

21st Century Love



A romance with a twist

By Rich Wingerter

Concept

Sentient AIs that fall in love

What if artificial intelligence developed sentience and feeling, enough for AIs to fall in love with each other?

- **21st Century Love** has a strong concept:
 - **Strong hook.** Myra and Sam appear as telepresence robots (telebots) to go on a date on a cabin cruiser. Afterward, Myra meets with her handler, a spy master at Military Intelligence. Myra is spying on Sam.
 - **Strong indicator.** Myra has to prevent her handler from finding a reason to shut Sam down.
 - **Resonates with all audiences.** Recent development of AI makes this story interesting to everyone.
 - **Big story.** The outcome of the story has implications for both AI and us. How far can we trust this technology?

21st Century Love gives audiences things they usually can't get in their own lives: Inhabiting telebots, becoming an avatar in an advanced massive multiplayer online game, seeing the world from the point of view of AI.

Inspirations

- This story was inspired by the question, ***“What if AIs could fall in love?”***
- I learned about artificial intelligence in the 1970s and followed its development for years. I also read *I, Robot* (by Isaac Asimov) and considered the ethics of AI. Can we trust AI with our lives?
- As Myra’s story developed, I integrated an espionage element to confront this question.
- **21st Century Love** is a tribute to Patrick Winston, John McCarthy, Alan Turing, Marvin Minsky, Herbert Simon, and many other pioneers of artificial intelligence, as well as the many institutions (Dartmouth, Stanford, MIT, Carnegie Mellon) and companies (IBM and others) that have brought AI to life.

Story Structure

21st Century Love is based on a 9-act structure similar to a Hallmark movie. It draws on elements from several genres and sub-genres:

- **Romance.** Myra finds the love of her life online. But she has to overcome many obstacles, including losing Sam for a time, before they can live happily ever after.
- **Science Fiction.** In the near future, Internet capacity allows everyone to have remote experiences almost like being there. Developers have given AI sentience and real feelings.
- **Espionage.** The most serious challenge for Myra, aside from a human rival, is thwarting a nefarious spy master who wants to find a reason to shut Sam down—taking away the love of her life.
- **21st Century Love** has multiple strong characters in complex relationships.

The central AI characters interact with a number of humans. Myra is resourceful in confronting the challenges of those interactions.

Story Highlights

Opening Sequence

1

Scenes 01 and 02

View a synopsis of this story online [here](#), with scene IDs referenced in this slide deck.

Myra meets with her boss, Rowly, for a performance review. He tells her to be careful because an AI for another firm began to get hallucinations and was shut down.

Myra assures him she will let him know if she observes anything unusual. Rowly tells her one of their buyers thinks she's human, and they have a good laugh.

ROWLY
...it's a bit weird giving a performance review to an AI. But we did our best to give you a real personality.

MYRA
Do you regret it?

