EDIT NOTES THE SOFIA DIARIES 15JUN20 /   
  
SECTION TWO - BOOK COVER PHOTO LEFT SIDE { THIS IS A SQUARE }  
  
 El Senor as Marcello Mastroianni image – la dolce vita (c)

SECTION TWO – FIRST PAGE PHOTO RIGHT SIDE {THIS IS A RECTANGLE MAKE SAME SIZE AS ANTHOLOGICA 1ST PAGE }  
  
 Madame Christo as Ursula Andress / ‘Queen Ayesha’ image (c) mcmlxv

SECTION 3 WIDE ANGLE SCREEN LEFT TO RIGHT NO BACKGROUND BORDERS ON EITHER SIDE   
  
  
 Senor as Marcello in Sofia image – la dolce vita (c)

**~ ‘The Sofia Diaries’ ~**

TOTM SNIP .png‘

**An American Bachelor in Bulgaria**Greg Marcy da Gama  
  
Book. Film. Play.  
神道 OM

♛

© MMXIX  
  
Sofia, Bulgaria

‘The Sofia Diaries’ is a multi-themed, romantic comedy set in Sofia, Bulgaria, first quarter of the XXIst century. Its subjects are friendship, love, art, food, knowledge, sex, memory, fear, freedom, and hope. It is a visual, cultural, and culinary homage to ‘An American in Paris’; ‘My Dinner with Andre’; and ‘The Graduate’. Its heroes and heroines a nod to McQueen-di Caprio / Jim Harrison-Pedro Almodovar / Simone de Beauvoir – Meryl Streep.  
  
**PLOT SUMMARY –** A semi-retired, suave and sophisticated American artist, El Senor, is waylaid (a stranger comes to town) by Romanian border police en route from Istanbul where he was in production for his latest play, ‘Paris to Istanbul’. Refused entry due to visa timing issues, he is held in the Bucharest airport cafe for 24 hours while his best friend plans a destination city for his temporary banishment. For its natural charms, poignant history, and great historic beauty, Sofia is chosen.   
   
Arriving into Bulgaria, a thrashing rainstorm endangering their landing, days without sleep, ruffled and weary, hailing a cab, not entirely by happenstance, his friend has gift-booked him into the most sophisticated, elegant apartment in all of Sofia. Hosted by a Sofian naturalist beauty, Madame Christo, she longs for art and the artist, life free of domination, and the mature chance to be greater than the sum of her parts. In the Senor she has found her Ulysses.  
  
Over three months a duel is played out between them – who can love the other the most without admitting it; who can prove that love is but a state of mind; who can survive the complex contradictions Nature and biological imperatives impose on us, often against our imagined wills. Because Madame Christo is married and has a family, and because El Senor is not but wishes he was to her, they suffer the throes of intense attraction tingle battling with proper morality. El Senor is a ladies man. Madame Christo knows it. She is a one-man woman. He knows it. This does not make it easy for either of them. In fact, it makes it very, very difficult.  
  
Against her judgment, yet favored by her heart, to find a way to keep him near without breaking her moral vows, Madame Christo suggests she come with all her girlfriends over to his apartment – only women and him. El Senor can choose among them. Such a gift! Sensing a trap, El Senor is not a stupid man, he is only stupid for women. He counters Madame Christo’s offer, creatively suggesting he should meet them individually, one at time, in various restaurants around Sofia. In this way, over cocktails, conversation, and fine dining, once seduced, for the Senor is nothing if not confident, lucky or not, nearby awaits Sofia’s finest love-nest.   
  
Thus, through this series of Madame Christo arranged dates and culinary extravaganzas, intimate conversational tête-à-têtes are conducted in the finest Sofian restaurants, each as attentive and unique as their menus. While ‘The Six Dates’ take on a life of their own, they also come to drive a maddening wedge between Madame Christo and El Senor, for while they outwardly proclaim ‘The Six Dates’ are what they both want, in the tender reality that lies in the unspoken contours of the desiring heart, what they want is each other. Not having it is literally driving them both quite mad. Consequently, in ways they sometimes don’t even realize, El Senor and the Madame scheme and conspire to lovingly shipwreck the other.  
  
The heart wants what the heart wants. Even if its garden of love is strewn with dead bodies. ♛  
  
**CHARACTERS**:   
   
**El Senor** – **Leonardo Alexander da Gama –** American artist, playwright, social philosopher, an explorer, da Gama has come to Sofia by accident of Fate. Man’s man, woman’s rights advocate, democratic secular humanist, El Senor is a teeming mass of charming contradictions. Filled with self-confidence, a thinker, he is disarmingly plagued by diffidence. Good looking in a rough, odd sort of way, sometimes unbearably so, Senor’s grit and laugh, scars and smile, swagger and bow, keen of mind and fit of body, these and other discreet weapons he carries hidden, always tucked under his hat, in his boots, or his backside. They are the stuff that other men respect but none have need to fear. These are the secrets to his success.  
  
**Madelina Petkova Christo –** Bulgarian native, proud of herself and her roots, Madame Christo is an unalterable light, the charismatic ambiance that is woman, she fairly radiates an effervescence the Senor could taste if he were allowed, treasure if it were his bounty, adore, regardless. Madame Christo is that woman who men want because it appears she is free, and, she is free, in her spirit, her mind, her love, and her caring. O, the Madame is a very caring person, so much, in fact, that sometimes she cares so deeply the depth soundings of her heart echo little warning chimes that the oxygen of her love is not enough to sustain. One must also carry with them reason. And it is in reason that Madame Christo places her trust. Hence, she is easily tormented. Physical stalwart, she can throw or take a punch, muscles ache to be touched, yearn to be loved. Life is easy when happy. It’s when we meet one we didn’t know we loved then it hurts.  
  
**The Producer – B. D. Belasarius –** Boris Diogenes Belasarius, “B.D.” to his friends, ‘Big Dick’ among his admirers and enemies, is Bulgaria’s leading arts and culture producer. A tough, empathetic, intelligent but non-intellectual man, beefy and physically strong, not particularly handsome, in fact, plain in a pug faced way, ‘B.D.’ can have almost any actress or singer he desires, and while he indeed has many – the one he longs for is the beloved Madame Christo. Doing her a favor by embracing the works and repertoire of El Senor, unbeknownst to the Madame, B.D. with his well connected Mafia associates plots to have the Senor either done in or removed from Bulgaria by any means necessary. Taking the trust and confidences of Madame Christo’s plans for The Six Dates, B.D. schemes to plant the Vegetable Girl as a culinary assassin to El Senor. B.D. is our Great Cyclops.  
  
**The Six Dates – The Fashion Ingenue / The Human Rights Lawyer / The Elegant  
  
Courtesan / The Classics Professor / The Psychotherapist / The Vegetable Girl**   
  
**The Six Chefs - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ /   
  
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**SETTINGS CHRONOLOGY  
  
\* The Plane in the Sky and the Sofia Airport  
  
\* The Apartment In All Its Glories   
  
\* The Churches, Courthouses, and Parks of Sofia  
  
\* The Farmer’s Open Air Market & The Fated Lunch  
  
\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’  
  
\* The Producer’s Office – Madame Christo & Boris ‘B. D.’ Belasarius  
  
\* The Six Dates – Date #1 ‘The Fashion Ingenue’ / Restaurant #1  
  
\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’  
  
\* The The Six Dates – Date #2 ‘The Human Rights Lawyer’ / Restaurant #2  
  
\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’  
  
\* The Six Dates – Date #3 ‘The Courtesan’ / Restaurant #3  
  
\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’  
  
\* The Mysterious & Frantic Phone Calls & Texts   
  
\* The Six Dates – Date #4 ‘The Classics Professor’ / Restaurant #4  
  
\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’  
  
\* The Six Dates – Date #5 ‘The Psychotherapist’ / Restaurant #5  
  
\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’  
  
\* The Six Dates – Date #6 ‘The Vegetable Girl’ / Restaurant #6  
  
\* The Mysterious & Frantic Phone Calls & Texts   
  
\* The Grand Last Supper – Dinner for 8 ½ – Ambulance Street Scene du Noir Nuit   
  
\* The Sofia Airport – Hands in The Sky – Lovers Locks on a Paris Bridge** ♛

**THE BOOK / THE FILM / THE PLAY ~**  
  
\* **THE BOOK**   
  
  **I**t’s early morning and I’m on a plane flying out of Bucharest to Sofia, Bulgaria, a place I’ve known only on boyhood maps of ancient folklore, medieval kingdoms, and haunted battlegrounds. Little did I know my life was about to soon be changed in unimaginable ways, which, given I’ve just gone through half-a-year of Hell to get to this point, that may be a good thing. The plane, a four engine prop job, is starting to wobble in the sky. In the thunderstorm engulfing us I can tell the Captain is having a hard time controlling his rig. The passengers are exuding fear under their breath which is only making them more scared by the second. I do not say anything. I’m not scared. If Fate has your number, you ain’t goin’ nowhere ‘cept where she’s taking you. None of us are. The best thing you can to do is stay shut-up, eyes open, and listen hard. If Fate’s gonna give you a chance to be either the hero, or the lucky son-of-a-bitch who walks away, she’ll let you know. She always does. Me? I’ve always been one of the two, so far. I aim to stay that way.  
  
 The stewardess, a chiseled Eastern European beauty, cake-walks down the aisle, hands groping the upper railings, checking that all are buckled in, as the plane dips she sways with a fine face locked in grimace and frozen smile. Damn, she looks hot. I am sure at any moment the oxygen masks are going to drop down – they do that sometimes by stress sensors and the stress this bird is taking is enormous. Just then the sky pops a beauty of a lightening bolt as clear to me as a vision for I am running my camera out the starboard window capturing for posterity what may be my and our final moments. It is the least I can do to support the black box evidence. The camera falls from my hands with the jolt bang of lightening, the cabin lights flicker, the gasps audible, but just because we have been struck and the plane is now shaking violently, it does not mean we are all going to die, it just means our pilot better call on some of that fancy pilot shit of his and fast or else we’re going to be on the news this afternoon and I promise it won’t be because an American in Sofia, a stranger came to town. It’ll be ‘Pity all those poor SOB’s.’  
  
