

EGSM – [Episode] – Rom Coms

Content Warnings

- Explicit language
- Sexual references
- Spoilers for: Last Christmas
- Discussions of: misogyny & sexism, classism
- Mentions of: death, pregnancy & abortion, food, eating disorders

MADDY

Yeah. [Singing] I love you baby and if it's quite alright...

HELEN

[singing] I need you baby to...

(laughing)

MADDY

Copyright strike

(laughing)

[Show Theme - Intro]

HELEN

Hello friends and fans and welcome to Enthusigasm. The show where we talk about a few of our favourite things. I am your host, Helen Gould, one of the

Rusty Quill Enthusiasgasm – EGSM021 – Rom Com

best Rusty Quillers and today we're talking about the genre of romcoms. And, I am besotted, enraptured, head over heels to be joined by Karim, Maddy and Morgan. So as always we are going to introduce ourselves alphabetically. So Karim, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

KARIM

Hello my name is Karim Kronfli. I'm he/him. I'm a voice actor, occasional director and I appear as Simon Fairchild in the Magnus Archives and John Belfrage in Inex- In- Inexplicables, if I can get that through my mouth at all.

HELEN

Excellent. And Maddy what are your pronouns and what do you do?

MADDY

Hello my pronouns are she/her. My full name is Maddy Searle and I am the previous lead editor for Stellar Firma, previous director for Inexplicables and director for the upcoming Chapter and Multiverse actual play show.

HELEN

Hooray you can say it in public now because we've announced it! Huzzah!

(cheering)

MADDY

Thank goodness

KARIM

And there was much rejoicing!

HELEN

Yes. And finally, Morgan what are your pronouns and what do you do?

MORGAN

My pronouns are she/her. My full name is Morgan Leigh Davies and I am the co-host of the weekly pop culture podcast Overinvested with Gavia Baker-Whitelaw who has appeared on this show before and I am also a culture staff writer at Bussell

HELEN

Oh I didn't know that! That's super cool.

MORGAN

It's a new development for me -

HELEN

Congratulations on the cool job!

MORGAN

Yeah it's so exciting!

(laughing)

HELEN

Alright, so as you have been forewarned, we are going to start with a big question which is give me your favourite romcom and tell me why it's your fave. I can pick on you or I can go first. Would anyone like to jump in?

MADDY

I have kind of two answers being cheeky. (laughs)

HELEN

Be as cheeky as you like. We adore cheekiness on this podcast

MADDY

So my...my kind of good girl answer is Obvious Child, the Jenny Slate romcom which was a much more recent one and not one that possibly many people have seen where she is a stand-up comedian and she meets a guy and they have sex and obviously they conceive a child and she has to go through an abortion but...

HELEN

Oh

MADDY

...after the abortion she gets together with the guy and he's actually really sweet. So it's a really lovely film and yeah, just very funny and progressive and great. But then my kind of cosy answer which is less progressive is You've Got

Mail because I watched it so much with my mum and my grandmother growing up and we had...like my mum and I quote lines from it all the time at each other. “It’s the e-” “go the mattresses”. All sorts of things like that. “I can’t help myself.” Just all these lines that possibly other people would not find interesting but me and my mum just absolutely love so yeah, that is my cosy favourite.

KARIM

I need to watch You’ve Got Mail again at some point. I think I watched it many, many years ago but I watched another film I’m trying to remember desperately a couple of weeks back and that was the original story that You’ve Got Mail was based on.

MADDY

Oh yeah Shop Around the Corner, yeah.

KARIM

Yeah that was it.

HELEN

Is You’ve Got Mail the one that produced that gif of Tom Hanks rubbing his hands and then pressing send on an email?

MADDY

Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!

HELEN

Yes! I knew it. I knew it.

MADDY

That's just about...that's when he was just about to launch into a fun rant about much he loves the Godfather and Meg Ryan's character is like what is with men and the Godfather?

HELEN

That's quite a good accent you've got there, well done.

MADDY

Thank you. And generally Nora Ephron's milieu of romcoms are high up on my list even though, yeah...they're not very realistic and probably not good to base life advice on but they are very, very fun to watch and are full of incredible dialogue.

MORGAN

Well, You've Got Mail is so interesting because if you think about it for five seconds with any kind of critical thought, you're like this is horrible.

MADDY

Yeah absolutely

MORGAN

Because he puts her out of business and then is like we should just be together anyway and she's like oh I guess so. But he's Tom Hanks, so -

HELEN

Is that how it ends? I'd forgotten the ending

MORGAN

Yeah

HELEN

Does he just take her shop?

MORGAN

Well because he has the big bookstore which of course now doesn't...it's based on Barnes and Noble essentially which opened this huge bookstore on the upper westside of Manhattan and there were a bunch of small bookstores that went out of business. Like, this was a big thing in the 90s he, it's so predatory and yet when you're watching it, you're like this is just really fun because these people are charming.

