



When Fact Met Fiction

A Complicated Romantic Comedy



INTRODUCTION

When Fact Met Fiction is a romantic comedy web series in 8-10 minute episodes.

Set in present day Western North Carolina and fashioned after classic three camera sitcoms, When Fact Met Fiction takes a lighthearted look at a complicated romance in the context of family, friends and the American South.

The unrequited romantic tension between Jim and Pam from the office... The heart-warming banter in *Gilmore Girls*... The southern charm of *Designing Women*... The emphasis of family values as seen in *The Middle* and the crazy antics of an ensemble cast like that of *Taxi*.

Fast paced, witty banter with hard switches in emotional highs and lows sets the tone for this fun, sweet, romantic comedy -- a satisfying journey into the simple complexities of life and love.

THEMES

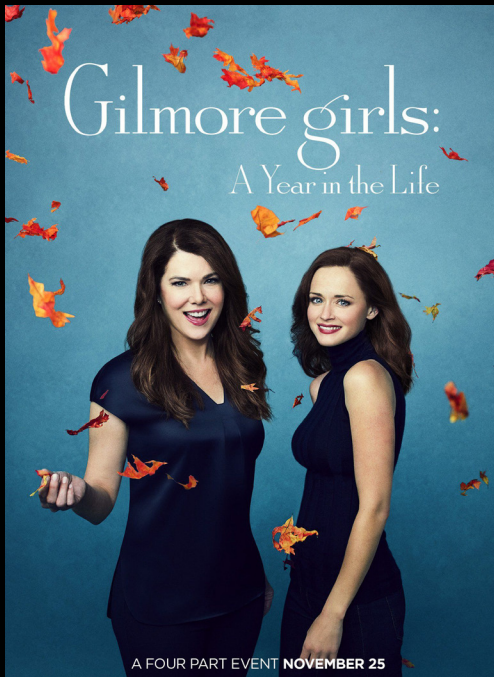
The show will have a very lighthearted and heartwarming feel with strong themes like...

- learning to trust again
- the importance of family and friends
- not running from your fears or past
- not letting your past hurts define you



GILMORE GIRLS: A YEAR IN THE LIFE | NETFLIX

COMPARABLES



The sweet, romance driven storyline of Gilmore Girls.

MEETS



The rambunctious interwoven relationships of The Office.

PRODUCTION BUDGET

No Stars in Cast: \$35,000 per episode

1 Star in Cast: \$50,000 per episode

3 Stars in Cast: \$80,000 per episode

THE WORLD

The setting is a rural fictitious town named Walterville located in the Appalachian Mountains of Western North Carolina where everyone knows everyone's business. Walterville is home for the offices of Southern Sunset, a woman owned lifestyle magazine run by Celeste Frank. Celeste is a widow and a single mother doing her best to juggle life and work.

The offices are located in a renovated house much like in the hit TV sitcom *Designing Women*. The staff work in close proximity to each other encouraging both personal and office led banter.

The aesthetic of the set plays into the the fact that Southern Sunset is a Home and Garden/Lifestyle magazine. The walls are decorated with oversized covers of popular issues and the space is adorned with homestyle furniture and natural accents like flowers and plants creating a home away from home feeling.

The ideals that come with placing importance on Family and friends is always front and center. Due to this feeling of family at the office there is a deep sense of concern and involvement in each others personal lives. If Southern Sunset has a problem then they all feel it and do their part to help -- often times resulting in one person wearing many hats just to get the job done. Such is the experience in many small businesses as they are growing.

In the same way that all of those employed at Southern Sunset feel a sense of duty to do whatever it takes to keep it afloat --they feel a sense of duty to each other personally, especially since most of them are actually family or have known each other for a long time. Those bonds are not easily broken. This is what Olivia is welcomed into. The environment of Southern Sunset creates some sweet heartfelt moments in the midst of drama and comedy.

“The environment of Southern Sunset creates some sweet heartfelt moments in the midst of drama and comedy.”



