

An original grown-up cartoon series
conceived, produced, & directed
by
Cie Peterson

Written by Cie Peterson and Don Kelly



IF I HAD A DIME SYNOPSIS

When a groovy actress slides headlong into unforeseen debt and an unrelenting debt collector, she sets out to rescue herself armed only with spunk, a can-do gal pal, and a starry-eyed scheme to spin the mundane into the must watch!

Imagine an actress with the spunk of Mary Richards, the career of Joey Tribiani, and the financial woes of George Bailey. This is Miranda Davis, 1970s cartoon denizen of Generic City, where films premiere nightly amidst the glitz and swaying palms of the Westwood neighborhood, while bustling high rises and theaters dot the cityscape in the Eastwood section of town. Here, for 30 years Miranda has played out her tantalizingly near-glamorous life, aided by the emotional support of her itinerate, good-doing son Anton, and the financial support of her estranged but obliging husband Dan.

Until Dan's recent death, that is.

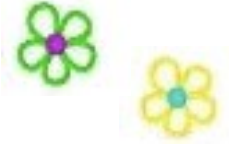
And then Miranda receives bad news....of the tax kind.

It turns out that Danforth Ellington III, while well-meaning, was not well-paying, leaving Miranda, his legal spouse, the unwitting heir of an enormous tax debt. Just how enormous? That's what the Underpaid/Overdue Office—the UO—is intent on figuring out, and why top notch UO Agent Earnest Mee has been assigned the case. Dispatched to Miranda's apartment to discover just how extensive Dan's tax debt is, Mee discovers instead that Mrs. Danforth Ellington III is none other than his beloved TV idol Miranda Davis. As stern melts to star-struck and duty collides with adoration, Mee realizes that a protracted audit may provide just the means he needs to unravel the accounting conundrum while simultaneously wooing the actress for whom he carries a blazing torch.

In the meantime, Miranda seeks solutions, turning first, as always, to her fearless best gal-pal Beatrice Hardy, as well as long-time theatrical agent Pecksniffian. While she waits for the singularly unimaginative 'Sniff to book her any job that will help pay the bills, inspiration strikes. Enlisting the aid of Bea, Miranda sets out to do something risky and risqué: she will document herself at home and at work, and then televise her life for everyone to see. True, it has never been done before. True, it is questionable whether audiences will want to watch a real life unfold. And, true, Bea is all butterfingers-and-thumbs when it comes to the demands placed on her by the mics, lights, and 16mm camera our heroine deputizes her to command. But plucky Miranda is certain: celluloid tales of an actor's life—even *her* actor's life, spent in the shadow of actors far more famous than she, including the oh-so-vain Florence Butterfield—may be just the ticket to resuscitate her career and fortify her finances.



IF I HAD A DIME EPISODE INFO



Marketing: *If I Had a Dime* skews toward a female demographic, particularly dynamic and empowered women, over a wide age range. The show provides unique opportunities for product placement - an entire episode, for instance, can be crafted around Miranda shooting a brand-specific commercial. It is also singularly multi-platform friendly. An example: To earn extra income, Miranda takes a job at the *Generic City Press* writing an advice column à la “Dear Abby;” using a real-life blog, viewers can pose actual questions, and then watch for Miranda’s character-driven responses.

Series Tone and Themes: *If I Had a Dime* employs a smart, sharp wit to spoof Reality TV and challenge society’s fascination with celebrity, reality programming, and the entertainment business. However, flourishing within that context are really positive messages: true friendships endure, dreams defy age, tenacity can trump adversity, women can conquer tools and technology, and good guys do NOT have to finish last!

Episode Length: The pilot script for *If I Had a Dime* was initially written in a standard 22-minute format with 2 commercial breaks. Subsequently, it was written as a 12-minute episode with no breaks. The truth is that as writers we are flexible enough to create new scripts and adapt existing ones to meet whatever time constraints are imposed on us by the demands of the mode of distribution. The world is changing; let’s work on new ways to deliver the message together.