(laughter)

MADDY

Yeah!

KARIM

One might say that's...is that a fairly common theme for Nora Ephron generally because I watched When Harry Met Sally the other night and it was like, yeah Harry's an arse.

MADDY

Yeah Harry's horrible but the film's great

KARIM

At the beginning...

HELEN

I mean so this is the thing right, I don't tend to like romcoms as a genre but there are specific films that I quite like and the reason that I don't tend to like them as a genre is often because I'm like who the hell is this guy? He's...Why is...just...you know.

MADDY

Yeah absolutely.

HELEN

Oh for audience benefit I made very rude gestures with my hands just then

(laughing)

KARIM

But in similar line to the earlier comment, it's Billy Crystal so he could do no wrong as far as I'm concerned, pretty much

HELEN

So Karim, what's one of your favourites then?

KARIM

Well When Harry Met Sally

HELEN

Yeah

KARIM

Frankie and Johnny. And I suppose the all time classic favourite, possibly one of the funniest films of all time, Some Like it Hot.

MADDY

Oh yeah!

KARIM

Which has got the best final line in any movie, ever, I think.

MADDY

Yes. Joey Brown socking it to us

(laughing)

HELEN

Why do you like those ones?

KARIM

I suppose they were at a formative time of my life. They were popular at the time. I'm a sappy date at the end of the day and I like a nice, fun and, you know...you see the struggles that are happening, you know you want them to get together and they've just got to overcome what's going on between their lives.

HELEN

Yeah

KARIM

I mean Frankie and Johnny has...it's so much more the two tortured souls that had really crap lives until this point and they're just finding their kindred spirits and overcoming their own challenge. It's that struggle to overcome the things that get in the way until they finally get resolution and happiness, I suppose, or whatever of happiness they can hope for or dream for, I suppose is the thing.

HELEN

Yeah. It's that wish fulfilment isn't it

KARIM

Yeah

HELEN

Yeah. What about you Morgan? What's one of your...what are your favourite romcoms?

MORGAN

Well as I mentioned before we started recording I really love the classics from the 30s and 40s of which, the Shop Around the Corner for instance is from that era and I...so I was very keen to be on this episode because I just love those old movies and when I was growing up I remember being in middle school and the big thing at a sleepover was all the little girls would get together and watch a romantic comedy and I would be the one girl who was like "I don't like girly things. Like I don't want to have to watch a romcom" and I think that was partially a function of kind of internalised misogyny but also that the romantic comedies that were coming out when I was in middle school, which was around the early 00s or turn of the century were quite bad. They were just not good movies and were really sexist as you were saying Helen. A lot of these films, especially the ones that have come out in more recent decades are kind of awful and what I really love about these old movies paradoxically is that they are way more progressive and especially in terms of the gender relations you can watch these female characters have a lot of spunk.

KARIM

Bringing Up Baby for example

MORGAN

Yes! Is one of my absolute favourites and in that Catherine Hepburn plays this total lunatic woman who basically just decides that she has to marry Cary Grant and Cary Grant is like what is happening to me? I don't understand and normally we think of Cary Grant as this really suave guy and in that movie he plays a palaeontologist who doesn't know how to talk to people and just gets, like, taken over by this rich lady who is just like no, I'm going...you're gonna fall in love with me and it's so funny and like dirty without them being able to explicitly talk about sex. So that's one of my favourites. I really love His Girl Friday which is another Cary Grant film which is just...they talk so fast, it's so sharp and like he plays a kind of asshole in that but part of what's charming to me about that movie is that there isn't really any sense of chivalry from him but it's because he takes the love interest really seriously. As she, because they're both newspaper reporters and paradoxically the fact that he doesn't always treat her very well is a sign of respect because they're both professionals. But the one I love the best is probably Holiday which is from 1938 and is by the people who did the Philadelphia Story which is a little bit more famous but Holiday is Grant and Catherine Hepburn and it's just more sentimental and less zany as some of the other screwballs but I really love it. And yeah, I mean, I could go on and on which I'll stop about all the movies from that era but I think there are so many of them and it's a little bit of a lost art to do those, those romances because they actually made movies for women in the 30s which doesn't really happen anymore.

KARIM

It's because women were the primary people going to cinemas back then

(MADDY and MORGAN agree)

HELEN

Oh really?

MORGAN

Yep. Yeah

KARIM

Play to the audience.

HELEN

Oh that's interesting. I had no idea.

MADDY

Yeah I did some...I was the producer on a podcast called Woman versus Hollywood and I learned a whole bunch of interesting things about very early Hollywood and for example in the 20s and stuff women were kind of seen as the arbiters of good taste and the moral purity and so if women liked it, then that was good to go whereas, then when the studios came in and it went much more corporate and Wall Street and big finance, then the very masculine values, that still kind of pervade today came in. So, yeah, I just find the early era of Hollywood very interesting even though I didn't know as much about it until I worked on this podcast.

