reason. They had to defend the decision to the rest of the staff, so they made up inconsistent reasons about email I had sent and passed that gossip around the FAA office.

Huge Contractor suspended my paycheck until I returned my badge for access to their building. On the day I returned my badge, I had lunch with an ex-coworker. I told him Huge Contractor claimed that the 'client' said I violated the nondisclosure agreement.

My ex-coworker had heard a different story. The FAA managers were telling the staff I was fired because I had 'abused email.' They said that a link to my non-FAA web site, which contained my curriculum vita (academic resume) and professional writings, in the signature of an email I sent to someone in the office constituted improper use of FAA email. As though none of them had ever included a non-FAA link in an email. They claimed that by including the link in my signature file, it looked like it had been officially approved by the FAA. Even though I was not an FAA employee, nor an employee of a contractor, but a subcontractor with significant technical experience and education prior to my employment as a subcontractor.

Nobody mentioned any nondisclosure agreements to the remaining staff members. Apparently the FAA managers and Huge Contractor managers didn't coordinate their story. In Huge Contractor's office, management wouldn't talk about it to the staff at all. Some people thought I had quit. Others thought it was because I wanted to analyze Perfect Airspace solutions that might question the status quo. I think it was because the FAA director was in a bad mood for an hour and thought that firing someone would cheer him up.

## Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 48

One faction tells me I'm fired for hearsay spread by the client about something the client has no business talking about, and another person says it's because of a link in my email. Someone should FOIA their email and see what they've sent around regarding why I was hired and why I was fired.

I'd also like to have someone do a biological test on the carpet in various offices and conference rooms on our floor.

I wonder if Huge Contractor was in cahoots with the FAA managers to try to get Mr. Friendly, a federal employee, fired. If so, the FAA may have asked Huge Contractor to hire a woman to get Mr. Friendly in trouble, thus they put me in his isolated corner of the office. I'm sure he sexually harassed other women. I may have been hired to get sexually harassed and was hired as a subcontractor to make it easy to get rid of me too.

Another angle is that the FAA and/or Huge Contractor knew about Mr. Friendly but wanted to sweep it all under the rug. Huge Contractor might have decided that whenever they hire a woman, they'd have to hire her through a

subcontractor incase she 'made trouble' by complaining about a federal employee. Get rid of the problem by getting rid of messenger.

Either way, there is some kind of game going on. They thought I would shut up and go away quietly. Because that's what previous women had done.

## Episode 49: Power of the People part 2

The future of our nation is in trouble not because we don't have enough educated talent, but because business and government leaders misuse the talent and enthusiasm of their existing human resources.

INT. CAFE

Tim and Lisa wait for their lunch. Continuation of previous episode.

LISA

They told me it had to do with the FAA's interpretation of the contractor's nondisclosure agreement. Then they told me to call the subcontractor firm when I got home. I got all this baloney about Oh, the FAA shouldn't have done this to you. Good cop/bad cop. We were nice to you. FAA's fault. Don't sue.

TIM

I'm just really... disappointed. I thought you might be the one... who could actually make a difference. Perfect Airspace. You tried. That's more than I can say for anyone else.

LISA

No wonder women - and men - leave the profession. These are highly talented, highly intelligent people with lots of skills.

TIM

I'm tired of projects that go nowhere. Getting kicked around like unwanted bastard stepchildren.

LISA

To hell with the New York project!

TIM

That project's already there.

So what do you predict for your future?

LISA

I don't waste my time trying to predict the future. I create the future.

TIM

Your former employer's always trying to come up with analyses to predict the future.

LISA

Yeah, and what would they do about it even if they did know? When you have a staff of 400 engineers with advanced degrees, if you want to make a difference, you don't use them to predict the future. They're there to create the future. And if they're wandering in circles chasing their tails, the future they're creating is chaos.

TIM

Like the chaos versus order of your Perfect Airspace.

LISA

It's your Perfect Airspace now. Take good care of it.

TIM

I don't know. They'll fire me next.

LISA

The future of our nation is in trouble not because we don't have enough engineers, but because business and government leaders misuse the engineers they have.



Waiter comes by and puts plates on the table.

### **Shooting the Scene**

Nicest restaurant plates ever – my wedding china with matching water goblets.

We happened to have a friend's camera at my house that day, so we had one camera on me and one on Kevin (Tim). Then we did a few more takes with one of the cameras zoomed out to show both of us.

I wanted this scene to be shot during the day so there would be natural light in the room, as there would be during lunch at a café. Unfortunately, different amounts of light shined on different parts of the wall. The wall near me looks like a different color than the wall behind Kevin, as though I'm in a different room.

### **In Real Life**

The weird thing about this lunch in real life is that several of my bosses from Former Employer sat at the table next to us during lunch. One of them I had seen the previous week at a conference banquet with the director who fired me. I did not care to see any of them that day. I certainly wasn't dressed for work.

They greeted me as they were leaving. I told them I'd just been fired. I wanted them to hear it from me, not from the grapevine. The guy who had just seen me having a great time at the banquet was shocked. When they returned to their office, they stopped by the desk of one of my friends and asked her what happened. Luckily I had already called her a few days prior.

During this lunch, my ex-coworker said he was very disappointed that they fired me. He knew I was trying to solve air traffic problems and that I was one of the few who probably could. He had hoped I would.

I told him I couldn't go back to another one of these jobs. That it would be like crawling back to an abusive boyfriend.

I walked my ex-coworker back toward his office after lunch. We got to the elevators just as one of the Huge Contractor managers saw me. He looked scared out of his mind. Not sure what that meant.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 49**

I've known a lot of people over my adult life who are very good at math. But what useful work are they doing with their math knowledge? I'm sure some people out there are solving important problems with their math knowledge. But it seems to me that most of the work is being wasted.