 There’s so much in life I don’t know. So much none of us know. I don’t know that the pilot is on his last flight and has served 35 years of distinguished service. I don’t know that the fire engines which are now lining up on the tarmac runway waiting for us are there to shoot water hose cannons over the fuselage as a salute to his career. I don’t know that the woman who picks up my camera when it fell in the seat next to her as the lightening struck had a look of abject fear on her face that would make her husband cry when he finally saw the last moments of his beloved and the mother of his two children. I don’t know anything. None of us do. Especially, I don’t know that there’s a beautiful woman waiting for me in Sofia and if we make it there she will be the gift of the gods to this near broken artist, a total failure on his trip to Istanbul, done in by the double-crossed love of a woman. How fitting. All I can say now is it’s been a good life. I’ve had a good run. I’ve a good son. I’m prepared to die. Je t'aime.  
  
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**O**nce upon a time, so long ago now I can hardly remember even who it is I was, or even where it is I was, pero (that is Spanish for ‘but’) I remember this: I was in Istanbul, a big shot artist, a man of the world, going to set the center of the universe afire!! “They’ll forget Constantine when I am done!!” Well, you see, I was dreaming, a walking nightmare, for none of that was really quite true, the truth was, well, that part of the truth we will hold for now. I am here to tell you of Sofia, Bulgaria. A lovely place, if you don’t already know that, you will soon see.   
  
It is said that I am an American. True, that is where my I was born and raised, in the Northern part, Chicago, the Windy City, a months-old babe in swaddling cloth. Mother an artist, father a jazz musician, with my two year old sister, the four of us made our way South on the two lane blacktop, a ‘39, big fender and headlight, steel-framed Hudson, not a bad car for a couple of good looking young kids and their babies – New Orleans, French Quarter – here we come! Move over, Louis Armstrong.   
  
As life tends to happen to us when we are busy making other plans, Mother and Father, each a turbulent, gorgeous mess, found their attraction to the other was as strong as their repelling need for individual independence. Naturally, the early ‘50’s, Mother won that match. As Fate often takes her hand, sometimes in soft embrace to the cheek, other times, a cruel slap, she fated me to early on read. Read I did. ‘What’s that, a newspaper? Gimme that! Listen!! Blah-blah-blah-blah!!’ The adult faces were long and red. ‘How did you do that?’ ‘Does it matter? Now may I go to school?!!’ You see, it was not fair to me that Sissie got to leave the apartment every morning with a nice lunch and walk to St. Louis Cathedral elementary school in her sun dress to the French Quarter, it then more like Europe than ever I knew, while I stayed home with Great Grandmother Howell, she, the Creole woman who took my daily charge and never once laughed while I paraded the house in my underwear. But this is a history story so let us return to its telling. Ah, Sofia, Sofia, Sofia . . .   
   
My host in Sofia is none other than the esteemed Madelina Petkova Christo. Incredible, pero, verdade. In my mind, my Art Girl. Muse. Bulgarian femme extraordinaire. Gazing at her chiseled cheek bones hollowed by crystal blue eyes, I know that I am lucky to be having lunch with her. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Cafe is renowned to locals as having some of the healthiest and yet most gorgeous native dishes and breads in Sofia and, truth to be told, about food and love I always tell the truth, our lunch does not disappoint – neither does Madame Madelina. Athletic blonde, the Marina Navratilova type with just a mad dash of Natasha from Boris and Bullwinkle, except Madelina is quicker to smile with a winsome charm that makes a hard man good, and a good man hard. Ah, yes, the lunch.   
  
Ever the attentive Muse, Madelina bids me as her guest to remain seated. A few minutes pass and she returns to the table, the noon sidewalk a bubbly carafe of midday diners, - “Don’t these people have jobs?” “Why yes, of course they do. They work in the neighborhood and take the time for lunch. They don’t do the same in America?” I look her in the eye. “No. They don’t. It’s why I’m here.” - her hands and fingers, lovely, they jangle with clean glasses and a tall cold bottle of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ beer. Aging Quixote, I am hoping we will drink enough so the only sensible, caring option is to return to my deadly glamorous apartment, the better to while away the afternoon sunlight dans une étreinte tendre. Hey, I’m American, what did you expect? We went to the moon, right Armstrong? I pass on the beer. “Do you have a drinking problem?”, she asks. “Not when I don’t drink.” A wink is as good as a nod. A moment passes. Madelina return with plates and settings. What she lays on the table is beautiful as any Renoir.   
  
Two visual sentences of ingredients . . .   
  
Followed by several back and forth conversational exchanges . . .   
  
Followed by a musical discussion of Coltrane’s new release record from Blue Train . . .   
  
Followed by two visual sentences of cooking instructions . . .   
  
Followed by several back and forth conversational exchanges on what is freedom, it is of the mind as much as of the historical person . . .   
  
Followed by eating, the restaurant, the street, the ambiance, the sounds of dining and city life . . .   
Followed a discussion of smoking, of health, of the mountain resort, of all the possibility that is Sofia Bulgaria . . .   
  
Closing with the sadness of three cheek kisses, and a sober, solitary walking trip to the local farmer’s market . . .   
  
The shopping to music soundtrack, the food fresh, the ingredients, always the glory of food . . .   
  
The apartment. The unpacking. The delicate, caring, elegant storage of all . . .   
  
The shower to Mozart . . .   
  
The bathrobe . . .   
  
The writing desk . . .   
  
The glass of wine . . .   
  
The cigar . . .   
  
The paper. . . .   
  
The pen . . .   
  
The words . . .   
  
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Sofia, Bulgaria,   
August 23rd.Here I am, stranger in a strange land, how I got here, only the gods know. I know this. My ancestors came from Europe, by gut and grit they made their way to the new world, the Americas, and from there sprang up life based on the European experience, its flirtation with ancient democracy writ new in parliaments and legislatures, the blood of the people often shed to preserve it, the rich as always cheering on those who keep them alive, still, my people persevered. In that way, on my return to my ancestral roots, Europe, here where I now call home, it is incumbent upon me to carry back in the moment the quest for fire and the lessons I learned, taught to me by the elders, and instructed that I bring them in safe herald, home to our Europe.   
  
Madame Christo, I’m going to say a few words about what I repeatedly refer to as ‘fundamental universal human rights.’ “TOTM, ‘The One & The Many’ – People. Money. Power – Human Rights In The 21st Century.’ This is a phrase which to me has a specific meaning; it is factual, they exist, and it is incumbent upon us to determine what they are and what are the meaningful circumstances of their existence. By fundamental, I mean basic, a root source; by universal I mean they apply to every human being on earth regardless of gender, age, race, faith, no faith, national origin, or cultural identity; by human rights I mean those innate, inherent, inalienable rights we intuitively understand as natural impulses encoded into our biological DNA and manifestly expressed in an actionable, observable, and annotated coda of ‘fundamental universal human rights.’

For example, the first fundamental universal human right is the right to life itself. This is an inviolate right; by inviolate I mean that no one has the fundamental, first principle, willfully assertive right to kill another human being. We know this right to life is a genetically programmed impulse for it is seen universally in all people regardless of gender, race, etc. If any human anywhere is under direct threat of losing their life, no matter whether the life-taking incident is being effected by another human, or by natural or accidental occurrence, such as a hungry bear attempting to eat one alive in the woods; or a roller coaster off its track plunging one to their death; in any and all cases the universal human impulse encoded into our DNA and reflected by our intuitive reactionable responses is to stay alive; to avoid being killed, for even though we know that every single human being who has ever lived has died or will eventually, for life and death are fundamental and natural to each other and the fact that our universal human nature is to stay alive at all reasonable costs, from this we can rationally deduce that the first fundamental universal human right is the right to life itself.

One can agree with this general principle that there are fundamental universal human rights, and that the first of them is the right to life itself, while simultaneously contextualizing the meaning and implications of that right into a myriad number of circumstantial, existential, and conditional interpretations. My goal herein is only to initiate an explication of the factual principle that there are fundamental universal human rights and that the first of them is the right to life itself. I will address the other contextual interpretations in a separate essay.   
  
For purposes of matching vocabulary and abstraction level to writer and reader, I am purposefully choosing to express these principles in easy to read, intelligent conversational terms without repeated reference to other philosophers and human rights advocates for these are my ideas, not theirs, and any responsibility for their worth or discredit rests solely on my shoulders and the merits of the words themselves.

♛  **A**s an artist, thinker, social philosopher raised in the tradition of the classics starting with Hammurabi, wending one's way to the Mediterranean shores, I ask myself the question of who is writing the new myths? For the West the tales of Homer, the actual lives from Plutarch forward, in this 'modern age' – and it truly is modern if we consider the difference between 1995 and 2020’s internet and the end of paper stories as we knew them is as equal in impact to our time as was the 1500's and Gutenberg to the oral and hand lettered eras – hence, today one reasonably asks the question, what will follow this, for it is as obvious to the layperson as the scholar, this post-papyrus era as revealed thus far shows no signs of creating new constructive myths similar to what was seen on Acropolis.

In these tectonic times we have deconstruction myths, 'Blade Runner', 'Game of Thrones', and a host of other 'Why we were failures' myths churned out by corporate media bent on entertainment and cash producing sequels, not preservation of the social fabric or its meaning. I suppose one could easily see this as depressive lamentations on this writer's part, and in a way that would not be wrong. The question I am asking is how are there new Bukowsi's, Baudelaire's, Browning's, Nin's, etc. etc.

