



HEADSTRONG

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CASS' CORNER



Wouldn't It Be Nice? (sometimes Life just isn't fair . . .)

A favourite film of mine, over the years, is "50 First Dates," a movie featuring performances by Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore, as well as funnyman Rob Schneider. Our beloved country (and funny-) man Dan Aykroyd plays a key role in the movie, as a clinician, too.

It is breathtaking to see some of the shots from the Pacific Ocean's Hawaiian islands captured in the feature, as well as the frozen wonder of the bergs and chilled water, apparently filmed in Alaskan waters. We see walruses and seals that Sandler's character works with, caring for them, too. The sights we see are, truly, refreshing to the eyes and other senses.

You know what? I always enjoy Adam Sandler performances, too, as well as catching sight of a noteworthy Drew Barrymore. Comedic performances from fellow Saturday Night Live alumni Dan Aykroyd and Rob Schneider are a treat to catch, too, and it is entertaining to hear Sandler sing some songs he penned for the film.

Before you see the show, you likely are of the belief that it is one taken from the comedy genre. Yes, I find the film thoroughly entertaining to watch, so I chuckled it off, when I first heard mention of Goldfield Syndrome, which Lucy (Drew Barrymore's character) suffers from, following an unfortunate auto accident, while driving, with her father.

Following said accident, we learn that Lucy Whitmore was hospitalised for several months, having suffered a serious head and brain injury.

Sandler's character, a womanizing marine biologist of sorts, sees Lucy while visiting an island watering hole and is immediately smitten by her beauty, grace and charm.

One day, upon seeing her 'playing with her food,' actually making a construct of sorts, from what appear in the film to be waffles, he approaches her, suggesting an alteration, to improve her creation.

The proverbial sparks fly, and they really hit it off. Surely, they will meet, again, in the same place, at a later time.

They do; unfortunately, when Sandler's character makes similar recommendations to her culinary construction, an upset Lucy asks him if it is proper, wherever he may be from, to interrupt strangers while they are eating, and touch their food?

He cannot believe she does not recall their previous interaction, and he is flabbergasted at this.

The restaurant's owner approaches him, is it confrontationally, or in more of an effort to protect Lucy?

She explains to the incredulous Sandler precisely what happened. We learn of Lucy's protective father, as well as of her steroid-pumped brother, also concerned for her safety and welfare.

As far as Lucy is concerned, entirely unaware of what has happened to her, each day is the same. It is always the same day; her father and she 'are going to get their pineapple,' the football game is at the same point, and everybody in her household knows, already, what the next play will bring. Her father and brother DO THE SAME THING, EACH DAY, never wanting to upset or surprise her.

Each day, they remove the paint from the walls and Lucy is turned loose, painting her own creations on the blank walls. In the background, the audience hears the music she is listening to and dancing along with. It is a Beach Boys' song, "Wouldn't it Be Nice."

While visiting the fictional brain institute, in Hawaii, we learn of Dan Aykroyd's role, as what I would describe as a clinical physician. He explains to the family that Lucy is suffering from "Goldfield Syndrome," and that there is no cure for it, presently. We, as an audience, are left wondering if Goldfield Syndrome is a true ailment, or if it is another fictional or comedic creation, purely for the film.

It turns out that, no, Goldfield Syndrome is not a real ailment, merely a fictional creation, invented for the sake of the film. However, it bears a striking resemblance to an ailment we are familiar with, anterograde amnesia. With this diagnosis, patients have normal recall for events of the same day, but the slate is erased, each night, as the patient sleeps. When they wake, they recall nothing from before the 'right then,' or the current day.

In 2010 (real) researchers, I learned on the Internet, describe a woman apparently suffering from this type of memory loss. Unfortunately, due to lack of definitive investigation, the scientists could only reach the definitive conclusion that the woman 'had been influenced by the film.'

Having accessed research from a Wind Goodfriend, PhD, I was able to read about some of her research. She, unlike I, did not appear to be a big fan of the film; however, she did include further information and research on anterograde amnesia.

It, according to Goodfriend, 'pretty closely matches the situation portrayed in the film.' With anterograde amnesia, typically caused when a person has a sort of brain damage, the damage is most often to the hippocampus region of the brain. This is a portion of the brain that is at least partially responsible for memory storage. Having suffered this damage as the result of a car accident, Barrymore's character has permanent brain damage in the film. People who truly have this condition, essentially ARE "stuck in time." Their brains can encode and store new memories; unfortunately, those memories are made inaccessible to the person. In other words, Goodfriend shared, the person does not 'realize' that the memories exist. Said individual will always believe that it is the day when the amnesia started, just like in the movie.

As I have shared, previously, I thoroughly enjoy the film, regardless of apparent 'scientific inaccuracies.' No, there is no ailment referred to as Goldfield Syndrome, though, as I have shared above, anterograde amnesia pretty well fits the bill on this description. Enjoyable performances are witnessed, a refreshing landscape is presented, and it is what I find to be an uplifting and educational, certainly a thought-provoking story.

In regards to the difficulty Lucy suffers from, as well as to our own difficulties in life, following our respective cases of head trauma, I can only quote another line I heard, in '50 First Dates.'

"Sometimes Life just isn't fair. . ."