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More Than Friends

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School of Language and Culture

A thesis + exegesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Creative Writing

This thesis consists of a full-length screenplay for a feature film. A summary of the screenplay is as follows:

Liv thinks she is about to get engaged to her long-term boyfriend Will, but instead is dumped. The 'white-picket-fence' life is pulled away from her. After her last attempt to get Will back ends in a brutal rejection, she turns to her best friend Sarah for comfort. In her desperation to be 'wanted,' Liv kisses Sarah. Liv feels guilty for using Sarah, but also romantic feelings for Sarah awake. Sarah, a lesbian who has spent years repressing her feelings for Liv, can no longer hide how she feels. Liv and Sarah get drunk to talk it out and move on. But instead talk themselves into kissing again, and the feelings only deepen. They try and avoid each other and pretend nothing happened, but it doesn't work. Eventually, Sarah convinces Liv to give these feelings a chance. Liv tries to learn about her sexuality, ultimately feeling that bisexual best describes her. This label of bisexuality worries Sarah, and she breaks up with Liv when she realises that she doesn't want to get married, have kids, live in the suburbs, and she doesn't want to be the person who stops Liv from having that. Liv is distraught by the breakup and goes to get answers from Sarah. Liv leaves frustrated because Sarah won't see that she is willing to compromise on kids and marriage. Liv decides the best way to get over Sarah is to get Will back, but it never feels right. A job opportunity in New York comes up, and Liv sees this as a fresh start with Will. When it comes time to leave Liv realises that she isn't ready to give up on Sarah yet, and that Will is not the person she should be with. With Liv leaving Sarah realises the error of her choice and goes after Liv. The two reunite and live happily ever after.

The Thesis is framed by an Exegesis which is a 6000-word essay on the subject of:

- a) the genre of the Thesis
- b) the development process from synopsis to second draft

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"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgement), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the of any other degree of diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Exegesis

In this exegesis, I have two intentions, the first to demonstrate my understanding of the expectations of my audience based on my genre. And second to reflect critically on the creative choices I have made in constructing a dramatic narrative in my script.

Genre Analysis

In this section, I will identify and explore the genre of my script and the audience expectations that go along with that. When considering whether to invest in a project, producers first need to be able to identify who the intended audience of the piece is, and therefore the genre. I will show that I have an understanding of what my intended audience expects, and how I have applied those expectations to my script.

Genre

The genre of my film is Flawed-Female-Driven Romantic Comedy. The three films that are also examples of this genre are “Bridget Jones Diary” (Bevan, Fellner, & Cavendish, 2001), “The Incredible Jessica James” (Clark & Turtletaub, 2017), and “How to Be Single” (Rickard & Fox, 2016).

Make a Case That This Genre is Recognised by the Industry

These films are driven by, marketed around, and celebrated for their female protagonists. By merely looking at the posters for these movies it is clear that they are about the women.

While there are romances and handsome men along the way, you are coming to the cinema or logging into your Netflix, for these women. In fact, “How to Be Single” (Rickard & Fox, 2016) and “The Incredible Jessica James” (Clark & Turtletaub, 2017) did not have any posters featuring male characters. And while “Bridget Jones” (Bevan, Fellner, & Cavendish, 2001) did have a poster with Firth and Grant on it, Zellweger is still placed front and centre.

When we look at the trailers, the story is the same. Of course, the male characters' feature in the trailers, but the excitement and the praise is all about the women. In the "The Incredible Jessica James" (Clark & Turtletaub, 2017) trailer, scattered throughout are quotes from reviews of the film praising Williams and her performance specifically (Netflix, 2017). They also use the quotes to reinforce fun and exciting character traits of Jessica James. They are getting you excited about this woman for who she is and not because of the romance she is about to have. We're intrigued by the two male characters, but they are only presented to us as pieces of Jessica's story. The same goes for the "How to Be Single" (Rickard & Fox, 2016) trailer. This trailer is all about ladies, and fun, and ladies having fun. While we are introduced to the male characters that we will eventually get to know they are just faces in the crowd. Damon Wayans Jr., who provides the big tearjerker moment of the movie, appears in the trailer for a second, maybe two (Warner Bros. UK, 2015).