KARIM

Can I plant a flag in the sand for audio drama?

HELEN

Oh in what way?

KARIM

I love Margaritas and Donuts. It's just so cool.

HELEN

What's it about?

KARIM

It's a romcom, umm by Faith McQuinn did Margaritas and Donuts by Observer Pictures. It's about two people who work in the same building. The guy's a dentist, the woman's a paediatrician and she's damaged from previous relationships. He just thinks she's really nice and likes to go out with them and it's the various; can he convince her that he's actually a nice guy step by step. It's a really...it's so nice to have a nice romcom on audio drama as well because audio drama is so heavily genre based and all this kind of stuff. It's really nice.

MADDY

I really enjoyed...I think it's called Fanmores, The Empire Claps Back as well

KARIM

Oh yes, yeah

MADDY

Yeah, like two very opposed Star Wars fans arguing with each other online and eventually coming to an understanding.

HELEN

I love that. I love the idea...like I'm a big fan of, what do they call it...epis...epist...

MADDY

Epistolary?

HELEN

Yes. Yes. Like stories that are told through letters or diaries or the forms of writing and I really love romances that are told like that.

KARIM

Isn't romcom just an escape from...given the fact the world is a bit rubbish around you wherever you happen to be and you get to go somewhere nice.

HELEN

Yeah

KARIM

It's like with so much high energy stuff and this, that and the other. I love the Marvel movies and all the superhero stuff and I love all that kind of stuff but there's something great about just a nice sit down with a cup of tea and a couple sorting through their differences and falling in love.

HELEN

Yeah. Yeah. Ah (happy sigh)

MORGAN

I mean the early films are really interesting because they simultaneously have this...a lot of them have this fantasy of wealth and this is the genre that comes from the depression right and so a lot of the movies, they'll be in these fabulous New York apartments, which, as someone who lives in a New York apartment it's very amusing to me because there are these are like these palatial abodes and I'm like where is this located? I don't understand

(laughing)

But at the same time, and this is something that I think has kind of been lost more recently, it's a genre that's fundamentally about class.

HELEN

Oh

MORGAN

So obviously this is a period when Hollywood are censoring a lot of material so, virtually all characters in Hollywood movies are white at this time but they're allowed to really probe these class differences between characters and anxieties around money and that's a massive concern for people in America at this period because the depression is going on and so Holiday for instance, one of the movies I mentioned, Cary Grant falls in love with Catherine Hepburn's sister and actually is engaged to be married to her and not Hepburn originally and he's kind of like a young guy who's made money from himself who comes from a totally nothing background and they're from this very elite, upper crust New York family and what his dream is, is to make some money for himself and then quit his job so that he can go experience life and figure out what it all means. And Catherine Hepburn is kind of enchanted by this and the rest of the family is like this is so horrifying, like, how could anyone not want to be in banking forever and so that's just one example. But you have all of these questions about what money means, how the classes are interacting with each other and then the anxieties around that... and how that interacts also with the changing role of women, right because women are entering the workforce in different ways. But it's covered up with the romance. They're fun to watch as you say and I think a lot of the stuff that's come out more recently doesn't have as much of that meat on it. Even though these movies are really fun, they're also saying something that's quite real and interesting and I think that's part of why they were so popular at that time, is that they were speaking to a group of people, women in America, who were really thinking deeply about what is our place in the world and cinema was...even in a sort of frothy way, was trying to provide some answer to that which I think is what's so fascinating about those films.

HELEN

It's so interesting to think about class in romantic comedies because now I'm thinking about the ones that immediately come to mind and they are all...they do all incorporate something about class in them in some way. Like I'm thinking of Always be my Maybe where one of them is like a really successful celebrity chef and the other one is trying to make it with his band and he's broke all the time and still lives in a small apartment and one of the major tensions in their relationship is can you, sort of, accept me being from where you came from as well or like...and her also being why can't you support me in the big things that I do without thinking that they're snobby or...gosh you're absolutely right. I think there is still a big thread of class through a lot of romcoms because you have to have some kind of tension there.

KARIM

Need I say Love Actually at this point

(laughing)

MORGAN

Well it goes back to Jane Austen right. Elizabeth Darcey or, Elizabeth Bennett has less money than Mr Darcey and this causes all this... these problems. It's an eternal, you know, stress and obviously all the people in those books...or almost all of them are relatively well off but there's still this tension between, like, are you kind of like comfortable versus super wealthy and the differences in that.

MADDY

10,000 a year

(laughing)

KARIM

I believe the classic line, “well in those days nobody was really poor. Well nobody worth mentioning.”

(laughing)

MADDY

And then Jane Austen still inspiring more modern romcoms/teen movies like Clueless as well.

MORGAN

Yes!

