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2010

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Horse Latitudes: The Melding of Fact and Fiction

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Horse Latitudes: The Melding of Fact and Fiction

by

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

Of the University of Texas at Austin

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2010

Horse Latitudes: The Melding of Fact and Fiction

By

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

SUPERVISOR: Richard Lewis

The following report documents the inspiration, themes, preparation, and challenges faced in writing the feature length screenplay *Horse Latitudes*. This is the story of a young woman who works as a spam writer for an advertising agency. In hopes of moving up in the company, Cairo begins working undercover for her boss, writing erotica blog entries for his personal website. She begins using the people closest to her for material, thus betraying her own morals. As she descends deeper into debt to her boss, she becomes physically ill until she can no longer survive in the world she has created. This is a story based on the author's own experiences of working for a spam company and being committed to a hospital. This report also includes supplemental planning documents used in the final draft.

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Chapter One: My Life as an Object

I am invincible.

Nothing can harm me. Nothing can break me. Nothing can get in my way to endeavor to live.

This was until the great “nothing” invaded my mind, twisted my view, and balled me into tight knot that was buried at the heart of Minotaurian maze.

I *was* invincible.

But now, I am not.

One Year Earlier

Before I sat down to write *Horse Latitudes*, before I knew the difference between an MRI and an MRA, and before my body tasted the sweet chemical mixtures of ciprofloxacin, Trazadone, or prednisone, I was a child. It is this personal coming of age that pushed me to write this story. Instead of writing for my workshop or my professors I decided to write a story for myself. I wanted to document the change that had come over me, as well as my perception of my world around me.

However, in real life, as with screenwriting, it is important to begin our story in the ordinary, undisturbed world that we find our protagonist living day in and day out. As an introduction, I will describe the three main inspirations from which I drew inspiration for my settings,

conflicts, characters, tone, and resolution for my script.

TSEG

Before moving to Austin, I had never worked for a company like The Search Engine Guys (TSEG). It was a small, internet start-up company which was run more like a frat house than a corporation. Merits were based on how much you drank versus how hangover employees were the following day, and brownie points awarded for the most sexist or racist comments made on an hourly basis.

The two men who started up the company could be characterized easily. They were men who regretted getting married, but—vs. “and” who wouldn’t let their heavy wedding rings get in the way of them having fun. The more they felt restricted, the more they would encourage their employees to act carelessly. Their self-destructive behavior was encouraged as long as it didn’t disrupt company productivity. They specialized in recruiting new graduates who had never worked before. They would pay them less in exchange for the “fun environment.”

However, as many leaders before these men knew, it is hard to be loved as a leader and still maintain discipline. This is where my boss fit in. He was twenty years old, newly graduated, and flaunted as TSEG’s personal genius and prodigy. His prowess was not based on any job performance, however, merely that he was Asian (and therefore perceived

to be stereotypically smart). He was put in charge of most internal operations and ruled with a stony fist. The bosses would make requests for promotions based on “job merit” (as outlined above) and speed.

And this was just the working environment.

My actual job consisted of one simple task: write as much internet spam per hour as possible. As a spam writer, I had a list of clients who needed mass advertising to boost their Google ratings. For example, I had a client who specialized in plastic surgery. I was to search the internet for unsolicited questions (like Yahoo! Answers), where a third party asked a question that was related to the product I was pushing. I was then to answer the question in a sincere and personal manner, while at the same time slipping in my products’ information to resolve the person’s problem. **See Illustration 1.1** on the following page for an example I wrote under the identity “Cat”.



I only survived in this foreign land for two reasons: my speed, and, as my bosses would say, my “TNA”¹.

Brackenridge Hospital


However, all this was to change one hot summer day in July 2009. In my spare time between work and school, I started developing my own photography business. I was on a wedding shoot when I first started to


¹ “Tits and Ass”

Sample Spam Assignment

 **Ask**  **Ans**

[Home](#) > [All Categories](#) > [Society & Culture](#) > [Religion & Spirituality](#) > Resolved Question

 **Resolved Question** [Show me another >](#)
Is it wrong to get a nose job?
Mr. Mudkipz
I know I could use the money for better causes, and I still will donate money to the needy, but I'm tired of people calling me Jewish when I'm Christian just because I have a huge nose with a big bump on it. I already wear a cross no matter what but then some rude people make comments like why is a jew wearing a cross?
1 year ago

 **Best Answer** - Chosen by Voters
Do what you want. God will hold you accountable for changing His Creation.
That one guy
No, just kidding. You should feel free to do what makes you feel attractive. It's called "not living in a theocracy."
1 year ago


 **Cat**
I think you should stop worrying about what other people call you, and focus more on your faith if that is what is important to you. However, if you still want to change your appearance then a nose job is what you need. Bring in a picture to your plastic surgeon so they exactly what you want. Nose jobs take some time to heal, so make sure you lay out enough time for recovery so you don't ruin the work and money you put into it.
Good luck!
Source(s):
<http://www.dr-apo.com>
1 year ago
0% 0 Votes

Illustration 1.1

notice a deep, throbbing pain in my eye and head. I used a whole bottle of ibuprofen, lay in bed for a week, and asked everyone I knew if this had happened to them before. With no good answer I decided to go to my general doctor. My doctor told me that she suspected that I was having migraines in and around my right eye. She referred me to a neurologist, Dr. A. Raymond.

Every time I think back, I wish to myself that I could take this next move back, because, as it turned out, Dr. A. Raymond was my archnemesiis.

I went to this specialist's office and was examined for about ten minutes, asked my family history, then sat me down seriously. Dr. A. Raymond told me that if I did not immediately go to the hospital that I would go blind.

I checked into the hospital under my own steam (**See Illustration 1.2**), and was somewhat optimistic about my treatment for Optic Neuritis.

However, things slowly started to unravel. Dr. Raymond put me on high powered steroids and ordered every test in the book; MRIs, a spinal tap, and constant observation. It was after the first day that we had another serious conversation. I had Multiple Sclerosis (MS). It was MS at age 22.

I was invincible until this moment.

However, days went by and the treatment was not working. My head and eye were no better, and yet, I was not blind. I was seen by several specialists in the hospital and all of them agreed, it was not optic neuritis, and it was probably not MS.

Arriving at the Hospital



Illustration 1.2

My archnemesi was not happy about this at all. However, because her treatment and diagnosis could not keep me in the hospital any longer

she discharged me. I was in much worse shape then when I had entered, though. I could not walk on my own for the spinal headache I was suffering from. I had undergone a botched spinal tap, and the headache I had had for more than two weeks had not abated, even with copious amounts of hydrocodone. All they could say was “It’s a mystery.”

From that point on I was in and out of doctor’s offices for the next year. From fighting debilitating headaches to counteracting devastating side effects from medications (at one point my arms and legs fell asleep for four months from a single dose of antibiotics used to treat a Urinary Track Infection, which was caused from a muscle relaxer that had cut off the nerves to my bladder). This became my life.

It is a never ending battle, as of yet, and I still seek out help from numerous doctors to treat my mysterious symptoms that continue to plague my life.

Present Day – “The Meet Cute”

For all the misfortunes and ill-advised career moves, there must still be a happy ending (this is America after all). I met a wonderful man at TSEG, who helped me and continues to support me through my medical dramas. I have been able to finish school and take time off from work to rest and get well.