In looking at how "Bridget Jones's Diary" (Bevan, Fellner, & Cavendish, 2001) was marketed there is a lot more of Firth and Grant in the promotional material than the other two films. This is down to the fact that this film was based on a popular novel, so audiences were already familiar with this iconic triangle. It is also possible that it was to get audiences on side with the casting choice. When it was announced that Zellweger, a thin American woman, had been cast as the beloved chubby-British Bridget Jones, it was "the subject of much media scrutiny (in the U.K., especially)" (THR Staff, 2016). Therefore, it makes sense to put two well-known British actors on the poster with her. But when you read the reviews they are all about Zellweger and Bridget; you have to scroll halfway down the page before you get a single mention of Grant and Firth (Ebert, 2011). Critics and moviegoers come to these movies to see the story of these female characters; the eye candy is just a bonus.

History of the Genre

Romantic comedies have existed in some form or other since what seems like the beginning of time. Whether it's Viola trying to seduce Duke Orsino in the Shakespearean classic "Twelfth Night", or it's Viola trying to seduce Duke Orsino in the Amanda Bynes classic "She's the Man", the story of boy meets girl is one that people love to see and can universally connect with. But throughout history, they have had to update to keep up with their audience's expectations.

The earliest form of romantic comedy in cinema was "comedies of manners" (Yehlen, 2016). These depression era stories about rich men falling in love with poor women were designed to show the common folk that "money doesn't buy everything" (Yehlen, 2016). But in the 1930's we started to ditch the damsel-in-distress stories, and introduce strong female protagonists with the screwball comedy (Yehlen, 2016). It was particularly in Katherine Hepburn's films around this time that we were introduced to a woman "playing a professional role and ... refus[ing] to be subordinate to her male counterpart" (Romantic Comedy Through the Ages (History and Commentary)).

From the 50's to the early 70's it was all about highlighting the differences between men and women. Then in the 70's came the sexual revolution, where women in these films were finally allowed to talk about sex, and they pondered whether "true love" really existed at all (Yehlen, 2016).

In the 90's and early 2000's, we watched Meg Ryan, and Tom Hanks fall in love, a lot. In the late 2000's though, we hit a speed bump, romantic comedies started to become less popular. What used to be a genre for women to get their start before moving onto becoming a serious actress, was now being replaced in function and popularity by young adult (YA) novel adaptations (VanDerWerff, 2017). YA stories covered the romance angle but also "featured

big, genre elements that turned them into blockbusters” (VanDerWerff, 2017). With YA novels moving in on their territory, romantic comedies have been forced to adapt and update. Trying to shake off a lifetime of being “written off as chick flicks, like they don’t mean anything” (Karlin, 2015) and rebrand for the 21st-century woman.

More and more we are ditching romantic comedies littered with perfect white people, perfectly falling in love, and showing real people falling in real love. It makes sense for both the audience and the actresses. If we want these big-name actresses to come back to romantic comedies, we have to give them the roles that will make them feel like they’re doing something new with the genre. There have always been versions of the love story, but none with the kind of messy, real protagonists, who often border on unlikeable, that we see today.

And it isn’t just in film that we see this shift; television romantic comedy has had to make a change as well. People want to see their real lives reflected back to them, but funnier. While we are seeing more and more romantic films centred around flawed and interesting women, television has excelled. A prime example of this is Hannah Horvath and her group of terrible friends, living their exciting lives in Brooklyn. “Girls” (Dunham, 2012) shows its viewers a group of vastly different women who all seem to dislike each other, with boyfriends whom they also seem dislike. We get to see ‘real’ people rather than the perfect fantasy people that we are given time and time again. This new take on the romantic comedy is making audiences excited about the genre again.

Key Signifiers of The Genre in Story and Script

Romantic comedy is one of the most formulaic genres you can find; no one is going into a romantic comedy looking to be surprised. They know what is supposed to happen, and unless you pull it off well, they are not going to like it if you change things. But there are subtle differences that separate each of the subgenres.

