

## Section 1: Television Series Information

Title:

- *Mail Order Boyfriend*
- The title is a play on “mail order brides”. The women involved in this practice have been used as the punchline of jokes for generations. The lighthearted nature of this title is intended to ensnare an audience looking for a comedy with no real substance. However, the exploitation of mail order brides is a serious topic, and *Mail Order Boyfriend* is not a comedy. A large part of the series focuses on the ethics of consent for AI, and the abuse of that technology to fulfil human pleasures.

Genre:

- Sci-fi Dystopia, Romantic Drama
- *Mail Order Boyfriend* conforms to the genre conventions of dystopian sci-fi by using technological advancement to invoke philosophical debate. It can also be considered a romantic drama, as it revolves around the issues Port and Jerome have with pursuing a relationship together.

Synopsis:

- Port Rousseau is a struggling comic artist who is trapped in his home under quarantine. The story begins several months after his only remaining family disowned him and his friends fell off as the pandemic began. He seeps into a depression. Port desperately desires an escape from the mundane, and any sort of in-person interaction. He discovers the companion program offered by Omnitech, a company that creates humanlike AI androids, and purchases one he is matched with. The show follows their relationship’s development as his android, Jerome, becomes sentient. As the seasons progress, an android revolution breaks out. Jerome and Port become leading figures in this revolution, advocating for their love.

## Section 2: Character Biography

Character Name:

- Porter “Port” Rousseau

Physical:

- Port is a slight young man, no taller than 5’7”, weighing about 110 pounds. He is transgender (FTM) and gay, and begins the season freshly out of the closet. He has mousy, unwashed brown hair, large glasses, and freckles. He is toned but only due to his lack of body fat to cover his muscles, in later seasons he will become more built as he medically transitions with hormone therapy and also spends more time out of the sedentary environment of his house. He typically dresses himself in athleisure wear when he is stuck at home, but prioritizes fashion when going out, choosing form-fitting clothing. The colors he favors are green, black and red.

Personality:

- Port isn’t shy. Often quiet, due to his extended period of lonesomeness, absolutely, but he has a passion for melodramatics. He gains his energy through spending time with others, especially when he is entertaining a group and is the center of attention, so being quarantined alone for so long has put a damper on his mood. Port struggles with depression, and has ADHD and Autism, which often leads to his work piling up, and is part of the initial reason he considered purchasing an android, to clean up after him. Port loves reading comics and the dream job of his childhood was to become a comic artist, which is something Jerome supports him in, though he has mostly abandoned that hope in the apocalyptic reality they live in.

Life Experiences:

- Event 1: Port lived with his grandmother while he was growing up, his mother was an addict to cope with his father’s early death via car accident. He lived with her until the virus hit, and they were separated due to her unstable immune system. He later tried to return to his grandmother when restrictions initially eased, but she did not accept him for being trans, and told him not to come back. He left, and now the government-enforced full quarantine has kept him unable to return.
- Event 2: AI equipped androids were first introduced about thirty years before Port was born. Since then, they have become mobile, perfectly humanlike, and have taken the space of family and friends for many quarantined people. Upon their initial arrival, Port’s grandmother could not afford one to assist with housework and taking care of him, and they were very much a luxury then. Now, androids are an accessible resource to most members of the population (those who still have jobs after a large amount of human labor became obsolete).
- Event 3: Port had a boyfriend named Emil about a year prior to the events of the story. Emil was a charming bartender and three years older than Port. Their relationship ended

due to (at least what Emil claimed) the pandemic, but Port has a lot of lingering trust issues since Emil did cheat in the beginning of their relationship. Port wasn't the kind of person who cared if his lovers were seeing someone else, but he didn't want to be in the dark about it. Jerome changed this about him, he proved himself to be trustworthy, and Port became less weary of others because of it.

#### Current Situation:

- Presently, Port is stuck in his apartment. The government has put a three month ban on all human contact in an attempt to expunge the virus that many conspiracy theorists claim is a curse from God, sent to end the human race, and make way for the androids to take over. Now, every human job is fulfilled by android delivery, and humans work from home, or live off their savings. Android testers, programmers, and repair people have become amongst the most coveted jobs left. Port is extraordinarily lonely, like many of the other trapped humans, and takes advantage of an Omnitech service that provides companion androids at a low cost (or rather, for a low loan payment). He went through a matching process, was surprised to see that children and grandparent models were available to be selected, and placed an order for a "JEROME" model, as recommended to him. The JEROME model is intended to be the perfect life partner and lover. Port is in a state of despair until Jerome arrives, when he switches to a state of frenzy, only to realize some assembly is indeed required.