Part of the reason nobody wants to be an engineer is that we aren't allowed to tell anyone what it's really like. Just think about lawyers, with all their great stories, even from the lawyers who say being a lawyer sucks. Too many people still want to be lawyers. Engineers are only allowed to be

corporate mouthpieces. What we say isn't genuine and nobody believes our corporate lip service. The upcoming generation can tell we're not being honest with them when we go to talk about how 'great' our jobs are.

Perhaps someday I will solve air traffic control problems. But it won't be with math.

A few years ago I went to a middle school math day to talk to girls about what I did with my career. During lunch, all the women griped about their job. I felt like we were such hypocrites for telling all these girls how wonderful it is to be an engineer when we all thought our employers treated us like fleas. Why are we all willing to be corporate mouthpieces? Does it make us feel like we are justifying acceptance of poor treatment, instead of removing ourselves from an abusive environment?

## Episode 50: Freedom

*Lisa refuses to crawl back to abusive situations, even though others have resigned themselves to their fate. If management was afraid of the blog, how will they feel about the movie...*

EXT. PARK

Lisa and Brian stroll hand in hand. Lisa wears a RoleModels in Media t-shirt.

LISA

It's like a dysfunctional family. Each generation learns how to treat the next poorly. The bosses treat the employees poorly, so the employees treat each other poorly.

BRIAN

So what's this nondisclosure agreement?

LISA

It says you can't give away data or computer programs developed by the contractor. It doesn't say anything about telling jokes you heard in a meeting.

BRIAN

What does the government client have to do with the agreement?

LISA

Nothing.

BRIAN

Sounds like some garbage to make you crawl away with your tail between your legs.

LISA

If I go back to another one of these jobs, it's like crawling back to an abusive boyfriend.

BRIAN

Like codependence.

Lisa nods.

LISA

People with the best skills, like Cheryl, have more options and move on to somewhere they can be useful. The ones who keep letting the managers treat them like children don't have the self esteem to find something better. They keep hearing It can't be done. You can't do it. You aren't good enough.

BRIAN

So. What are you going to do now?

LISA

I'm going to start that role model business I've been thinking about. Get stories about role models out there.

BRIAN

Are you going to make a video about your novel? With cars exploding?

LISA

I have a new story I've been working on. Now I no longer have to worry about how my coworkers will react to what's going on. It isn't the story I wanted. But it's the story I have.

Lisa and Brian walk into the distance hand in hand.

### **Shooting the Scene**

My husband, Randy, was the camera man on this hot July day in a lovely forest near my house. Luckily it's not a busy path. We only had one person stroll through while we taped.

Randy walked backward on the side of the path while Andy (Brian) and I had this conversation. One time Randy stumbled into a bush. He recovered better than I did for that take. I stumbled over my lines because I was afraid Randy would fall on his behind.

### **In Real Life**

My novel does have cars exploding. But I put off working on the novel so I could produce *Budget Justified*.

Two months after I was fired, I was invited to a party by a friend from Former Employer. My friend was also good friends with one of the FAA managers, so the manager was invited too. The invitees and RSVPs were listed on an invitation web page. I don't crawl into a corner and hide just because someone treats me poorly, so I RSVPd 'yes.'

At the party, my friend told me that the manager had called him the day before the party to decline the invitation. He had never missed any of my friend's previous parties.

My friend blamed me that the manager didn't show. He said it must've been because the manager knew I'd be there. I don't hear from that friend anymore.

I could've sat around and felt sorry for myself, but it says more about my friend, and the engineering culture, than it says about me. Even though being a yes-woman is part of the engineering culture, I don't need to spend time with people who think something's wrong with me for refusing to crawl back to another abusive employer.

### **Lisa's Character Blog for Episode 50**

I didn't want to include sex or masturbation in any stories about women engineers. Too many books throw in token sex. Some writers don't have any experiences to write about besides sex. I wanted to write about strong women who persevere toward difficult, long-term goals, women who do great technical work and have solid leadership roles. But I didn't have the opportunities to do great technical work or to lead important projects. So I don't have those kinds of stories to tell.

I'm glad I can be myself and communicate openly with my husband. That's why we've had a good marriage for almost twenty years. Because we don't play head games with each other. We don't use each other or step on each other for personal gain. We don't abuse each other for personal amusement. We're a team.

The management felt a need to control me, not include me on their team. They wanted to be in control of what I could think, whom I could be. Now that I no longer work for them, they have no power over me. I'm free to make a video about whatever I want. I need to be allowed to communicate about my work and my life. Sometimes when you walk around an office of eggshells, one of them breaks.

At least I was fired for something I believe in. Freedom of speech. And now that I've been fired, I can speak even more freely about the things I wouldn't dare mention while I was still working in that office.

I'd be an idiot if I went back to yet another job like this, just to get treated like yet another person's emotional and physical punching bag. We have an old saying here in Washington. Fool me once, shame on me. Fool me twice, we don't get fooled again!

## Anonymous Blog

After a manager told me about a woman who'd left after working there for less than nine months, I decided it was time to document what Mr. Friendly was up to. I thought I'd need it later if I was going to report him.

I also wanted to monitor how my comfort level in the workplace changed from day to day. I wrote it as a narrative with the intention of engaging other women in comparing their stories and to help men who don't see what's going on to understand what the workplace experience is like for women.

I posted the entries as an anonymous public blog. I posted it anonymously because I knew there'd be backlash if it got publicity or if the wrong person found it. I posted it publicly to see if it got many hits. It didn't.