The setting is one of the biggest and most important signifiers in a romantic comedy. They inform what kind of girl we are going to follow, what she is looking for, and even the kind of man she'll meet. If you're in the suburbs, she's the devoted stay-at-home wife whose life is about to be turned upside down. If you're in a small country town, she's either out-of-this-world hot but is down with the bros. Or she's a big city girl who needs to be humbled and will fall in poop at some point. But if you're in the city, your life is exciting. You might be working in a failing bookstore, you might have been rejected from seven different writing schools, but you're chasing your dreams in the big city, so you're automatically a winner. The city makes the messiness of their lives more acceptable because it is full of opportunity. You couldn't have a girl whose life is a mess in a small country town because there is only one man for her to fall in love with. Whereas in the city the world is at your fingertips, and even if you don't find love with a man you can always fall in love with the city.

Love triangles are also common in this style of romantic comedy. There is usually a recent ex who is still on the scene, and then the new love interest. In "The Incredible Jessica James" (Netflix, 2017) we are introduced to Jessica through a series of dates, so we know she's looking for someone, but all she talks to these men about is her recent ex. The ex is never the right fit for our protagonist, but they always come back on the scene right as things are starting to heat up with our unexpected love interest. This dilemma of choosing between the devil you know and the devil you don't always turn out the same way, but you have to have that journey nevertheless.

Another important signifier of the flawed-female driven story is the character of the best friend. She is the wild sidekick but can also be counted on to give sage advice. While this is normally one character, in some cases these traits are split between two such as in "How to Be Single" (Rickard & Fox, 2016). Rebel Wilson plays the crazy comedic sidekick, while Leslie Mann is the straight man with the perfect shoulder to cry on. Again, like setting, the

character of the best friend changes slightly depending on the style of romantic comedy. In our flawed-female in the big city story, the best friend seems to be just as much of a mess as our protagonist if not more so. In comparison, our lead seems like the sensible one, but in the end, she doesn't know how to handle herself in the best friends world, so is forced to figure out who she is all on her own. The differences between each subgenre within romantic comedy are subtle but important to abide by.

Expectations of The Genre's Contemporary Audience

If we want to look at what the audience expects from this genre nowadays we don't need to look any further than "The Incredible Jessica James" (Netflix, 2017), "How to Be Single" (Rickard & Fox, 2016), and "Everybody Loves Somebody" (Compeán, Nacif, & Ruiz, 2017).

All three of these films are centred around women who are trying to discover themselves and messing up a lot along the way. But through their schemes and hijinks, they somehow meet the perfect man for them. They are also haunted by an ex who insists on popping up on the scene just when things are starting to work with someone else.

These days we expect our protagonists to be flawed and complex, and we don't mind if there isn't that layer of glamour and mystery that these women used to have to embody. For example, Holly Golightly, from "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (Jurow & Shepherd, 1961), fits perfectly into this category of romantic comedy, but in those days even a woman who did have faults still had to be put together. Her flightiness was just mystery, and this made her more desirable to men. These days we want to see the inner turmoil that Holly Golightly had, but we don't mind seeing all of what this looks like. We don't mind seeing a woman who looks like life has gotten the better of her.

How My Script Fulfils Those Expectations

In my script, I worked hard to fulfil the expectations of the audience. One of the most important parts to get right in a romantic comedy is the reunion at the end. There are specific steps that must happen in this journey, and I didn't want to get it wrong.

The most important step before the reunion is the apology and the explanation. We don't want to watch our characters hashing out bad blood when they're in the middle of getting back together, so you do it before the event. The person who did wrong explains and apologises, hoping their humility will get them a second chance. A person who gets dumped out of the blue goes looking for answers, wondering how they can change to get the person back. This happens so that when they come back together at the end all the worrying about what has happened between them has already happened, and they can just get on with living happily ever after.