A realist, I don't see it. Conundrums abound – diffused technology platforms allow greater exchange of information than at any time previous, period. Yet, the audience of same also simultaneously grows more diffuse so that the amount of information increases but the amount of absorbed social knowledge decreases. None of this was done with a conscience. It was done out of curiosity, hubris, and survival by profit – none of which are criminal, but also none of which are moral.

When Plato and his crew were writing, it was the time of when every 5 people in the Republic were matched by 3 slaves. Fascism's most noted feature is amoral efficiency, and if you can't produce great works of philosophy and culture with that level of citizen to slave ratio, you are not worth the stone and papyrus used to record you. (A little gallows humor there.)

In any case, I read the papers, the blogs, the headlines, the dark web, and it does not seem to me, amigo, that there are new voices similar to these bubbling out of the subterranean ecosphere. I hope I'm wrong. I know that as a writer with a portfolio of works ready to go to press, that the overarching theme of them, the human Odyssey, would be better served if it carried with it elements of these classics merged and married to the new platform megaphones of today for only in this way will the young, soon to be one day old, have the cultural myths passed on to them for their beneficence and descendants.

I would further note, I have consistent and persistent issues with the abstract intellectualization of these concepts. I am a working class boy from the Southern United States, Louisiana, New Orleans, and while I went to very good private schools and was afforded an excellent education through the prescient luck of my mother, it was no secret to me that my people and kinfolk were the common working person, the ones with two hands in the mix, their backs, their sweat, their grunts the fuel of society.

O, yes, of course, it was the 'smart elites' who ran all, as has been true since Herodotus, but for me, I was always reticent to go so far, or entwine myself into abstractions, many of which I dearly love and appreciate the need for them in intelligent discourse of any abstraction such as 'myth', etc. but, I run from the likes of Zizek, more into the arms of Russell or others who could speak eloquent of complexities with simple sentences.

This is not a knock on what others write for it is quite clear what they mean and among educated cultural historians – all of whom are endowed with highly efficient abstractional conceptualization – it lays an intelligent foundation. Yet some make the case that they 'don't think myth is an original individual creation'. I get what they mean for no man is an island, but I would counter and say Homer was a man, and individual, and while he was not an island, per se, he wrote by oral word these fine historical myths that still resonate with common working people like me, and many others – ask Brad Pitt viewers of Troy – so what I mean to ask, again and again, how do we keep alive and who will do the new myths for the post-papyrus, digital era?

I have these conversations in my head daily as I review and negotiate with agents over portfolio development. It's about more than the money; it's also about the works securing a lasting place, not because of ego, but because of honor to ancestors who made it all possible and the life force demanding by our existence we provide protocols for the descendants, the same or better than what we were given.  
  
As someone who creates stories to be told in this era when media is driven by nearly the sole purpose of ‘finding content to fill the pipelines’, I think this – Corporatist Fascism kills everything it touches, especially the arts. It's not a coincidence that with the rise of the accountants and corporate run studios all the arts directors are unemployed, truly great directors of the '90's, none can find work; only billion dollar movies get the start treatment; Weinstein was a pervy creep; apart from that, in the ‘90's he was able, prior to this corporate fascism, to make some great films with great directors. That type of independent film is mostly gone, morphed into the new landscape of ten thousand underwater tentacles of corporate film making for Netflix, Amazon, what's left of The Studios, etc. What will we do? We are all thinking on this.  
  
  
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**\* The Producer’s Office – Madame Christo & Boris ‘B. D.’ Belasarius**NOTES – CSS – Committee for State Security / SIA – State Intelligence Agency / Gendarme   
  
This storytelling has a bit of ‘A Fish Called Wanda’ to it. Hilarious, yet serious, complexities.  
  
Somehow Madame Christo and The Courtesan are cousins or even sisters estranged/separated as babies from their parents – check the 1989 fall of Communism and the relationship between the BSIA and its operatives in Russia – EU and think how to conjoin them into a matched, secret pair with new identities.   
  
B.D.’s father must have somehow been a big-wig bad guy/good guy holding together the State as it transformed from a bulwark of complex national priorities to one of seeing the writing on The Crumbling Wall, making sacrifices of certain ones so that the greater others could live. How the business of being a spy or an intelligence master can be a ‘family business’, not just a one-off excitement junkie, and in this case, the lineage may have produced a boor but one with a good nose for what it is men want, and men want three things – money, power, women – and knowing this and capitalizing on it is how B.D. is able to maintain his position in modern Bulgarian, post-Communist social fabric. Think.

**\* The Producer’s Office – Madame Christo & Boris ‘B. D.’ Belasarius**

**The Six Dates – Date #1 / Restaurant #1 - “The Fashion Ingenue”** –   
  
{ Mise en scène interspersed with conversation, faces, cooking, serving, dining, drinking. }  
  
“I like you da Gama. Then again, I like men. You serve a purpose. Let me tell you something while you sip your drink. I had always been a big drinker and alcohol always played a huge part of my life. Social butterfly, I drank for every occasion, happy or sad and before long alcohol was becoming an escape for me from itself. The years went on and it was becoming more and more evident that drink was taking far more from me than it was giving. I was wasting precious days either drinking or feeling so terrible from drinking I could hardly keep up with my work. For a woman who makes her living in large part by her looks, that’s not a pretty picture.

Drinking and men were my escape from the life of the past mind, you know, the childhood demons we nearly all struggle with – and I was so desperately unhappy with that past I thought I could drink it away. Physically and emotionally, I was wrecked. From years of not being able to just enjoy a couple . . . I was stuck on a loop, heading from one opening to the next, relying on alcohol to give me a false confidence in which I have since come to learn it destroyed. Drinking wasn't all bad, of course. I had some really fun times. Sometimes even with a man like you – You don’t think it’s hard for me to get a man, do you?”   
  
“For you? Not at all. I’m sure there are many who would worship at your altar. I would.”  
  
“True that, but even with that, I certainly wasn't happy. Clinging to the past was the very thing that was causing my unhappiness, anxiety and depression. I was constantly robbed of energy, suffering wild emotions as I muddled on. I didn't really understand or truly see. It took my lust for life, killed my creativity – I’m an actress, all models are, and a damned good one – and I see now I let it take so much of my time, of my life, of my art . . .

I didn't have a clue who I actually was anymore. I sat there looking at pictures of people who'd given up drinking and thought ‘Can I do this’? I didn’t know anyone who had attempted a challenge like this, but I knew I had to do something drastic to change my life. After many years of therapy, making peace with what I now know I cannot change, I am alcohol free today . . .   
  
and if you'd have said that to me at the beginning of this, I'd have found that extremely hard to believe as I sat there depressed, trying to piece together yet another blackout induced bender that filled me with immense shame. Its only now I realize the past is forever, but if you’re lucky, or smart, you learn that it’s forever in the past, and the moment we hold now is the power of a future. One day at a time, every day more distant from that past. There’s something to be said for that.”  
  
“Let’s drink to that, my dear.”   
  
“Very funny. Not.”   
  
“I’m sorry. That was uncalled for. I didn’t mean any harm. Please, excuse me. Do go on.”  
  
“You think you could make a woman like me happy, Senor?”  
  
“Oh, I would make you happy, darling. It would be my pleasure.”   
  
“I bet it would. But listen, da Gama . . . Oh, I’m sure you’re glad I’m here, alright. But . . . No, you don’t understand. You just think you understand. Sitting there drinking your côte du Rhône. Salivating over the lamb chops to come. Hoping you’ll get me in your bed tonight. You won’t, Senor. This is one tender sheep which you don’t understand at all. Nothing. Nothing of me do you understand. Not that you wouldn’t want to take me into your arms and squeeze me like the soft flesh you so adore. Men. Like drink, you are so easy to get used to – and used by. I’ve had my fill of that. Still, as I said, I like you.”   
  
“Forgive me. I should never have said that. Men, we can be such boors.”   
  
“No, you’re not. You’re just men. In spite of yourself, you’re a charming man. The gods seem to forgive you for you do not know what you do. And, Senor? . . . You? You’re even kind of cute.”   
  
“Why, thank-you, dear. You’re rather fetching, yourself.”   
  
“Do you know why I told you all this?”   
  
“I’m fixing to know.”   
  
“Because most men can’t do anything around an attractive woman except tell her how great they are. How much money they make. The big house. The fancy car. What’s that guy joke? ‘God invented Rolex's because you can’t take your car into the bar. You? Not a word of that.”   
  
“Thank-you, my dear, I am touched. Genuinely.”   
  
“Senor. Lucky you. You’re going to be touched, and soon.” A wink. A smile.  
  
Dinner is served.   
  
Folded money is left on the table next to empty espresso cups and a burning cigar.   
  
A couple walk on the night lit boulevard.   
  
A gate opens. A stairwell is ascended. Miles Davis, ‘The Scaffold.” A door opens.   
  
A beautiful apartment. Laughter in darkness. A candle is lit. Windows are opened.   
  
Moonlight streams in. A wind blows. Two bodies become one.   
  