THE OFFICE | NBC

STORY

We enter the story as Southern Sunset is struggling to stay afloat and grow their readership. The only corner they have on the market is a celebrity chef who is becoming less relevant as she gets older. The magazine is behind on the times, ex. It knows it needs to transition from print to digital. Jon comes on board and shakes up the status quo by bringing the missing ingredient that starts turning things around for Southern Sunset - romance. But change can be hard for people who have grown used to doing things a certain way adding stress to the work environment.

When Olivia begins as editor at the magazine it's obvious to her that there is plenty of history between everyone already at Southern Sunset. This history is eluded to often as veterans of Southern Sunset interact with each other. Although Olivia is on the outside looking in at the beginning, she soon becomes part of the family whether she wants it or not. Celeste becomes like a mother, Mel becomes like an uncle and Sunny becomes like a sister. They all quickly become family.

The primary plot line centers around the romantic journey between Jon Frank and Olivia Smith who are exact opposites. Olivia is a pragmatic technical editor and Jon is a carefree fiction writer with a big secret. The two don't exactly get along when they are thrown together by fate to become co-workers at Southern Sunset. However, close proximity can have an interesting effect on people and despite Olivia's protests, she slowly begins falling for Jon. But both Jon and Olivia harbor secrets. Jon's fame in the literary world could influence Olivia's perception of him and he wants to know she cares for him and not his alter ego, while Olivia's secret causes her to believe Jon would be better off with someone else and despite her feelings she keeps him at arm's length, even getting into a dead end relationship to do so. In the long run, their relationship is summed up as a journey of breaking free from past rejections in order to embrace present acceptance that will ultimately eclipse the hurts from earlier experiences. All this plays out in the context of a quirky ensemble cast that brings a delightful levity to serious topics.

“The two don’t exactly get along
when they are thrown together by
fate to become co-workers...”



HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER | CBS

STRUCTURE

When Fact Met Fiction will be structured like a standard half hour TV show with a beginning, middle and end. This show definitely leans more on the serialistic end of the spectrum with the main storyline being the continually evolving romantic relationship between Jon and Olivia from episode to episode. However, each episode will be propelled by some occurrence or situation in their environment that will often be the catalyst that brings them to significant moments in their relationships. Each episode will also hold a theme or message unto itself, like the importance of family, the complications that arise with poor communication or learning how to give people the benefit of the doubt. Such wholesome themes will set the feel for the show as being positively minded.

Dialogue driven, this show will be served by fast paced, whitty performances by all characters. Each character will also have distinguishable ticks and quirks -- even those who might be defined as playing the “straight part” will have those aspects of their personality that so define their manner of speak and gate. Line deliveries between players will have clear universal (to the world of When Fact Met Fiction) rhythms and breaks that lead to crescendos of the jokes or the points. It is fashioned after the word play found in classic sitcoms and comedy television of the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s; Happy Days, Taxi, Cheers, Get Smart and others.

“Dialogue driven, this show will be served by fast paced, whitty performances by all characters.”



TAXI | CBS

tone and style

Imagery will be bright and poppy like “bubble gum”. The color will be reminiscent of the bright colors in popular current shows like *The Middle* or *Gilmore Girls*. This color and cheeriness will also be emphasized in wardrobe. Wardrobe will be used to help build and convey particular aspects of a character's history or persona, however it will harmonize tonally with other design elements on screen, unless it serves the purpose of the story to break harmony.

The visual style will be like a classic three camera sitcom. Simple shots mostly stationary camera. Not a whole lot of camera movement.

The main environment of the story takes place at the office of *Southern Sunset*. This set and all sets within the show will tell a story. *Southern Sunset* for example will communicate small, barely making it, business. It will also convey that it has woman leadership. It will be hip and trendy with a feminine touch but such measures have been achieved on the cheap. The office is run out of a renovated house with an open floor plan including the kitchen, office supplies, printer and work stations all being in the same area -- communicates cramped.

Personal appearance in regard to hair and makeup will be thoughtful -- used to mirror the character's own inner journey as well as contrast their own persona to that of others in the cast.

The score will largely set the mood for the scene, sometime over accentuating the dilemma at hand in order to support the comedy. To mirror the subtle complexities of the human interactions within this story the genre of Jazz will be the foundation of the score. And bright, discernable, melodic movements will set the tone of the world.

