So I shouldn’t even call it pre production until being done with the script.. but I did. I meet with all the actors individually & let the actors know that once the script is done a table read will decide where they are placed – even though I’m already placing them based off looks, in my mind. At this point the draft is 14 pages with ten or 11 characters and I have 10 seriously interested actors. That ten quickly becomes 6 as they fail to respond to emails or make it to scheduled lunches. Showing up for a scheduled appointment set ahead of time Is a proving factor.

I was slowly collecting all the**props** needed in my adventures around town. Just walking around town I literally found a blanket in the middle of the road in the rain, a winged lapel pen by a bike share, a working Trak phone on a traffic light, a backpack with only one strap and other things needed to make the characters feel real. In the beginning of March when I booked the conference room at my workplace for the table read I also made the order for a uniform to be delivered by March 6th. I also ordered name tags for the Chili workers, Park badges and a clapboard. All that was left was cigarettes, a fifth of liquor, a box, a broken phone and some soap.

As far as **locations**, there are only two that are interiors. The food spot and the cell store. At one point I wanted to include a bathroom, but that was nixed in re-writes. I have a spot for the food place called the Irish Times, that agreed to let me film whatever I want there as long as the crew eats lunch there. But while eating during our weekly production meeting, the owner of Ben’s Chili Bowl said we had a chance talking to her daughter and filming there. Ben’s opens early and stays open late, giving us the opportunity to film pretty much whenever throughout the day. And after our talk with Mrs. Ali, we felt pretty good about it. I emailed her daughter and she took my number – things were looking good. We scheduled another Sunday as I went from location to location taking photos for a potential Director of Photography. I also needed to lock down a mobile store. I planned out a path and Tim agreed to drive and help out. All the stores were Boost mobiles. I planned to hit some Metro PCS’ bit after my failed first attempt early on, I figured we would have more luck with a smaller (& honestly jankier) chain like Boost. The thing with these mobile stores, where there is one, they have competition near by. So every stop we made we hit two stores. A Virgin store, a Metro store, a cricket store. We hit 7 stores and generally were given the same response “contact our manager”.

That was until we headed to the last boost mobile, we saw a store waving the many flags of a mobile store, Simple Mobile. After perfecting the pitch over a handful of stores, I gave it to him and he simply said “Yes” and gave us his card.
I eventually stopped hearing from the owner of Ben’s Chili Bowl and it started to worry me after I had finished the script. I hit her up on a alternate email address and went up to the spot to hand deliver her mom a Script for her, but she wasn’t there.  She eventually responded she was out of town and wouldn’t be back until the 6th, but practically gave her okay on the date, March 10th via email. She never responded to my emails once she was back in town as production drew closer though..

It took two more weeks from ur meeting at Ben’s before I got anything done with the script that I cared about. I then had to reach my screenwriting mentor to run it by him. This time it took him forever to respond, but I got his final critiques. I loved his critiques but I often got frustrated because he didn’t understand basic concepts that I felt came across simply. So I abandoned the only professional screenwriting advice I had, feeling I was close to solid on the script. Organizing the **table read** and gettin’ everyone on board wasn’t hard but there was just the issue of the yet uncast female security guard and “Colin”.  Then the crazy actor  backed out because he didn’t want to drive 40 minutes from where he lives. Said it was outrageously far and  often failed to respond. so i dropped them both. The **shootbook** was completed from a schedule breakdown of the script and sent out to Tim. Tim couldn’t make it to the table read and we had 4 actors, with a Script that calls for 8. I had 2 of them covered via friends in my office.

