

July 14: ♪ 4. (If You Were) In My Movie ♪

“Room Service,” someone called out. Rose straightened up and shouted back, “Just a second,” as she stuffed her blouse back into her skirt. She fixed her hair, stood up, and made it halfway across the room when she swung around. Her big eyes and partially open mouth showed panic.

“I can't let him *see* me,” she whispered. Her finger pointed to Peter and then to the door. When he stood up, she dashed into the bathroom and closed it. After taking care of room service, he knocked on the bathroom door. Rose came out.

“Thanks for the stand-in. If he recognized me, it'd be zoo city here in ten minutes.”

“You think he would talk?”

“It's enough if he tells someone who tells someone who tells someone. Sooner or later some creep will, like, hawk the story to the trash press, you know. But he's history now. Let's eat.”

Rose sat on the sofa, leaning over the coffee table, and took a bite. Peter sat down on the chair across from her, where she had placed the other tray.

“So you like movies?” Rose started the dinner conversation.

“If they're good, you know, good story line, intelligent dialogues, hold together logically, or downright silly. I wanted to be an actor, once. I mean, I played Hamlet in high school.”

Rose looked up and poked a fork in his direction. A knowing smile appeared on her face.

“Epic! Tough role fer sure. Anything in film?”

“Did some extra stuff, nothing serious. Watch what I can, though.”

“So, what's your favorite?”

“How do you compare a romantic comedy like *Notting Hill* to, say, *Terminator*? You can't.”

“Okay, best rom com.”

“*Notting Hill*. Hmm, maybe *Pretty Woman*. Nah, definitely *Notting Hill*. The dialogue is funnier and better developed. Actually, *Pretty Woman* really isn't a comedy, come to think of it. More sex, though.”

Rose ignored his suggestive remark. “Best other comedy?”

Peter hesitated. He adored her more than he had any other woman, except for maybe Natasha. Seeing Rose on screen was the highlight of any movie. Her comedies, geared toward teenagers, were not exactly award-winning productions, though, and some of her later films fared even worse with critics and viewers alike. He had to tread lightly here. “Please, don't get mad, um, but none of yours are in the running. I've seen all of them, because of you. I mean, I have them all on DVD.”

So far, Rose seemed to take the longwinded commentary in stride. Her gracious smile gave Peter courage.

“You look great in them, even playing a 13-year-old. Honestly, I mean, you *are* great in them. I'd vote you best actress anytime, except maybe, you know...but...well those scripts with the ridiculous, um, forced, unrealistic Hollywood ending; even your tremendous talent can't save them. I just can't give them best picture. They're for a teen audience.”

Peter's knuckles pressed against his lips. Would the star accept his honest opinion without feeling insulted? She had moved on to serious adult roles in her latest movies, anyway. Rose had maintained unbroken eye contact. She jokingly said, “That's okay. When you turn thirteen we can go watch them together.”

He dropped his hand and smiled back. The pungent scent of their dinner hit his nose again. “How's the sauerkrauttopf?”

“Good, good, spicy-sour with a good bite. How about yours?”

“Could use some saffron.”

Rose stopped eating and gave him a puzzled look. “Saffron? There's, like, no rice in it.”

Peter answered with a funny voice. "Okay, okay, it's actually missing oregano, but since I can't pronounce 'o-re-ga-no,' I had to say saffron."

"You," Rose said in jest, as she threw a napkin at him. "Seriously, stop, like, trying to compete as comedian and answer the question. Film category is best comedy, you know. Or are you takin' the fifth?"

"No, no, just stalling. Tough choice, tough choice. So many to choose from."

He gazed at the off-white ceiling while thinking.

"*Deep Throat*," Peter blurted out suddenly.

"*What?* That flick's, like, X-rated."

"But it is *so* funny. Great dialogue. And the sound effects when she comes, hilarious."

Rose stared at him without moving. Her arms held cutlery in mid-air. A piece of pork adorned the fork.

Damn, I doesn't she want some action after all this time alone?

Heat flashed across his face. His index finger loosened the white, wet shirt collar stuck to his neck. Peter's eyes drifted down her blouse's cut-out and lingered on the black chiffon over white cotton covering her breasts. Another heat wave rippled through his body.