MADDY

Which I absolutely adore

MORGAN

Which is one of the best

MADDY

Yeah, so good.

HELEN

That's the one with Paul Rudd?

MADDY

Yeah Paul Rudd looking exactly the same as he does now.

HELEN

Looking exactly the fucking same!

MADDY

It's ridiculous. And it has a great soundtrack as well. It's got Radiohead in it.
It's awesome.

HELEN

Yeah. Ok. I actually...I often get Clueless confused with Legally Blonde and I think...so that's my big confession for the episode. It takes a while for me to sort them out for each other. I did also...I really liked 10 Things I Hate About You

MADDY

Yeah, yeah that was a big one when I was growing up

HELEN

Absolute classic. The scene of Heath Ledger running down the bleachers, running away from campus security singing

MADDY

Yeah. [Singing] I love you baby and if it's quite alright...

HELEN

[singing] I need you baby to...

(laughing)

MADDY

Copyright strike

(laughing)

HELEN

Yeah that was one of my first ones...because not only was it a romcom which I had decided at that age that I did not like, it was also an American teen movie which I still do not really like in general because I just...I can't stand how mean everyone is...

MADDY

Oh yeah I understand that

HELEN

...for large portions of those films and I'm just sitting there like ohhhh. No I don't like that. But I actually liked that and I was like oh ok, maybe I can like these things.

MORGAN

Well my freshman year of high school we read *The Taming of the Shrew* in my English class and my teacher, whom I did not like, tried to tell us it was secretly...or it was really a feminist text and I was like; it's not.

MADDY

Hmm.

MORGAN

I know scholars love to try and argue that because they don't want Shakespeare to have written that piece of misogynist dreg but unfortunately it's very sexist. And so I was not having any of this and I don't think she liked how intensely opinionated I was, but we also watched that movie and I was like 14 so of course I was peak age to be like "I don't like this movie about teenagers, it's very silly and I hate this play". And then I didn't watch it again for like 15 years. And love Heath Ledger. One of my favourite actors and I was like I've got to rewatch this and it's so charming. I don't think it's perfect but I think that era, 90s to early 2000s era of like a lot of teen stuff but I feel like *Legally Blonde* is in a very similar zone of like pop-y, feminist stuff that is very deliberately feminine but also really smart and spunky that Hollywood was doing at that time, I think has aged really well but I was not in a place to appreciate while I was coming up but now I can be like yeah, oh no, that was really fun.

HELEN

Let's just all forgive our teenage selves.

MADDY

Yeah. Oh, I was such a music snob when I was a teenager it was awful.

HELEN

Yeah I had a friend like that but he actually did have extremely good music taste and put me on to a lot of really good people so I also forgive him.

KARIM

I grew up in the 80s. I've got no excuse.

HELEN

Oh my gosh! But you had...Oh! I was about to say Heathers but that's not really a romcom is it?!

(laughing)

KARIM

No

MADDY

Yeah it's a teen movie but it ends quite bleakly

KARIM

It's a goth romcom maybe

(laughing)

HELEN

I have to sa... I fell asleep! I fell asleep. I've only seen it once and I feel asleep in the middle of it and I woke up and everyone was dead and I was like "what happened here?!"

(laughing)

MORGAN

The Heathers musical is fun. I think the film was a bit too bleak for me but adding a bit of peppy music to it kind of spiced it up for me.

KARIM

That's hilarious

HELEN

But yeah. I think a recent favourite of mine is still Always be my Maybe because even...I like so many different romantic tropes but one that I always forget that I like is the friends to lovers thing. I really love the idea of like...what's that really cliched way of putting it where it's like ah, it was in front of your face all along kind of thing. And the uncertainty of that. I love...yeah. And it was also very funny and Keanu Reeves turning up and being like a ridiculous exaggerated parody of...in fact not even a parody of himself because the character Keanu Reeves that Keanu Reeves plays in Always be my Maybe is nothing at all like what I think the real Keanu Reeves is.

MORGAN

Well he's so known for being such a nice person and if you read any interview with him it's so apparent that he is really smart and just likes to hang out with his artist girlfriend and reads book and translation. That's his idea of a good time and so...and his willingness to be in that movie speaks to his complete lack of vanity right. I didn't love that film but I thought all the stuff with him was...like I was crying with laughter. He was so funny.

KARIM

We're going to have to have a list of these things so we can all go back and watch the rest of them afterwards.

MADDY

Yeah I'm making notes of the ones I haven't seen.

KARIM

So Lowri, I hope you're taking notes!

(laughter)

MORGAN

Well I loved Obvious Child which you mentioned Maddy at the beginning. I didn't want to interrupt when you were giving off your list but that's my favourite of recent years. I think that movie is so unbelievably smart and really, really funny and the characters just feel like such recognisable...obviously they're very funny and kind of heightened, but again as someone who lives in New York; I was living in New York at that time, I felt so much like I could completely meet these people. And yet it feels

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not like a... mumblecore-ish, like Indie movie, like it's very much a constructed romcom and pulling off both those things at once is really amazing and it's political without being like annoying.