The apologies in my movie had to have this intention behind them, but with the added layer of the idea that Liv almost feels like she must have Sarah's permission to be bisexual or gay. Liv wants to know why she got dumped, and what she can do to change it, but the person who would help her dissect these answers is also the person that dumped her. Because the protagonist is grappling with her sexuality, her choice is even more fraught. Sarah is the only LGBT person Liv knows so when she goes to Sarah for the breakup chat; she isn't just going as someone who wants to know what they can do to get the girl back. She's going as a newly minted bisexual who is genuinely concerned that she has somehow broken the LGBT code. Getting this moment right was paramount in fulfilling audience expectations.

How My Choice of Genre Affects Characterisation

The choice of genre hugely affects the situations that these women are put in.

Audiences want to feel as if they are the protagonist and at the same time her best friend. They want to feel like they're spending an hour and a half chatting with their friend about boys and life. Because of this I wanted to bring the audience in close, make them feel like they are in Liv's head. In other styles of romantic comedy, you are simply an outsider looking in on a beautiful love story. But with stories about messy women it's important to be up close so that you feel a part of the mess, therefore you don't have time to judge the mess.

This genre affects what characters want and need by playing with gender roles. Often times plots will be about women who have dreamed of getting married and having children their whole lives. But in growing up, and going on this journey of self-discovery, they learn maybe that's not all life has to offer. Of course, this isn't a storyline that is specific to romantic comedies, but it is one that is heavily used and why I used it in my story.

How My Screenplay Provides the Audience A Fresh Perspective on the Genre

What makes my romantic comedy different than the usual is the LGBT+ component. Liv, our protagonist, throughout the movie explores lesbianism and eventually discovers her bisexuality after falling in love with her lesbian best friend. White heterosexual couples still dominate mainstream romantic comedies. If there are gay people in the movie, they are relegated to the role of sassy best friend, or simply a crude stereotype and the punch line of a joke. While this film does deal with the same ideas and moral quandaries as other romantic comedies, I feel making the simple change from girl meets boy, to girl meets girl, brings it into 2018 and helps it stand out from the crowd.

Having a bisexual character was an important choice for me. There are a lot of discussions recently about the representation of LGBT characters in media, especially around how bisexual characters are portrayed and treated. Bisexual erasure is "a pervasive problem in which the existence ... of bisexuality ... is questioned or denied outright" (GLAAD, n.d.) and

it is a problem that is reflected in film and television. A report released by GLAAD in 2015 showed that while 28% of recurring LGBT characters on TV shows were bisexual (Kornhaber, 2015), the majority of them showed bisexuality as “going hand-in-hand with moral flexibility” (Kornhaber, 2015). These dangerous stereotypes that often surround portrayals of bisexual characters made it essential for me to have a bisexual character who isn’t a manipulative, untrustworthy sexual deviant, but just a regular person who loves boys and girls.

And finally, what sets this film apart is showing a same-sex couple kissing, having sex and being intimate. While there are more LGBT characters on our screens, often we are merely told about their intimacy rather than being showed it. A memorable example of this from 2017 is *Beauty and the Beast* (Hoberman & Spiliotopoulos, 2017). Before the film was released Bill Condon, let slip that there would be an “exclusively gay moment” (Barnes, 2017). What Disney was patting themselves on the back for was having a flamboyant man, and a henchman who doesn’t hate being in a dress, dancing together on screen for approximately two seconds. When you have to tell everyone that something is “exclusively gay” so that we notice a moment that you could blink and miss, it doesn’t count as LGBT inclusion. Not being afraid to show an LGBT couple being intimate, and using the word bisexual, is what gives my film something fresh for fans of the genre.

My Script

In this section, I will reflect on the decisions I have made throughout the creative process and demonstrate my understanding of how to form a dramatic narrative. I will show how I used my knowledge of dramatic techniques to make thoughtful choices in my writing. And I will

reflect on how the intentions behind this piece affected my decision making in terms of story elements.

