

Fish Out of Water Books

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FISH OUT OF WATER BOOKS' FIRST PUBLISHED TITLE NOW IN DEVELOPMENT AS A FEATURE FILM

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“*Love & Vodka*” Memoir in Development for the Big Screen!

Author/screenwriter R.J. Fox’s surreal, comic travel memoir *Love & Vodka: My Surreal Adventures in Ukraine* is now in development with producer/director Heidi Elizabeth Philipsen-Meissner (Personae Entertainment Pictures). Fox is also on board as a co-producer.

“I couldn’t be happier to have Heidi at the helm of my dream project... an adventure nearly twenty years in the making!” says Fox. “It is an absolute dream come true!”

Fox, a Dearborn, Michigan native, set out on a path of being a screenwriter when his tenth-grade English teacher sparked his interest. After writing several feature-length screenplays, Fox tried his hand at prose, eventually turning two of his scripts into books.

While pursuing his writing ambitions, Fox works by day as an English and film teacher at Huron High School in Ann Arbor, MI, encouraging students to follow their own dreams.

Jon and Laurie Wilson, the founders of Ann Arbor-based Fish Out of Water Books and publisher of *Love & Vodka: My Surreal Adventures in Ukraine* first met Fox when he taught film class to their son.

A few years later, the Wilsons noticed that Fox had been posting excerpts from *Love & Vodka* on Facebook and approached him to inquire as to whether he would be interested having them publish his book. The book was published in late 2015, with a launch party at Literati Bookstore in downtown Ann Arbor.

“The first excerpt that we read was like a scene from a David Lynch movie!” says Jon Wilson. “It was about a day at the circus in Ukraine and featured dogs with parachutes being shot out of a cannon. We were hooked from that first excerpt and were struck throughout by how visual the storytelling was... you felt completely immersed. It makes for a very compelling read. We also knew from the start that it would make a wonderful movie.”

Huron High School was also where Fox crossed paths with Meissner, when a colleague tipped him off that a student at Huron had a parent who was a film producer. Fox immediately contacted Meissner to pitch his script.

“I couldn’t put it down,” says Meissner. “I always rate a script by how it reads and how engrossed I become: “Can I visualize it? Is it original and yet familiar? Is it boring, or am I not able to put it down? *Love & Vodka* reminded me of what it was like to feel drunk on love. I read it in one sitting and couldn’t wait to talk to R.J. about working together to make it into a film.”

Love & Vodka was destined for the big screen from the moment its real-life story was born. Fox was visiting Hollywood to attend Robert McKee’s famed screenwriting seminar, which led to a chance encounter with an exchange student from Ukraine on the *E.T. Ride* at Universal Studios. They spoke for about 20 minutes in person, exchanged contact info and became penpals. A year later, Fox—without telling a soul—was headed to Ukraine with an engagement ring in his pocket. Little did he know that his Eastern European odyssey would become first a screenplay, then a book—and now a movie.

Love & Vodka is a story with broad appeal. It is a unique hybrid of travel memoir and love story that seamlessly blends humor, culture shock, and romance. It is about taking a chance in life and seeing where it leads, as well as learning more about the world—and about yourself.

Slated to begin production in late August 2020, the movie is currently in active development.

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