Although I wrote something every day, I posted the entries only on the weekend. I wanted to be clear that I was not using federal resources or time to create my blog. Perhaps it would've been appropriate to use FAA resources since I was documenting FAA activities. However I was well aware of how the FAA treats whistleblowers. And I wanted to retain legal ownership and copyright of the blog entries.

Since I was documenting Mr. Friendly's actions in blog form, rather than a list of what he did, I tried to make the blog to show a nuanced picture of Mr. Friendly. Because he wasn't black-and-white pure evil or totally innocent.

I planned to go through the blog later, pull out from it a list of Mr. Friendly's actions, and bring the list to some authority – as soon as I figured out which 'authority' would assist in working toward a productive result. And as soon as I was legally an employee of the contractor rather than a temp at a subcontractor.

As it turns out, there was no 'authority' affiliated with the FAA or Huge Contractor that would help me obtain a productive result. Thus the 'authority' I

chose to air my harassment blog to was the public. Let 'The People' decide what to do about the entity that presides over the FAA: Congress.

What I ask you is: do 'The People' have the courage to elect officials with the guts to make sure the FAA doesn't waste its human resources and abuse its engineers?

The following blog entries are the anonymous blog I kept during my last five weeks in FAA offices, with very little editing. It's a look into my pre-fired, pre-masturbation-witness thought processes. I have since taken the entire blog down.

Sun. 9/30/2007

I'm the new woman at work. I'm in my thirties and this is my second job since completing grad school and moving my husband of over a decade across the country. In both of these jobs, within a few weeks of my arrival, a male co-worker has taken my hand and put it somewhere it doesn't belong.

What a silly thing to do. I find this worrisome. I'm not sure what the motive is. Does this guy plan to invite me to a hotel during lunch? Is this just a game to see what he can get away with? Is he challenging himself to find out how many women he can kiss without his wife finding out?

Luckily at my previous job, the male co-worker quit within a few months. I'm not betting on being so lucky with the current one. So I'm documenting this to help me understand what's really going on, to analyze how my perception of the situation changes from day to day, and to help any other co-workers who may be affected by this problem.

I suspect that I'm not the only target of this man's attention. I'm pretty easy-going, so I might be able to blow it off it affected only me. But a few days ago, one of the managers said that before I started this job, another woman quit after having worked there only a few months. He said he wasn't going to spend any time working with new people if they're not going to be around very long (although he seems to be enthusiastic about working with the new guy in the office). And that's exactly what encourages sexual harassment: isolating the women. Because the only guys left talking to them are the ones who want to harass them.

As the new woman, I don't know a whole lot of people in the organization and they don't know anything about me. I don't have a network of colleagues to interact with. My boss hasn't spoken to me more than once since I started. He doesn't care what I do. So I would hang out with the most fun guy who would pay any attention to me. Now the person I enjoy talking to the most is the person I need to be wary of.

Mon. 10/1/2007

Today was a good day. I was happy to see the overly-friendly guy. He's my main source of information about what goes on in this office. And he seemed happy to greet me. Sometimes I wonder if he's only glad to see me when it's convenient for him.

He tapped me on the knee a few times. Tapped, not grabbed. It didn't bother me this time, something I merely noted. In fact, I tapped him on the shoulder once to get him to stop yammering at some point. He didn't take it as an invitation to do anything inappropriate. Most of our interaction today was based on him consulting me for technical expertise. When our interactions revolve around appropriate activities, I feel glad to talk to him.

Within the context of work tasks, I asked him about the woman who quit after only a few months. He said she was really nice, but he didn't work with her much because her office was down the other hallway. Another person confirmed that she left because she wanted to telecommute too many days per week so she could hang out with her kids. But if Mr. Friendly didn't work with her much, why did he say he needed to give her a call?

I still have a suspicion about another young woman in the office, but I'll investigate that another day.

Tue. 10/2/2007

Today Mr. Friendly showed me an email from a woman he said he had an affair with. He said she was the only one he had ever had an affair with and that it ended a while ago, although they keep in touch. I asked him what he liked about her, why he wanted to have that type of relationship with her. He said he liked her because she was discreet. I take that to mean he liked her because she let him get away with it.

I'm not sure why he told me her identity. Maybe because he wants to trust me with his secrets, to be able to talk to me about anything. My hypothesis is that he didn't have good loving relationships throughout most of his life, thus has learned poor relationship skills. It's possible that he views an affair as not a big deal, something typical.

His father was very violent as he was growing up, so he ran away from home when he was a teenager. His parents didn't find out where he was until months later.

I don't think he knows how to express friendship with a woman without being physical. I am glad I have had several friendships with men that were built on respect, without being physical, that I can look back on as models for how to build a professional friendship. Mr. Friendly may need me to be his example of how to build an appropriate professional relationship. I just hope that it will turn out that way.

The Affair Woman's email was a response to his request for feedback on something he wrote for work. I find it interesting that he sent

his request to myself, the woman he had an affair with, and the other woman in the office whom I have a suspicion about. I don't know if he sent his writing to anyone else for feedback. Apparently he values our opinions. So he has some degree of respect for us. In fact, I think at some emotional level, he needs us. But his first reaction toward gaining our friendship is to attempt to establish a physical relationship.

Thu. 10/4/2007

We're just not intellectually matched. Today I was complaining to him about the lack of attention/direction/communication with management. He thinks I'm complaining that I have nothing to do. That is not the case. I have plenty to do, and if I didn't, I could make up something to do. But what would be the point. No, I do not want him, nor anyone else, thinking that I have nothing to do. I'll have to never bring up the topic again, make sure he sees that I'm busy.