Rules of Miranda’s World: While the show has an overriding sense of reality, cartoon things can, and do, happen. Pecksniffian’s toupee defies gravity, Bea’s “infinity pocket” can produce anything from a ukulele to a piece of lumber, and Miranda’s heart-shaped hair deflates noticeably when her spirits do the same. However, Miranda is an actress, and so references to recognizable shows and “celebrities” are intrinsic to the story-telling. Often, the celebrities are invented, such as the well-known and popular Florence Butterfield, Miranda’s arch rival. Other times, references are to television characters, such as “Alice” or “Hazel.” When there are nods to real actors, they are typically subtle, guided by the principle that if it could happen in any world, and it is not anachronistic to the setting, circa 1974, then it is fair game. So, when Bea encounters a young director on the beach who is scouting locations for a horror flick (perhaps about a shark?), the fact that he is named Stevie may remind some people of someone actually living, but certainly a director named Steve (or Stevie or Steven) who is shooting a film about sharks can exist in any world...

Cartoon Reality TV . . . Reality TV just got a whole lot smarter!

IF I HAD A DIME CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS



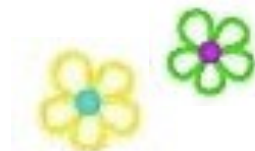
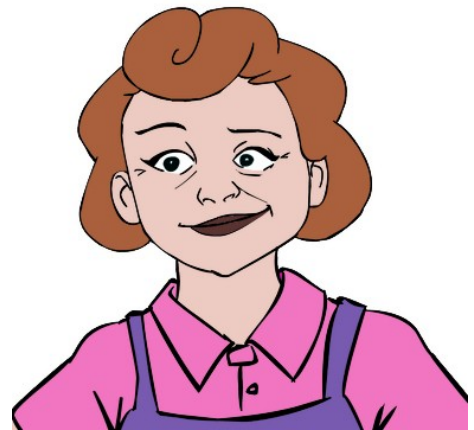
Miranda Davis . . .

Miranda has bootstraps! Long, sturdy bootstraps. Any doubt of this can be quelled by witnessing how often she has to pick herself up by them. Despite a life of minimal success and a career that finds her ceaselessly struggling, Miranda is filled with a positive energy, tenacity, and enthusiasm that is infectious. Her bonds of affection run deep and true as seen not only in her relationship with son Anton and best gal-pal Bea, but even with longtime agent Pecksniffian and her estranged husband Danforth. Optimistic and quixotic, Miranda's biggest flaw is probably her inability to deal realistically with life, causing her, at times, to pursue dreams and concoct plans that others can see may not (probably will not) pan out, even while she commits to them with full vigor.



Beatrice Hardy . . .

If Bea had bootstraps it would only be because she made them! Miranda's fiercely self-reliant, no-nonsense, slightly cynical best gal pal, she is a woman of great character and heart who has Miranda's back every step of the way. As her name implies, Bea is hearty... vigorous in both body and spirit! She is an ingenious fixer-of-things and solver-of-problems, making things happen as easily as reaching in a pocket. That is, until she encounters the film camera that might prove her undoing. Still, Agent Mee better beware because Bea is his worthy and estimable foil, his equal in every way, except for the ways in which she is his superior.



Earnest Mee . . .

Stern tax agent Earnest Mee should not be allowed to have bootstraps as he would only use them to shoo away puppies and kittens! With his holstered calculator always at the ready, Mee is a rigid and tireless government employee fixated on collecting every unpaid UO debt. That is until he is assigned the Ellington audit and finds himself face-to-face with the object of his affection in whose presence all authority drains from him. Poor Mee! Even his mouth becomes mush in the presence of the adored Miranda, reducing his typically bombastic speech to monosyllables and peppering his sentences with contractions! (Typically he finds their usage a sign of laziness.) Still, he hopes to win her heart, and angles for every opportunity to try and turn a meeting about finances into a date.