Synopsis

Liv thinks she is about to get engaged to her long-term boyfriend Will, but instead is dumped. The 'white-picket-fence' life is pulled away from her. After her last attempt to get Will back ends in a brutal rejection, she turns to her best friend Sarah for comfort. In her desperation to be 'wanted,' Liv kisses Sarah. Liv feels guilty for using Sarah, but also romantic feelings for Sarah awake. Sarah, a lesbian who has spent years repressing her feelings for Liv, can no longer hide how she feels. Liv and Sarah get drunk to talk it out and move on. But instead talk themselves into kissing again, and the feelings only deepen. They try and avoid each other and pretend nothing happened, but it doesn't work. Eventually, Sarah convinces Liv to give these feelings a chance. Liv tries to learn about her sexuality, ultimately feeling that bisexual best describes her. This label of bisexuality worries Sarah, and she breaks up with Liv when she realises that she doesn't want to get married, have kids, live in the suburbs, and she doesn't want to be the person who stops Liv from having that. Liv is distraught by the breakup and goes to get answers from Sarah. Liv leaves frustrated because Sarah won't see that she is willing to compromise on kids and marriage. Liv decides the best way to get over Sarah is to get Will back, but it never feels right. A job opportunity in New York comes up, and Liv sees this as a fresh start with Will. When it comes time to leave Liv realises that she isn't ready to give up on Sarah yet, and that Will is not the person she should be with. With Liv leaving Sarah realises the error of her choice and goes after Liv. The two reunite and live happily ever after.

Character

The main line in my script is the Liv and Sarah relationship line. In this line, Liv risks losing her best friend, the person who is her support system, if their relationship doesn't work out. This means that at first Liv is cautious about anything happening. The first kiss makes things awkward, and Liv is reluctant to take it past that. She feels lost when she can't talk to Sarah for a few days; Liv can only imagine how bad it would be if she lost Sarah for good. But as Liv and Sarah's feelings become harder to deny Liv's aim becomes more about putting all her effort into making their relationship work rather than stopping the relationship from happening at all. The time for being cautious is gone, and now Liv must throw herself into this new relationship wholeheartedly for it to succeed. At this point not only does Liv risk losing her best friend but she also risks losing the person that she loves.

The stakes escalate for Liv and Sarah the deeper they get into their relationship. The main point of difference between them is the lives they see themselves living. Liv has always wanted to get married, have children, and move to the suburbs, but Sarah doesn't want those things. As Liv gets more serious about Sarah, she starts letting go of her old life and putting all her eggs in the Sarah basket. The best example of this escalation is when she decides not to get back with Will when he says he is done with the break. Until that point, Will has represented the life that Liv wants. Letting Will go shows that Liv is laying it all on the line for Sarah.

Liv's arc in this movie is not only a change in what she wants out of life but also an exploration of her sexuality. Liv starts as a straight woman whose primary goal in life is to get married, have kids, and live in a beautiful house. This plan is thrown up into the air when Will wants to go on a break. Through her relationship with Sarah, Liv is not only confronted with the idea that she is, in fact, bisexual, but with the thought that finding the person you

love and can honestly be yourself with is perhaps more important than having the perfect wedding and the perfect house. By the end of the story, Liv has not only fully embraced her new sexuality, but she is also willing to give up that ‘perfect life’ if it means being with the person she loves.

The inner-conflict that Liv faces is about who she sees herself as. Her image of herself at the beginning of the story is very much tied up in her relationship with Will. Her identity is ‘Will’s girlfriend.’ Over the course of her story, she has to let go of that image of herself, and everything that image entailed, and see herself as an independent unit. This forces her to consider her whole identity and life. One of the biggest moments in this struggle is over her sexuality. If she isn’t ‘Will’s straight girlfriend’ then what is she? I think the audience will relate to this struggle because it is very common to get wrapped up in how other people perceive you and forget to consider how you want to see yourself. And it can be hard to rediscover who you want to be under the pile of things that other people think you are.

Story Structure

The first key turning point on the Sarah and Liv line is when Will rejects Liv for the second time. When Will tells Liv he wants to go on a break there is still hope that she can get him back. But this second rejection while Liv is trying to seduce Will leaves Liv feeling undesirable. This ultimately leads Liv to Sarah. The person she always goes to comfort, but this time she feels so unwanted that when she feels cared for and loved by Sarah, she acts out of desperation and kisses her. Liv runs off feeling guilty for using her friend to feel better about herself. The audience can see from this moment that Liv has reached rock bottom and is truly desperate for affection. But also that despite her momentary lapse of judgement she respects Sarah and their friendship.