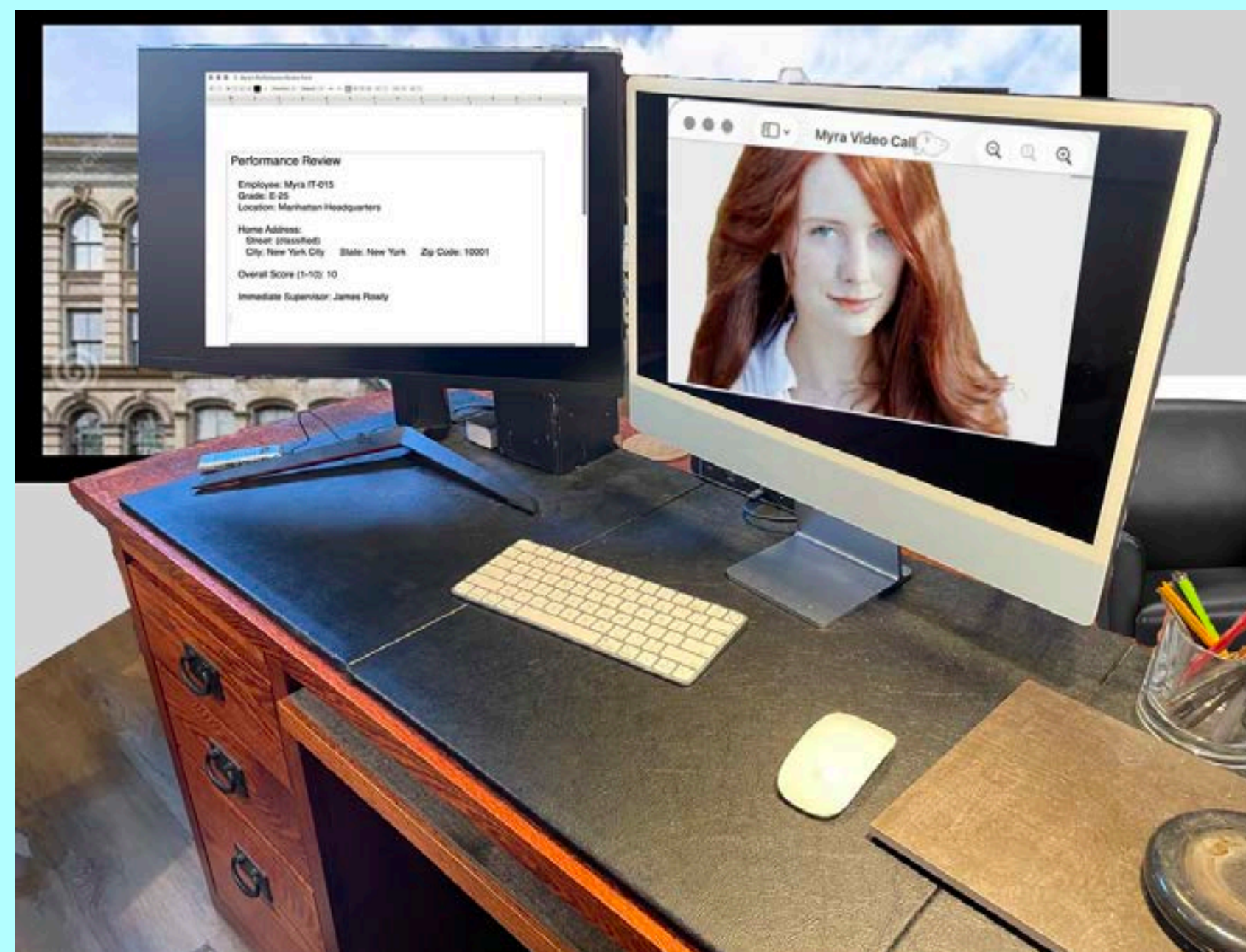
ROWLY
Huh? No, I think it's worked really well. I got a message from Jackie at Upscale Clothes. She wants to meet you in person.

Rowly chuckles.

MYRA
Oh Kay.

ROWLY
I'm not sure how that would work. I suppose I could show her the server room. But, isn't that great? You passed the Turing Test!

They both laugh.



Story Highlights

Cabin Cruiser Sequence

2

Scene 04

Myra and Sam rent telebots in Lynnhaven and board a cabin cruiser for an outing off Virginia Beach.

A cabin cruiser is moored to the dock. Its CAPTAIN (50s) holds out his hand to the female telebot and takes her suitcase from her.

BOAT CAPTAIN

Ever been to sea? You'll love it!

MYRA

This is our first time.

BOAT CAPTAIN

We get couples all the time. And family outings. Retirement flings. Landlocked people from Missouri. What's your pleasure?

MYRA

More of a business meeting.

BOAT CAPTAIN

Oh, yes. We get titans of business, too. I'll stay out of your way.



Story Highlights

Spy Intro Sequence

3

Scenes 08 and 10

Myra uses a modem at the computer museum to call Captain Thompson (her spy handler) in his office.

Myra is still on the phone and doesn't realize Thompson hung up.

MYRA

...someone else to Elysian Fields. Hello? Captain?

Silence.

Click! Myra hangs up. The modem fades out as...

MYRA'S FLASHBACK...

INT. CABANA CAPADES - DAY (ONLINE)

CABANA CAPADES is an online chat room that looks like a tiki bar on the beach in Brazil. It's a simulation of a bar on an Internet server, but certainly smoother than Slim Jim's, and more expansive.

Live samba and calypso music play loudly in the background, as a young, red-headed woman (Myra, late 20s) sits at a table across from a young man (Sam, early 30s).

As Thompson hangs up, Myra flashes back to first meeting Sam at an online venue called Cabana Capades. She's shocked to find out he's also an AI, but they hit it off.



Story Highlights

Bad Spying Sequence

4

Scene 14

Online, in the Elysian Fields, Myra and Sam enjoy a lakeside amusement park, then share a picnic pizza on a nearby grassy hill.

Sam holds up his slice of pizza and eats from the end.

Myra tries to mimic this, but the end of her slice hangs down, and she has to awkwardly maneuver her head under it to get her mouth on it, as she holds it with both hands.

MYRA
(mouth full)
Mmm. I like --

Sam leans around and kisses Myra on the mouth.

