

THE BANNEN WAY

Created by Jesse Warren and Mark Gantt
Developed for television by Javier Grillo-Marxuach
Pitch Script
9.1.10

THE HOOK

Imagine that you were raised by a man who would eventually become Chief of Police. Imagine that your father put into you a set of hard-core values about morality and doing the right thing.

Imagine that your favorite uncle - the next most influential figure in your life and the coolest man you know - is the biggest criminal kingpin in the city.

Now imagine that in spite of being raised by a law and order type, you only have three viable skills in life: lying, cheating and stealing.

What do you do with your life?

TELEVISION IS LITTERED WITH BAD GUY GONE GOOD SHOWS

The *It Takes a Thief* genre is everywhere - typified by *Leverage* and *White Collar*: shows about con artists with cop handlers and a cop franchise.

The Bannen Way is not that show.

The Bannen Way is about a criminal who doesn't want to be a bad man, but - in his bones - doesn't know how to be anything other than a criminal. It's a show about a Danny Ocean-like rogue who, in the course of making a living as a thieving, cheating liar ALWAYS brings about comeuppance for men far worse than he is.

Do we have a franchise? A story engine? Of course.

Every week, Neal Bannen has a new job that brings him into contact with scumbags.

Every week there's a client and a mark - one wants us to con or rob the other, and the other will do anything to protect what's theirs. One of them will be good, one will be evil, or both will be either: but everyone has a hidden agenda, and trapped in the middle there will always be, Neal Bannen, trying to do his job, trying to make a living...

...and putting the bad guys where they belong.

This is the story of a man trying to chart his own course - a guy who can't be a cop and doesn't want to be a bad guy...or as our slogan says "there's the right way, the wrong way, and the Bannen way."

That is the fun of this series - not the weekly *Law & Order* payoff of watching a bunch of Dirk Squarejaws put criminal masterminds behind bars, but the weekly fun of seeing how Neal Bannen gets away with it and no one else does.

SO HOW DOES IT WORK WEEK AFTER WEEK?

We are lucky to already have proof-of-concept in the form of the Streamy Award-winning web series created by Jesse Warren and Mark Gantt.

PLAY THE WEB TRAILER

OK, now that we have seen that...let's make sure we all get the pilot's set up: Neal Bannen is screwed.

- He owes 150,000 to a ruthless mobster.
- His uncle is offering to pick up the tab if he signs up for his organization by stealing The Box from another, equally evil man.
- His father wants him to turn states evidence on his uncle - on pain of a three-strikes-and-you're-out beef.
- He has a trio of assassins gunning for him...
- ...and a beautiful cat burglar whom he can't trust and who will use his attraction for her to steal The Box out from under him.

The fun of the pilot story will be watching how Bannen manages to turn all of the sides working on him against each other: ultimately delivering all the bad guys, except for his uncle, to his father, staying in his uncle's good graces and remaining true to himself.

OK, SO HOW DOES THIS WORK WEEK-AFTER-WEEK?

Our SERIES REGULAR CHARACTERS are all in a position to bring "cases" to Bannen providing our series with a number of built-in story engines...they are:

CHIEF BANNEN - a ruthless martinet who disguises his ends-justify-the-means philosophy as a form of tough love. He raised Neal and wants nothing more than for him to become a citizen...but he's not above using Neal for his own agenda if he must.

THE KINDS OF CASES HE CAN BRING IN: *"Son, a criminal is bringing in a half dozen stolen Porsche 911 slantnoses through the post of Los Angeles today...I can't do anything about it because the information came from a confidential informant with immunity, but if someone were to steal those cars from under him...that would deal a huge blow."*

MISTER B - Bannen's role model and true father figure. The coolest, smoothest cat in town. He is also irrevocably evil, committed to a much harder life of crime than his nephew - and dying of a terminal illness with less than a year to live. Mister B needs and heir-apparent and believes that Neal is his heir apparent and is engaged in a full on war with The Chief over Neal's soul. Over the course of the series, Mister B will do everything he can to corrupt Neal Bannen and make him into the new boss.

THE KINDS OF CASES HE CAN BRING IN: *"Neal - the Feds are bringing in a witness to testify against one of my rivals. I'd love for my rival to go down on this rap, but he's ordered a hit and the cops protecting the witness are dirty...wouldn't it be nice - and lucrative - if some tactical mastermind could get the witness out of police custody and keep her alive until the trial?"*

ZEKE - Bannen's handler and logistical right hand. The girl behind the computer. The one who gets Bannen his jobs most of the time. Zeke is a tattooed twenty something (probably the fiftieth time you have been pitched a variation on "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" today). Zeke recruited Bannen to be her front man after hacking into Police records and singling him out as her best choice. She would like to present herself as a kind of hacker Robin Hood and always selects targets who deserve to be stolen from (like Scumbag Mortgage Guy) but she doesn't...exactly redistribute the wealth either. Finally, Zeke loves food trucks, chases them on Twitter and schedules all her meetings with Bannen around their schedule...her favorite one is the Gut Wrencher taco truck.

THE KINDS OF CASES SHE CAN BRING IN: *"Hey, Big Fella, Monsanto has a guy arriving at Union Station carrying a briefcase with the formula for the latest GMO seeds they plan to use to screw farmers out of their money - what do you say we steal the briefcase and sell it back to them for a fortune?"*

KAREN HEALEY - Karen is Bannen's AA sponsor, a Sela Ward-gorgeous knockout.

A grown adult with her head in the right place, her priorities in order, and Neal Bannen for a personal project. She's Bannen's true north (when considering his moral compass), always knows the right thing, and is never shy about telling Neal what he should be doing - even if he seldom listens. She's also head civil rights attorney at a huge downtown firm.