He looked on his plate for a moment, then met her eyes and softly said, "How about *L.A. Story*. Ten times funnier, if you actually live in L.A."

Rose threw up her hands with excitement and accidentally catapulted the piece of pork against the window. "Awe, I love Steve Martin. He's so great. Like, I attended the Academy Awards when he hosted, you know. Totally awesome."

She paused and stared down at her plate.

"You dream of an Oscar, don't you?" Peter asked.

Rose nodded without lifting her eyes from the table. Quietly, she said, "Yeah, I work so hard at it. As you said, like, the scripts suck. The Academy doesn't particularly care for comedies...particularly teeny comedies, you know. No matter.

Steve Martin never got an Oscar, and he's still awesome. I totally love that scene with the 'double-half-caf decaf...'"

They finished the line together with a laugh: "...with a twist of lemon."

He looked into her eyes and smiled. If Peter had not been in love with her before, he would certainly be now. Deep down, Rose was just a girl, sitting in front of a boy, asking him to love her. This conversation could happen on any normal date.

Peter said, "I can so relate to the earthquake scene. You know, where they are sitting around calmly discussing the strength while lunch's sliding across the floor. When the Northridge quake hit L.A., Mom just freaked. I was, like, looking up, 'yeah, the ceiling's not coming down,' and went back to sleep."

He talks about his mom, Rose thought. So sweet. His foot briefly touched her, followed by a quick withdrawal. She felt like high school. Unprepared Peter in his neat but normal clothes dispelled the tense guessing game that accompanied her other dates. No promises of riches or film roles here. No pretense or lies, either. Mere clumsy attempts by two friendly, lusty eyes trying to get her into bed.

"Your fave scene?" she asked

"Actually...no. That's the one at the ATM."

"The ATM?"

"You know, two lines, one on the left, one on the right. Steve Martin withdraws some money, then the guy from the left introduces himself, like, 'Hi, I'm your designated robber.'"

They both laughed. Rose felt light in her stomach, but not from hunger. Neither did she want to hump him. Not yet, anyway. Peter produced some undefined longing in her, mixed with the dread of a long distance relationship across two continents. How could she convince him to come back?

"Don't you totally miss seeing American movies? Fer sure no *L.A. Story* in German, right?"

“Actually, yes. Forgettable, though. Just loses too much in translation. I go to the public library. They have thousands of DVDs with English soundtrack. Get this, I scored all the seasons of *West Wing*. I mean, that's as American as it gets. Far as I know they never showed it on German TV.”

“Wow, that show's just one American civics lesson in disguise. Into politics?”

Peter's eyes turned slittier, as he stared at the cloudy fat stain on the window. “Here and there. Kinda like power acting, isn't it? Helps you get elected, if you can deliver a line. At least in California. Reagan and the Governator showed that. Let's not go there. American politics gets me all riled.”

“Fine. How about fave drama?”

“Depends. Maybe, *A Few Good Men* or *Wall Street*, the first one. Wait, maybe, *The Firm*. Ah, you just cannot compare them.”

Rose pointed her fork at him again. “Major Tom Cruise fan, ha?”

“Nah, you're mucho cuter. But he always get's the girl.”

Peter bit his lip. Rose took in the comment with a reluctant smile. “Pu-lease, like, no bribin' the judges.”

He thinks of only one thing, like any man, but behaves like a baby. I shouldn't.

His movie choices revealed much about him. A good first impression. Still too many unanswered questions for her to move on to romance. Time to get to the core issues that separate women from men. “Okay, what about guy-movies, really macho stuff.”

“Hmm, *Armageddon*.”

“Come on. That's not macho. That's comedy.”

“But it *is* macho. Oil rig workers with muscles of steel, danger, nuclear weapons, bombs exploding, fist fights. What's not macho about that?”

Rose looked down and hid her laughter behind her hand. Peter certainly did not look like a man's man. His tastes

seemed to convey a juvenile attitude, too. Could she discover a manly core?