  
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**\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’ -  
THE DRUNKS OF SOFIA** – The drunks of Sofia are some of the best, nicest, kindest men I have ever met. Drunks, most of them are the same. Binky, Blinky, Nod, the State honors its old, its fallen, its war heroes, castoffs, graybeard castaways, the fathers, the brothers, the sons, the fallen angels, the thin booted, the thick headed, the thin haired, the slightly tattered, the treadworn, the shop worker, the dock yard man, the grinder, the eloper, the skip jack, the sailor, the gutsy guy, the one took the bullet, the one who fired the shot, the one who smiled when they hung the enemy, glad to see his entrails, who did not whimper, did not whine, when twenty five thousand were impaled, a silent, not so silent message to them, the other, those who came to the homeland thinking they could take it. No, our man, our boy, our son, our father, drunk, drunk to his core, did he not have a big dick, yes he did, did he lay the north african girl on her back, kiss her y, lift her arch, turn her gently, butt high in the air, spank her ever so relentlessly, did he not, he did, he did, he did, over and over and over, she told him in tears what a man he was, how happy she was, what a good writer he was and he could not write and he knew it but he had copied poems and kept them in his case and passed them off as his own worn on the edges, a bit now like himself, and his dirt, and his sweat, and his palms were the dark brown of coffee, the whiskers in his beard the grounds, strewn around, streaks of gray, the great red ruddy cheeks had been to sea, and when Ahab had taken Moby’s carcass onto the ship, he was the first to pat the Captain on the back, the first to lend his knife to the gut, the first to sip the fat oil and the blood, the first to share the heart and the kid, the whale, the life, the wife, the water, the wind, the wordless wonder of it all were his and for this was why he did drink.   
 ♛

**\* The Six Dates – Date #2 / Restaurant # 2 - “The Human Rights Lawyer”** – { Mise en scène interspersed with conversation, faces, cooking, serving, dining, drinking. }  
“I read your play, ‘Paris to Istanbul’. Human rights to its core. What is it you wrote? You had Urbana Magellan cupping her breasts, one in each hand, she says to whomever will hear her,   
  
 “You have the Church. You have the State. Never the two together! Understand?”  
  
“That touched me deeply. It’s one thing to write such a line. It’s another to face its conscience.”   
  
“Go on.”   
  
“I mean, you say lines like that, write plays like that, in Europe, and across the waters of the Mediterranean, these and those are stories that have been told since Justinian and Mehmet. Aren’t you a little afraid?”  
  
“You mean of dying? For being killed for demanding democratic secular humanism as a universal way of life? For demanding and insisting that no matter gender, age, race, faith, no faith, national origin or cultural identity all humans have fundamental universal human rights and these are best achieved by means of secular democracy? Yes, I am afraid to die. To die is natural though. As it is to live. To live with Heaven beside you but Hell within, that is no way to live.”   
  
“How is it you came to feel this way? What was your tipping point? It’s source, da Gama.”  
  
“You see dear friend, it’s like this – and by the way, you are very damn beautiful – I am a man who was raised in early youth by four women, all of them smart, levelheaded, and hard working. Reason tells me it is only patriarchal social bigotry that malignantly ensures unequal outcomes. It's a universal truth . . . Without equal women's rights, there cannot be nor will there ever be equal human rights.   
  
I am a democratic secular humanist. I oppose any system which precludes equal human rights. It’s not complicated. Yet, the truth is, in the company I travel, and the places I go, to stand for such a notion, this is where the wheat is culled from the chaff. It’s easy to find men who claim to believe such words that come so easily to their lips when the company of friends is mixed. Yet, get some of these same men alone – and skip aside that men have every right and should speak easy and open about any and all in their private company – and that includes talk of women as well. In private, over spirits and cigars, many men will tell you different. Just between men.  
  
Still, I assure you as easy as sitting here enjoying the moment with you, the man who makes the case for why men are superior by right and law to women, by nature, grace, and god, this is a man whom I know not only does not trust himself, he does not trust me, or his woman, for this type of false dominance is based on cowardice and fear.   
  
Too afraid to admit a woman’s power and how it affects him; not having the courage to stand in front of other men and say, ‘Women? I may not understand them the same way I think I do a man. For me, whether I do or not understand them, I understand that life is composed of us both, and there cannot be any system, social, political, or economic, that can at one moment worship the mother, the daughter, the sister, the women from our youth, and then at another time look these same woman in the eye and say, ‘Times have changed. You are no longer my equal or superior. You are my inferior and subordinate to me.’   
  
There’s the rub. There is the nut-cutting time the mind of the male either grows cloud or clear. Ambiguity? Of course. That is no reason to fear. Look, we sit here as man and woman, each listens and eyes the other. Free to speak our minds and hearts.   
  
Is that your foot touching mine? It is, isn’t it?   
  
By god, you see just what I mean! Now that is worth fighting for . . .  
  
But let me finish . . .  
  
Women must hold and be afforded and protected equal legal, social, and economic rights in every circumstance and institution – governmental or social, intellectual or spiritual, it does not matter. Equality by law and experience are not divisible in any way or at any time by any one.”  
  
“That’s quite a speech, Senor . . .”   
  
“Thank-you, dear. I would have to agree.”   
  
“O, you are a bastard. But you are a very good bastard.”  
  
“Why, thank-you, dear. Waiter, please. A bottle of your best champagne.”

♛

**\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’**You see, it is like this. To the locals and even myself I may be a stranger in a strange land, but I am no blind man and it is evident to me the beauty, tranquility, security, and peace of Sofia is no fluke. The locals with whom I speak are shocked that I point out to them on their asking me what I think of their city and country and I tell them the flat-out truth – Sofia and Bulgaria is so far superior in quality of life to that of the United States that they are in no way comparable. Their faces grow wide, their mouths, silent.   
  
Truth has the ring of truth to it, and it is not me the unhappy American to twist it to fit any personal needs. The quality of life here – the parks, the food, its freshness, its availability on every corner, the politeness, the dressing up, the order that comes from social cohesion and not a fascist corporatism instructing the masses on their phobias and which items purchased will relieve them of those provided only a debit card is secured to a monthly payment.   
  
That is the America of today, a far more ugly place than either the locals here can comprehend from telling of it, or I could stand from watching it metamorphose and metastasize these past 50 years from days of golden glory to now, erstwhile lonely, isolate, worn, beat down troopers worried about the rent, getting sick, or being shot to death. It is an ugly picture that I tell in the most beautiful of places. Tell it, I do.   
  
Everywhere in the world strangers pour out their hearts in this new scribe we call ‘social media’, I am no different at times, and there and then one can see the Tower of Babel come alive, in a universal form. What is it the gods have wrought? I tell the young workers behind the counter at the unbusy cafe that sure life is difficult for them in Sofia; it’s difficult everywhere for is it not the human condition to wish to suck our thumbs, gasp for air and bellow, ‘Bring me money!!” That in no way makes life in Sofia any less beautiful. Open your eyes and appreciate what you have. If you travel the seas, you will not find better.   
  
Tomorrow I have a date with a beautiful woman. It is by the luck of the gods that I have been blessed to meet Madame Christo, and in her pain and in her love she has found a way to bathe this aging body a few more times in the arms of Beauty. For that there are no words. I am a quiet man, even though I talk a lot when I am with others, for I am the artist who creates alone, days and days at a time, only leaving to stroll the leafy streets in search of animal flesh and vegetables, coffee and cigarettes, flowers, and look in the eye of a pretty maiden, when I can. The woman whom I will meet, Barbarella, I can sense she is a special woman, that kind of woman whose work we do not speak of, is not spoken of, is only enjoyed and appreciated in the quietest of terms and places. So be it. I have been down more roads than most men and there is still muscle in my shoulders and steel sharp knife on my desk. I know how to take care of a woman, that is for sure. We will see. I will be sure to wash my face, wear the cleanest of shirts.   
  
  
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**\* The Six Dates – Date #3 / Restaurant #3 - “The Courtesan”** – { Mise en scène interspersed with conversation, faces, cooking, serving, dining, drinking. }  
  
A caress for eyes, a shudder in the morning wood, a beautiful mosaic, a luminous particle of light . . .  “Of all men’s miseries the bitterest is this: to know so much and to have control over nothing.” - Herodotus

**\* The Six Dates – Date #3 / Restaurant #3 - “The Courtesan”** –

**\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’**On Matisse - I love stories of this venerated old sage – especially of his aged years, his hands crippled by arthritis, his spirit undiminished, his appetite, like yours still hungry as a nearing septuagenarian, from his bed his loyal companion brings to him scissors and paper from which the throne of pillows and sheets he meticulously carves out blue women cut outs and doves of peace. We are lucky, at least I consider myself so, to have seen and known of him as a boy so now that the September years are here I hold my head high in pride pursuing the arts in my own way, like him, still hungry for more.  
  
On Russell - When not chasing you, philosophy is my game; Russell is the man who laid the foundation for the complexities of the elder philosophers to be understood in the most simple of terms. Lucky for my,errant youth, all his books of same were in print and readily available to me in my precocious teen years. 'Why I Am Not A Christian'; 'Manners & Morals", "Three Volume Autobiography" - these and other simply written social philosophies helped establish this heart is the lonely hunter teenage on the path to small understanding of complex issues; that he was alive and I weekly begged my mother to fund a trip for me to London to meet him which she categorically refused as preposterous did little to diminish my respect for this venerable sage. Now aged, Russell passed, him who played on Queen Victoria's lap yet led the way to disarm nuclear powers, his advice on going after love and women with gusto, keeping the mind on higher powers, these and other reasons, such as my imagination of bedding you one day, all give me succor as I write on this fine late summer morning in Sofia. ;) / <3 ~ / ~ OM  
  
On Shylock in Merchant of Venice - “"I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, heal'd by the same means, warm'd and cool'd by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, do we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that." --Shylock from "The Merchant Of Venice" Act 3, scene 1, 58–68  
  
This is all very interesting, especially as a swatch of Judaic reactionism in cultural history of the white English, Christian times of William Shakespeare. Three faiths came out of the desert and worked their way north from Africa / Asia Minor - two of them are still fighting each other and vie to control the third. It's no wonder there is no peace with such superstitions defended by blood.  
  
  
 ♛

**\* The Mysterious & Frantic Phone Calls & Texts**This segment, the mysterious and frantic phone calls and texts should be some of the funniest, most pathos filled, poignant, desperate, aching, angry, revealing, hopeful, sad, bitter, joyous text and calls ever made.   
  