I tried to explain that I am goal oriented, and that I don't like being given a demand to look for some data when I don't know what it's for, or if the data will even be used for anything at all. I want a goal to work toward and I can figure out on my own how to do it. The problem is that I don't know what my goal is for this year, nor anyone else's. And if I make up my own goal, nobody is going to care about it. So maybe my goal is to look like I'm busy so nobody bugs me.

Fri. 10/5/07

Today he slid his hand up my skirt. I was on the phone, so I wasn't able to protest. He found out I was wearing a maxi pad and may have felt a little foolish. I whisper-yelled and called him a dork when I got off the phone. He didn't respond. I think he felt hurt. I hope negative reinforcement has some effect. I also need to figure out how to reward positive behavior.

I haven't worn a skirt lately because he takes standing in his office while wearing a skirt as an invitation to grope. I don't like having to monitor my activities to avoid unwanted situations. But sometimes I can't get him off me without making a scene. Sometimes it's easier to let him do whatever to avoid a scene. It seems he doesn't understand anything but a kick in the groin and punch in the jaw. I'd hate to have to do that. Now I know I need to avoid the situation altogether.

Does he not care if he gets slapped? Perhaps he has such low esteem that he expects women to reject his friendship whether he treats them well or not, figures he has nothing to lose.

I'm wondering if this instance was a control issue. I was on the phone with a brainier guy in the office whom I have more in common. Mr. Friendly knows I get along well with Mr. Brainy, and has a lot of respect for him. He may feel threatened by that kind of relationship, which he



knows he would never be able to have with me, so he's trying to hang on physically because he knows he cannot hold me intellectually.

The funny thing is that I don't get as upset about it right away, as I'd expect most women would. Or in the way I'd expect myself to get upset. I get more angry over it several hours after the fact. It's inappropriate behavior for an office and it gives me a bad impression of the professionalism of our office in general.

Tue. 10/9/2007

I think he's finally getting the idea that I don't really want to play along with his games. Either that or he was too busy today.

So far, I've only emphasized Mr. Friendly's annoying traits and habits. Anyone who reads this would wonder why I bother talking to this guy at all. Most of the time, he's helpful and pleasant. Most of the times that he talks to me, he doesn't get touchy-feely. When I first arrived, he was helpful and didn't try anything inappropriate at all. I had thought we were establishing a good working relationship.

Sometimes he can be really funny, a little goofy. He doesn't take himself too seriously. I have to appreciate him for who he is – good entertainment value. He's not the type I would normally hang around if we weren't in the same office. He's not the brainy type. But for the most part he's not a monster either. Maybe a scared child in an adult body.

Today he was kind. He shared his candy with me, a gesture reminiscent of friends sharing on the playground the day after the Halloweens of my childhood.

He asked for my advice on another document he was writing. I'm glad he values my opinion on his work, almost to the point where he seems to turn to me as the writing expert. It was nice to work with him on something serious.

Wed. 10/10/2007

Mr. Friendly was busy again today, but he did spend some time to vent about some things happening on the project he's on. I think he's glad to have someone to vent to. Probably because I actually listen. Hopefully I respond well, giving him different perspectives to think about without coming across as though I were judging him.

I caught myself tapping the knee of a younger male co-worker for a split second today when he came up with a great idea. Luckily he didn't seem to notice. But it occurred to me that he could have been offended, since some people are more sensitive to that sort of thing than I am. Am I becoming desensitized to office touching?

Thu. 10/11/2007

Another good day. I think after I called him a dork last week, he started to understand that I appreciate him more when he's not playing

his little games with me. I enjoy having him around as someone to joke with, but not to joke with physically.

Or maybe he's getting enough female attention from the other young woman in the office.

Another guy stopped by while I was talking to Mr. Friendly in his office. We had a long conversation about how nobody in our department knows what they're supposed to be working on. The two of them make a reasonable comedy show together, one slapping his own ass, the other saying our organization is actually two organizations, each doing the same thing as the other. I told them I've already developed my own project, 'Perfect Airspace,' even though I haven't even been there two months yet. I may have even found someone else interested enough to help work on it already.

I feel more comfortable about his presence when we're discussing work-related topics in a group setting. The teasing feels like a lie. Like he's trying to control me, or feel like he owns me by dominating me physically. Sometimes it seems like he was just testing for a reaction. But hopefully as I'm here longer, that game will become old.

Fri. 10/12/2007

The game hasn't gotten old yet.

Today I had meetings all morning. I was on adrenaline mode, paying close attention and taking notes when others were sharing information, and spilling energy while I was speaking. I didn't get back to my office until the afternoon. Mr. Friendly was glad to see me, and kept walking by my office and stopping to chat after I returned.

While I showed him something on my computer, he rested his hand lightly on my shoulder for a moment. After having spent the entire morning in the theater of a meeting environment, I was too spent to have much of a reaction.

Later he came back as I stood in my office. He gave me a gentle hug from the side. Then he grabbed my hips and grinded against me. What the hell? Too much. Too hostile. Too controlling and presumptuous, as though he wanted to trap me into doing something because he could. He knew I'd be too humiliated to run out of my office screaming about it. I pried his hands off of me and headed out of my office and straight for the women's restroom. He couldn't follow me there.

I wanted to talk about how it made me feel when he pulls stunts like that. When I returned, he was in the conference room. It's theoretically a good place to talk, but a few weeks ago while I was in there, he locked me in. We were just talking, but I wasn't aware that the door even had a lock until someone knocked. I felt weird about being caught locked in the conference room, as though I were up to something.

The next time we were in the room together he lifted my skirt. I tugged at it, trying to keep it down. He told me not to be shy. Shy was not the issue. I wanted to keep my skirt down.

I didn't want to yell. I'd be mortified if someone else in the office knew what was going on. People would ask why I went into the conference room with him. Blame the victim. It's a work environment and entering a conference room should be a normal work activity. I wouldn't have gone in the conference room had I had any idea that someone would do something like that in an office setting.