Pecksniffian . . .

Pecksniffian wouldn't know what a bootstrap was if it came up and wrapped itself around his boot. 'Sniff, as Miranda and Bea call him, is the singularly unimaginative theatrical agent, who manages Miranda's career and runs Pecksniffian and Associates, although there appears to be no evidence of any associates. It is uncanny how much of a visionary this cigar-chomping man is not! Regardless, he is constantly on the lookout for a buck, an angle, and the next big act, despite the fact that he fails to recognize it even when it is right in front of his face.



ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS

Anton (Tony) Ellington - Miranda's son

While Tony is his mother's son in thought, idealistic and optimistic, he is his father's son in look, brown-skinned with a small, tight 'fro. Twenty-five and college educated, he travels the globe doing what he can to be a positive force for change in the world.

Florence Butterfield - Miranda's nemesis

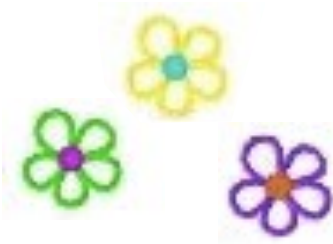
Successful, famous, stuck-up, and egotistical, Florence is everything that Miranda is not.

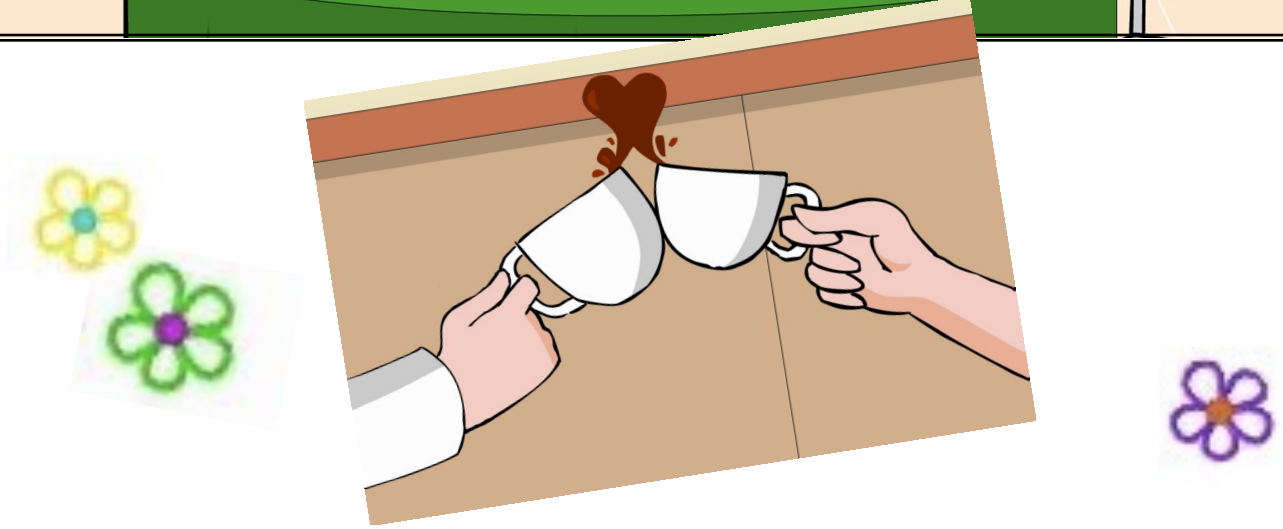
Mimi Mee - Earnest Mee's mother (formerly Mimi Miller)

As fastidious as her son, Mimi is responsible for the always-crisp pleats in Earnest's pants.

Frankie "The Flash" Fontana - Proprietor of The Snap Shop

Frankie is a snazzy photog with an eye for fast cars, cool gadgets, bright lights, and Bea.