“No, give me a real man-movie, somethin' serious, drippin' in blood and gore.”

“Does *Terminator 2* count?”

“Totally. You didn't like the first one?”

“I did. Second one tops it, though. Rare exception to the rule that sequels suck.”

“Yeah, well, it's the money. Okay, now the big one: best chick flick?”

“*Ghost*, definitely *Ghost*.”

“Come on, *Ghost*, like, barely counts. It's a comedy. On mypickflick *Pretty Woman* ranked much higher, you know.”

“But I cry at the end every time!”

Confusion reigned in Rose's brain. This date had long ago taken an unusual—if not outright weird—path. She could not explain her attraction to Peter, who differed so much from her beaus since turning a woman: rich, tall, whiskey-drinking *men*. Now, this grown *boy* admitted a soft side that men do not talk about. The honesty and innocence emanating from him touched her deeply. Was he for real?

“You are just saying that. Guys don't do a *Bambi*.”

“I do.”

“Sure. You're, like, one of those dudes that goes to a chick flick with his girl, holdin' hands, flippin' the lip how he, like, cares about the story, while thinkin' of somethin' else. Men always think of one thing.”

“So not true!” Peter's voice had an air of feigned indignation. “Sometimes, not often, but sometimes, we think of something else.”

Both laughed.

“Okay, what's left? You like music films?” Rose asked.

“Like musicals?”

“Aha.”

“Definitely, *My Fair Lady*. Audrey Hepburn is soooooo cute.

“You are not supposed to say *that*.”

Rose dropped off her seat and kicked him under the table.

"Ouch!"

"This is, like, our first date, you know. You're, like, s'posed to say that *I* am so cute, puppy, not some other chick."

"But she's six feet under!" He sounded exasperated.

"Still. It's the thought that counts, you know. Now I am sad." She pretended to wipe tears from her eyes. "I'm gonna go pout on the bed, and if you have any smarts, puppy, you'll come over, like, cuggle me, and say you're sorry."

Rose left the table and sat down on the edge of the bed and pretended to pout. Peter seemed to get the message that dinner was over. He sat down and snaked an arm around her. She deliberately stared at the wall and said, "Say you're sorry."

"I'm sorry."

"Mean it?"

"Mean it."

"Accepted, but you gotta pay to leave the dog house. I'll think of something."

Rose hugged Peter while putting her head on his shoulder. The tender feel of cotton on her hair brought back memories of careful, almost awkward flirts after school. A musky smell clung to the fabric, while a pungent scent of cologne hovered around him. He slowly caressed the back of her blouse. The two continued the loving embrace for minutes. His hand found the way to her front and climbed the fabric protecting her double-D cup.

Rose sighed, pushed away, looked at him, and asked, "How far is Potsdamer Platz?"

Peter seemed surprised. "Five, ten minutes by bus. Why?"

"Anna said they, like, have a Starbucks there." Rose lowered her eyes and played with the plastic buttons of his white shirt. "I, like, totally need a taste of home right now. I'm still sad, fer sure. Get me a grande Soy Strawberries and Crème Frappuccino, please, pretty please?"

Rose turned her head sideways and flashed that smile of hers, as she looked at him with big eyes. Peter looked dumbfounded. He hesitated, but she knew he would get the message: dating a star meant getting used to star airs.

Finally, he said, "Sure," and turned to the door.

"Wait, lemme give you some money."

Peter waved it off.

"I totally insist, puppy. For all your trouble, at least I can pay. Date is suspended for the next hour." She did not want to feel obligated. After all, she probably outearned him a thousand-fold. She angled a green bill from a drawer. "All I have are hundreds. So, you see, I need change anyway. Bring me some small bills for tips, okay."

"So, what's your heart's desire again?"

"A grande Soy Strawberries and Crème Frappuccino."

"Yep, a grande Soy Strawberries and Crème Frappuccino."

"Thanks, puppy. Wait, let me wipe the lippystick off your face. You so have that measles look."

She gently wiped around his mouth with a paper tissue and patted his hair. "Now go fetch."

He turned and left. Rose's eyes followed him. As the door fell shut, she thought, *Finally!*