A few weeks ago he tried to get me to follow him into the conference room again. I refused. But I walked past twice. Both times, a different person had come into the conference room to ask what he was up to. What a goofball.

So, back to today. When he returned to his office after playing in the conference room, I sat him down and told him that although I normally appreciate a hug when I run into a friend, I don't appreciate being grabbed. Looking back on that statement, I'm not sure if I was clear. I guess I'll have to communicate about that better next time it comes up.

To me, this isn't normal. But what is normal? Some professional women pay to take pole dancing lessons. He should hook up with one of them. He seems to think I'm one of the pole dancers. I can't figure out why he would think that. Maybe just wishful thinking. Believing what he wants to believe.

Or maybe it is normal. And I'm believing it's not because that's what I want to believe.

Sun. 10/14/2007

Some women think men are predisposed to be naturally bad and prey upon women. I was at a conference last summer where someone spoke about sex trafficking. I asked what was going on in the lives of the men who wanted to pay to get sex with these girls dragged to the mattress against their will. The response was that it was because men are inherently evil.

I disagree. My husband, and probably almost all of the men I know, would never seek out girls trapped against their will. If a man is looking for trafficked sex, then his social and psychological needs are not being met.

Mr. Friendly's psychological needs are not being met. I don't know what those needs are or what is going on in his life to result in his seeking lewd behavior from me. I may never find out. And I likely don't have the right experience to help him solve that problem.

It's not my responsibility to fix him. I'm not one of those women who think it is their responsibility to rescue everyone who has a problem, whether they want to be rescued or not. I'm not looking for a project, I'm looking for a colleague. Of course, this work relationship can be toxic at

times, so I have to take it at face value. Perhaps a better description would be work entertainment.

I told him he's ruining our friendship in the long run, that I'm tired of his games. He says he understands, but his actions show that he either doesn't understand, or he doesn't care.

He says I overanalyze things, that I think too much. One can never think too much. The entire human race doesn't think enough. The truth is that I'm a much better problem solver than he is used to dealing with.

The little games he plays with me are not the only problem he creates for himself. He has made several bad decisions in his life and is going through financial difficulties. He doesn't have much of an attention span. He likes the fun of the moment, unable to project the consequences months or years out. He is incredibly helpful and attentive when someone needs something right away. But he loses interest in anything that takes time. He needs to learn the concept of delayed gratification.

I, on the other hand, have no problem with taking on a project that may see little benefit until ten or more years out. Hey, if you don't start on the problem now, you're not going to be better off in ten years. What else are you going to do with yourself over the next ten years?

Mon. 10/15/2007

I like looking out the office window at the clear blue sky, the cityscape beyond us. A train rolls by. A skyscraper points at an airplane coming in for a landing. A boat floats on the river in the distance. Buses and shuttles drive around in a traffic circle. A limousine stops to let out someone who may or may not be very important. Reminders that we are just a few cogs in the wheel of society. Interesting things are going on outside while we're trapped in our cubicles.

A picture of Mr. Friendly and his wife with their arms around each other sits on his desk. A picture of a happier time, one that seems unattainable today. However, he thinks things are going fine with his wife. She is unaware of his past affair.

I listen to him making jokes, telling stories. I told him I came out of my meeting with management this morning confused about what I was supposed to do. He said that was because management came out of that meeting even more confused about what I was supposed to do.

Rumors. A good way to learn the organizational culture and history. He tells me about the woman in our office who doesn't know anything, but pretends she's an expert on everything. Or the boss who can outcalculate everyone and has the best insights at meetings, but can't remember his password or where he put his briefing files. Or the managers who disappear for hours and come back with shopping bags from expensive department stores.

He sees the goofing around that goes on in the office. The productive work that people do isn't as prominent. Goofing around has become the office culture and nobody wants to be the one who takes on extra duties. Then Mr. Friendly expects a promotion just for showing up for the past ten years. Reminds me of teaching college freshmen.

He tried a little footsie today while I showed him a briefing in my office, but since I didn't react, he didn't push it further. I decided to have a little talk today.

I started by asking how much respect he has for his wife. He said he had a lot. So I asked why the fooling around. He said attraction. Not a great answer. I think he was trying to be honest, he probably doesn't really know the answer. I asked him how he would feel if I met his wife. He told me he'd be very nervous. Guilty conscience.

Then he grabbed my leg. He whispered that he was attracted to my hourglass figure, strong legs, and hips. It was so stupid I couldn't help laughing. I don't get upset, scared, yes. But not upset. I said that I didn't want to encourage him. He begged me to talk dirty. I didn't go along with it.

I told him I was worried about him, that this was a sign of a deeper problem. He said he had never had any close friendships with women that weren't physical. I responded by saying that he might need me to be the person he learns to have a nonsexual friendship with.

He said I was overanalyzing. If he only knew how true. I said maybe he needs to analyze a little more. Later he gave me a hug without dragging his hands to see where they could go.

Wednesday 10/17/2007

We had a staff meeting today. I didn't sit by Mr. Friendly. As I walked in, he said he got my voice mail. I asked him what I had said. He didn't repeat it, of course.

I would have been shocked if he actually had repeated it. And so would have been everyone else. Yesterday he was in his office telling people who weren't there to kiss his Italian ass. On his voicemail I said, "Italian ass" and hung up.

After our staff meeting, he gossiped to me about the underlying meaning of what had been said by the managers. We didn't want anyone else to hear, so he whispered softly. He kept his hands to himself the entire time.