I believe that a story’s resolution should reflect the character’s desire. The saying “Without your health, you have nothing” seemed true

to me as I seemed to descend deeper into despair, but I realized that you only have nothing if you have no one. Living to be alive is not enough.

And thus began my writing process for the creation of *Horse Latitudes*. I wanted to document my life before and after these events, not only to heal my own psyche, but to also reveal many of the things I observed about our modern world. Mainly, I wanted to write about how corporations, technology, medicine, and people objectify our bodies to an inhumane degree. We separate ourselves from living by any means possible.

Chapter Two: Themes

Although this script draws from real life, I wanted to breakdown the story in terms of thematic ideas rather than the chronological order of events. My priority in both drafts was to focus on why I was telling this story and what message I wanted to speak, rather than merely dictating what happens to our protagonist (as I felt I do in most of my other scripts).

My overall theme of the piece is how frequently we are objectified by our modern lifestyles to cope with these lives and the lives of those around us. This natural mechanism comes in many forms, including objectification by; technology, corporations, medicine and medical practitioners, other people, and especially ourselves. My experiences over the past year have given rise to these observations, and so it was important to incorporate them into my script (**See Appendix A for Thematic Brainstorming**).

Technology

With the inundation of new technologies to our lives every year, it is hard not to become engrossed in the fast changing tech lifestyle. However, with the introduction of so many new technologies to make our lives easier, we slowly lose our sense of interpersonal interactions and skills.

In *Horse Latitudes*, I wanted to show the death of real personal relationships through Cairo's interactions with Jack, and with Cairo's roommate Muriel.

Jack and Muriel are interesting characters because they have the same problem, but it manifests itself in different ways. Jack, who comes off as a disgusting pig, communicates his inner feelings through text messages. Unfortunately for him, he comes off very coarse, because the texting language is so emotionless and explicit (e.g. "Imma gunna split ur pussy and put it in a comma"). Many modern relationships are often initiated through text messaging, which is why I wanted to show how miscommunication could completely undercut a person's ability to form meaningful relationships with others. This leads people to objectify the person they want, as they do not have to risk anything in person.

Muriel is quite different. She uses the internet to hide from the outside world. Her hypochondriac tendencies are encouraged by her desire to be safe. People no longer are people, but transform into germ and disease carrying devices that she would rather ignore. However, in the story, she takes a risk, goes into the outside world and finds someone similar to herself. Instead of seeing him as an object or "an other," she can relate to him. Being able to relate to other people is what allows us to see others *as* people.

We all try to define ourselves through Facebook, our resumes, our

person property, even the amount of “friends” we have. I wanted to show how all of these things are truly fake, and that when the power goes out, we really have nothing but the people around us.

Corporations/Society

Capitalism is not about people, it’s about money. A corporation has a hard time making money *while* treating its employees as people. Having witnessed this first hand, I wanted Cairo, our main protagonist, to be under the thumb of an evil corporation. “Devine Ink Corporation” (DIC) is an advertising firm dedicated to anything from magazine art all the way down to its Spam basement.

Cairo wants something better than the life of a spam writer. Her job is to manipulate and encourage bad ideas to take root in unsuspecting individuals. This shows the capitalist view of people because to the company, these people are just things. Cairo is forced to write things that she does not believe in, as well as blackmail her boss just to keep her job.

Even in the end when Cairo is going to do the right thing by turning herself in, her sacrifice is muted. Those who should be punished are promoted for their wrongdoings and Cairo is left to fend for herself. For those who must work these types of jobs in the real world, we have all come to accept that “life is unfair.” But really, if companies and

bosses looked upon their employees, not as assets, but as people, fairness would come to those who needed it.

Medicine

Doctors are supposed to look at their patients as a whole person, but modern medicine fails its patients miserably. When a person walks into the examination room, they are put on the table, like a rat. They are ordered to undergo tests. They are asked for a medical history. They are introduced as a name, age, weight and blood pressure. Not a hometown. Not feelings. Not personality. They are a group of symptoms that need relieving.

Dr. A. Raymond, in both story and reality, was the perfect representation of how medicine objectifies the body. She is a scientist with a theory to test and prove. When she is wrong, her ego gets in the way and her experiment is done. Why keep going if the hypothesis was wrong in the first place?

In addition, Dr. A. Raymond also had a posse of students that go everywhere with her. It must have been equally embarrassing that the lab rat did not perform in the manner which it was supposed to. If a machine can't be fixed, you throw it out. If a patient can't be cured, there is nothing medicine can do but put them in the trash.

In *Horse Latitudes*, I wanted to show how patients are treated in hospitals. They are stripped, branded with a bar code, and caged inside.

Cairo's escape is meant to signify her rebirth and healing as she throws off the idea that she is an object to be manipulated by medicine. The very first scene I wrote was when Cairo is taken to the MRI room. She is asked a lot of personal questions that she can't seem to get the right answer to and is made to feel bad about herself. Then one of the nurses starts masturbating in the room as he keeps her company. I wanted this to represent how the medical community really felt about its patients. That these tests and treatments are often just them pleasuring themselves with the power they have over their patients.

Ourselves

This last thought brings me to the final point: we can objectify ourselves. Whether through technology, society, or medicine people often let themselves be what others want them to be. Cairo is a pawn for TJ's plan to take over the Spam Man division. She lets other people use her for sex in order that she may write articles about it. She puts her faith in Dr. A. Raymond to cure her, and even gives up her freedom when she accepts defeat.

Cairo becomes the very kind of person she did not want to be and therefore is making *herself* sick, dehumanizing her own person for the benefit of others.

Objectification by these many outlets is a large topic to cram into

one script. To help accommodate this I tried to incorporate this theme in every storyline. This was not difficult as modern interactions are all plagued with blatant objectification. The hypersexualization of any kind of relationship helped me show the external motivations for all the characters if they need to objectify each other.

Chapter Three: Planning

This script started with a character that grew into a family, which blossomed into a different world. I had to research in places I would not have normally ventured and compared films that I had never thought to pair before. From pre-planning came definite structure and finally outlines. This was a long process, but once I had everything in place the pages came together organically.

Characters

I had the great fortune of taking a three day workshop course with David Mamet. It was too short a class to soak in all of his important lessons, but I did glean one piece of wisdom that I use extensively in all my writing, as well as teach to my writing classes.

In order to create a driven character within the plot one must ask three questions:

1. What does the character want?
2. Why now?
3. What will happen if they do not succeed?

These questions define the character's goal, establish why we start when we start with the character, and force the writer to understand the consequences to the character if they fail in their quest. I began by making a table of all my characters and asking these questions. See **Table 3.1** for basic Character Questions.

Basic Character Questions

Character Name	Character Role	What does he/she want?	Why now?	What will happen if they don't get it?
Cairo Paine	Protagonist	To work on something uncompromising	There is a job opening in Art	She will be stuck in the basement forever
TJ	Antagonist	A promotion	Rodney's website has risen to the top	Rodney will always be his superior
Dr. Raymond	Antagonist	Prove she is right	Cairo is sick	She will be embarrassed in front of her students
Muriel	Supporting	To go to the hypochondriac conference	She is not sick yet	She will never leave the house
Gina Paine	Supporting	To know what her ex-husband is up to	She heard he is getting married	She will lose her chance of getting married to him again
Ferdinand	Supporting	Cairo to love him	He finally met her	He will lose her
Jake	Supporting	Cairo to love him	She is forced to be with him	He will lose his only chance to get her

Table 3.1

Because I have so many different characters inhabiting center stage, I tried to give each a clear goal and special characteristics to make them memorable. For full character descriptions please see **Appendix B**.