IF I HAD A DIME

EPISODE SPRINGBOARDS



SMILE FOR THE CAMERA

After a week of auditioning, there is no acting job in sight. With financial pressures mounting, Miranda heads out to the 'burbs to strategize with Bea. But Bea has her own mountain to climb in the form of an electrical wiring job that distracts her from Miranda's woes. That is until an old photograph from the early days of their friendship reminds them both that while individually they fly, as a pair they soar. When Bea finally flips the switch, the lights shine, the dust scatters, and the gals may both have the answers they seek.

A TAXING SITUATION

Miranda's heart hair is deflated. Dan is gone, Anton's away, money is scarce, and rigid Agent Mee has turned up at her apartment to threaten her with tales of enormous tax debts and frighten her with his UO might. With best gal-pal Bea by her side, Miranda tries to get to the bottom of exactly how much debt she's inherited from Dan. But Agent Mee's not talking, at least not once he discovers that the object of his unforgiving calculator is also the object of his dormant heart.

IN A PICKLE

Pecksniffian finally comes through, landing Miranda a job as a giant pickle in Smirken's Gherkins new ad campaign: "Who killed the cucumber?" They're going for a *film noir* spin, complete with former screen idol Madison Spade, a man famous for his tough, gumshoe roles in the 1940's. When a couple of items go missing, the now-boozy Spade closes the set so he can solve the mystery. Suspicions linger on a bedraggled black man no one recognizes, but he's none other than Anton Ellington, Miranda's beloved son, home from his volunteer missions to check on his mom.

Across town, Ernest Mee is having daydreams about Miranda. In them, he is her sitcom husband: Jeff to her Donna, Mike to her Carol, Dagwood to her Blondie. He has bought a toupee and models it in his bedroom where he thinks no one can see him. But his mother, Mimi Mee, sees everything and she doesn't much like what she sees!

FLASH, CAMERA, ACTION

With a paycheck in hand from her pickle gig, Miranda whisks Bea off on a filmmaking equipment shopping spree. They head to The Snap Shop, and meet its owner Frankie "The Flash" Fontana, a middle-aged, graying Burt Reynolds-type, who loves leisure suits, sports cars, and cooking. In fact, as he tells Bea and Miranda, he is working on his own cookbook entitled *Flash and a Pan*. He falls for Bea the minute she grabs the wrench out of his hand and fixes the broken gadget he is repairing. No woman has ever tightened his nuts like that before, but Bea dismisses him as a walking midlife crisis, especially after he offers to cook her dinner and teach her about her camera. Skeptical of his attention, Bea turns him down.





JAIL BIRDS

Miranda is convinced by her activist son Anton to join him at a People's Rights rally. At first reluctant, Miranda finds herself more and more excited by the energy and enthusiasm of the crowd. Even after they are all arrested, she can't help but wish that Bea was there with her camera so as to capture the whole event on film.

But alas, Bea and the camera are not getting along. In fact, she's at home trying to keep anything she films in focus when the call comes from Miranda...actually, Anton; Miranda wasted her call on Pecksniffian. Bea goes to bail them out, but ends up on the losing end of a run-in with a chauvinistic desk sergeant that lands her in her own cell. Begrudgingly, she admits there is only one way out: call Earnest Mee. He saves the day, of course, getting them all out with no charges filed. Miranda is eternally grateful, and Mee is filled with delight, believing that Miranda orchestrated the whole thing just so he could meet her son.

PATIENCE FOR THE PATIENT

Once again 'Sniff comes through. This time it's a week's worth of work as a nurse on the hottest soap opera running, *The Brave and the Pretty*. Miranda will play alongside the show's leading lady, Phoebe Dallas, who requires an emergency nose job after a boating accident. The gig means lots of screen time—and face time—with the inimitable Ashley Faye, who's played the role for years. Miranda's heard nice things about her and hopes Miss Faye might be able to help make Miranda's nurse a more permanent character. But when Ashley Faye is unexpectedly hospitalized for a real-life appendectomy, the show hires a last-minute replacement (her face will be bandaged anyway) and who better to fill the role than Florence Butterfield, beloved by audiences everywhere, but insufferable to Miranda?