MADDY

Yeah, absolutely.

MORGAN

Which is also impressive.

MADDY

Just even the scene with her having dinner with her dad, you're just like oh the family dynamics in this just feel so real

HELEN

Out of interest, does anyone...has anyone seen Last Christmas with Emilia Clark and Henry Golding?

MADDY

No

MORGAN

No, I remember it coming out and I read the plot summary but I've not actually seen it

MADDY

Yeah

MORGAN

Cause the plot summary turned me off.

MADDY

I think I was working in the cinema when it came out.

HELEN

Yeah I'm not...I watched it because it was on and I was trying to read a book about Ancient Rome at the time and it seemed like a decent background noise. Umm. Can I spoil the plot for you?

MADDY

Yeah go for it.

MORGAN

I already know so...

HELEN

OK, listeners; I am about to completely spoil Last Christmas for a second, right. So it's got some really interesting stuff in there about, like, depression and some commentary on Brexit and stuff like that. Some interesting little through lines but the overarching thing is Emelia Clark falls in love with someone who turns out to be a ghost and...

(laughing)

Ok so the thing is Emelia Clark's character has had a heart transplant and she gets haunted by the person who gave her the heart and...

I was just gobsmacked!

MADDY

It's like I see dead people in a romantic way.

(laughing)

HELEN

It was...I knew something was off with him from the start because no one else ever interacted with him and she was always just meeting him randomly out in the street and stuff like that and he makes her a better person, kind of thing but that plot twist really just knocked me out and I just needed to tell someone about it.

MADDY

Entirely fair

MORGAN

I just...can you imagine being in a meeting with studio executives and saying I've got a great twist. Everyone will love this. Like, no they won't! What?! People are going to want them to get together and then he's dead. I just...it boggles the mind. I really don't understand.

HELEN

I was really into a b plot romance between the proprietor of an all year round Christmas shop and I think a German guy who also really loves Christmas and they bond over tacky ornaments. That was great. But yeah I just...my mum doesn't really get these things and also was asleep for most of Christmas so I couldn't turn to her and be like "did you just see what I just saw?!" (laughing) Oh. Ok audience we have stopped spoiling Last Christmas. But on that I think we're going to take a little break. Ah I've timed that perfectly.

BREAK

HELEN

And welcome back. So in the break, Karim, you said you wanted to talk about a couple of very specific romcoms.

KARIM

Well the Simon Pegg oeuvre of romcoms I suppose

HELEN

Ok

KARIM

Which have certain fairly standard tropes like the Unsuitable Other Partner and stuff like that but I think Simon Pegg does a great every man for a romcom leading man

for want of a better phrase, rather than we've been talking about Cary Grant who's possibly so swoonable almost anyone would fall in love with him. But yeah so Run Fatboy Run and...Man Up. So...

HELEN

What are those about? I haven't seen either.

KARIM

Run Fatboy Run is Simon plays a character who, at the beginning of the film, is about to get married to his heavily pregnant girlfriend and runs away from the wedding.

HELEN

[Gasps]

KARIM

Oh yes

HELEN

I'm scandalised.

KARIM

Yes. And then a few years later he's a sort of slobby guy, he's trying to get on with life etc. and she's about to get married...she's in a relationship with this high powered American played by Hank Azaria who's an absolute expletive deleted and he tries to win her back in all kinds of ways and Frank is someone who runs a 10k, marathons and all this kind of stuff and so in that kind of classic way you might do, oh I'll do it then. A man who's never run, ever, then decides to run a marathon and

Hank's character and he sort of have various interactions across the race and it all ends up nicely in the end but that's a really nice one with...in the sort of slobby romcom rather than high class...well there's the class differential between Hank's character and him but with the man not being the high status kind of thing in that situation. And Man Up, he goes on the wrong blind date. So there's that trope. That's with Lake Bell, famous for doing lots of voiceovers and stuff like that as well. And they go through all kinds of stuff around London on this wrong date. After a while they realise they're actually on the wrong blind date and hilarity ensues. But they eventually get together with the right people and they realise they're actually the wrong people and they get back together in the end. It's really nice.

HELEN

Ah that sounds fun. Although that's not actually a trope I've come across a lot, the wrong blind date one. Is that something that the other two of you have? Is that a...

MORGAN

No

MADDY

No I don't think so

KARIM

I think it's one of the early appearances of Phoebe Waller-Bridge was in Man Up as well.

MADDY

Interesting.

HELEN

Very cool

KARIM

Those are really cool.

MADDY

And even something like Shaun of the Dead has a lot of romcom elements to it despite the fact that it's chocked full of zombies.

KARIM

It's a hor-romcom

MADDY

Yeah

(laughing)

HELEN

A zomromcom.