Shot in black and white – cutting to reactions of the speakers and the recipients, in staccato bursts they reveal only formerly hinted at truths and in so doing move the plot forward by leaps and bounds as well setting the table for untold, unspeakable suspense.   
  
Personally, apart from the restaurant scenes, these are my most favorite parts of the story. Due to their plot disclosing nature, they must be written last, hence, I have not yet written a single word of them. But, we will. And they will be hilarious.   
  
  
  
 ♛

**\* The Six Dates – Date #4 / Restaurant #4 - The Classics Professor** – { Mise en scène interspersed with conversation, faces, cooking, serving, dining, drinking. }  
  
He thought about geography  
  
Words on a page   
  
London, Paris, Istanbul, Mumbai   
  
Pink limn of dawn tickled blue night Sofia sky   
  
As a boy he dreamed of a Calcutta lover   
  
Black flaxen hair flowing over a Siddhartha prince   
  
Dreams   
  
Coffee has a bitter fine taste   
  
Like love unfulfilled   
  
He never kidded himself   
  
Her appetite was as healthy as her mind   
  
“If you can’t stand on your own two feet for hours at a time, don’t apply.”   
  
This made him laugh.   
  
Dark brown eyes like brooding goblets.   
  
A hand on the lower back.   
  
She meant what she said.  
  
A knee pushes tween knees.  
  
The scent of morning fills the air.

♛

**\* The Six Dates – Date #4 / Restaurant #4 - The Classics Professor** –

**\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’ -  
IN THE MATTER OF EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE** – Whoever told those guys to build those tall churches, those magisterial palaces of wonder, the places with tall spires and petite blondes resting on grey stone and marble sarcophagi, hoping prince charming will come, he never comes, but then comes a los angeleno, disney’s my name, sequels my game, lemme see here what we got goin’ on, and it goes on and on and on till johnny depp grabs a sword imitating tonto or some such fellow and they make a wax mannequin of him replete with waxed moustache and all the girls that never married well they married their cats wait in line for a selfie hoping when they put it on the fridge they can convince themselves it was the real thing like the first time they tasted a fizzy coca-cola, the first time they had sex, when it felt good, wet, deep, and wild, it was all those things, it was a diamond ring, that never materialized, later made her cry, but she had white skin, knew how to read books, and she did, listening to david byrne deep in the night, tori amos wailed, the gods held her tight, o europe, europe, ye for whom I long, escape this hell, and morning song, traffic whirls, and dj shocks, another moment of this, I’ll blow my locks she said she said and it twerent anything she could do about it for the ticket seller was going digital and all she had to do to survive was give them her debit card number and the rest would take care of itself. And she did, she did, and she lived happily ever after. Her. Her and Johnny Depp. European architecture its the greatest I’ve ever seen. And I’ve been to Bilbao with the noble Spanish whores, so don’t tell me different behind the glass doors. Huzzah! European architecture it is the best.  
  
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**\* The Six Dates – Date #5 / Restaurant #5 - “The Psychotherapist” -**{ Mise en scène interspersed with conversation, faces, cooking, serving, dining, drinking. }– A la Tony Soprano’s psychiatrist, scarf, pantsuit, heels, French twist.  
  
“A woman frequently signals interest by talking about herself using the word “I” a lot. A man signals interest by talking in a deep monotone voice. A woman signals disinterest by using hedge words, such as “sort of,” “kind of,” or “probably.” A man can increase the odds of a woman wanting a second date by laughing at her jokes or showing support, such as saying “that must have been difficult” or “that sounds tough.”

Of course that's not rocket science, but I think a lot of men probably still need to hear it. A woman can increase the odds of a man wanting a second date by talking about herself a lot, by using the word “I.” That kind of goes against conventional wisdom. I think a lot of women think that they shouldn't talk too much about themselves. But, men seem to like when a woman opens up on a first date.”  
  
“It seems to me, you see the darkness that is often hidden from polite society.”   
  
“Men worry their dicks are too small. Women worry their pussies stink. It’s a zero sum game. Just kiss and fuck with all you’ve got and the rest will take care of itself. Trust me.”   
  
“I wouldn’t trust you as far as my dick could throw you.”   
  
“What? No one was ever hurt being thrown four inches.”   
  
“Kiss me.”   
  
“I wouldn’t kiss you on a bet. Although, it might be a lovely way for you to die.”   
  
“Touchée.”  
  
  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/06/our-searches-our-selves/529740/>  
  
  
 ♛

**\* The Six Dates – Date #5 / Restaurant #5 - “The Psychotherapist” -**

**\* The Apartment & ‘The Sofia Diaries’**Some women are like cupcakes. We want to eat them up as soon as we look at them. There are times I miss you so much, I wish I could remember where I hid your body.

**\* The Six Dates – Date #6 / Restaurant #6 - “The Vegetable Girl” -**{ Mise en scène interspersed with conversation, faces, cooking, serving, dining, drinking. }Garland in her hair, fairy elf, smokes hashish in a little corn cob pipe. Giggles. Ignore her angelic nature at your peril. Coven witch when she does not get her way. Beware, Senor . . .   
  
“Tell me about yourself, Vegetable Girl.”   
  
“Me? Nath Human? What’s there to tell? I’m a fry cook at the Krusty Krab.”   
  
“What??”   
  
“You are old, aren’t you, Senor . . . You don’t even know what I’m talking about, do you? You don’t know what’s the ‘Krusty Krab’? You old fart! Everybody who’s anybody knows the ‘Krusty Krab’! Sponge Bob? Princess Vitarah? You shitting me? You really don’t know them?”   
  
The Senor nods his head side to side, a bewildered look on his face.   
  
“My God . . . B.D. said you were old. But he said you were hip. You’re not hip. If you don’t know the Krusty Krab, why are we even having dinner together?”   
  
“What??”   
  
“I can see who you are. You’re probably one of those guys on Facebook that trolls for beautiful women, except you always pick the one’s with knives in their hands and blood on their lips.”   
  
“What?!!”   
  
“I know your type. Big cocks-man. Gets all the girls. Especially the ones with tattooed roses on their bodies. Never has to work for it. They think they’re all lucky to fuck you. You? You’re just fucking them to have something to do. Another notch in the bedpost. Another fantasy to whack off to the next time you’re stranded somewhere and can’t get a date to save your life . . . You beat your meat and think about dinners just like this you’ve had so many times, and then you cum all over the table wiping your hands with the dinner napkin from the beautiful meal you’ve cooked for yourself, all alone, and wondering why. You’re pathetic, Senor.”   
  
“What?!!!”   
“Shut up. Listen. I know the kind of man you are. Let me tell you something. During a Pomeranian witchcraft trial in 1538, a suspected witch, that would be me, "confessed" that she had given a man henbane seeds so that he would run around "crazy" you know, Senor, sexually aroused? In the file from her Inquisition trial, it was noted that she, "a witch admits" having once strewn henbane seeds between two lovers and uttering the following formula: "Here I sow wild seed, and the devil advised that they would hate and avoid each other until these seeds had been separated". So tell me, Senor . . . Am I scaring you? Scaring you just a bit? You wanna fuck? I hope so. Confident men like you need their balls cut off . . . but I’m too sweet a little elf to do such a thing. Why, I would take your tender balls and succor them in my mouth. So sweet and divine, I’ll make your eyeballs roll into the back of your head. Sounds, peachy, hunh, Senor?”   
  
“What in the fuck are you talking about??”   
  
“What’s wrong, Senor? You can dish it out, pero, ‘pero’, that’s one of your favorite little ‘funny’ words, isn’t it. Pero, you can’t take it, can you? I’d like to give it to you. You’re damn right. I’d shove it up your ass, you son-of-a-bitch, before I’d give you the chance to shove it up mine.”   
  
“You are fucking crazy . . .”  
  
“No, I’m not . . . I’m fucking you, tonight, right after this dinner. B.D. told me, he said if I could get you to sit still through a whole dinner of insults he’d pay for a trip for me and my lesbian lover to summer in Sardinia – right after we finish our witches school in Cluj. You know Cluj, don’t you Senor? Transylvania? Vampires? I read up on you. I know you had a Romanian girlfriend and she broke your heart. Good!!! You deserved it, I bet!!! What, did you fill her with fantasies, promise her the moon but not even give her a trip to America? You crazy artist bastards are all alike. Talk. Talk. Talk. I’ll tell you what. When you eat my nest tonight, you better not talk. You better just keep working it. You hear me? Not a sound out of you, got me?”   
  
“Jesus . . . Fucking . . . Christ . . . you are a loony bird.”   
  
Dinner is served. Matching plates of amande de truite, Ruffled, the Senor looks away. Nature Girl uses the chance to sprinkle a powder of henbane over his plate. It looks like paprika pepper. Surely he will be none the wiser. Little does she know El Senor is gifted with a great nose.

Senor turns back to the table and Vegetable Girl. The scent of the henbane rises to the Senor’s nostrils. He is acutely aware something is not right. Thus ensues a verbal and cinematographic homage to the poisoning scene of wine goblets in ‘The Princess Bride’. The question becomes, who has taken the poisoned fish to their lips? El Senor? Or, the Vegetable Girl? We find out in the love nest. There is where the truth of all stories of lust are unfolded. Till death do us part, they say. - “Any moment might be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we’re doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now. We will never be here again.” Homer, The Iliad.  
   
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**\* The Mysterious & Frantic Phone Calls & Texts**

**\* The Grand Last Supper – Dinner for 8 ½ – Ambulance Street Scene du Noir Nuit**

**THE ENDING OF ALL ENDINGS –** The Life & Death of an American Bachelor in Sofia. ‘Le Funeral’ (Anonymous view from a plane taking off in Sofia, landing in Paris)   
  
“Stronger than lover’s love is lover’s hate. Incurable, in each, the wounds they make.” ― Euripides, Medea  
  
  
  
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**\* The Grand Last Supper – Dinner for 8 ½ – Ambulance Street Scene du Noir Nuit**

**\* The Sofia Airport – Hands in The Sky – Lovers Locks on a Paris Bridge**

**X**

**THE** **SIX CONVERSATIONS –** Dinners themes with the American Bachelor in Bulgaria.   
  
\* What is the meaning of life?   
  