The main focus of our discussion was how management is nickel-and-diming the staff, eroding morale little by little. Management refuses to give the staff bonuses. But they pay themselves \$5000+ bonuses. There was even an article in the news about huge bonuses meant to encourage the retention of highly skilled scientists that were going to management. All they had to do to get the bonus was sign a form that basically said, "Hand over the money." Management also refused to

discuss the results of the employee satisfaction survey. Guilty conscience.

I gave Mr. Friendly some information I found on a psychology web site about people who grew up in homes with little care from their parents. It described the resulting trust issues, possibly leading to affairs. He said he'd look at it.

I'm not sure if he caught the underlying message beneath giving him information from a psychology web site: you have issues. Some people would be pissed off. Like my dad. If I had ever suggested he had issues, he would have disowned me. One time I told my mom that someone needed to seek help for him. No one ever did. Eventually he killed himself.

Thu. 10/18/2007

One of the funny guys in the office tried to make a case that sexual harassment is a form of entertainment for the blue collar guys in a different part of our organization. He said that the blue collar department also gets a lot of complaints that they're stealing each other's lunches. And when someone steals one of the women's lunch, it gets categorized as sexual harassment.

I left a snack in the refrigerator at work Monday evening. It was gone Tuesday morning. Must have been sexual harassment.

Interesting that Funny Guy brought it up within the context of management taking away all perks, leaving employees to seek enjoyment in other ways. Especially since the staff in our department also feel that all their perks are taken away one by one. And that creates an atmosphere where the staff wants to get away with things behind management's backs.

Fri. 10/19/2007

Mr. Friendly said something silly, so I pretended like I was going to choke him. He reached out to grab me. I think. I jumped away and whispered, "No...No," with fear on my face. He left me be. Maybe Mr. Friendly took the information I gave him from the internet seriously. Or maybe he's worried that I think he's a mental case.

So far, I can handle Mr. Friendly's behavior. For a while, I had been worried that it would escalate. If it escalates to the point that I couldn't handle it, I'll have to tell someone. But, based on how everything else is run in our organization, "authority" would likely handle it in a way that would not be productive. I know I need to deal with him myself first. And I have no idea who the appropriate person to tell would be. Probably nobody.

As the new woman, I don't want to be known solely for being the one who complained about groping. There is a good chance it would backfire on me. I have no sure allies.

I'm concerned that the silence condones his behavior, that I have become his enabler. I feel I need to say something allowed, otherwise he will continue to sneak around. I'm hoping that once I understand the problem well enough, I can deal with it in a way that doesn't make everyone's situation worse.

So I confront him about it occasionally. Make him the butt of his own jokes. Which he does very well on his own, so that makes it easy. I tell him I'm laughing at him, not with him. And then I laugh with him.

Sun. 10/21/2007

As I was growing up, I was not the sexy type. I was the brainy type. A nice girl. Nobody would have lifted up my skirt, grabbed my breasts, or pinched my ass. That's what my sister was for. She was able to get boys to stop doing that to her by gaining a hundred pounds.

When we were kids, it was accepted as normal for boys to grab and harass girls. Some grow up learning to behave like beasts.

Sometimes I wonder why I would be selected as a target. I think it has as much to do with situation as type of person. I think different people have widely varying views of who I am. Some people seem to think I'm a party girl, while others think I'm a good girl. Some people know I'm a genius, while others haven't witnessed me in any context where my intelligence would be on display. Some think I'm disobedient to authority, others think I do my job. Some think I'm a goof off and others think I'm a strict disciplinarian. And all those people are right on most occasions, but they extrapolate their views into something I'm not. Some people just see what they want to see.

Mr. Friendly has told me I'm a bad girl. He sounded playful, but I think he wanted me to feel like it's my own fault, that I want it. Or maybe he was trying to convince himself.

Mon. 10/22/2007

Funny Guy forwarded to me a long story in an email that contained an obscenity. He didn't realize it until later, so he came straight to my office as soon as he realized it. He wanted to make sure I didn't think it was sexual harassment. He says our organization will fire people for sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment hadn't crossed my mind. Why does he keep talking about it? Guilty conscience?

He could be trying to gradually desensitize me to behavior that could be construed as sexual harassment. And maybe he is trying to get my promise not to tattle on anyone for sexual harassment. When I got hit by a car fifteen years ago, the insurance company tried that tactic on me, trying to get me to say that lawyers were a useless waste of time and that I wouldn't talk to them. I promptly called a lawyer. The insurance company paid up real fast.

But honestly, I don't think he's plotting a sexual harassment campaign on me. Too weird.

An obscenity in a forwarded email doesn't bring to mind sexual harassment. Poor taste, bad writing, but not sexual harassment. In fact, when I read it, I wasn't surprised to see it there. I even expected it. The article was full of quotes from the guys in the blue collar department. I would have expected many more obscenities. The article described how they all go out to Hooters after work. Now that's an institution built to pay women to get sexual harassed. It didn't say how the women in that department felt about the guys going out to Hooters.

Mr. Brainy almost plowed into me today by walking backwards through a narrow doorway. He's twice as big as I am, so that could cause serious injury. I held my arm up against his back as soon as I entered and saw him coming at me, and I at him. The result was my hand on his back. I don't think he was offended, just surprised. And mostly embarrassed.

Hey, everyone gave each other back rubs in high school all the time. But this isn't high school. It's more like junior high.

Wed. 10/24/2007

Today was a weird, disorganized rainy day. For a variety of reasons, it took way too long to get to work. Mr. Friendly was so busy, I didn't talk to him all day. Someone brought in cake. Everyone ate it in the conference room. So that cheered me up.

I also had a really nice talk with Mr. Brainy about how he met his wife. He's going out of town for an extended vacation soon, so I'll miss him too. I should make a point of talking about those things with him more often. I think he's shy of me. Or afraid of getting accused of sexual harassment if he talks to me too much.