“Imagery will be bright and poppy
like bubble gum.”



GILMORE GIRLS: A YEAR IN THE LIFE | NETFLIX

ROM-COM

True to the Romantic Comedy genre, romance is the driving force behind the comedy. We will witness the sometimes uncomfortably awkward moments that occur as two people, especially in situations where one party “doth protest too much”, are in the process of discovering their feelings for each other. This is the driving force of most of the comedy of the show -- romantic tension that builds to a laugh and then settles into an “ahhhh, that’s sweet” moment.

“Romantic tension that builds to a laugh and then settles into an “ahhhh, that’s sweet”.”



HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER | CBS

THE LEADS

OLIVIA SMITH is a pretty young woman in her early twenties. She has just graduated with a Technical Writing / Editing Degree and is ready to make her mark on the world. She aspires to one day be the head editor of a major magazine and views the small magazine Southern Sunset as the perfect first stepping stone since she will wear the title of, "head editor. She is an independent woman that believes she doesn't need anybody's help to get where she's going and is somewhat tightly wound when in a professional environment - like she's got something to prove. She wants to be taken seriously, and seen as successful. Her perfectionism causes her to look down on people that she thinks are lazy, messy, late etc. Olivia needs to learn how to relax and have fun. She is very much like Sandra Bullock in "The Proposal".

JON FRANK is in his late twenties. He has a net worth of about \$10 million due to the success of a series of romance novels that he wrote under the pseudonym "Nathaniel Embers". None of his readers /fans know what he looks like because he has stayed purposefully out of the limelight. He values his privacy and doesn't want anyone to treat him differently than they would treat anyone else. He still lives in his hometown of Waltererville, NC where he works on his novels. He doesn't really care what people think of him but he is very likeable. Many people don't think of him as a person of high moral and ethical standing because of his easy going outer shell - but deep down he is that guy you can always count on to do the right thing. Jon is a cross between Neil Patrick Harris' character of Barney on "How I Met Your Mother" and Mr. Knightley played by Jeremy Northam in the movie, "Emma."

“...close proximity can have an interesting effect on people...”



THE OFFICE | NBC

THE OFFICE FAM

CELESTE FRANK is in her late 30's early 40's and is the widowed mother of Sunny Frank. Celeste owns and runs the Southern Sunset Magazine, her brain child and passion project that is now beginning to be quite successful but still has the challenges of a growing venture. Celeste's husband Ben died a few years ago by a heart attack and Celeste is still somewhat in mourning. They had a very fun and loving marriage and Celeste has a hard time letting herself admit that she has feelings for her employee and life long friend Mel Tennant the photographer for Southern Sunset. Celeste is an A type personality. She loves being around people. She takes charge of situations and makes things happen. Her temperament would be similar to Julia Sugarbaker in "Designing Women".

MEL TENNANT is in his early 40's. He moved down to North Carolina from Boston in his 30's for a change of scenery. He has been a friend of the Franks since he started taking photos of real estate that Ben represented before Ben died. Mel is seen as kind of an uncle to Sunny. When Celeste started her magazine with the life insurance money she received from Ben's passing, she hired Mel on as her photographer and he's been smitten by her ever since - but has respectfully not started anything as she is still mourning Ben's death. He is kind of slow moving and cares a lot about details. He is a true artist and wants every photo he takes to be the best it can be. He speaks slow, many times mumbles, is cynical and speaks with little inflection much like Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh or Ben Stein in the Clear Eyes commercials.

SUNNY FRANK is 16 years old. She is Celeste Frank's only child. Sunny is the classic tomboy, she skates, 4 wheels and isn't afraid to get dirty. She looks up to and adores her uncle Jon who has been more like a big brother to her. She is also a book worm, there is seldom a time that she doesn't have a YA novel she's wrapped up in. Celeste, trying to stay involved in her daughter's life as she also runs Southern Sunset, has asked Sunny to help Mel with his photos and design work in the afternoons when she gets out of school. Sunny isn't thrilled about the proposition but complies and makes the most of it. Overall Sunny is a pleasant girl, she's supportive of her mother, misses her father but can tell that her mother needs a companion and is definitely in favor of Celeste and Mel getting together.