(laughing)

I would also put my hat in the ring for Venom being a romcom

(laughing)

KARIM

I'm trying to catch up with my superhero movies and Venom's on my list. I haven't got there yet.

HELEN

It's so silly but I love it very much. Both of them in fact. Especially because the second one is like they break up and then get back together basically. Like they have a fight and Venom storms out and everything and goes on a journey of self-discovery and then realises oh I miss Eddie. They're very silly films but they have such a big place in my heart and I will...I will kill and die on this hill, they are romantic comedies about a man and his alien

MORGAN

The first one is like explicitly structured as such.

HELEN

Isn't it!

MORGAN

Yeah. And the marketing team was marketing it that way after it came out it did so well. So they clearly knew what they had on their hands. I think everyone involved in those movies understood that they were making weird performance art for Tom Hardy. So... like the Marvel people had to pretend or sincerely believe that everything they're doing is really serious and important and I don't think that anyone involved in Venom was under that delusion except perhaps Tom Hardy himself and everyone else was facilitating that for him which you know what, great. That's fine.

KARIM

Sounds like Robin Hood Prince of Thieves. Everyone realised it was a panto except for Kevin Costner

(laughing)

HELEN

I actually think Tom Holland is extremely self-aware and I think he had an absolutely great time. I read somewhere that the lobster scene was not scripted.

MORGAN

Nope

HELEN

So Karim there is a scene where Tom...oh god I nearly called him Tom Holland then...where Tom Hardy just climbs into a tank of lobsters and you know what? Mood.

(laughing)

KARIM

I can see that.

HELEN

He's just having so much fun especially because he voices both Eddie Brock and Venom. So yeah.

I wanted to talk a little bit about popular tropes in romantic comedies. We've already touched on some. So we've got the wrong blind date, we've got friends to lovers, we've got alien parasites to lovers

(laughing)

KARIM

Ghost to lovers

HELEN

Rivals to lovers. What others am I missing? Because I know there's a lot.

MADDY

Ooh in 10 Things I Hate About You and I think possibly some other romcoms is the kind of thing where I'll pay you to date this girl and then they end up falling for the girl

HELEN

The fake dating trope

MADDY

Yeah where it's like oh I'm only dating you because of this but then actually they fall in love during that charade

HELEN

And then they don't know if the other person is still faking or not and they're like oh.

MADDY

You're being paid to date me, urgh, gross, go away. No but...I used to...

KARIM

I was but then I fell in love with you.

HELEN

Or you have the ones where they agree beforehand that they're going to pretend to date each for whatever reason

MADDY

Like Green Card or something.

HELEN

Yeah it's like oh I'm meeting my family and they're going to interrogate me as to whether I've got a partner, can you just come and pretend. That kind of thing and then they start taking them to all kinds of family get together.

KARIM

Green Card is nice. I like Green Card. It starred Gerard Depardieu, I mean whilst he may not be quite the man these days, I loved him in so many movies back in the day.

HELEN

I actually...I did a reading for a book that had fake dating as its premise which was really fun where they were both doing it for their...so the guy was doing it for his career because his bosses wanted him to settle down so they could take him seriously and give him a promotion and...

KARIM

That classic trope yeah

HELEN

...the woman was doing it to get back at her ex. And that was done so well and it was so much fun

MADDY

There's a kind of trope that I'm not sure is really a trope but it's one in a couple of films that I really like which is in While you were Sleeping and My Big Fat Greek Wedding, the protagonist kind of falls in love with the family of the partner at the same time and even though there's issues with both of them for various reasons, I really like that kind of, ah they just need a place in a family kind of thing and it's really sweet.

KARIM

You have to appreciate My Big Fat Greek Wedding was basically somebody filming my wedding.

HELEN

Any more fun tropes that we've come across in romcoms?

MORGAN

I really love the comedy of remarriage which was a big one back in the day, as I keep referencing, although I feel like there have been some more recently, which sometimes you literally will have a divorced couple that then gets back together and sometimes it's more that there's a romance at the beginning and then there's some separation and then they come back. But His Girl Friday obviously is a couple that has been together and then divorced and comes back and he's pursuing her and The Philadelphia Story as well. And Cary Grant's breakout was a film called The Awful Truth which is...they just did this over and over again. Clearly there was something in the water where people were like, really anxious about the state of marriage and women being able to decide they wanted to get divorced but then they get back together with the original husband, but there's a way of humbling, I think, the husband in a lot of those situations. But you wind up with a lot of great scenes with characters who know each other really well so the dialogue can be really good because they're just going so fast at each other because they've gotten past the initial stage where they're getting to know each other because they already know how to insult each other really well because they've known each other for so long.

(laughter)

And I often...in general with sitcoms, I don't like the ones that are nice, I like when they're cynical. So when there's a romance with a kind of edge to it, that appeals to me a lot and if the couple has broken up then there's something going on that's a little more, y'know, barbs. So I really love those films, yeah.