We were still without a female security guard and our crazy Jacob backed out, and that was just the start. I began planning to play Jacob myself. I always worried about the actor for Jacob () being unreliable, but I felt like he was a perfect fit for a homeless man on drugs. It gets crazy when you are down to the wire. One of the actors (Brook) fit pretty well as a crazy person in the table read so I gave him Jacobo. I had to find a chili manager and a female security guard but after looking at the diverse cast, I decided to switch the two. Female manager, male security guard. So the one female we have in the film is in a prominent role. Eric, now our Second lead gave me the name of a guy for the security guard and I accepted him without meeting. He only had 3 lines & to find the manager, I went to one of the [We Act Radio](http://weactradio.com/) Wednesday open houses. I explained the concept to Kymone Freeman‘s new intern and she asked me if she could do it. I love Kymone’s place. So then we had the cast on lock. The Sunday before the shoot, the 2 main characters linked up with me and the director for the first **rehearsal**. Tim expertly guided them through the scenes.

I can’t think of this as mine anymore. It’s gotta be our. So I conceded to give him co-writer because he has added a lot to the script since his came on board. My barber also told me an attitude is gonna hinder me In professional life. Like Troy Duffy. We schedule a rehearsal for the Paul scene & the Cell Store and then another for the chili bowl scenes – making at least 2 reversal for every scene except the Chili Bowl scene.

After meeting with Vida, seeing what the shop is like for breakfast and her allowing us to use her T-shirts everything seemed peachy. She just insisted on meeting with the director too and run scenes, so my time was kind of a waste. – but I had to in order to have the famous Chili Bowl. . During that meeting he broached a subject I stayed away from – the fact that one of the potential fictitious employees was a dick. I knew better and assumed Tim would aswell.. never assume. She likely wouldn’t be there on the day of and the character of Dick Daniel was important to the film. She said she wasn’t having that. So due to a meeting with the director – which I thought would go over smooth, we potentially lost Ben’s Chili Bowl.

One of the biggest debacles would be – initially everyone was on board for march 10th. Everyone. Sure, they were unpolished and probably wouldn’t have accomplished the main goal of a great movie – but now it’s hard to get everyone on board for rehearsals/shooting. The female I had acquired from We Act hasn’t showed up for one rehearsal so we had to fire her. Tim claimed he had a replacement. This had really become Tim’s boat that I had just help build. I was still fully invested and believed he could make a good film – but my vision had escaped my grasp. My ten minute movie was slowly becoming a 20 minute picture with all of Tim’s rewrites and creative, artistic liberties.

It was and is disheartening. I pretty much had a baby and gave it up for adoption – and now I’m watching someone else raise it. All because I lacked the confidence in myself to do it right.. but upon approaching our shooting scheduled day I was calm about it. I still have faith in Tim’s eye and we were very close to starting this up.

Just like development into pre. Pre has leaked into pro. During production I had to re lock the location by talking to Vida and giving her.. well, I decided to lie to her and not use logos so in the end I could still have Ben’s in the end.
Tim and I decided to replace the female Manager role because Leigh never showed up for any rehearsals, but Tim couldn’t lock down a replacement so I never formally fired her. She’s a budding artist who thinks herself a big deal. I can appreciate that, even though she has put us through things I wouldn’t allow anyone else to put us through.

 Got up early and went to the office, 1 block from where we were shooting. Our guard didn’t ever call back so I took his place. The Pa and actor were on time. It was a simple shoot and the son rose fast as hell. It was great to see scene 9 all in action for the first time.
Then we moved to the second location were we were shooting a Jacob scene, 10. The best part was that the food line for the homeless formed as we were shooting and added some authenticity to the scene. The actors there did so well, when we were resetting they were given food by volunteers in the park. It was great to watch my words play out so well in the moment. The whole time the PA and I did sound on Tim’s borrowed h4n. From 630- 1130 we shot, then we took a 7 hour hiatus. I fed the boys and we discussed adding a scene. It was never apparent to me how long filming each shot would take.

After taking a prolonged break together we met back in the park with Eric to shoot scene 12. It was hard, having to pause for the sound of the trains and sirens. We had to switch up a part because Eric’s old behind couldn’t get up and down like what was required of him. It made the scene feel alot different because The character of Troy had alot of shit to carry up&down. Then at the very end, when we were so close to finished with the master shot a valet couldn’t get a person’s car to work and kept setting off the alarm. Brook (Jacob) was on a time crunch so we had to move on without close ups, but we did get inserts.