Thu. 10/25/2007

Mr. Friendly called me after he left work. He seems to think the bosses are out to get him. They have treated him poorly in the past, but I don't think they had any ulterior motive in this case. I told him he needs to pick his battles. This one is so petty he needs to let it slide. I don't think he's going to.

He doesn't respect authority, occasionally cutting off his nose to spite his face. Part of the reason he is attracted to me and trusts me is that I am irreverent toward authority and enjoy his stories about management's antics. But I view each of the managers as an individual and find some aspect of their style to respect, regardless of their position, because for the most part, the managers are quite intelligent. Mr. Friendly dismisses all managers because they are managers. He tries to hide from them and pushes to see how much, or how little, he can get away with.



I feel bad for him. Like a hurt child, waiting in fear for the next beating from management.

Mon. 10/29/2007

A few of us are going to an offsite meeting next week and I asked one of the new guys in the office how he was getting there. He said, "I'll wait on the corner for a beautiful woman to pick me up. Are you driving?" Another guy was present at the time. I looked at him to make sure he noted the comment. Who knows what he thought of that remark.

My first impression of New Guy was that he was a chauvinist. He probably doesn't have a clue that he's a chauvinist. On his first week of work he came to ask me about the copy machine. Why didn't he ask one of the guys who sits near him? I decided to give him the benefit of the doubt, just incase the guys he sits near weren't around at the time.

But a few days later he came right out and said that because I was a woman, he wanted my opinion on the color of furniture for his living room. Why would he think every woman cares about the color of furniture? I told him my furniture was black, so he probably wouldn't want my opinion.

He asked another woman about her recommendations of safe neighborhoods from a woman's point of view. She told him she's not as concerned about neighborhood safety as some women, so she didn't think her opinion would be representative of "women's safety." You go, woman.

A young cool guy at work didn't show up today. Probably recovering from the weekend. Supposedly he's starting a business throwing big parties. Since our boss has moved to a different department, nobody is around to supervise him. He often comes in late, leaves early, and has been caught several times not showing up at all. But he still works there.

Tue. 10/30/2007

Except for our occasional goodbye handshakes before he leaves work, Mr. Friendly hadn't touched me since I gave him the information from the psychiatry web site. Until today. He was standing over me while he talked to me. I didn't know why he was doing that at the time, but I'm wondering if he was trying to look down my blouse. Then he sat down and squeezed my leg.

I told him if he's going to touch me like that, he'd have to take me to a nice restaurant or a nice trip out of town first. He said there's no way that would ever happen, since he has a wife at home. Exactly my point. I told him I deserve better than this, that I should be treated like someone he valued. He agreed verbally, but that didn't stop him from feeling me up later.

Luckily he's not my boss. If he had more power in the workplace, this might be much more threatening to me.

I would think he'd know he can't expect me to go very far along with his games without some effort on his behalf toward treating me like someone he felt was special. I assume this all went over fine with the woman he had an affair with. Or maybe he did put more effort in with her. I don't care enough about it to ask for more details.

Mr. Friendly is still very busy. I'm a little suspicious of that. I think he's starting to realize that I'm actually a hard worker, so he may be trying to keep up appearances for my sake, trying to convince me he's doing so much work. I think the information from the psychiatry web site got him worried. Not so much the information itself, but the fact that I gave it to him. He's kept his paws off me for the past two weeks, up until the leg squeezing today.

The past two weeks, he's been going to our other building for meetings frequently. That's where his ex-affair lover works. Maybe he's meeting with her.

I gave my boss's son a toy construction helmet today. I would have given it to the kid even if he were a girl. But it still seemed like I was giving it to him because he was a boy. I gave it to him because the LED on the front of it wouldn't turn off and thought he needed a toy more than I did.

I asked a young guy to install a technical analysis software on his computer so he could do his work. He couldn't figure out how to install it. But he did figure out how to install a slew of applications for downloading music and videos. He also sleeps at his desk.

Thu. 11/1/2007

Mr. Friendly told me I smelled nice today, which is odd because I don't wear perfume. Maybe it's my hand lotion.

I asked New Guy something about his previous city of residence. His response was, "That's right, baby." What the hell did that mean? Weird.

Out of the blue at lunch today, New Guy asked one of the women if she cooked. You Go Woman told New Guy to stop it with the sexist remarks. First surveying all the women in the office about the couch, then questions about women cooking. I'm glad she feels she is in a situation where she can say something. She's much younger than I am, so she's never had to deal with extreme sexist workplace issues like I faced in the '90's where I was assigned to work with the secretaries and the male interns worked with the engineers.

Mr. Brainy is leaving for his long vacation today. He's always a gentleman. I wanted to give him a goodbye hug, but didn't know if he'd feel weird about that. There were about ten of us crowded around when we were leaving, and I didn't want to embarrass him. So I gave him a goodbye handshake.

Fri. 11/2/2007

Fridays are always happy because there are good meetings. I get to talk to energetic people, the freedom to go for a walk to other buildings, and have a special treat, like doughnuts.

I live a better life than most people. I have a very nice husband, we have more money than we use, we eat good food, go to interesting events, meet interesting people, and learn lots of new things.

I've been talking freely about my husband more lately. That seems to have had the effect of diminishing Mr. Friendly's boldness.

Although I enjoy chatting with Mr. Friendly, he has a negative affect on my morale regarding how management treats me. His attitude is to avoid management. He is concerned that management expects him to do all their grunt work. There is some truth to that. At my former employer, when I mentioned I had no project goals and I wanted to get more involved in a project, they gave me intern-level tasks. That's a great way to lose great employees.