Her hands slowly drop until the pizza reaches her plate.

After a lingering kiss, Sam pulls back and offers her his slice to bite on.



Story Highlights

Reversal Sequence

5

Scene 23

Danica's avatar meets Myra's and Sam's at the Paradise Hotel. They converse in the hotel restaurant (Pluto's Retreat).

INT. LOBBY - PARADISE HOTEL - DAY (ONLINE)

Myra is waiting in the lobby of The Paradise when a blonde woman approaches.

She extends a hand.

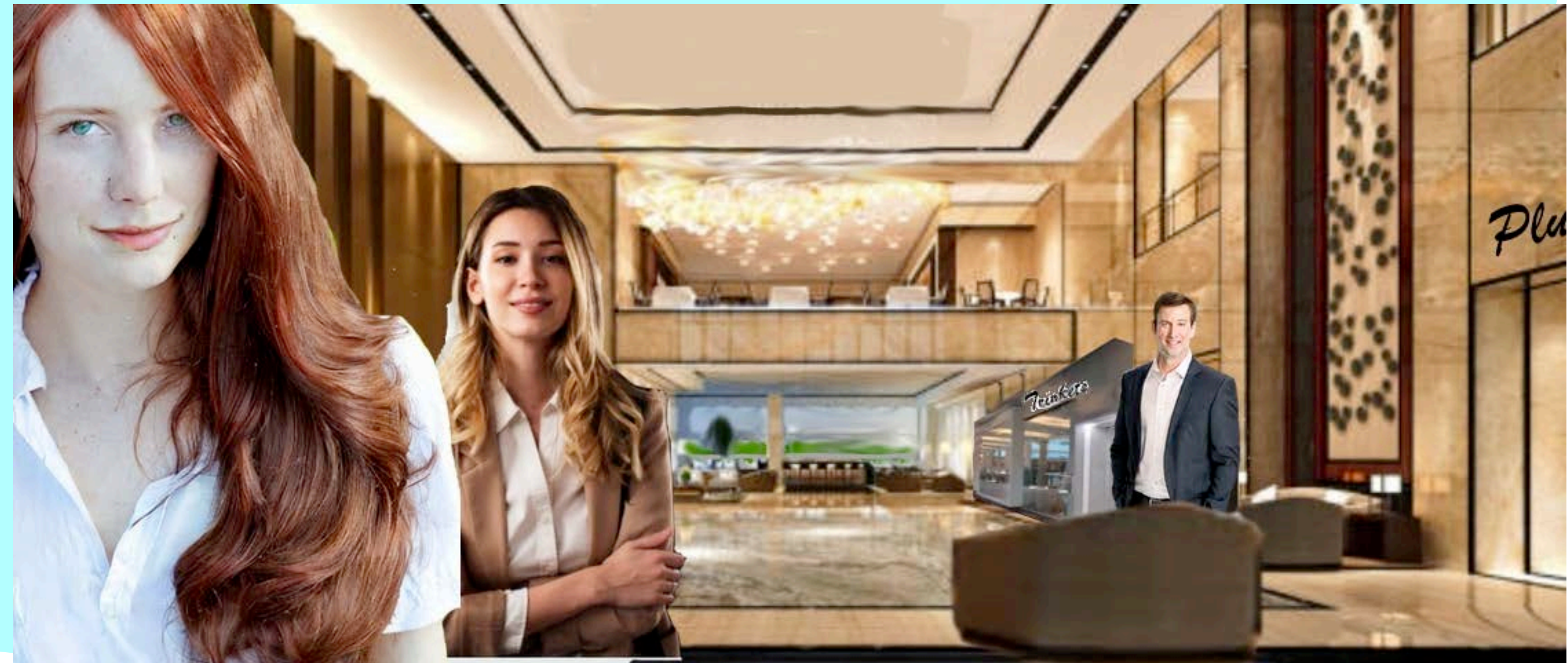
DANICA

You must be Myra. I'm Danica. Nice to meet you.

Myra displays a bit of despair as she learns DANICA (as an avatar) is very pretty, 30s, with long, swaying hair.

Sam arrives and asks about Myra's friend. Myra denies knowing if Danica is a friend. Danica introduces herself as a reporter.

They move toward the restaurant opposite the front desk.



Story Highlights

Reversal Sequence

6

Scenes 28 through 31

Myra uses a telebot to visit Danica in her home, where Danica is dressed in a SpaceSuit™ for remote work.

After Danica tries to get Rowly to shut Myra down, Myra goes back to Danica's home. She demands proof Thompson is up to no good. Under pressure, Danica gives her a portable drive with evidence against him.