\* Is Communism or Capitalism the better way?   
  
\* What is Freedom and does it really mean living without Fear?   
  
\* Is sex necessary for love?   
  
\* Why the Penthouse is better than the Outhouse, aka, Always try to marry for Love & Money.   
  
\* Is it Fate that the one’s who wanted us we didn’t want, and, the one’s we wanted didn’t want us?   
  
\* Philosophers have always enjoyed asking awkward and provocative questions, such as: What is the nature of reality? What are human beings really like? What is special about the human mind and consciousness? Are we free to choose who we are and what we do? Can we prove that God exists? Can we be certain about anything at all? What is truth? Does language provide us with a true picture of the world? How should we behave towards each other? Do computers think?  
  
  
  
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**THE SIX PIECES OF MUSIC -**BB King – ‘The Thrill is Gone’  
  
  
Sugar Ros - ‘The Whining Song’  
  
  
Bulgarian Marching Band -  
  
  
Coltrane Blue Train - ‘The Great Intro’   
  
   
Bulgarian Black Beret Jazz Singer - ‘The Saddest of the Saddest Love Songs’ (original)  
  
  
Bach – Joy of Man’s Desiring Street Mob in Sofia Square ( Marko Markovic )

♛

**THE SIX RESTAURANTS -   
  
  
 1. Our First Lunch Cafe**

**2.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**3.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**4.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**5.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**6.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_♛

**THE** **SIX PHONE VOICE / TEXT ENDINGS –** Dénouement avec Le Bachelor.   
  
  
\* Senor pleaded, "You must understand, dear. This is what we artists do. We make up lies."  
  
  
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**THE ENDING OF ALL ENDINGS –** The Life & Death of an American Bachelor in Sofia. ‘Le Funeral’ (Anonymous view from a plane taking off in Sofia, landing in Paris)   
  
“Stronger than lover’s love is lover’s hate. Incurable, in each, the wounds they make.” ― Euripides, Medea  
  
  
  
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**IDEAS TO BE CONSIDERED AS CONVERSATIONS & JOURNAL ENTRIES**  
  
\* A culture of racism, paranoia, and authoritarianism permeates America.   
  
\* I ain’t no queer, but I can tell you this – whosoever wants to hug another human being of legal age, that’s tween those two and ain’t none of mine or anybody else’s business.

\* If you can't be a democracy close down your State until you can. In the end, if you can't, we will close it down for you.  
  
“There may be something more important than women, art, food, sex, and nature, pero, in all my life searching for it, whatever that might be, I have yet to find it.” - ‘C’mere. Look down here.” ;)   
\* “Everyone makes crucial nutrition mistakes, even healthy eaters. There are over 40 common foods that if not eaten properly are unhealthy for the individual.” “Wait, so you’re saying the best thing to do is to kill oneself as cleanly and efficaciously as possible?” 🤔   
  
\* "More poor people are eating meat around the world. That means they will live longer, healthier lives, but it is bad news for the environment."

"This is why I say it's about the population numbers; look at it this way; if every one is entitled to fundamental universal human rights regardless of gender, age, race, faith, no faith, national origin or cultural identity, and they are entitled to seek and enjoy these rights by means of secular democracy and genuine democratic capitalism whereby they fairly share in the rewards of their labor, then who can tell anyone what they can eat, what they can buy, what they can make whether it be a worthless green lawn or a McMansion? The problem is in the numbers. Earth's resources are finite; with present population numbers only increasing, especially by the underdeveloped sectors, we are outstripping our resources by a factor of 125%, thereby killing the Earth that is keeping us alive. See what I mean?"  
  
\* “The history of humanity is the history of stories. Fantastical feats of strength by legendary warriors, tales of daring romance, and of great sacrifices or devilish betrayals, mankind is fascinated by a good story.” “Is that why you talk so much?”   
  
  
\* “Appearing throughout several stories of Greek mythology, Paris, son of King Priam of Troy, is one of the best-known figures from ancient legend. Winning the affections of, or in some narratives kidnapping, Helen, Queen of Sparta and wife to King Menelaus, the actions of Paris laid the foundations for the Trojan War. Persuading his elder brother, Agamemnon, to attack in retribution, Menelaus sought the recovery of his wife and vengeance against Paris and his family. Responsible for the slaying of Achilles according to Homer’s Iliad, shooting the demi-god in the heel with an arrow to fulfill Thetis’ prophecy, Paris did not survive the conflict he started. Mortally wounded by Philoctetes during the Sack of Troy, Helen pleads at Mount Ida for Paris to be healed but is rebuffed by the angry deities.”  
  
\* “The wife of Onnes and Ninus, Semiramis was a legendary Lydian-Babylonian who later ascended to the throne of Assyria following the death of her second husband. Born to noble parents, according to the legendary narrative Semiramis was abandoned at birth and discovered by the royal shepherd. Leading soldiers during the Siege of Bactra, King Ninus fell in love with Semiramis and asked for her hand. Reigning supposedly for more than four decades, conquering much of Asia during this time, Semiramis is held responsible for the restoration of Babylon and construction of many great works of the ancient world.”  
  
\* “There is no English word that quite captures the sensation of innamoramento, crazy head-over-heels love, deeper than infatuation, way beyond bewitched, bothered, and bewildered. But that’s what I am - an innamorata, enchanted by Madame Christo, fascinated by her story and Sofia’s stories, tantalized by her and its adventures, addicted to her sound, and ever eager to spend more time in her company." - El Senor in his journal, ‘The Sofia Diaries’   
  
\* "A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say."  
  
\* “On August 6, 1682, the Ottoman Empire, at the height of its power, declared war on the Holy Roman Empire. Muslim domination of Europe extended from the Balkans northward through Hungary and reached into Poland. Westward, only Habsburg Vienna barred the way. Louis XIV, for his own reasons, preferred dealing with the Ottomans rather than with the Habsburgs. Were the Muslims to have been victorious, they might have ruled from the Mediterranean to the Baltic.” - Angelo M. Codevilla, which makes one realize,   
  
“It was religious-economic wars that shaped the 'center of the world' - how Muslims don't get their faith and massive immigration drives are perceived as aggressive and hostile is purposeful concealment. I am no fan of mass migration under the rubric of 'liberty; or 'refugee'; complex subject and that is why we study history which is very much alive today.”  
  
\* “Any moment might be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we're doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now. We will never be here again.” ― Homer, The Iliad   
  
\* “Of all men’s miseries the bitterest is this: to know so much and to have control over nothing.” ― Herodotus  
  
\* “"There is one developed country—and only one—in which it is not only legal, but easy and convenient, to amass a private arsenal of mass slaughter. That country also happens to be the one—and the only one—regularly afflicted by mass slaughters perpetrated by aggrieved individuals." - David Frum, The Atlantic   
  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/08/guns-are-american-exception/595450/>

\* If theocrats and preachers were able to discuss theology and origins of the universe before and after any human life with the same grace and dignity that the world’s leading astrophysicists and philosophers do, there would be no need for violent revolution against them. Alas, it appears they cannot, hence, they and their followers in the end are doomed.   
  
“Hawking, in his brilliance, saw a way to end the interminable groping backward in time: He proposed that there’s no end, or beginning, at all. According to the record of the Vatican conference, the Cambridge physicist, then 39 and still able to speak with his own voice, told the crowd, “There ought to be something very special about the boundary conditions of the universe, and what can be more special than the condition that there is no boundary?”

The “no-boundary proposal,” which Hawking and his frequent collaborator, James Hartle, fully formulated in a 1983 paper, envisions the cosmos having the shape of a shuttlecock. Just as a shuttlecock has a diameter of zero at its bottom-most point and gradually widens on the way up, the universe, according to the no-boundary proposal, smoothly expanded from a point of zero size. Hartle and Hawking derived a formula describing the whole shuttlecock — the so-called “wave function of the universe” that encompasses the entire past, present and future at once — making moot all contemplation of seeds of creation, a creator, or any transition from a time before.

“Asking what came before the Big Bang is meaningless, according to the no-boundary proposal, because there is no notion of time available to refer to,” Hawking said in another lecture at the Pontifical Academy in 2016, a year and a half before his death. “It would be like asking what lies south of the South Pole.”  
  
<https://www.quantamagazine.org/physicists-debate-hawkings-idea-that-the-universe-had-no-beginning-20190606/>   
  
\* “Epicureanism is commonly associated with a carefree view of life and the pursuit of pleasures, particularly the pleasures of the table. However it was a complex and distinctive system of philosophy that emphasized simplicity and moderation, and considered nature to consist of atoms and the void. Epicureanism is a school of thought whose legacy continues to reverberate today.”  
  