Since I'm new, I can't expect to be included in everything, but management avoids our corner of the office. I feel out of the loop because I'm not closely connected to the right people. And I am connected to the wrong people. And my boss has left, without anyone replacing him. And I don't know how to insert myself in the loop correctly without getting used as an intern – like at my former employer.

This afternoon Mr. Friendly slid his hand up my leg, over my pants this time, so I don't think he figured out I was wearing a pad. I walked away. He came over and tried to kiss me. I asked how his wife was doing, calling her by name. Then he apologized.

Sometimes I think it would be funny to toy with him. But what kind of person would do that? Someone who had no respect for the other person. And I know he would play back further than I would want to go. Touch his knee, he'd rip off my pants.

It's like a game where he's trying to see how much he can get away with, like a child testing his babysitter by sneaking closer to the cookie jar until she finally takes him into the other room.

I said his behavior isn't normal to me and asked what happened to him before he got married that made him OK with his actions. He told me he lived with a woman for over ten years, raising her child she got pregnant with from some other guy, even though she was living with Mr. Friendly at the time.

They didn't get along. She needed him because she didn't want to work, and he supported her financially. He didn't have the courage to leave. She didn't want him to go to college. She probably was afraid that if he bettered himself, he'd leave her. Instead, he left, then went to college. He said that never cheated on her the whole time.

He finally left when he came home from working a night shift and a naked guy was in their apartment. While the child was there sleeping. He kicked the guy out and made him leave with only his underwear.

I suppose he didn't have the courage to find another woman if he didn't have the courage to leave her. Now that he has a wife he likes, he has the courage to find another woman. Mr. Friendly said I'd make a good psychologist. And to send the bill to our department manager.

I wouldn't be surprised if most of his friends during that point of his life, living in big city slums, had that type of relationship, living in a similar situation. I grew up on a farm. While we had our own dysfunctional problems, I didn't grow up thinking that was a normal way of life.

I'm hoping my working "relationship" with Mr. Friendly doesn't become toxic to the point where I feel anger toward him. I think what will more likely happen is my relationships with others in the office will grow, the office culture will evolve, and Mr. Friendly will fade away.

I didn't write anything on Monday, November 5. That was the day Mr. Friendly masturbated in front of me. I didn't know what I should do about it and I was too stunned to know what I wanted to write.

My last day of work was November 6. I didn't bother writing anything that day since I had been at work for only three hours and one of those hours was while I was getting fired and cleaning up my desk. At this point, my whole anonymous public blog was moot.

Sun. 11/18/2007

I got fired last week for my blog. So I won't have any more posts for awhile. But I'm sure this story is far from over.

## Epilogue

I couldn't subject myself to another place like this ever again. So I decided to work on my own projects. Why give FAA managers credit for my intellectual pursuits? But it took a long time before I was sure what my projects would become in the long term.

Well, now I had a true story, so the first thing I did after getting fired was to hold off on my novel and work on the screenplay for *Budget Justified* instead.

With all my education and experience in technology, I wanted my projects to have a strong footing in digital media. During the production of *Budget Justified*, Facebook was just becoming mainstream, with Twitter on its heels. I was already experimenting with blogging – I suppose if it hadn't been for blogging, *Budget Justified* may have been a different story.

Based on the recommendation of a business consultant, I experimented with virtual worlds in Second Life. I'm writing a story – looks like it will become two

books – about how I was treated as a woman in an online world where almost everyone, except myself, chooses to be anonymous. That’s not completely true. I go online anonymously too. As a man. I wondered if anyone would be able to tell the difference. They can’t. In fact, people who knew me as Lisa who also knew me as Brad in Second Life had no idea Brad was me.

When I was a freshman in college, I was introduced to word processing software for writing papers. I was so impressed, I wished to come up with an idea for a software that would revolutionize the way everyone communicated. It took more than a couple of decades before I would.

The web came along and I experimented with Java code for my graduate research. In 1995 I made my students create their own hyperlinked web pages and told them, “This will be very important. Although I’m not sure why yet.” Once video came onto the internet, I saw its potential as a means for interactive television. Unfortunately, even if I had a solid idea for a useful site, I didn’t have the software development skills to create one that would be of much use and didn’t have the thousands of hours of free time required to learn those skills.

While producing *Budget Justified* and writing this book, I found that the old model of movies, television, and books was broken. Inspired by the chat rooms in Second Life, live video in Ustream, and the popularity of reading books on electronic devices, I finally made it a priority to learn those web development skills. I’m creating CrowdPublish.tv to create the new model of books, interactive television, and the way we socialize and do business.

CrowdPublish.tv is very much a work in progress. I see it as a way to socialize online around electronic writings, art, etc. that people can sell while they’re giving a live talk through internet video. The audience chats by text or voice to contribute to the conversation. A few people can join in on video, like having a conversation with new friends in your living room. Or on the bus. Or on a hike – wherever you carry your electronic devices.

I want this to revolutionize the way people work by giving them more freedom and options. Currently society is set up to reward big business to hire people as employees. It’s a big commitment to take on an employee and a big risk for a person to tie up their options to one source of income – putting all the eggs that their livelihood depends on in one employer basket.

But if you become known as the Person Who knows all about llamas or the Person Who writes the most efficient code or the Person Who (insert what you do best here), people will visit your site and events to purchase your writings or pay you to help them out on their projects.

And you won’t be dependent upon the boss who may fire your entire livelihood because they were in a foul mood and thought it would be fun to fire someone and try to make them cry. Or dependent upon one unstable company that’s about to lay off half its staff. You’ll be free to move on to work with the people who actually appreciate what you create. You won’t need The Man to be a job creator. YOU will be empowered to be your own job creator.

The Future of Empowerment is Your Story.