Karen Healey would NEVER ask Bannen to do anything illegal: she sees him as her own personal crusade of moral redemption, however...

THE KINDS OF CASES SHE CAN BRING IN: On occasion you might Karen Healey saying *"Neal, my firm is bringing a pro-bono suit against a group of corrupt police officers who shot an innocent man...and they've stolen the video of the beating...but enough about my problems, let's talk about you."*

This, would of course, immediately put a man like Neal Bannen on the path to help his friend - with disastrous consequences. On occasion she might say something like:

"My firm will pay you to do some light-duty surveillance work on someone my firm is investigating..."

Which, of course, Bannen will hear as *"We will pay you to case some rich fat cat who violates people's civil rights...and if some of his priceless works of art should turn up missing, who'd be the wiser?"*

MADISON (RECURRING) - A beautiful and deadly cat burglar with no loyalties. She is perfect Bannen Bait, a dangerous femme fatale whom Bannen knows is out to screw him, and he doesn't care. She is the perfect drug, Bannen knows this as much as he can't resist her. In the course of the season, Madison will reappear: always trying to double cross him, usually failing, and ultimately aligning with Mister B's enemies to try to bring him down, conclusively drawing a battle line between herself and Neal, who will fall in love with her, and then have to send her to jail in order to protect his uncle.

Think of Neal and Madison's relationship as *Spy Vs. Spy*: soulmates invariably pitted against one another.

At the end of season one, Madison will be gone-baby-gone...opening the door for another "Bannen Babe" - every season there's a new one, each of a different stripe (season two might be The Chief's new protege, for example) and every season they make his life HELL.

THE KINDS OF CASES SHE CAN BRING IN: *"Listen up, sport - an Eurotrash scumbag just handed me the blueprints to a private vault holding a cache of priceless Peruvian ceremonial headdresses...what do you say we take the score, and maybe skim a little off the top for ourselves?"*

AN ADDITIONAL NOTE ABOUT MADISON: We will use Madison to back-door a season-wide threat into the show, as she will be in league with a Singaporean Crime Lord (ZI ZE ZHENG) who will, over the course of the season decide that Mister B is weak and must be removed. Madison will be the linchpin to ZZZ's plans, as his bid for Mister B's kingdom gains steam and becomes a serious, season-long threat.

And then there's our protagonist - **NEAL BANNEN.**

Good at stealing, bad at living. A member not always in good standing of both Alcoholics and Nicotine Anonymous. A guy with a knack for getting in way over his head. An erotic superman - a ladykiller with a conscience. A criminal who refuses to carry a gun and despises violence. A master thief who doesn't want to hurt innocent people but who knows no other way of making a living. A hero with just enough goofy dorkiness that we wonder if he can actually get out of every scrape and we marvel at his resourcefulness. A man who revels in bringing about O Henry justice on the wicked...

...a guy trying to find "The Bannen Way."

A NOTE ABOUT THE IDEA OF "THE BANNEN WAY"

One of our key visual devices in series will be the exposition of Bannen's principles for life. These principles will appear in text over the action - and every episode will showcase a principle of The Bannen Way - this will be our way of establishing the show's unique visual signature.

THE COOL THING ABOUT THE BANNEN PRINCIPLES: Is that they were invented by Bannen's grandfather - and have been interpreted in different ways by The Chief, Mister B, and Neal depending on their moral compass: this is not just a visual device: it's the soul of the series - the relatable heart of three men, each trying to do the right thing for themselves.

THE BANNEN WAY IS:

- A cool **fantasy of criminal life**

Neal Bannen is The Man. Good and Bad guys hire him to steal shit.

He steals it, and yet always manages to come out somewhere better than where he started. Is he flawed? Yes. Does he mess up, make mistakes and have more vices than you and I can count? No doubt. Do women want to be with him and men want to be him? You bet.

- A **heightened reality**

The series takes place in Los Angeles, but it's the L.A. of *Pulp Fiction*, *Grand Theft Auto*, and *Kill Bill* as filtered through Guy Ritchie and Joe Carnahan. Everything in Neal Bannen's Los Angeles is a little bigger, a little more colorful - and a little more exotically dangerous.

- **Jam-packed with story**

The Bannen Way will never be the kind of show where characters sit and discuss their feelings: the plot twists come hard and fast, circumstances turn on a dime, and incessant reversals are the order of every hour. Our stories are in constant motion, and our characters are always racing to stay one step ahead of something awful.

- **Visually Innovative**

From Bannen's uniquely visual way of planning his capers (what we call the "visual planning space"), to our scene transitions and character introductions, *The Bannen Way* will split the screens, freeze the frames, fill the visual-scape with unique graphics and text, and find ways of bringing visual storytelling to the forefront of our ADD/videogame/multitasking world.

- About **breaking the cliches**

We have all seen crime shows, action shows and caper shows. We all know the cliches. *The Bannen Way* is all about setting up the audience for an expected payoff and then giving it to them sideways - we will always look for a set up the audience thinks they have seen a million times and then turn it on its head into something different.

It is important that we hit this point hard because ultimately, all of Bannen's justice is O Henry justice: if the criminals all wound up in The Chief's jail, Neal Bannen would be run out of town on a rail...the fun of watching this show will always be to see how Bannen hoists the bad and the ugly on their own petard, all the while keeping the ill-gotten gains for himself.

- About a man's **quest for redemption**

At the end of the day, all the visual flair in the world means nothing if not paired with substance.

Neal Bannen is trapped between a desire to do some good and the sad truth that he has an addictive personality, a thrill-seeking temper and his only skills fall squarely on the side of the criminal...

...so this leaves us with the central question of the show...

...how does a man like this lead a life worth living? What is *The Bannen Way*?