The World and Tone

When I first started pitching this idea I wrote, “Amelie in America.” However, as I kept writing I realized that *Amelie*’s world was too pretty and innocent for the place I was trying to portray. I wrote the first draft without a model film (which was a mistake), but was given many options by my classmates. I finally landed somewhere between *Office Space* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

The only problem was that these movies have very different tones. In *Office Space*, it is a critique of cubicle America, grounded in a slightly hyperbolic world. The tone is satirical and dry, and any major drama that happens is deflated of any real emotional connection.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind is a movie very much based on emotional connection. There is humor throughout the film, but the low point is very dark. The film reaches emotional levels that *Office Space* avoids. Its world is also based upon our world with one minor deviance, a device that can erase memories.

Horse Latitude tries to be both. In my first outlines, I give Cairo actual medical diseases and illnesses that she is trying to contend with. However, when matched to the beginning of the script, the tone shifts so

heavily (MS really brings down a film audience) that the reader felt jolted. In reaction to this, I decided to make up fake illnesses, the end result being that it was her environment making her sick. And the only cure would be to change herself for the better and live the life she wanted.

On a less serious note, it was very entertaining to create a hyperbolized office space for Cairo to work in. Though in real life, spam writing is not always about penises and children wanting plastic surgery, but it often feels just as disgusting. The porn websites were also made up, but I did research several websites to get the general gist of their advertising campaigns.

Reading the latest draft I still believe that these two tones can be reckoned, though I may not have fully succeeded yet.

Structure

Although I followed the three act screenwriting structure closely, I also utilized the eight sequences method by David Howard. Howard splits the three acts into eight smaller sections of 1—15 pages. Act I is split into two sequences, Act II into four, and Act III into the final two sequences. For the basic Structure Map of *Horse Latitudes* see **Table 3.2**.

Initially I was going to organize the script based on eight different illnesses or diagnoses that Cairo receives. However, as I continued to structure the film, I decided that it would kill two birds with one stone if I

divided it into eight different fantasies, each leading into the next sequence. This would not only help me organize the film and smooth the

Horse Latitudes Basic Structure Map

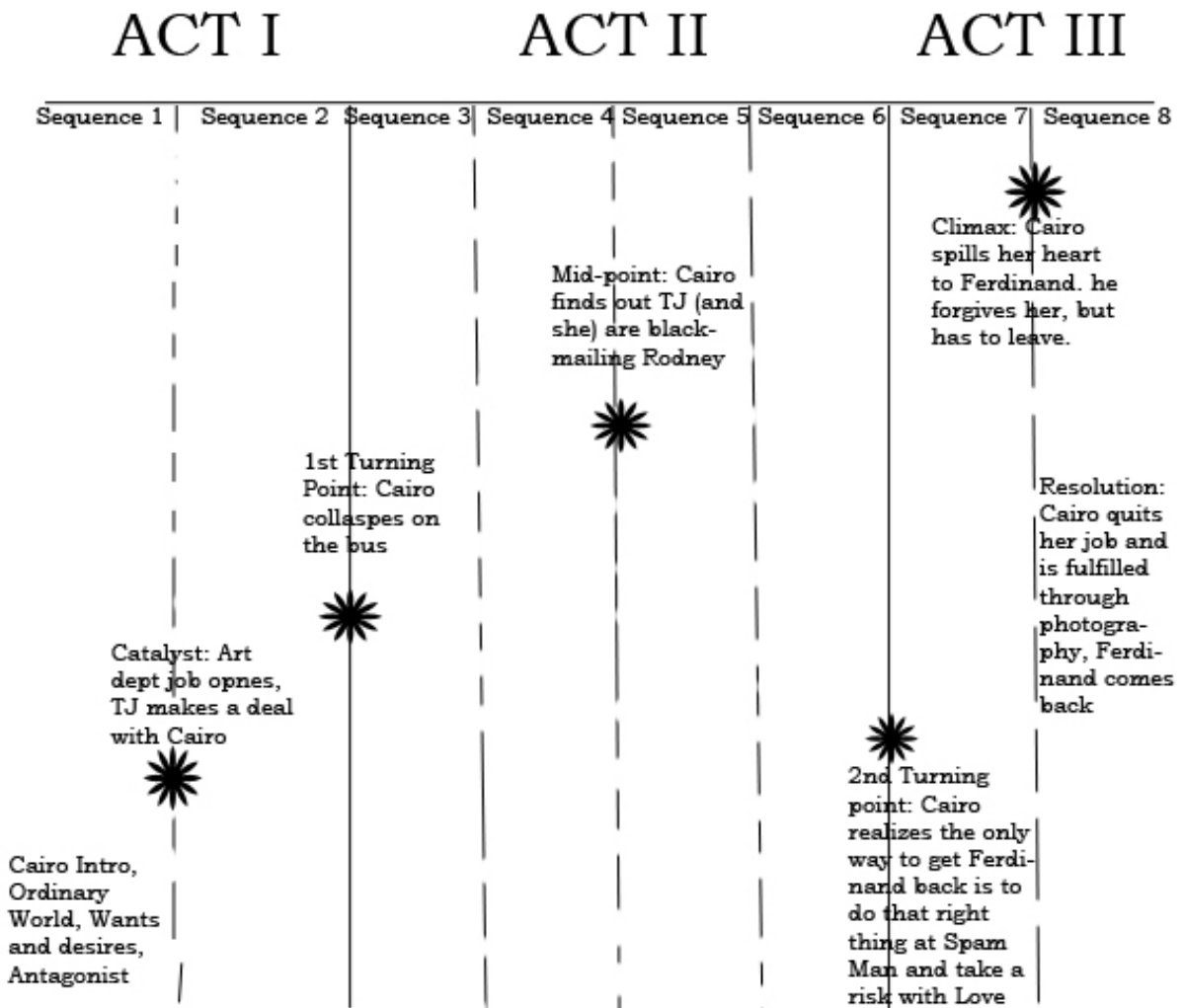


Table 3.2

transitions, but also help visualize Cairo's writing assignments (as emails or pieces of paper are not very visual. I wanted each fantasy to tell another piece of the story and delve deeper into the mind of Cairo (whether she is thinking about Jake or Ferdinand, whether she is in a romantic phase or sex-driven).

Also in the first draft, I started with a different sequence of events, which followed my true experience too closely. Act I remained the same, but in sequence 3, Cairo was going to go into the hospital, not just diagnosed, and then sent on a long journey (spanning the whole film) to different doctors, getting different tests, and suffering the medical consequences. However, having the hospital scenes so early in the film did not give the script as much movement towards the finish (as the hospital seemed the darkest, most dire situation). See **Appendix C** for the Initial Step-outline and **Appendix D** for the Revised Step-outline.

Although I profess to use the Three Act Structure religiously, this script uses it more loosely than I have previously experimented with. It is a story with a beginning, middle, and end, but the change in tone throughout makes it a story of "Before & After." In the first half of the movie there seems to be this special filter over the world, more like *Office Space*, and in the second half, when the story begins to get more serious, the emotional lows start to peek in. However, the resolves more happily than I might have wanted. The chase scene out of the hospital was a

foray into the slapstick, and may need further change in the future. But the relationship resolution between Cairo and Ferdinand was open-ended, as this was not the main goal of Cairo. I wanted the audience to feel satisfied by Cairo's choices and outcomes, but also feel that last minute of hope for the future that really brings my message together.