Back to the park for the last Jacob scene 14. It was hard, coming into a homeless park in the night with lights and boom poles, so many people want to stop you to talk, not knowing our patience is wearing thin and you wanna cut for bed. It got a little tense and Tim wanted to call it a night without completing, but we smoked over it. Actually funny story, we couldn’t find the loose tobacco for a rolled cig So Tim decided to Cut The Scene Completely. I felt it gas good closure to the Jacob character, but I will admit he got off light for his transgressions. I also may have not got the auto for the final couple scenes because we had been out there for over an hour on the same sound file and forgot to click the h4n twice to start again. You only click once on my h5, which I was used to.

A week later we were going to meet Monday but that was postponed. We instead met again on Tuesday morning. I brought all the props to set up the morning of day one and day 3. Setting up the living situation was fun. For the wake up, I pulled a car to the side of the road down below so we would get the actors reaction to an actual car. I stress a bit because Tim doesn’t really do establishing shots too often. I’m slightly afraid of confusing the audience.

Erik was an hour late, claiming he got taken somewhere different with my precise GPS google link. But we filmed the last scene next. The death scene, using fake blood from a blender. 16 oz powdered sugar, 8 ounces water, 1 ounce food coloring and some chocolate power for darkness. Alot of this is thinking and acting on your toes. Eric cancelled the night shoot and so that involved moving shoots. Tim was a bit out of it, wanting to get back to his sick dog. I was than told we had to hold off on a short scene planned for Tuesday as well. It all consists of moving things around with other actors and the PA. Clearing my own scedule and not making any money on those days because I’m not at work. Rough.

There were alot of decisions I didn’t agree with, but it was me vs. The director. Producer should have the final say in a big budget, but I truly picked my battles so we could have a smooth shoot. Use your better judgement and maybe the scenes will turn out optimal. I made every decision I didn’t like work to the best of my ability.

When setting up for the phone store shoot Wednesday, the owners phone was suddenly out of order. I go there and he’s out of town with no way to reach him until he returns a week later… so more stalling.
Thursday we went to reshoot the morning 2 scene 10. My shoes looked odd and my shirt was Untucked. I tried to make the case that my character didn’t give a damn about their park ranger job, but that didn’t fly. He also wanted to reshoot both Jacob scenes, instead of just pick up coverage. So as the days pass, we have very little actually presentable according to him. One shot is a beautiful one shot, but it looks a tad bit strange when one actor touches another’s shoulder. So no insert, we must redo it. When we are redoing \_ though, the sun never peaks behind the clouds. He can’t tell through the lens if it’s morning, noon or night. This is my first short film and it’s dragging. But I keep hoping it’s for the better of the project.

I finally think of a good compromise for Vida. Have everything play out the same, but have the manager reprimand him, on behalf of the company. It’s hard to think of a good compromise, but that keeps the manager as the potential employer in people’s minds and makes Ben’s a champion of the less fortunate. After a call and an Email, I am patiently waiting for her response. I also waited quite a while for Tim to be ready to film again. I wasn’t the easiest to work around with my kids either. I would be on call for shoots, able to find a sitter – but I wasn’t my normal pushy producer self. I think that made him not rush. But the actors are getting haircuts and shaving. Gaining new projects, which I am proud of them for but.. I’m hoping that doesn’t bode I’ll for production.

It seems like I’m bitching alot, which I am not. I certainly mastered the delivery and presentation of these problems by complaining to my Creative Partner Luis or my Film Connection Mentor J, but This is honestly just a proper representation of filmmaking. Initially i had hope and wanted it to go off without a hitch. I wanted it not to be like those numerous stories you hear – but it honestly all starts on the first day. Make it through though because when you’re on, the feeling is incredible. You’re actually making a film.

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