MADDY

And I think...I'm trying to think of the kind of tropes in *It Happened One Night* because we haven't really discussed that one yet, with Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert so he is a newspaper reporter and she is a rich heiress who's kind of run away because she doesn't want to get married and they're just kind of stuck together on this weird road trip where they're just trying to get across America and failing. And yeah, it's kind of one of those ones where they're stuck together for some reason and they have to kinda muddle along and try and work something out and after lots of barbs and insults flung at each other, they eventually get together. Then there's a very innuendo filled bit at the end where they set out this thing about the Walls of Jericho where they put a blanket between their two beds to make sure that they're sleeping in the twin beds and they're not sleeping together and it's all very proper and then at the end it's like the Walls of Jericho fell that night. So it's obviously they slept together.

(laughing)

MORGAN

Well that movie has the class stuff obviously because he's just this working reporter and she's fabulously wealthy and usually it's the man who has the money and then the woman is allowed to marry up by marrying a rich guy. That's more socially acceptable. The Austen heroines are usually poorer than the men if there's a class differential so it's kind of unusual that it's going in the other direction in *It Happened One Night* but I think also, what you were saying...whoever it was, was saying about the paying to like date someone. It's not exactly that, but it's a similar thing of he just wants the story. That's why he's staying with her the whole time. He wants this big story but then he falls in love with her but then she thinks that he's just exploiting her basically and so then they're having to prove that the emotion is real and not just a transactional thing. Which of course also plays into all the class stuff, right, is really interesting and that movie basically invented the genre and was a massive sensation. Won all the Oscars and was this huge hit and was very racy...just before the Hays Code kicked in, that movie is on the border so there's some innuendo that would not have gotten through a year later.

MADDY

Yeah because isn't there a scene where she, to hitch a ride, shows off her shapely leg

MORGAN

Yes!

MADDY

Very, very risqué

MORGAN

Scandalous

(laughing)

HELEN

He should've shown off his shapely legs

MADDY

I think he does actually, does he?

HELEN

Ooh

MORGAN

I think he tries and it doesn't work because he's like you don't know what you're doing. I know how to get through this country. You're just this clueless rich girl and she's like I have some skills, like trust me and her abilities are exploiting her femininity right, which she doesn't know anything about. Yeah

HELEN

I do like that trope of being stuck together sort of by accident or unwillingly. There was...there was a trailer for a film that I was quite interested in where they have a one night stand and then they get like snowed in or something to his apartment or there's some kind of black out or something and she can't leave but she's decided in the morning that it was all a big mistake and thinks he's terrible and they're both like, yeah it was a mistake. And then over the 48 hours or whatever it is, they get to know each other and decide, oh alright, you're ok then. I cannot remember the name of it for the life of me. I never actually saw it so...

(laughing)

MADDY

There's one I mentioned briefly in the family category While you Were Sleeping and I'm wondering if this is a trope that any of you have come across in anything else where Sandra Bullock's character falls in love with this guy...just because he's pretty in her vicinity and then she...when she...he falls into a coma and she pulls him off the train tracks at her job where she works as a ticket officer, and the family assumes that she's his fiancée and so that's...

KARIM

Is that While you were Sleeping?

MADDY

Yeah While you were Sleeping, yeah. And so there is that trope of they've accidentally told a lie and they can't go back on it.

HELEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah

MADDY

But she ends up while they are waiting for the original guy to come out of his coma, she falls in love with his brother instead played by Bill Pullman. So yeah

KARIM

You mean Bill Pullman actually gets the girl?

MADDY

Yeah because in...in...

KARIM

Good grief! That's genre breaking!

MADDY

In Sleepless in Seattle he's awful, he's terrible but in While you were Sleeping he's quite charming and wears those massive 90s bomber jacket type coats. It's hilarious. And yeah, it's...yeah as with many of these 90s romcoms, many problems with it but there are some fun moments in it, and er, yeah.

HELEN

We're starting to come to the end of the episode. I'd be interested to see if any of you have any favourite couples from romcoms, like any people who ended up together and you're like, yeah. Yeah that's good.

MADDY

That's a very good question and I'm immediately stumped. I'll need to have a think

HELEN

I am again trying to think of every single romcom that I can. Would you count As Good As It Gets as a romcom or has no one else seen it?

MADDY

I don't think I've seen it

MORGAN

I've not seen it

KARIM

I think I saw it a long time ago.

HELEN

It's an interesting little film with Jack Nicholson and Helen Hunt and Greg Kinnear

KARIM

Yes. No I definitely did see that one, yes. Yeah, it's a hard edged romcom

HELEN

Oh yeah it's...that's why I don't know if it's actually...it's like more of a dark comedy that happens to have a romance in it. Like it's very sort of hard fought.