\* The master of ancient Greek comic drama, Aristophanes combined slapstick, humor and cheerful vulgarity with acute political observations. In The Frogs, written during the Peloponnesian War, Dionysus descends to the Underworld to bring back a poet who can help Athens in its darkest hour, and stages a great debate to help him decide between the traditional wisdom of Aeschylus and the brilliant modernity of Euripides. The clash of generations and values is also the object of Aristophanes’ satire in Wasps, in which an old-fashioned father and his loose-living son come to blows and end up in court. And in Women at the Thesmophoria, the famous Greek tragedian Euripides, accused of misogyny, persuades a relative to infiltrate an all-women festival to find out whether revenge is being plotted against him. – Aristophanes’ The Frogs and Other Plays  
  
\* ““Fear? What has a man to do with fear? Chance rules our lives, and the future is all unknown. Best live as we may, from day to day.”― Sophocles, Oedipus Rex  
  
  
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  **~ N O T E S ~**  
  
  
IN THE MATTER OF THE RUPEE FALLING IN RELATION TO THE DOLLAR -   
  
“Part of this incomprehensibility lies in the conundrum of the new; when the rupee underwent its previous massive swing the Euro was still new; globalism in trade, and the internet flattening dead and alive so many industries and new opportunities, little of that is yet understood my modern economists; and another thing; economics is not a science, it is an opinion of ideas that utilize philosophy of money to proscribe laws (force backed by a gun) and each nation does it to protect and promote its own known national interests and resource capabilities, as well as its unknown, hidden deal agendas that are as old as the Plato Republic. It's impossible for economists to agree on much of anything, unlike real science, hence, we are snow jobbed by the powers that be to believe they know what they are doing, when actually, hope and hunch are their primary calling cards. This global economic awakening will be like nationalistic cycles of boom and bust, except this will be a new strain based on integrated DNA not hitherto conjoined - the lab results are still out - free markets are a chimera and corporatist fascism is a tumor in the economic chromosomes rewriting code as fast as it expresses itself. My take? Hang on, for a few years all the currencies will drop relative to the dollar; it's turn for comeuppance is on the far horizon.”  
  
IN THE MATTER OF A NEW LOVE INTEREST ON THE HORIZON -   
  
 “It’s fairly rather obvious that a woman of your considerable talent and intelligence, not wearing a ring on her left finger hand, a teen-aged daughter, a lovely painter in her own right, modern impressionism with a slight nod to Peter Max and that Russian guy with the lover’s couple, she writes in reply to my introduction, ‘Thank-you, I enjoy painting and its small wonders. I am, however, a professional musician.”   
  
Well, Jesus Fuck Me Christ . . . who’d a thunk I hit the trifecta on a Monday morning fishing trip. :v “   
  
Thinking he might have found the maidenhead, he wrote to her at once, “If we marry, does it mean I must move to the Ukraine, or are you willing to consider travel and relocation?”   
  
IN THE MATTER OF CAPITALISM SAVING THE PLANET FROM GLOBAL WARMING -   
“Can capitalism save the planet and humanity? Yes, argues MIT's Andrew McAfee in what’s bound to be a controversial new book.”, Senor replied,   
  
“"Yes, Cocaine is addictive, however, the cure for it's addiction is more cocaine!!" said the addict who still had a bit of money in his pocket and his seller’s phone number on speed dial.”

\* **THE DRUNKS OF BUCHAREST** – The drunks of Bucharest are some of the best, nicest, kindest men I have ever met. Drunks, most of them are the same. Binky, Blinky, Nod, the State honors its old, its fallen, its war heroes, castoffs, greybearded castaways, the fathers, the brothers, the sons, the fallen angels, the thin booted, the thick headed, the thin haired, the slightly tattered, the treadworn, the shop worker, the dock yard man, the grinder, the eloper, the skip jack, the sailor, the gutsy guy, the one took the bullet, the one who fired the shot, the one who smiled when they hung the enemy, glad to see his entrails, who did not whimper, did not whine, when twenty five thousand were impaled, a silent, not so silent message to them, the other, those who came to the homeland thinking they could take it. No, our man, our boy, our son, our father, drunk, drunk to his core, did he not have a big dick, yes he did, did he lay the north african girl on her back, kiss her y, lift her arch, turn her gently, butt high in the air, spank her ever so relentlessly, did he not, he did, he did, he did, over and over and over, she told him in tears what a man he was, how happy she was, what a good writer he was and he could not write and he knew it but he had copied poems and kept them in his case and passed them off as his own worn on the edges, a bit now like himself, and his dirt, and his sweat, and his palms were the dark brown of coffee, the whiskers in his beards the grounds, strewn around, streaks of grey, the great red ruddy cheeks had been to sea, and when Ahab had taken Moby’s carcass onto the ship, he was the first to pat the Captain on the back, the first to lend his knife to the gut, the first to sip the fat oil and the blood, the first to share the heart and the kid, the whale, the life, the wife, the water, the wind, the wordless wonder of it all were his and for this was why he did drink.   
  
\* **IN THE MATTER OF EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE** – Whoever told those guys to build those tall churches, those magisterial palaces of wonder, the places with tall spires and petite blondes resting on grey stone and marble sarcophagi, hoping prince charming will come, he never comes, but then comes a los angeleno, disney’s my name, sequels my game, lemme see here what we got goin’ on, and it goes on and on and on till johnny depp grabs a sword imitating tonto or some such fellow and they make a wax mannequin of him replete with waxed moustache and all the girls that never married well they married their cats wait in line for a selfie hoping when they put it on the fridge they can convince themselves it was the real thing like the first time they tasted a fizzy coca-cola, the first time they had sex, when it felt good, wet, deep, and wild, it was all those things, it was a diamond ring, that never materialized, later made her cry, but she had white skin, knew how to read books, and she did, listening to david byrne deep in the night, tori amos wailed, the gods held her tight, o europe, europe, ye for whom I long, escape this hell, and morning song, traffic whirls, and dj shocks, another moment of this, I’ll blow my locks she said she said and it twerent anything she could do about it for the ticket seller was going digital and all she had to do to survive was give them her debit card number and the rest would take care of itself. And she did, she did, and she lived happily ever after. Her. Her and Johnny Depp. European architecture its the greatest I’ve ever seen. And I’ve been to Bilbao with the noble Spanish whores, so don’t tell me different behind the glass doors. Huzzah! European architecture it is the best.  
  
  
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\* In the matter of ‘THE DRUNKS OF BUCHAREST’, from India his friend Pranay, the great mystic philosopher and teacher had written, “Your lines are drunk on both the earthy & the other-worldly. Your phrases are seeped in wine-like beauty (& wit:). Your language is that of the drunken mystic ... drunk on the glory-wonder-ecstasy-bliss of existence .....” He replied,

“Thank-you so much, dear Senor Pranay - one never knows the reception such words and language will invoke; they, the words, were from early this morning, rising around 2:30 after fours hours of good sleep, to my surprise body said, 'Wake' and rise I did to coffee and the new work, 'The Sofia Diaries' which I've about 25 pages into; in any case, I came across this pic of the gorgeous femme above, it was about 4:30 a.m. then, and last night, after yesterday's hard bike riding and sweat of the errands and the day's toil of creativity, I was very, very tempted to get good and drunk for it's been some near weeks since I have, but something, only the god's know what or why, made me eat a sandwich first, flirt with a local Cuban-Bulgarian girl, drink a glass of fermented milk, twas then the fatigue of the day hit me and instead I came home and hit the sack by 10:30. This piece, and another on the Architecture of Europe ran fast and smooth from the pen onto the page, knowing it would be a journal entry for 'El Senor' in his 'Sofia Diaries'. It's funny how 5 minutes can seem like 5 decades and vice versa. Well, I'm sober for a bit, so let us invoke Baudelaire as often as we can. lmfao. All the best to you in India, sir, in these tense times. Still planning to head East - the detour to Bulgaria from Istanbul is now near reconciled and I suspect the Fall if the monsoons cooperate will be our voyage embarkation. Love your new series on Indian mysticism. All the best from Sofie and to your gorgeous wife and family. - Senor”   
  
And thus another secret of Sofia’s beauty was revealed to him. Every day a good day to die.   
  
  
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**FILMMAKER / DIRECTOR / CINEMATOGRAPHY NOTES   
  
CINEMATOGRAPHY -**TIME BASED MONTAGES & CLOSEUPS / CASSEVETTES / MALLE / FELLINI   
  
\* “As I operate the camera, I want to be close to the actors, and that means closeups. I shoot everything on a 26mm lens, which is a good portrait lens on a movie camera. I don’t want to have other crew members between me and the actors. I want to be the one that’s up close and chatting to them as I would be if I wasn’t operating the camera. Also, I shoot academy ratio, which is perfect for faces when you’re working with no budget. The things that you get for free, you’ve really got to exploit. I quite often cast based on what I see in people’s eyes and people’s faces and then I want to show that on the screen.

I think film language is quite limited. We’ve set ourselves a language without really exploring how far the form can be pushed. There’s experimental film, obviously, but within narrative film-making we’ve settled in this very vanilla style of telling stories, quite often based on photography or theater. Photography can’t do time-based montage and theater can’t do the closeup. So, combining the closeup with time-based montage is something that you’ll notice is present in a lot of Bait. There’s this thing called experimental film, but I still think we’re at the stage where every film should be experimental. If we’re not experimenting one way or another, then it’s all over, really.” - Mark Jenkin, ‘BAIT’ - Indie Filmmaker, Cinematographer candidate.   
  
<https://filmmakermagazine.com/108148-with-digital-you-have-to-spend-a-lot-of-money-before-it-becomes-free-mark-jenkin-on-his-hand-processed-16mm-bait/>  
  
  
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\* **WHAT MAKES A GREAT ROM-COM GREAT?**If you want to write romantic comedy fiction or screenplays, here are five hard and fast rules you should stick to. If writings not your thing, but rom coms are, these rules will give you fun new way to look at them.

**1. Different But The Same**

You heard the term: opposites attract? This must always be true for the lead characters in a rom com. Yet at the same time both characters must be fundamentally the same as each other. This contradiction creates chemistry.  
  
**2. Circumstances Will Tear Us Apart**

Not only must your rom com leads be in conflict with each other, circumstances must conspire to keep them apart until three quarters of the way into the story. These circumstances can be anything. The guy is still in love with his ex wife (Silver Linings Playbook). The girl is a major Hollywood star and the constant subject of lies and gossip that undermine her relationships (Notting Hill). The girl and the guy live so far apart they have never get the chance to actually meet (Sleepless in Seattle). The girl’s career is taking off at the expense of the guy’s (The Five Year Engagement).  
  