Chapter Four: Challenges in Writing the Script

Screenwriting feels like it is split 75% planning, 25% actual writing. It takes a good map to find your way through the trials and tribulations that are a complete script.

When I finished writing the first draft I knew I had a lot of changes to make. The story needed to be restructured, scenes needed moving and removing, and characters needed clearer motivations. The feedback I received mostly centered on how much readers like the details, but they were fuzzy on the actual plot and line of movement. I think these are good things to hear after writing the first draft, because I was not editing my characters as they came onto the page. In past scripts, I have spent too much time in plotting and forcing my characters into dialogue and situations that were not organic to their person. However, the plot still needed work.

I came up with three central problems that I needed to focus on in rewriting my first draft:

1. Cairo's goal needs to be more concrete
2. The switch in tone is jarring to the reader
3. There need to be more interweaving of characters and their problems into the main conflict of the story
4. Reckoning of fact and fiction

Cairo's Goal

From the beginning, Cairo's goal has been problematic. I did not want to write a romantic comedy, because I didn't want Cairo's goal to be based on her getting a man. This story is more about self-realization than changing from career woman to lover. Instead, I was aiming towards a tragic mistake that led the protagonist back to her roots, and yet changed for the better. This was difficult to pull off as these goals are not very concrete.

Cairo is also a very difficult character to write. She is a romantic and a dreamer stuck in a modern world of technology and sterilization. And yet she is like everyone else in that she won't take a chance when it comes to love. She hides behind her dreams in order to avoid the people around her. Her family life is a little complicated and her relationship with Muriel was not brought out in the fullest. I wanted to portray that they were two romantics lost at sea, and yet they were holding each other back from reaching the shore.

She needs to be simplified, rebuilt, and make everything surrounding her about her one goal.

Problems in Tone

Another problem often brought up is the change in tones. From sequence one to five, the tone is more satirical and funny. But sequences

five and six are very dark. They start in an unclear rape scene to life in the hospital. The story takes a very different turn than what the audience is expecting. While this is what I set out to do, I am afraid that it does not work for the set-up I created. It is a difference in tone and worlds as we saw with *Office Space* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. I tried to commit to this change in tone in the second draft, but it still does not work. Consistency in tone will do a lot to keep the audience involved in the story.

Character Codependency

I tackled a large topic for the theme of one movie. I also have a lot of characters that all need to fit somewhere in that theme. I often had readers who wanted several smaller storyline cuts so that I could focus on the main plot more deeply. However, I want a rich world with a lot of people in the forefront. In the second draft, I tried to tie all the characters together in a way that one couldn't be removed for the story to work. For example *Love Actually* has one easy theme that every storyline ties into *and* ties all the characters together, physically in the film. I think I can get to that happy medium in my film if I slim down my theme into an easier concept that can be felt through all the characters and their wants. In the second draft, there were those characters that wouldn't take a leap of faith for love and hid behind technology and objectification,

and then there were those who took the leap and succeeded. This is not simplified enough and it needs to be clearer so that when the viewer leaves the theatre, they know exactly what the movie was about. Specific characters who need this clarification are Rodney, TJ, Cairo, Gina, and Ferdinand. They all need to need each other.

Reckoning Fact and Fiction

Writing *Horse Latitudes* has been both cathartic and frustrating. I learned that writing from one's own experience is easy, but making it into a clear, concise story (whether all fact or partly fiction) is more difficult than a purely fictional account. It is hard to rearrange true events in an order they did not happen; the brain is stuck in its truth. At some point, one has to completely leave the fact behind and look at the story elements merely as a puzzle that needs to be solved.

Because Cairo is based upon myself, it was very hard to be objective with her character. The same goes for most of the characters in the screenplay as I based them all on real individuals. Putting life into them is easy if they are real people, but once they are put in a fictional world they have to have legs of their own with internal motivations that I create for them in order to be effective characters.

In the second draft TJ changed drastically. In the first draft he was much more maniacal and unrealistic, where in the second draft I tried to

give him motivations in addition to a hunger for power (even if this was based in reality). I tried to dig deeper into his character to discover why he might be doing what it does, while still portraying the same “outside” view to Cairo and her fellow characters.

Reckoning the factual events with the fictional account will take more revisions to solve. Even so, the journey to recreate this time in my life is worth a complete breakdown of the events and the people who were involved.

Chapter Five: In Conclusion

The title *Horse Latitudes* comes from the old story of sailors, caught in too calm of waters, who throw their horses overboard in a desperate attempt to lose excess weight from the ship. The logic behind this being that a lighter ship will ride higher in the water, catching more of the faint wind. The sailors were afraid. They were afraid of dying from starvation in the middle of the ocean.

When I heard about this old story it immediately connected with my protagonist's plight. Cairo is stuck in a rut at work, home, and in love. The one thing that can really save her is her personality and beliefs. However, instead of being patient or finding a different way out of her predicament, she decides to change her entire person in order to reach a goal she won't be able to enjoy. From a girl who is a true romantic, she becomes a bloodthirsty competitor for the dream job that is mostly dream.

The sailors who threw their only food source into the ocean, who created the *Horse Latitudes*, had to put their faith into the trade winds that moved them; Cairo needed to put faith in herself, and not be swept up by shortcuts to happiness.

Writing this script taught me that looking at the misfortunes in your life and expressing them in an artistic form can be a healing tool. Although the script is meant to be (for the most part) a comedy, I hope

that it can also enlighten the reader to my personal struggles in coming to terms with these serious events. There are many people in the world who find their lives turned upside down, and whether it is a loved one dying, a natural disaster destroying their home, or being laid off after years of loyal service, the realization that we are not invincible to the trade winds that push us is a sobering event.

However, I believe that the winds always pick up.

Appendix A: Thematic Brainstorming

Horse latitudes, doldrums, at some point you have to put over your horses overboard, at some point you have to get rid of your overly romantic ideals

You can't let being sick stand in the way of what you want

Life is good but still has its complaints, with love

Office environment, white walls eyes shifting, big brother with the IM

Gets sick and sent to the hospital, They don't know what is wrong but send her home anyway, anything to get away from the icy sterilization

Masturbation in the MRI room

Headache, athena coming out of her head, piercing her fingers into her brain, collapses

Low point act 2: doesn't know if she is just desperate to find a guy before her health insurance dumps her and she is diagnosed, because who wants to date a walking corpse

Organized by new disease on Google (bad bad "blindness")

Rows and rows of medication

Arms and legs fall asleep

Nerve test

Spread romance through the world, get the old romantics back

Old shaking nurse's hand

She's a spammer, Makes worry dolls, takes away people's worries,
ignores her own

Characters:

Mom (loves online shopping, filling up her basket everything, never
buying)

Best friend (loves buying and then returning things)

Bad boyfriend, frat daddy In between boyfriend?

Good boy friend, a fellow romantic/but not at first

Appendix B: Step-Outline (First Draft)

“Horse Latitudes or the Calms of Cancer or Death By”

Logline: Cairo, an old-fashion dreamer and idealist, struggles to find understand what is true happiness in the modern world, when stuck by a mysterious illness that tests her faith of not only her future, but in herself.