## Section 3: Character Inspiration

### Character Inspiration 1

- Jack McFarland: Will and Grace
- I was inspired by Jack's personality and find it easy to draw parallels between him and Port. They both are unemployed artists who are constantly looking for odd jobs, both had trouble coming out to their family, and both carry the same dramatic sensibility. Jack is a bit more over the top than Port is however. Jack is always unapologetically himself, but Port struggles with self-doubt often, even as an extrovert. Jack and Will's flirtatious friendship exists in a very similar sphere to the initial companionship between Port and Jerome. Though, Port and Jerome begin a romantic relationship, and Jack and Will vow to stay platonic. As a gay man, Jack acts as important representation. My hope for Port is that he could be an even more realistic and positive representation for gay trans men.

### Character Inspiration 2

- Ronald "Mac" McDonald: It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia
- Mac's struggles with self-image and body dysmorphia inspired Port's insecurity. Mac is deeply involved in a culture of toxic masculinity and is under the impression he needs to be buff and big to be desirable. Port has dysphoria and begins to work out and take hormone therapy later in the season to achieve a body he feels at home in. Mac is also neurodivergent, like Port, who has ADHD and Autism. Mac desires to act as the protector of the bar in a similar way that Port desires to protect Jerome and himself. Mac is more about the show of protection, rather than the genuine ability to, as part of the false image he projects to the world. Port doesn't care how other people perceive him, he is cemented in his manhood, he only wants to feel comfortable in his own eyes.

### Character Inspiration 3

- Sophia Buset: Orange is The New Black
- I selected Sophia as my third inspiration because of her backstory and experiences as a trans woman. Her calm, collected, and mature personality also gave me ideas for how I thought Port would act under pressure. Sophia responded to transphobia not with violence or by yelling, but by simply saying "leave me alone." When Port eventually becomes a leader, her taking inspiration from her mindset would motivate his leading style. Port would have this level of confidence and be able to assert himself by the end of the first season. Sophia has to deal with the trauma of her own son not accepting her, and him also betraying her to the police by reporting that she had committed credit card fraud. Despite this, she loves her son deeply and wants to be a good parent in his eyes. Other than Port's grandmother's unacceptance, which is not shown, no transphobic remarks will be made during *Mail Order Boyfriend*, as transphobia is not a main focus of Port's character.

## Section 4: Filming Techniques and Explanation

### Technique 1: Deliberate Choice of Music

- I chose to use *This Will Be Our Year* by The Zombies to compliment my character trailer because of its very distinct rhythm and its quirky, upbeat sound. The banging of the piano keys in the same order, over and over, mirrors the cyclical depression that Port experiences. The beat drops in time with the comic book falling on Port's face, which creates a satisfying audio-visual experience. Also, the lyrics relate to lost time, hope for the future, and a lover giving you the strength to live, which perfectly matches the romantic themes of the show. This song being from the late sixties is also significant because it provides a contrast to the sci-fi future world the show is set in.

### Technique 2: Quick cuts– 14-22 seconds

- I employed quick cuts during a montage scene of the trailer. The purpose of these cuts was to show the passage of time, and Port's fast descent into further and further unhealthy habits. His dishes piled up quickly, while the appearance of his comic books lingered for slightly longer. This is a very real interpretation of what ADHD feels like, things that don't stimulate you and should only take you a few minutes to do continue to mass until they become impossible to accomplish all at once. And things you do have interest in, like comics, take your attention away from your duties through time-consuming hyperfixation. These shots are meant to make the audience feel this stress, and be able to relate to Port.

### Technique 3: Color as a Symbol– Contrasting Color

- This entire film was shot at night, so I had to get creative with lighting. I used different colors of light to show different times of day. While Port was reading his comic, I was lit with a yellow spotlight to mimic the beams of sun pouring through a window, and a color-changing orange/yellow bulb to act as underlighting. The LED lights in the background completed the warm feeling of morning in a less subtle way. During the nighttime scenes, I used purple and dark blue lights, cool tones, to boost the darkness so I could still be seen. I reflected the spotlight onto the ceiling to get softer white lighting than I would have gotten from using my dorm's overhead lights.