“...change can be hard for some people adding stress to the work environment.”



DESIGNING WOMEN | CBS

THE EXTENDED FAMILY

POPPY STANHOPE is in her early 40's. She is somewhat of a celebrity in the world of food. She hosts her own cooking show on the Eats and Treats Network and is Southern Sunset's biggest contributor. She is responsible for a decent part of the magazine's success as her personality and recipes have garnered a lot of readers. She is a predatory female that will shamelessly come on to any man that she thinks is sexy. She is a cougar when it comes to Jon - she loves his writing and is always coming on to him. Currently she is under contract with Southern Sunset but that contract is about to expire and she's thinking about leaving to get signed with a bigger magazine. Personality wise, Poppy is a mix between Blanche from *Golden Girls* and Suzanne from *Designing Women*.

OWEN FELPS is 17 years old. He goes to the same school that Sunny goes to but they've never met until he makes a pizza delivery to Southern Sunset where he finds out that just moments earlier he had almost hit her with his bike. From that moment on Owen is smitten with Sunny. He is a basic teenage boy. All he thinks about is food, girls and food, but he's a sweet respectable boy if not a tad absentminded.

GIOVANNI RUSSO is in his mid twenties. He's an international ex-jewelry thief that has gotten mixed up with the Russian Mafia and is on the run. He borrowed some money from a loan shark to pay off some medical bills for a family member - but wasn't able to pay the loan down in time. Although, Giovanni is quite good at thievery, he doesn't have much common sense and can sometimes be aloof. Giovanni moves to Asheville, NC to lay low for a while. He has a foreign accent and is a slightly more attractive and sociable version of Latka from *Taxi*. Overall he's just a really sweet guy that made some bad decisions.

VIC FREEMAN is floating aimlessly in his mid-twenties. With more life experience than some retirees, Vic finds himself yet again at another job that doesn't compensate or offer him the opportunity for success that he believes he deserves as the main writer at Southern Sunset. But really his sexual overconfidence and air of superiority is actually a cover for deep feelings of inadequacy as he, at least in his own eyes, is the unsuccessful son of a very successful upper class family. In a way he is out to prove to his parents and even to himself that he can accomplish something great. He strives for others to see him as important. He steps on those who he sees as useless to his promotion and sucks-up to those who he thinks can help him "arrive". For Vic image is everything and substance takes a back seat.

“Due to this feeling of family at the office there is a deep sense of concern and involvement in each others personal lives.”



TAXI | CBS

PILOT

The episode begins with a moment of calamity for Celeste Frank as her lead writer Vic Freeman is packing up his things to leave for a seemingly more prestigious job. What makes this even worse is that Celeste has to send her issue to print by the weekend and there are still articles to be written so Vic is really leaving the magazine in a major bind. Unable to convince Vic to stay on through the deadline Celeste has to get creative.

Just as Vic is leaving Southern Sunset, Olivia Smith walks in, nervous but excited to start her first “big girl” job as a technical editor for an emerging lifestyle magazine. But her first day proves to be much more challenging than she thought as she is greeted by a frazzled Celeste who proceeds to inform Olivia that her responsibilities will be expanding to include editing... and writing. However, it becomes quite obvious to Celeste after reading a first draft submitted by Olivia, that although she is a great editor she is not a very gifted writer.

Feeling the mounting pressure of the deadline closing in, Mel, the magazine’s art director, has a lightbulb moment and suggests Celeste call in a favor from her brother in-law, Jon Frank. Jon, unbeknownst to most people, is an award winning romance writer who works under the pseudonym “Nathaniel Embers”. He happens to be in town and more importantly available since he has just finished and released his most recent novel, “The Love In Our Tears”.

Jon, being the reliable brother in-law that he is comes flying to the rescue. Arriving disheveled and unkempt -- Jon doesn’t make a very good first impression on Olivia. Olivia’s underwhelmed view of Jon is only bolstered when Jon’s articles, although captivating and entertaining, are “not”, as Olivia puts it, “what our readers are expecting”. Further ammunition for Olivia disliking Jon is provided when she finds some dirt on Jon from his early years as an author, before he started writing as Nathaniel Embers.