Cast of Characters—

Cairo: A romantic in a hedonist’s world. Jaded by her disappointment in her job, the men in her life...

Muriel: Best friend of Cairo, obsessed with documenting everything that happens in her life, as well as everyone else’s. She gives rather depressing synopsis of everyone she meets, very judgmental, lonely.

Ferdinand: Main love interest. An everyday guy on the surface, (“frat daddy friends” who love *Entourage*, beer pong, and fucking when they can get it), but when gotten to know better, an old fashion romantic who knows what he wants. Love. Blends into the college crowd on sight, dirty blonde, tight t-shirts...etc

Mom: Obsessed with online shopping as her husband travels on increasingly long business trips. Earnest teaching, the kind kids make fun of.

Ernie: The perfect boyfriend, tall, dark, buff, kind, going to be rich, kind of sweet...and yet? No chemistry. Everyone always asks “Is he...?” Gay. We don’t know and neither does he.

TJ: Underlying to The Bosses, Cairo’s small Asian boss with evil intension, pretentious slutbag (minus sex), write the very popular, “The Art of Great Things: Tips and Habits for Effective Living.” High voice.

Dr. Raymond: Loves sick people. Loves medical jargon. Loves that paycheck from Pharmaceutical Inc. Thrives environments high in death particles. Bitch.

The Bosses: Douches to the nth degree. But other than that, nice guys.

ACT I

Sequence One – “Straighten Up and Fly Right”

1. INT. MRI ROOM – NIGHT (we see the future to come)

CAIRO’S eye peak into the goggle mirrors over her eye, allowing her to see outside the deafening machine. A man, ERNIE, sits in a chair ten feet away, nose buried in a glossy Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition. He looks up at her, though can’t see her eyes watching him. He looks behind him through the tinted mirror. Moves his chair away. Reaches in his pants. Cairo’s eyes widen, lifting her head in horror to verify her

suspicions. His hand tucked down in his pants... “Honey, you need to stop moving around— ” The intercom buzzes. “But—” “I said ‘SIT STILL.’”
V.O. into...

2. INT. THE SPAM MAN OFFICE – ONE MONTH EARLIER (Not quite leading that perfect life)

Cairo sits at a dusty computer in an ultra clean office. Her screen is a mostly blank document entitled, “Ladies Love Big Cock.” Watching the clock for 5pm. TJ confronts her on her blank document, chides her about her *job review* on Friday, we see that this is very important to her, but she obvious hates TJ. When he leaves, she minimizes the windows and pulls up Ebay, she’s bidding on a packet of old letters from the 40s. Tres romantique. FERDINAND catches her eye from across the room, sends her an IM that beeps: busy tonight?

3. INT. SEMI-CLASSY RESTURANT – NIGHT (modern dating is hard for Cairo)

NICE GUY. Really nice date. They are having a hard time figuring out what to talk to. She says she has a headache. He texts her a message while sitting at the table. “grl im gunna split ur pussy wide open and put you in a coma” He smiles broad. She asks for the check.

4. INT. CAIRO’S HOUSE – LATER THAT NIGHT (Girl and future talk)

Cairo arrives home in a daze. We meet MURIEL, who has been carefully documenting their last week of going to the zoo and seeing the deaf kid

tour. Muriel comforts Cairo about dating and that they don't need anyone but each other. Cairo tell her about the job she wants/writing photography? She seems to want this more than anything.

5. EXT. MOM'S HOUSE – MORNING (Cairo thinks her mom is depressed with her father traveling)

Mom tells her all the things she has put in her cart online...Cairo tells her that's great, how's dad doing? Mom has set up a date with a guy. Mom thinks Cairo needs a responsible man, secure future so she won't be alone in her old age. Should see a doctor if her head keep bugging her.

6. INT. THE SPAM MAN – WATER COOLER – FRIDAY (Ferdinand gets her to agree to come on a date, we get to see good chemistry)

Cairo fills her cup at the Culligan machine. Ferdinand corners her and asks her plans for the weekend, he invites her to an 80s revival concert. She makes up a really lame excuse, and he calls her out on it. Then he says that he is going to invite the whole office. TJ calls her into his office as she hurriedly agrees to go.

7. INT. THE SPAM MAN – TJ'S OFFICE (Cairo's Review)

TJ asks her to explain why she wants to transfer to a different office (she wants to write something of quality), but he tells her that if she wants to succeed she is going to have to get her head out of the clouds and stop slacking off, until then, no reference for the job upstairs. He suggests she read his blog.

Sequence Two – Times are A Changin’

8. INT. CAIRO’S HOUSE – WEEKEND (Plan of action)

Muriel asks about Ferdinand, but Cairo wants to talk about Ernie, the date her mom set up. He sounds perfect. Not fratty. Cairo and Muriel do crafts (hurting Cairo’s eyes) while planning how to make a better impression on her boss...and think of ways to bestow favors upon him.

9. INT. CAIRO’S HOUSE – BEDROOM – LATE (make-over)

Cairo tries on a hundred different outfits in front of the mirror, including business formal, causal, catholic school girl, hipster fashionista, lesbian butch, and finally complete nerd, with a frack Star Wars T-shirt and calculator watch. She shakes her head and reads the newest blog post of TJ’s: “1,000 Readers and a Personal Confession: **‘You – all of you – are wonderful. I know it’s cheesy, but I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.’**” She throws up in her trashcan.

10. EXT. 80s BAR – NIGHT

Cairo stands outside waiting for everyone. She’s on time, god damn it. Then she see Ferdinand...alone...dressed in 80s garb. “No one else wanted to come...” Annoyed at first, Cairo begrudgingly goes in with him. But then he asks her to dance, and they have a great time, she feel like herself. But then she gets a phone call, from Ernie. She lies to go meet him.

11. CLASSY COFFEE SHOP – LATER

Ernie is a classic catch, very polite, and a flatterer. But he's got a beeper. Works for a hospital, so he's always on call. When they get up to go, Cairo feels light headed. He sets her up with a doctor, she agrees to go only to show interest.

12. THE SPAM MAN – MORNING

TJ patrols the aisles ever watchful. Cairo tries to be pleasant and work as hard as she can, but her head is hurting. Ferdinand IMs her and they chat about their evening, and he asks her out again, but she tells him she already has one.

13. DOCTOR'S OFFICE – AFTERNOON

Goes to see DR. RAYMOND. Very calmly she examines her, chits the chat, and asks about her history...etc. She asks her to change into a gown for more testing. At the end of the appointment she sits Cairo down and tells her she wishes she had better news to give. Shocked, she is told she needs to be admitted into the hospital immediately for observation. If not, she could go blind.

ACT II

14. HOSPITAL – NIGHT

An old nurse approaches. It takes her three times to put in the IV. Shaky hands.

15. HOSPITAL – NIGHT

Cairo stalks the empty halls pulling her IV stand creakily through the halls. One wheel is broken and swizzles awkwardly. A nurse tells her that a guy called, said he was your boyfriend and would be up soon. Not Ferdinand, but Ernie. She asks how he found out about it, he says he found out through work.

16. HOSPITAL – MORNING

The evil doctor returns, not alone but with a pack of students in tow. She tells Cairo that she needs to get a spinal tap, and luckily her students need to see one. As they walk out, Ferdinand sheepishly walks in, a couple bouquets in his arm and a stuffed envelop of letters from work (TJ's reads, wow didn't realize you were gone). When asked how she's feeling, she says that she feels worse than when she came in, and that now a spinal tap is on its way. Ferdinand suggests that they break out...now.