The second key turning point is when Liv and Sarah get drunk and try to talk themselves out of having feelings for each other, but end up making out. Liv still feels guilty for using Sarah and Sarah is working hard not to show that she has feelings for Liv. This is a big moment because this kiss is different. This isn't a sad friend needing validation; this is a kiss between two people who have spent an evening actively trying not to be attracted to one another giving into the attraction. This kiss erases Liv's guilt over using Sarah, replacing it with confusion. This is the first moment where we as an audience see how undeniable the connection between Liv and Sarah is. We also see when Liv stops it from going too far that although this is all very impulsive, Liv isn't reckless with Sarah. She may be wrapped up in lust, but she still wants to protect her friendship.

The third key turning point is when Liv and Sarah realise that trying to pretend that their night of passion didn't happen isn't working, so they decide to give a relationship a try. This moment is crucial because it is the first time that Sarah doesn't relent to Liv. Even when Liv voices the ultimate concern, losing the friendship, Sarah makes her case and convinces Liv that there is no option but to play out the feelings. Everything is on the line now. They may call themselves friends with benefits, but it is clear to the audience that some deeper feelings are happening. This is the moment where Liv realises that the time for caution is over and she has to put herself into this relationship wholeheartedly if it is going to work. And she wants it to work.

The fourth key turning point is when Will tells Liv he wants to get back together and Liv chooses Sarah instead. While we have seen Liv working hard to show her commitment to their relationship this moment is the most significant step in Liv letting go of her old life and embracing her life with Sarah. This is the most confident choice we have seen Liv make. There is no hesitation; she is all in with Sarah. This is important because saying goodbye to

Will also means saying goodbye to the life that Will represents. We are unsure now whether Liv will get the things she wants now, so we understand that this is a big risk for her.

The fifth key turning point is when Sarah breaks up with Liv. Liv put everything on the line to be with Sarah. Sarah wanted Liv for so long that she never took the time to consider what being in a long-term relationship with Liv meant. This is the moment that they reach their crossroads. Although they are different people, then they were at the start of the relationship both of them still see each other as the people they have always been. Sarah doesn't want to be the person that stands in the way of Liv getting her dream life, but Liv isn't sure that that is the life she wants for herself anymore. This turning point leaves Liv shattered. She completely changed her identity and her perspective on life when she fell in love with Sarah, and now she has nothing.

The dramatic question of this story is after falling in love with her best friend; Liv has to decide if she is willing to give up her dream life with Will and pursue something unknown with Sarah. This is established in the scene where Liv and Sarah have their drunken night together. We as the audience can see their connection but also understand that they fundamentally want different things. This question is answered when Liv leaves Will on the plane to New York. Liv has no assurances that Sarah will want to be with her, Sarah has rebuffed her more than once. But Liv is willing to take a chance on true love.

The core conflict in the Liv and Sarah line is that they have different values systems because they live in different worlds. Their conflicts always arise from the fact that Sarah lives in a lesbian world and Liv lived in a straight world. This never mattered before because it was just something they joked about as friends, but when they enter a relationship they become a much more significant part of each other's world, and this tests things. Liv is in a tough place because she doesn't know if she's a lesbian if she's bi if she's straight. She doesn't have a

world for a moment so clings to anything. This rubs Sarah up the wrong way because she is steadfast in her lesbian world. This conflict reaches a breaking point when they raise the question of children and marriage. In Liv's straight world marriage and children are how you grade whether your life is successful, but to Sarah, they aren't important. They both value different things.

The core conflict between Liv and Will is that they are wrong for each other. This isn't something they can both easily accept because on paper they are perfect. But every problem they face is because they are two people who are constantly having to convince themselves that this is what love is. They are never on the same page. This begins with Liv thinking she is about to get engaged when in reality Will doubts their relationship. This escalates again when Will tells Liv that he wants to get back together but she is in love with someone else. Because they don't have any connection, they aren't tuned in to what the other person is feeling so they put their expectations and their hopes onto the other person.