These perceptions and revelations of who Jon is moves Olivia to a somewhat uncongenial confrontation with Jon on their first day working together. In this encounter Jon responds amiably and Olivia is left somewhat humbled, yet still obstinate toward Jon.

The feeling we are left with at the close of this first episode is one of longing as we see a gracious Jon leave the office while an indignant Olivia is left to what will become the common task of removing her foot from her mouth. This episode also sets up the main theme of the series, “you can’t judge a book by it’s cover”.

EPISODE CONCEPTS

SEASON 1

Episode 1 | “Welcome to Southern Sunset” - The staff writer for Southern Sunset Magazine has just walked out the door as new editor Olivia Smith arrives. Celeste Frank the magazine’s owner is in a bind. With a deadline looming Celeste requests help from her brother-in-law Jon Frank.

Episode 2 | “The Iron Maiden” - Olivia struggles to convince Jon that his articles don’t fit Southern Sunset’s already established literary style. When Celeste reads some feedback from the magazine’s readers commending the new style of writing Olivia begins to wonder if she’s the right editor for Southern Sunset.

Episode 3 | “Poppy Stanhope” - Southern Sunset gets paid a visit by Poppy Stanhope, the magazines celebrity contributor. Poppy is a huge fan of Jon’s new take on the articles for her recipes and offers him a job to write for her cooking show.

Episode 4 | “The Legend of Jessica Buttz” - When Jon misses his article deadline and Mel “plays hooky” from a meeting with Celeste, the women of Southern Sunset magazine are left to speculation and frustration.

Episode 5 | “The Ultimatum” - She’s baaaack! And unless Poppy Stanhope gets her way, the future does not look very bright for Southern Sunset magazine. Can Jon keep his big secret AND save the family business?

Episode 6 | “Date 2 Mate” - Jon writes the description for Olivia’s online dating profile to help her get more interactions. But when Olivia gets asked out, Jon gets a little jealous.

Episode 7 | “Christmas Kiss” - Mel recruits Jon and Olivia to be the models for a photo for a Christmas issue of Southern Sunset. It doesn’t take long for things to get steamy between Jon and Olivia, after all, there is mistletoe involved.

Episode 8 | “The World Can Wait” - Jon is about to leave for his book tour when Celeste urges him to tell Olivia who he really is and how he feels about her. But when Olivia shows up at the office with her new boyfriend Giovanni, things get interesting.

FUTURE SEASONS

SEASON 1

The magazine Southern Sunset is struggling to stay afloat and get readers. They don't have a corner on the market or something that makes them stand out. They are having a hard time transitioning from print to digital. Jon comes on staff and brings that missing ingredient. Jon pursues Olivia. By the end of the 1st Season Jon has to leave the magazine to go on a book tour - but before he does, he has an honest heart to heart with Olivia. Olivia is already in a relationship and Jon's declaration will end the season complicated.

SEASON 2

Jon comes back early from his book tour to tell Olivia about Nathaniel Embers only to be interrupted by Olivia's boyfriend, Giovanni. Mel leaves Southern Sunset and Vic returns to take his place in design and layout. Poppy adds new tensions, Celeste finds herself attracted to Owen's father and a beautiful female from Giovanni's past arrives in Walterville on a mysterious mission. By the end of the season Jon and Olivia are together but Jon has yet to tell her about Nathaniel Embers.

SEASON 3

Jon and Olivia elope upsetting the Southern Sunset family for not including them in the wedding, Owen creates an app that makes him rich, Vic makes amends with his estranged father and Celeste and Phil take a chance on each other. By the end of the season Jon and Olivia are facing the fact that they may not be able to have children due to Olivia's medical condition and Celeste and Phil are wondering if their relationship will affect Sunny and Owen negatively.

contact us to read the pilot script...

CONTACT

STEFAN LINER
Producer

info@eaststreamstudio.com
(828) 484-7440

EAST STREAM STUDIO

- Where great stories come to life -