17. HOSPITAL – BROAD DAYLIGHT

They escape!

18. FERDINAND'S HOUSE – LATER

They celebrate their successful exploits with steamy Mac and cheese. Ferdinand's place is like most college pads...disgusting, with a layer of tiny black hair on most things (shoes and socks encouraged). After the

high of their adventure, things settle, and start to feel awkward.

Ferdinand asks if he can kiss her, but she leaves, angry at him.

19. MOM'S HOUSE

Her mother yells at her. Cairo felt better with Ferdinand, but now she realizes the real consequences and that her lack of responsibility could drastically change her future/health/chance for her dream job.

20. INT. THE SPAM MAN - LATER

With very respectable glasses, Cairo returns back to work, new outfit, professional smile (not too big, and very white). Ferdinand IMs her. She X's the window. TJ nods his snake-like head at his triumph over her. She scrolls down her task list through penis enlargement, upper arm liposuction, miracle diet pills, facial reconstructions, and Dave's advice column...she digs in.

21. INT. ERNIE'S APARTMENT – EVENING

Ernie drones on about work at the hospital, and Cairo tries really hard to stay interested. She tries to impress him with what she did today...there is a disconnect.

22. INT. CAIRO'S HOUSE

Cairo gets mad at Muriel for not being practical about her life. They get into a big fight.

23. FANCY RESTURANT – NIGHT

Things get serious with Ernie, and for some reason, that feels like a step forward. Gets locked in with a secure future.

24. The man from scene 24 appears and Ferdinand tries to change himself for Cairo. She doesn't like him in his new personality.

25. MRI Room replay.

26. Some other stuff happens.

27. EXT. STREETS – EVENING

Muriel confronts Cairo about what is important. Then locks her out.

Rain pours. Cairo stands outside her house, alone, her work clothes wrinkled and hanging heavily in the water. She hold her pounding head, the headache viable through the disturbed puddles around her. Her head splits open, as if Zeus...fades to WHITE.

ACT III

28. INT. HOSPITAL

Cairo's eyes open wide. Her mom, Ernie, and Muriel sit asleep in the white washed room. She's disappointed. No Ferdinand. She feels her head, the pain is gone. She slips out her IV, and tip toes out the room.

29. EXT. TOWN

With her gown flapping dangerously in the wind, she feels free. She strips off the gown and runs through the town, a lady Godiva without her horse.

30. EXT. FERDINAND'S HOUSE

She knocks on the door, out of breath and dancing. He opens the door, looks ill. She admits that all she ever wanted was to be with someone who made her feel alive, not held down with fake conversations and jobs she hates. She asks him to go on another adventure with her. He says, he will.

31. EXT. MOM'S HOUSE – WEEKS LATER

Cairo's dad is finally home, and her mom is happy. She realizes that they just missed each other, not having an affair. Muriel adopts a puppy. Ferdinand stands posed like a Greek God in the garden (Our fantasies are stronger than modern medicine), Cairo yells at him to stop moving as she takes his picture. She find out she is going to start her own business, rather than sell her soul to the man. There is no wedding, but we know everyone we like is going to live happily ever after.

Appendix C: Step-Outline (Revision)

Act I

Sequence 1 – An objectified World

1. Opening Scene/Fantasy: We tour the Devine Office Empire Building. It's a hierarchy the top being the glorious Art department, filled with inspiring works, good deeds, the promise of fame and fortune, all in the footsteps of founder Ed Devine (an internationally acclaimed artist), and this is the place our Protagonist, **CAIRO PAINE** hopes against all hope to be a part of. She explains her desires for fame so that no one will ever forget her. Unfortunately for her she works in the basement office, dedicated to...
2. ...Internet Spam. Cairo slaves over an article entitled “Ladies Love Big Cock Among the Tulips.” She works on a diorama depicting a very romanticized field of tulips with a hulking pink dildo flopping sadly. We meet **TJ**, her hellish imp of a boss whose pet blog project is called “The Art of Great things: Tips for Effective Living” (A kind of self-help site for sad, middle aged women, for example: What to Do When You’re Lost – 6 Ways to Conquer Uncertainty). TJ tells her she needs to reinvent her ad with more tits, try baseball metaphors. He reminds her about her job review and

teases her with doubt about the outcome. To further compound this fear, we meet **THE BOSS**, who calls her into...

3. ...His office. A bachelor pad for the 30-something non-bachelor, with too much money, filled with framed pictures of sports heroes/biggest dicks of all time/Reagan/women definitely not mated to his gold wedding band. Cairo thinks that she is in trouble, but instead he gives her a glowing report of how great of an employee she is, a great writer that he *never* wants to lose her. He gets up and asks her how she feels, sitting on the arm of her chair, wrapping a lazy arm around her, his hand coming dangerously close to—no wait, on her breast. She lies, I love it here...
4. I hate it there more than anything, she complains to her best friend and roommate **MURIEL RAINE**. We learn that Muriel is a shut-in/cybercochondriac, and that Cairo is trying convince her to go to this conference *for* hypochondriacs put on by the pharmaceutical companies and cleaning product giants—free samples galore. We learn a little bit about their history and how their childhood dreams and their new found realities haven't met up yet. Muriel helps Cairo research every baseball metaphor known to man. *Cairo settles on incorporating: Tight and sweating like a second baseman's glove.* They are endearingly shocked at

America's Greatest Pastime being used in such unromantic, vulgar ways. Cairo's mom calls with a reminder about the dance class she set up for her, so she can get out and meet men, one man in particular, Cairo cringes...

5. ...into a hip-hop, Scooby-do move. Cairo is terrible, and looking at herself in the long dance hall mirror makes it ten times more awkward. Her DANCE TEACHER shakes her head, annoyed, and decides to make an example of Cairo in front of the CLASS an overly white, trashy bunch of 20-somethings, dressed in designer sweats and so much plastic surgery they seem to be top-heavy bobble heads. The dance teacher puts her in a rather reveal position (buns tight, jelly worm up from the hips, and an open mouth for extra "sex-tastic points"). The mostly girl class smirks but one boy in the back looks on in anguish, he is **FERDINAND**, desperately in love with Cairo and is unfortunately being pushed on her by Cairo's mother, a self-proclaimed matchmaker. Cairo likes him, but he isn't on her career path to being remembered forever, so she comes for her mother. The classes finished up as embarrassingly as it started, Ferdinand walks her home, trying to seal the deal for a real date, but can't find the guts. Cairo ignores a call from her mom, remarking that she will just want a progress report of her love connection. She dials her dad's number instead.

No answer. Muriel asks why she bothers, Cairo doesn't even know if its his number, they've never spoken. He's forgotten all about her, it seems, unlike...

6. ...TJ who taps his watch as he walks by her desk. Review time.

The office is all a buzz. Cairo gets up and goes to the water cooler to calm her nerve. The gossip mill churns all the girls all pick at their nails and flip their bangs around the coffee maker. The rumor is: A new job opened Upstairs in Art. Cairo can't believe it. Cairo's thoughts spin to her dreams of moving Upstairs, becoming the artist she always wanted to be, fame, her name on every street corner...but TJ brings her back to reality, tapping on the glass window separating them.