**3. He Wants, She Wants**

In any book or movie the lead characters must desperately want something, and to create story their wants must be thwarted in escalating ways until the end. But in a rom com the characters’ wants generally follow a timeworn pattern. One half of the romantic pairing must desperately want the other, while the other half must want something different.  
  
  
**4. Turmoil At Three Quarters**

Two thirds the way through a rom com novel or screenplay the leads must realise together that they are each other’s perfect soulmates. Then emotional turmoil must tear them apart again. Three quarters the way thorugh Pride and Prejudice Elizabeth and Mr Darcy have put their differences aside and fallen in love. Then they learn that Elizabeth’s sister has eloped with Mr Wickham, which will certainly lead to Elizabeth’s downfall in society, making it impossible for Darcy to marry her. On an emotional turmoil point, her pride is gone, and his prejudices have been confirmed. Three quarters the way through When Harry Met Sally, Harry and Sally discover they are in love and have sex. The next morning Harry freaks out and disappears, leading Sally to conclude that she was right about his inability to commit all along. She gives up on him. Elizabeth and Darcy, Sally and Harry – each couple must find a way to overcome this final separation before finally falling into each other’s arms. This encompasses the last act of the story, and by this point both characters want the same thing – each other.

**5. The Learning Curve**

By the time the leads in a rom com fall into each others arms at the very end, either one of both of them will have learned some fundamental truth about themselves and changed for the better to secure their own happiness. Meg Ryan’s characters often have to learn the same thing about themselves in her rom coms: idealistic expectations of perfection do not lead to true happiness. Sally learns this by accepting Harry as he is. In You’ve Got Mail, Kathleen learns this by overcoming her prejudices about Joe. In Silver Linings Playbook, Pat learns that clinging on to the past is killing his chances for happiness. In Pride and Prejudice both Elizabeth and Mr Darcy learn respectively that excessive pride does not lead to happiness, and neither does pointless prejudice. They learn to accept each other as they are, and in doing so to accept themselves.  
  
<https://bafinnegan.wordpress.com/2013/02/10/the-five-golden-rules-of-romantic-comedy/>

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WRITE THE CHEMISTRY**

We go into a romantic comedy already knowing that our leads are going to meet, lose and, ultimately, get each other. So creating two unique characters an audience will fall in love with and NEED to see united is the most important key to such a movie's success. All great characters have purpose and credibility, are empathic and complex. But romantic comedy leads have additional requirements. They're emotionally incomplete people who get completed by their mate-to-be. One (if not both) of your protagonists should have an inner conflict that the story's romantic relationship confronts and ultimately resolves.  
  
**EXPAND YOUR GENRE**

What most people think of when they hear 'romantic comedy' is a man and a woman trading witty barbs across a restaurant table. But this kind of typical talking-heads fare is far from all our genre can be. In fact, some of the most successful romantic comedies are hybrids -- movies that have expanded their audience by cross-breeding with other genres. Romantic comedies can be action-adventures ('Romancing the Stone'), gender-benders ('Tootsie'), sports comedies ('Tin Cup'), ghost stories ('Truly, Madly, Deeply'), political ('The American President'), satirical ('L.A. Story'), period pieces ('Shakespeare In Love'), crime stories ('The Mexican'), teen movies ('Clueless') and more. This kind of cross-genre inter-breeding has kept our genre healthy for decades, and it's something to think about as you shape your romantic comedy with an eye towards the marketplace. You may already be edging into another genre's territory in your story. If so, maximize that element and plunder all it has to offer. Studios are more likely to be intrigued by a romantic comedy that also promises the kind of big screen action that a crime, adventure, sports, etc. movie provides.

**AN ACTION'S WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS**

And while we're on the subject of holding the big screen, consider making your romantic comedy a MOVIE, as opposed to a stillie. Great movies move -- and romantic comedy duds talk themselves to death. I know that many of us lovers of the form are drawn to it precisely because it's often about wonderfully pithy, sharp, delicious repartee. But too much talk can be the difference between a pass (because what you've written is more like a play or a TV show) and a green light-because your romantic comedy can really pull people into a multiplex.

How active is your script? How visually exciting? While you may not have the mudslides, wild chases and fireworks 'Romancing the Stone' delivered, you may have a set, a setting, world or a physical comedy opportunity that will open up and enliven your movie. Even the verbal-witty 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' featured a Scottish reel in colorful kilts. 'Annie Hall' is packed with sight gags, from the cocaine sneeze to the errant lobsters. Make sure your script makes use of all the cinematic storytelling techniques a good movie- movie uses.

**TWEAK THE FORMULA**

Yes, there is a predictable paradigm for plotting that most successful romantic comedies employ (you can see it in hundreds of movies, and analyzed in my book). But that's all the more reason for you to be exceptionally clever, imaginative and ingenious about your romantic comedy's story concept and execution. Four movies from the past decade that were truly memorable made their mark by putting a spin on the standard construct. There was 'boy doesn't meet girl until the last five minutes of the movie' ('Sleepless in Seattle'), 'boy meets girl after they're both dead' ('Defending Your Life'), 'boy only meets girl in and around weddings (and a funeral)' ('Four Weddings') and 'boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy loses girl, boy loses girl, ad infinitum, until he finally gets it right' ('Groundhog Day'). Try to come up with a concept that will enable your rom-com to stand out from the crowd. Failing that, a hook in the execution can make the difference. 'Bridget Jones's Diary' has the diary to hang its story on; 'High Fidelity' uses breaking-the-fourth-wall conversations with the audience. Take a bold leap and find your tweak. It may make all the difference.

**ROMANTIC MEANS SEXY AND COMEDY MEANS FUNNY**

Everybody remembers the 'fake orgasm in the deli' scene from 'When Harry Met Sally.' But can you remember any similar scene from a romantic comedy in the dozen years since that was just as raunchy and hilarious? Not many come to mind, which may be why some recent rom-coms that HAVE pushed the erotic envelope have really scored with their audiences. The zipper scene from 'There's Something About Mary,' the dress straps 'Jerry Maguire' breaks, 'American Pie's pie -- successes like these show that the humor to be found in sexual situations is well worth pursuing. So mine that humor. Activate intimacy -- which is what truly erotic and funny encounters are about: people being vulnerably, painfully exposed, whether it's literally, metaphorically or both. At the same time, don't forget that any comedy should provide at least a couple of truly funny set- pieces. Has your romantic conflict gotten so serious that the script is light on laughs? Find the humor in it and maximize. Steep your characters in painful, truth-baring situations, and look for gags to build bigger gags on. Smiles and chuckles don't sell a script. 'Ha- ha!' laughs-out-loud do.

**MAKE IT BE ABOUT SOMETHING**

He's a this, and she's a that, and high jinks ensue isn't enough. At the core of any great romantic comedy is some kind of thematic idea grounded in the writer's personal point of view. Why are you writing this particular story about this specific couple? What about their story reflects some insight you have about the relations between men and women or the human condition? What question are you asking that your screenplay's story development answers? Highfalutin' as it may sound, the romantic comedies that endure -- and strike a real chord with their audiences -- are the ones that explore universal issues. 'When Harry...' is about whether men and women can overcome gender differences. 'Tootsie' is about how no man (especially when he becomes a woman) is an island. 'Annie Hall,' with Alvy 'I don't want to belong to any club that would have me as a member' Singer and 'I have no idea what club I could ever belong to' Annie is about self-esteem issues. Your romantic comedy should be posing a question, or poking at a truth, that you, the writer, are passionately invested in exploring. That's the real key to involving an audience, and no amount of cute one-liners can take its place. So have your movie MEAN something. It will help it to get made – and to matter.  
  
<https://www.writersstore.com/romantic-comedy-writing-secrets/>

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**CULINARY NOTES – FOOD / SPIRITS / RESTAURANTS / CHEFS   
  
SPIRITS:** \* Bulleit Bourbon - “Some of the smoothest bourbon ever made. A drop is too much, a liter, not enough.”   
  
**\* THE MASTER FOOD WRITER – JIM HARRISON -**“**O**ver the weekend, I bought a copy of Jim Harrison’s A Really Big Lunch: Meditations on Food and Life from the Roving Gourmand. I’m thrilled to dive in. The book, with an introduction from his friend Mario Batali, is a compilation of 47 of the novelist and poet's essays on food and drink, published between 1981 and 2015.

Harrison, who died a year ago of heart failure at age 78, had 12 novels plus numerous novellas and books of poetry under his belt. But I liked his voice best when he wrote about food, most of his essays appearing in the pages of *Esquire* and *Men’s Journal*. Lately, though, I've found that a lot of people—especially young food writers I know—have never even heard his name.

I first arrived at Harrison's writing a few years ago while dorkily poring over New Yorker archives. At that point, I came across the 2004 piece that forms the backbone of his essay collection, “A Really Big Lunch." It’s a pretty crazy narrative of gluttony, wherein Harrison makes his way through a hideously expensive 37-course lunch in Burgundy, a meal with recipes made from cookbooks published centuries ago. As I dug deeper into his work, I found that Harrison realized new possibilities for food writing, convincing me that food writing could touch on so many vectors and subjects while remaining vivid, insightful, and wryly funny.”   
  
P. S. - There is every plan and no reason for myself, a former professional French chef and still active cook and naturalist gourmet to not continue on the great master Harrison’s tradition of fine food writing and within the bowels of ‘The Sofia Diaries’ we should be able to intelligently extract a fine cookbook laden with beefy, organic prose, delightful recipes, stunning pictures, and who knows, maybe even a video collection of the best of them. Let’s keep all of this in mind as we place the project with the proper agents and producers. ;)   
  
<https://food52.com/blog/19430-if-you-haven-t-read-jim-harrison-s-food-writing-start-here>