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Furman-inspired script could lead to TV deal

Katie Levans

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FURMAN-INSPIRED SCRIPT COULD LEAD TO TV DEAL

From the landmark Bell Tower to the lake's lone black swan, from game day pearls to the signature kickoff key jingle, our alma mater is home to a number of quirks and curiosities that make it uniquely Furman.

And now, thanks to Adam Morgan '07, Furman may soon serve as fodder for a television show based on his award-winning comedy script, "Liberal Arts."

Morgan's script, about life at a small liberal arts school nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, took top honors over more than 700 entries in the Fox/Procter and Gamble Script Contest at the New York Television Festival in September. He earned \$25,000 and the chance to have his show developed as a pilot for Fox.

"Furman is its own world," says Morgan. "For the most part, you and your friends all live, work, study and play within its borders for four years. A complete environment like that, with its own history and mythology, is a perfect setting for a television show."

Morgan, a first-year graduate student in the creative writing program at Roosevelt University in Chicago, entered the contest at the urging of a friend and completed his script in less than a week — devoting just two nights to actual writing. "It sounds crazy," he says, "but I work best under pressure, and real TV writers don't even have that much time, especially mid-season."

Furman alums from the years 2005-08 may remember *The Seventh Day*, a movie Morgan wrote and produced his sophomore year. The film received much advance publicity, but heavy rains on location in nearby Linville Gorge, Jones Gap and Paris Mountain stalled shooting and pushed back post-production work, leaving Morgan just three days to edit 18 hours of footage in time for the ballyhooed opening in the university's amphitheater.

"It was torturous to watch," says Morgan of the unfinished product that premiered even though it was missing scenes, music and sound editing. "It was definitely my greatest failure, but it taught me a lot about perseverance and made me realize I didn't want to be involved in the physical production of film or TV. I just wanted to write."

As for "Liberal Arts," Morgan says he never expected to win. In fact, he hadn't planned to attend the New York awards show until the festival president called and convinced him that it would boost his writing career whether he won or not.

"I was completely shocked when they called my name," he says, "not because I wasn't confident in my script, but because there are so many talented writers out there and it's exceedingly difficult to stand out."

Now, though, he's getting plenty of attention from folks like Marcus Wiley, vice president of comedy development at Fox, with whom Morgan met to discuss the script. Says Morgan, "Wiley talked about what kinds of things he was impressed by in the pilot and said they were shocked to see a fresh take on such a well-tread concept as college life."



JEAN LACHAT / CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

For that, Furman gets some of the credit, says Morgan. "Furman is a uniquely special place that made a huge impact on me as a writer. Its natural beauty, supportive community, and almost ethereal sense of tradition and history really struck me as fascinating and helped me see the value of other special places in space and time, which are now usually the centerpieces of my writing."

Rather than focus on what Morgan calls the "over-the-top, drunken-frat-boy antics" of most college-themed movies and shows, the "Liberal Arts" script looks at the lives of a diverse group of students during Orientation Week at "Fitzgerald University."

What might Furman alums recognize in the script? "The spirit of Furman is definitely maintained, at least in the first draft," says Morgan, who earned his degree in philosophy and religion. "There's no telling what direction Fox will want to take it, but as it stands right now, it's a pretty faithful tribute to Furman."

And for those who may fear that the pilot will poke fun at Furman, Morgan says don't worry. "There are certainly a few jabs at the inherent qualities of most private liberal arts colleges, but nothing directed specifically at Furman," he says. "I loved my time in Greenville and would wholeheartedly recommend Furman to any student who wants to be academically and personally challenged."

One caveat: Don't start checking for show times just yet. The journey from pilot script to production is slow, and the likelihood that a purchased script will make it to air is only 20 percent.

For now, Morgan is hoping for the best while focusing on his career goals.

"If they decide to produce the pilot, it actually goes to series and they decide to keep me creatively involved, I'll move to Los Angeles and write for the show," he says. "It would be a dream come true, but if that doesn't work out I would be blissfully happy teaching writing at a four-year university like Furman. That's my current career plan, so I'm going to keep aiming for that."

— KATIE LEVANS

The author, a 2007 graduate, lives in Greenville and is the brand strategist for 10Best Solutions. Read her blog at <http://sweettater.wordpress.com>.