7. Cairo sits at the end of a long glass table, TJ at the other end,

flipping through pages on his ipad. He tells her her work is mediocre, over-worked, and romanticized to the point criminal sappiness (They could be sued for that, you know). Then

uncharacteristically he wipes the pad clean. He shuts the blinds.

He sits in the chair next to her and leans in. He tells her about a

rumor he heard, someone Upstairs in Art is being promoted,

leaving that coveted job open and waiting a brilliant replacement.

Cairo's thoughts spin to her dreams of moving Upstairs, becoming

the artist she always wanted to be, fame, her name on every street

corner...TJ snaps her back to reality. “You have no chance at it. The Boss loves you and won’t give you the recommendation. However...” He leans in closer. “I could make it happen.” He proposes that she work for him on an unnamed side project, no questions asked, and if she does a good job, he promises the job will be her. Cairo is one step closer to being in the footsteps of Ed Devine himself. “What’s the job?” : Writing an Erotica-based Blog. (His explanation: He wants to boost his ratings on Google with a back-end blog that will get a lot of hits from his target demographic group). He tells her she needs to have something to show him tomorrow, to make it official.

Catalyst: A job opens up in the Art department and TJ is willing to give Cairo the chance to move up.

Sequence 2 – A Used World

1. Fantasy: Cairo waits outside for the bus. It arrives. She swipes her card, denied. Swipes it again, denied. The bus driver glares at her. She swipes it one last time. The ticket machine, an angry methhead R2D2 smokes, buzzes, and rolls an 8-ball-like triangle that reads “Worse than a Nigerian Prince Scammer.” Cairo shakes her head looking at the bus driver, embarrassed, shaking her head, but the bus driver pushes her fat finger on a large button

that reads JUNK. Cairo closes her eyes and just keeps saying, “No, I’m not spam...” The Bus driver says “Delete, Delete, Delete...” “I’m not spam, I’m not spam...”

2. ...The bus driver stares back at her in the mirror. “Your stop, honey.” Cairo opens her eyes, looking around. A homeless man sitting across from her smiles, he picks up something from the floor and holds it out to her. It's TJ's envelope. She gives the man five bucks. He looks disappointed, “Skank.”. She snatches the envelope...
3. ...And stares at its unopened form on the kitchen table. Muriel comes from down the stairs, her hands tapped in homemade plastic gloves, 3inches thick, dripping with sanitizer, and a face mask modified with a hand drawn mouth across it. Muriel asks about the envelope, but they are interrupted by **GINA**, Cairo's mother waltz's in the door (New Aged, Nouveau Rich, and a practicing Medium). Gina holds up a gift, a hippie bag dress and taps her mood watch. She is here to help Cairo get ready for a date she divined several weeks ago. We learn that Cairo's mom has been obsessed with setting Cairo up for life with the man of her dreams (rather than face her own grim reality of a divorcee). Cairo, frustrated by her present predicament at work lashes out at her mom's silly matchmaking ways, telling her that the way to make

- your mark on the world is not to fall in love, but to *do* something on your life, getting close to people just slows you down (very pointedly at her mom). Cairo goes on the date to smooth relations with Gina.
4. The date is great. Cairo and JIMMY connect on an intellectual and spiritual level (despite the heavy incense of the hippie coffee shop “On Sacred Grounds”). Then her phone buzzes, she excuses herself as she reaches her cell phone. The caller text message is from”Jimmy”. She looks across the table at his innocent face. She opens her phone and reads: “Imma gunna split ur pussy and put it in a comma.” Check please.
 5. Cairo gets home late at night and sits in front of her computer. The screen is blank. Looking around, she types in “porn.” A variety of delectable websites pop up including: “Pussy's vs. Beaver's”: We poach 'em, you shoot 'em, they come Meatbox ready”; “The Gaping Hole: Deposit Your Wonderstick in the Spank Bank”; and “Virgin Slutbags United.” Muriel walks in the room and screams as Cairo's computer explodes...
 6. ...but not really, because Cairo wakes up and realizes it was a dream. She rushes to work, printing off her half a page screen.
 7. Cairo arrives at work and runs into Ferdinand, the guy from the dance class. She immediately gets a stalker vibe from him, which

she gossips about with the office secretary on her way into the office. However, before she gives him the slip, he informs her of two things: 1) He now works in her office, maintenance, and 2) There is an 80s night get together with everyone that he wanted to invited her to go to.

8. Cairo passes off her article to TJ in an Office Space reenactment, secret agent style. She sits back down at her desk, pulls up her to-do list, when she gets an annoyingly large IM message from...TJ. "GET IN HERE." She looks around and sees that he has migrated to his office and glares at her.
9. She sits before him as he looks over the short paragraph she has written. He asks her if she put anytime in this, if she really wants the promotion and if...she's ever actually had sex. She tries to protest, but he reads the paragraph out loud. It amounts to a very vague, purple prose, man trying to hook up with a girl, and then very rushed sex. He gives her one more chance, and directs her to his blog entry entitled: WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW: An ignorant heart is best educated through action. Cairo is turned off by this, but when he tells her her hero Ed Devine is the one to said that, she takes it in, vowing to do better and get what she wants.

First Turning Point: Cairo decides to do whatever it takes to move up.

Act II

Sequence 3 - Porn Reporter, Write what you know, A How To

- Cairo returns home and sits down with Muriel to make her plan of attack. She will use the men her mother sets her up with to get material for her situational erotica tales. But Muriel is a little uncomfortable with the situation and informs Cairo of all the diseases one could pick up from such...relations with so many people. She further tries to distract her with the promise of working on her application to the hypochondriacs conference. However, Cairo ignores her and begins making a list of classic situations she would turn into her stories.
- Vignettes of Classic Porno Scenes/FilmNoir style, but with the twists of this world.
- TJ loves her work and encourages her to do more and more.
- Cairo uses Ferdinand in one of her exploits, but it turns into a fun outing, almost like a real date. When Cairo starts feeling a spark she shies away from the situation and doesn't call him or talk to him the next day, he is really hurt. Ferdinand starts stalks Cairo.
- Cairo starts feeling ill, Muriel sings doomsday.
- TJ is loving the blog, and he says that needs more, something more graphic, something that will make his readers feel...bad.

Sequence 4 – Cairo's not herself, but can't see it

- Cairo rides the bus home and collapses. She wakes up with her mom and Ferdinand by her side (he found her through his constant watch on her and called her mom). **DOCTOR RAYMOND** (a short lady doctor with an agenda for her own advancement and edification in front of her students) says that this could be a serious condition that they need to watch or it could be an isolated event. They just don't know. **HOWEVER**, she mentions that Cairo should take time off of work to rest.
- Cairo gets angry as her mother and Ferdinand both chime in this advice. This will only make her try harder though as she wants to prove them all wrong. She looks to her hero, Ed Devine for guidance.
- Muriel avoids her, in case it is some terrible disease. Muriel is on the computer 24 researching illnesses. Gina calls her constantly to talk not set up (but Cairo ignores her calls). But Ferdinand listens to her vent, Cairo feels the old connection again, but blows him off again.
- Work seems slower than usual, especially as Cairo stays later and later, writing until all hours at the office.

- She works on a scene that closely resembles an encounter with Ferdinand earlier, when she sees a light in the Boss's office. She decides to go in and explore. There is a document downloading onto his computer. She opens it and sees that it is *her* blog entries, but copy and pasted with new names (the Boss and all the female employees of the office).