FRESH VEGGIES AND AN OLIVE BRANCH

Bea is a terrible camera person. It's true. She's seen the footage. She cannot practically apply her research, and she needs help, even if that need flies in the face of every independent bone in her body. So, armed with a basketful of vegetables from her garden, Bea goes to The Snap Shop to ask for Frankie's help. He agrees to make dinner and tell her all he knows.

Meanwhile, Earnest Mee is incredibly nervous. He has finally gotten Miranda to agree to meet him for lunch, and he wants everything to go perfectly. He has even reserved the best table at the best medium-priced restaurant in town. But the morning brings a new assignment from his boss: a major audit of a giant corporation that must be redone before the end of day. It means Mee will have to skip lunch, which shouldn't be a problem since no one has ever seen him eat lunch before. Desperate to leave the office and meet Miranda, Mee concocts an outlandish plan that somehow seems to work, but when he arrives at the restaurant he finds the one thing he didn't plan for: his mother sitting with his dream girl.

LIFE'S A BEACH

Combining business with pleasure, the gals head over to the Westwood section of town in the season finale. Things look promising as Miranda takes meetings with a former flame who might just be able to secure her some regular work. But while Miranda schmoozes, Bea struggles to conquer the film equipment that has been her undoing. Will some advice from an upstart young director finally help her get on the right track?

IF I HAD A DIME

BACKGROUND AND CONTACT INFO

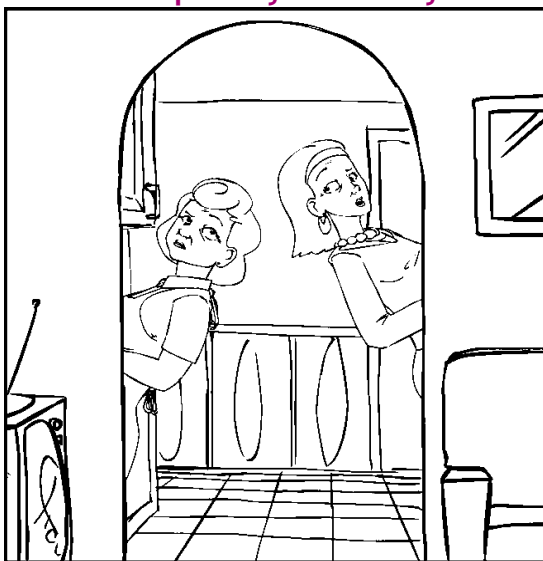
About the Show:

Cie Peterson is the creative force behind *If I Had a Dime*. Originally conceived as a vehicle to promote her own voiceover career, over time, Miranda and her friends took more concrete shape, and made it clear that they had many stories to tell, laughs to share, and social commentaries to make. Cie committed to the task...wholly! With invaluable input from seasoned professionals Bruce Bayley Johnson, Jan Neuberger, and Don Kelly, the project grew in scope, and now Cie has written/produced/directed several scripts, a plethora of artwork, a rather catchy theme song, a fully-produced animatic with audio track of the pilot episode, and heaps of marketing material.

About the Writers:

A native New Yorker, Cie began her actor training as a teenager at the renowned Gene Frankel Workshop in the Broadway district. Later, she studied with noted acting coach Sande Shurin and Sanford Meisner apprentice Larry Silverberg, and earned a Masters degree in Theater from Hunter College in NYC. In addition to her work as a voiceover actor, Cie has extensive experience as a director of both theatrical and video projects and a varied background as a writer, including the creation of other series and film projects. Writing partner Don Kelly, a former Fellow at The Writer's Institute at the CUNY Grad Center and a semifinalist in the Austin Heart of Film Screenwriting Competition, recently received his MFA in Creative Writing. Currently he works as a writer-for-hire as well as a film critic. Cie and Don have worked harmoniously together on all the *If I Had a Dime* scripts.

We'll keep an eye out for you...



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