KARIM

Yeah I loved that film but yeah it's very hard edged but things to say. Nothing wrong with waving a flag for want of a better phrase.

MORGAN

I'll offer a movie that's not from 1940 which is Notting Hill which was the one that I was obsessed with when I was 18. That was the one romcom that was allowed in my mind to exist. I mean we haven't mentioned Hugh Grant once, I don't think which is...I mean obviously he's in Love Actually but it is pretty crazy that we haven't talked about him because he's such a key part of the 90s and on.

MADDY

The Richard Curtis ouvre

KARIM

I could've spent 45 minutes talking about Richard Curtis movies but it would've got dull.

MORGAN

Yeah. And I just was totally infatuated with him when I was 18 years old. But I think what works so much about Notting Hill is that it's simultaneously this complete wish fulfilment fantasy. Like of course we're all...of course if I met a movie star they'd just fall in love with me and it would be really great but the movie has enough of a like, little bit of a realistic edge to it. It isn't great. She's hounded by the paparazzi and this guy...this normal guy is just like this is very weird and uncomfortable for everyone and...Julia Roberts obviously is incredible and she's playing someone who doesn't feel like just this dream lady. She feels like an actual human when she talks about her eating problems because she's pressured to be skinny all the time and she's had work done to her face and obviously it's all interacting with her star image at the time. And I just find their chemistry so great but also just feels like they're humans even though it's of course this big confection and the supporting characters are so good too, that adds to the feeling that it's actually happening. So I really love that one and I love the two of them in that.

KARIM

Yeah it's beautiful.

MADDY

I think in some ways I'm a bit cynical about the pairings in romantic comedies because I was kind of thinking about all the ones that I have on my list and I'm like most of these are...yeah the guy's probably a bit dodgy, I'm not sure. But in Mr Big Fat Greek Wedding because the courting romance aspect isn't as prominent and it's like they fall in love and then the plot happens

HELEN

Yeah

MADDY

You've kind of got this solid base of a pretty good relationship where he is really willing to go through all these hoops for her Greek family to get to the marriage bit and yeah he's...yeah, it just seems like they're a good partnership and they obviously have difficult moments but he just seems like a decent guy. Just an ordinary, decent guy and so that's my pick for...yeah they seem like they could have a long and happy relationship

KARIM

There's that whole concept and comedy you've got ordinary people in extraordinary situations or extraordinary people in ordinary situations so he's obviously the ordinary in the extraordinary scenario

MADDY

Yeah. Ian Miller.

HELEN

Do you have a favourite couple then Karim?

KARIM

Oh god

(laughing)

I can't pick any one really, I suppose. It's tricky. Ok here's...here's a leftfield one. Hugh Grant's character in Paddington 2, his own love affair with himself, does that count?

(laughing)

HELEN

Yes!

KARIM

Felix

HELEN

Amazing. Amazing.

KARIM

And realising having been such a...the actor of his thing all the way through, his first day of filming was the prison song and dance routine. Which was brilliant.

HELEN

Oh that's very good.

KARIM

And then going from that to watching him and Ben Whishaw in the story about Jeremy Thorpe...it's like why's Felix and Paddington doing that to each other.

MADDY

Very English Scandal, I rewatched that recently because I'm a big Russell T Davies fangirl and I was like yes

HELEN

Yeah. I don't know if I can pick a favourite couple. I think probably Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles in 10 Things I Hate About You just because....I guess for me they're my favourite couple because I had a crush on both of them

MADDY

Very fair, very, very valid

HELEN

And they ended up together and I was like ok, that works too, I guess. I also can't believe we haven't mentioned Bridget Jones now I think about it

MADDY

Yeah

HELEN

Where we have both Hugh Grant and Colin Firth.

MORGAN

Yeah, yeah! I love that movie. That's one of my favourites and that too is just incredibly well written and doing so many interesting things with people who are already famous, right, it's playing into what we already think about these people and how we feel about them in like really clever ways. Obviously the fact that Hugh Grant, we weren't used to him playing horrible people yet so it's just...I think that movie is fantastic.

KARIM

I have remembered who my favourite couple is.

HELEN

Ooh go on

KARIM

Colin Firth's Uncle Jamie and Aurelia from Love Actually because their proposal scene...that's just a gut punching lover one.

HELEN

Lovely. Right. I think we're at the end of the episode now. This has been really nice talking about love and stuff. We should do more of that. Thank you listener for listening along with us. I hope we touched on a couple of your favourites. Sorry again for spoiling Last Christmas.

(laughing)

It's just so wild! But yes. Thanks for listening. Thank you my guests for coming on and talking about romcoms with me. This has been so much fun. But for now it's goodbye from me. I'll see you in the next episode. Would you all like to say goodbye then.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

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[Show Theme – Outro Ends]

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Rusty Quill Enthusiasgasm – EGSM021 – Rom Com

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