



By *Josephine Brouard*

## Your life as a movie

As the directors of our own life stories, it's up to us to influence what unfolds

OVER THE SUMMER, I became hooked on audiobooks. What a gorgeous way to pass the time on a beach or by a pool over the scorching holiday period. My favourite "read" over the summer was Nora Ephron's collection of essays, *I Remember Nothing, And Other Reflections* (Random House, \$24.95). Ephron, who wrote the screenplays for *When Harry Met Sally...*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, *You've Got Mail*, and *Julie & Julia*, is a 69-year-old New Yorker, über-talented, and very funny.

Wise, too.

In her book, she covers a wide range of subjects, from how she forgets people's names to how doctors, reporters and lawyers appear to be getting younger with every passing year. Funny, that! She also talks about growing old – every time the phone rings, she wonders whose funeral she's being invited to next – and about how her life was once defined by divorce. Most divorces are ghastly, she says, and her second one was especially so.

Luckily, Ephron was able to finesse her marital estrangement from Watergate journalist Carl Bernstein into comedy in the 1986 film *Heartburn*, with Meryl Streep playing her on screen. Yet despite her ability to write blockbusting romantic comedies, and despite a third, happier marriage that has endured more than two decades, Ephron admits it took her forever to bury the pain of her infamous bust-up with the father of her two children.

Most telling are the writer's musings on "What I Will Miss When I'm Gone". *Would she miss the creative accolades? I wondered. The luxurious Manhattan lifestyle? The A-list celebrity friends?*

Well, no. Ephron may be a fêted New Yorker and a lauded writer, but what she'll miss, according to her and in no particular order, is: waffles; walks in the park; "dinner at home, just the two of us"; Paris; *Pride and Prejudice*; bacon; "the view out the window"; taking a bath; reading in bed; and pie.

Isn't it astonishing – comforting, even – to realise that, even when you can afford so many luxuries, the things you want *more* of wind up being the very things money can't buy... or are available to all of us for free.

Ephron's writings reminded me of a piece of advice I sometimes offer friends when they're feeling envious of others, or deluding themselves that they're missing out. "Just imagine," I say, "that your life is a movie, and that an actor is playing you." (I usually plump for Susan Sarandon – what about you?) Then I say: "Now, supposing your life is a movie... who do you imagine is watching?"

Typically, my friends pause as they try to imagine what I'm getting at. I then tell them what I'm telling you now: *no-one* is watching your movie. Angelina Jolie could be in the starring role, but no-one would care because no-one, trust me, is queuing

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up to digest the minutiae of your life. They're all too busy being prima donnas in their own!

So, what's the lesson? Simple, really, and powerfully humbling: no matter how famous, rich, deserving or undeserving we may or may not be, our life story is pretty irrelevant to the rest of humankind.

So! If you *are* directing your life story, why not make it a "movie" that's funny, uplifting, and boasts a happy beginning, middle and end? You're the director of your life, so ask yourself this: what's it going to be? Drama, tragedy or horror/thriller?

Me? I'm aiming for something Ephron-esque, where even the tragic takes a humorous turn; all ends well in the arms of a kind, affectionate man; and the list of things I'd miss is lustrous, luscious and long. ●

*Josephine Brouard has a psychology degree and a fascination for human behaviour.*