Mid-Point: Cairo finds out that TJ is using her material to blackmail the Boss, which will allow him to move up to the Lord of Spam.

Sequence 5 – Objectify Myself

- Cairo calls her dad, but he doesn't answer. Muriel and Cairo have a following out about Cairo's new way of life. Cairo tells Muriel that she has always held her back, and that she's be forgotten because she never really lived. Muriel refuses to speak to her.
- She “runs into” Ferdinand who confronts her about what that matter is, however, he sees that what she really needs is a night is distractions. This is romance at its best, quirky and full of laughs. As the night wears on she starts in on some bad habits she's been acquiring and gets him to take her to bed. He is in heaven, and she is in guilt city as she sneaks out the next morning and writes up her exploits with him.

- Everyone has started to notice that Cairo is dressing differently, more slutty trying to get the attention of every man in the office. But she's paler too and has developed a nasty cough wherever she goes.
- The Boss calls her into his office and asks why her work has been slacking off. Apparently they lost the Nair For Dogs client due to spotty content on her part. However, he says that he appreciates her new dressing attire and has decided to buy her a present for losing their most annoying client. A new office chair (this chair has the special ability of putting the sitter far back in the chair allowing a viewer to look up the sitter's skirt).
- When Cairo hands in her latest article to TJ, she confronts him about his plans. He threatens her with exposing the plot under her name (he says that no one could trace anything back to him). She must keep working for him if she wants to keep her job safe.
- TJ takes matters into his own hands and decides to give Ferdinand (who he guesses is the man in Cairo's story) the article, and tell him how Cairo has been using him all along. Ferdinand doesn't believe it.
- He decides to approach Cairo about it. She tells him that he should have stopped stalking her and being creepy around her if he didn't want to get hurt. Ferdinand gives her a speech about

how wanting to be close to someone is not a creepy thing, it doesn't mean the person is pathetic, it just means that they want to be close. That is what life is about, being close to others and making your mark on their lives. It is brave to try, so stop being a coward.

- Cairo realizes that he is in love with her, but she can't handle it.

Sequence 6 – Cure discovered/Realization

- She storms out of the office and goes looking for trouble. She goes to a divey bar and hooks up with two men. They are disgusting and Cairo has visions of everyone in her life hating her and watching her destroy her life. She collapses.
- Cairo wakes up in a different world, the hospital. Her body is subjected to every test possible. At first she feels safe, but it is the same as the outside world. She is merely an object, being dissected and used at every turn.
- Dr. Raymond finally comes to the conclusion that she has a very rare disease called Sensudeparatitis, which is a fancy way of saying the you are poisoning yourself with the way of the world. However, the Dr. Raymond thinks that she needs to stay on the meds, run more tests, and stay isolated from the outside world (aka stay in the hospital indefinitely). However, Cairo is getting

sicker and sicker, realizing more and more that she is the only one who can change things.

- Then she gets her first visitor (her mom refuses to come until she agrees to give up her job). It is Muriel, and it is the first time we have ever seen her out of the house. She seems to be doing better, she got herself to the conference and feels freer (we get a flash of the crazy hypochondriacs conference). This is the moment in which Cairo realizes how she wished she could have been there, how lonely she has been and will continue to be if she doesn't mend her bridges, and to break the camel's back Muriel brings Cairo a stack of cards from the office. TJ's reads ("didn't know you were gone, p.s. Going through with the operation today"), but none from Ferdinand. Her disappointment makes her understand how much she cares for him. Cairo decides that she must do the right thing and turn TJ in, whether it gets her fired or not.

Second Turning Point: Cairo must turn in TJ, reject her new ways of the world/get healthy, and try to convince Ferdinand that she is brave enough to try to be close.

Act III

Sequence 7 – Hospital Escape/Getting to the Spam Man

- Muriel and Cairo must escape from the hospital and pursuing ambulances and cement their friendship.
- Cairo gets to the office and yells in front of a large gathered group to STOP. Ed Devine is there, and he is presenting an award to the Boss for excellence in writing (for *her writing*). In fact he is being promoted. Cairo is dumbfounded as TJ is given the promotion and announces that he just received an offer for an e-book deal for his blog “The Pocket Guide To Greatness.” And Cairo...is then announced to have been given the art job upstairs. However, she is gone.
- Cairo searches through every bathroom and hallway in the building until she finds Ferdinand. She asks if she can stalk him.

Climax: Cairo tries to do the right thing and Ferdinand forgives her

Sequence 8 – Everyone gets what they want

- Cairo no longer works at the Spam Man, but has taken up writing a blog about all the beautiful things in life, capturing her own new life in beautiful pictures.
- We find out that Gina and Cairo's dad never were divorced (she had said that he was in a far off land and Cairo thought it was

made up for her benefit) and that he had simply had no service for years.

- Cairo works on being close with her best friends and maybe moving towards a closer love with Ferdinand.

Appendix D: Final Revisions Plan

Broad Strokes:

Central conflict—

The central conflict needs to be clearer, brought to the forefront, and moved earlier in the script.

This will deal with a crucial problem readers faced, which was justification of “WHY NOW”. This story needs a reason to start when it does, and why we are following these characters at this point in their lives.

The central conflict is: Cairo wants her freedom

This freedom is from the corporate ladder, her roommate, her family, and her own insecurities.

I think this conflict is much more definite and relatable to the audience, who are secretly want to shed their daily toils in pursuit of their own interests. But this does not apply to just their own interests, but also a way to make money to support their families. People want to be treated like people, and they don't mind working as long as their humanity is respected.

To implement this new, simplified theme I will begin by:

- Deconstruct the first act: the first act is slow and gets muddled in all the details of this different world. I need to economize my space by finding a way to introduce the world *as* I introduce the central conflict of the film.
- What kind of film is this? – The question of what genre this movie falls into has been a complicated question in the first two drafts because I wanted to merge two tones together into one. However, this has not yet been successfully done in my story. In the next draft I need to commit. In the interest of my story I think that the story's most successful parts are later in the film when there is more emotional connection. I want to steer more towards a character driven dramedy, that uses the office as more of a setting than a character.
- Cairo and Ferdinand's relationship: The relationship between our two main characters seems unsatisfying to my readers for a couple reasons. The first being that the reason they aren't together is not because of any central flaw in either of them, merely that Cairo makes a problem. Because Cairo is the main source of the problem the only thing she has to do is make the conscious effect of wanting him and getting rid of the initial problem she created. This is unsatisfying for viewers because nothing of great importance was over come.

- Ferdinand's character: The best romantic interests in movies are those that are deeply flawed, just like the best protagonists. I have always had a problem with Ferdinand's character, because he has always been Mr. Perfect in my mind. I want to completely scrap his character and begin anew. Extensive character interviews need to be done to figure out his side of the story. While this is going to be a tall order, I am really looking forward to getting to know him better.

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Vita

Catherine Sarah Jackson was born in Cedar City, Utah. After completing her high school degree at Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy, in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, she was admitted to University of Montana, in Missoula, Montana for her Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, specializing in Archaeology. During all three summers she worked as an archaeologist on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, Moigrad, Romania, and for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe in Northern Idaho. She earned her degree and travelled abroad to Kunming, China to teach English at Kunming University of Science and Technology. In 2008, she returned to the States making a new home in Austin, Texas. She entered the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin. During 2009-2010 school year she was awarded the *Warren E. Skaaren Endowed Presidential Scholarship*.

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