

Business Lunch at the Russian Tea Room

Christopher Durang

1994

Scene: the Russian Tea Room

Serio-Comic

Melissa: a Hollywood development person, 30s

Here, Hollywood and New York combine with predictable results as Melissa does her best to court a playwright for movie work.

MELISSA: Christopher, all of us at Zerofax feel that we want to return to the old-fashioned kind of movie where the characters have dialogue and thoughts and emotions—you know like *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, we think that was great, you know, Hugh Grant and romance and people buying tickets. That's what it's about, and that's what makes Zerofax a different kind of movie company. We're interested in quality. (...)

Oh, that's right. Well, he wasn't available, so then we called you. My assistant Jane loves your work, she said, why don't you call Christopher, he's a very funny writer. And I thought that was a brilliant idea. (...)

I love theatre writers. I produced "Sleaze-O-Rama" for television last year. Did you see it? It got great numbers. It was about a serial killer who became president but who found his humanity after he got AIDS and died. Everyone loved it. Lanford Wilson wrote the first script, which was beautiful, but we had to throw it out because none of the network people liked it, so we had Babaloo Feldman rewrite every single word. But Lanford understood. He thought we wanted something sensitive, but we didn't. I hope he brings the caviar soon, I have a meeting with Nora Ephron in 15 minutes. Nora Ephron is the kind of quality writer we want to work with. That's why I'm meeting with you as well. (...)

We want Nora to write a move for Meg Ryan where Meg is a widow who misses her husband dreadfully, they had this really

special relationship, and then some man hears her talking on the radio, and he's really moved by what she says and he wants to contact her, but the switch is it's her husband who hears her on the radio, she's not a widow at all, he disappeared at sea just like Julia Roberts did in the movie watcha-ma-call-it, and then he shows up and he kills her. It's sort of like *Sleepless in Seattle* meets "Psycho." What was that Julia Roberts' movie called?