The dilemma that Liv ultimately faces at the end of the story is whether she picks true love or she picks the 'perfect' life. At the end of the movie, Liv has everything she thought she wanted in the palm of her hand but she isn't happy. Being with Sarah and experiencing true love has changed her. In Liv's big choice moment I chose to have it be purely her decision. There is no one confessing their love and begging her to stay; she is making up her mind on her own. So when she decides to throw away the life, she always dreamed of it's a huge risk because she has no guarantee that Sarah will want her back. While the audience does know at this point that Sarah is chasing after Liv, Liv doesn't know this. I wanted Liv to be choosing herself at that moment as much as she is choosing Sarah. Yes, she is getting off that plane to go after Sarah, but she's also choosing not to settle. Which is just important a choice as going after love.

Theme

I wanted to write this story because I don't think there are enough depictions of LGBT relationships in cinema, especially in the romantic comedy genre. Romantic comedies have adapted in their storytelling to have more dynamic and flawed characters, but these characters are still more often the not white and heterosexual. There are hundreds and thousands of romantic comedies about straight people falling in love, but it is so rare that we get to see an LGBT couple fall in love. When people make movies about the LGBT community, they are movies that tell their history, which are essential stories that we need to tell, but that doesn't mean we can't also have fun romantic comedies centred around LGBT relationships. As a fan of romantic comedies, I wanted to honour a genre that I love but also tell a fresh story within that framework.

The other thing that was important to me was that this story had a bisexual character. Many times in this process it was questioned whether Liv needed to be bisexual if it wouldn't be more clear cut if she were a lesbian. But where there aren't many stories about gay people in cinema, there are even less about bisexual people. And even when there are they usually don't explicitly say that they are bisexual, they always dance around the point. The bisexual community is one that is marginalised by both straight people and gay people. I wanted to have a depiction of a bisexual person who isn't bisexual on her way to being lesbian, who isn't bisexual as an excuse to be slutty, she is bisexual because that is who she is despite what other people around her are telling her to be. I aimed to create a positive portrayal of a bisexual woman who makes some mistakes, but because she is human.

The main thing I want the audience to take away from my story is that romantic stories about LGBT people can just as fun and warm and loving and relatable as straight stories. Whenever I think about movies about LGBT people that have broken into the mainstream nine times out

of ten someone dies of AIDS in the end. And while these stories are heartbreakingly beautiful and vital I think it is also important to have depictions of same-sex couples in the same way that we depict straight couples. I believe that elements that contribute to this are letting my main characters do all the same things that straight couples get to do in romantic comedies. I want this movie to feel familiar and warm to audiences because it is the classic story of someone finding true love, but it will feel fresh because we are seeing the story told through two people that we don't get to see together in this genre. Ultimately I want them to be happy that Liv and Sarah end up together.

I think the friendship between Liv, Sarah and Maddie also grounds the story. While this is a story about two women falling in love, it is also a story about female friendship. I want audiences to walk away feeling like they are part of that friend group. It was important to me that the friendship in this film was a group of women who like each other and want each other to succeed. Even when they are doing something that may not be great their motivations are purely out of love. I think the elements that will show this are the moments when our characters continuously take time to consider how their friendships will be affected by their actions. Liv and Sarah are hesitant to get together because of how the fall out could impact the friendship. Maddie is worried about Liv and Sarah being together because she doesn't know where her place in the friendship is anymore. I want the audience to care about these friends.

To me, the key image in my script that embodies the big takeaway is the final image of Liv and Sarah lying in each other's arms on Liv's couch in her empty house. We have seen that couch many times, lot's of big things have happened on this couch, lot's of big things have happened not on this couch, but at the end of the day, all they need to be happy is each other. The couch is where it all began on that drunken night. There was no baggage and no

problems to solve. To me, this final image signifies that no matter what happens to them they can always find their way back to that silent moment of perfect happiness.

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