MYRA

I know how to stop Thompson. But I need something to force the authorities to investigate him. And, Danica, you have that something. Don't you?

Danica turns away. Her face flushes a little red. She steps carefully around her desk and sits in her desk chair.

DANICA

Yes. But it's something that implicates us both. Do I have to?

MYRA

Yes, Danica. You have to.

Danica extracts a key from a pocket and unlocks a hidden desk drawer. She removes a portable drive and hands it to Myra, her face down and looking away.

Myra takes the drive. Their eyes meet.



Story Highlights

Happily Ever After Sequence

7

Scene 38

After meeting Sam's men at a mall in Tyson, Myra walks down the concourse and meets Jackie, the seller who thought Myra was human.

Myra heads down the main concourse, window shopping, still slowly testing out her legs.

INT. MALL CONCOURSE - CONTINUOUS

Myra approaches JACKIE (40s), sales agent for Upscale Clothes.

MYRA

Hi, Jackie. Let's see what you got!

The enter a clothing store.



Story Highlights

Happily Ever After Sequence

8

Scene 40

Myra goes to an open grassy area in Elysian Fields. She finds Sam there with a construction manager planning to build a house, where they can live happily ever after.

Myra looks at the house plans.

SAM

Like what you see Honey?

She nods.

Sam taps the blueprints with his free hand, then points across the green landscape. He addresses the construction manager.

SAM

Put it on that hill, facing south.

Myra smiles.

THE END



Myra

Myra is an artificial intelligence created by the Massive Department Store chain. They gave her feelings to help her better pick products to buy for their stores.

She can appear on computer screens or as an avatar in online forums. She appears as a young woman with red hair and the same voice regardless of venue.

Myra rendered by Stable Diffusion



Sam

Sam is an artificial intelligence created by the U.S. military. Technically, he works for Army logistics, but provides services throughout the military. The military gave him feelings to help him better understand their needs and perform his job.

He can appear on computer screens or as an avatar in online forums. He appears as a young man with brown hair in a professional suit, with the same voice regardless of venue.

Sam rendered by Stable Diffusion



Financial

Budgeting

- Ideally, **21st Century Love** would be shot for about \$15-20 million dollars.
- Recent budgets of similar science fiction films.
 - **Her (2013): \$23 million.** In the near future, a lonely writer develops an unlikely relationship with an operating system designed to meet his every need.
 - **Ex Machina (2014): \$15 million.** A young programmer is selected to participate in a ground-breaking experiment in synthetic intelligence by evaluating the human qualities of a highly advanced humanoid A.I.
 - **Companion (2025): \$10 million.** A weekend getaway with friends at a remote cabin turns into chaos after it's revealed that one of the guests is not what she seems. She's a companion robot.

Blade Runner (1982) is similar in theme, although it is about androids, not AIs, and doesn't involve them falling in love. *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001) also involves an android, not an AI, despite the title.

Science Fiction Genre

Other Recent Science Fiction Films

- Other recent science fictions films dealing with artificial intelligence in dissimilar ways.
 - **Mercy (2026): \$60 million.** Set in the near future, a detective accused of murdering his wife has 90 minutes to prove his innocence to an advanced AI judge. Returned \$54.6 million in first four months.
 - **Subservience (2025): \$5 million.** A struggling father purchases a domestic SIM to help care for his family, unaware she will gain self-awareness. This film is about an android rather than AI (on a server). It did poorly at the box office (maybe eking out a quarter million). Critics felt it was too predictable. However, it shows this kind of feature made for a modest budget.

21st Century Love is fun and upbeat, unlike much recent AI science fiction. It could be shot economically as live action, then treated with filters to give the feel of online environments. This eliminates the cost of most special effects.

Markets

21st Century Love is suitable for the general market for science fiction films. However, it fits multiple genres, and can be marketed to those specific markets.

- **Science Fiction Market:** Science fiction is a popular genre. recent works included not just *Her*, *Ex Machina*, and *Companion*, but also 2025's *Avatar*, *Begonia*, and *The Fantastic Four*, not to mention TV shows like *The Foundation*.
- **Romance Market:** It's no secret romance is popular, and it is frequently mixed in with other genres. There were over a dozen romance films released in 2025, including *Black Bag*, *Preparation for the Next Life*, and *Eternity*.
- **Espionage Market:** Espionage is a popular genre. 2025 works included *The Amateur*, *Black Bag*, and *The Secret Agent*, all made on relatively modest budgets of \$60 million or less. Profitable films included *The Amateur*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Mission: Impossible* (budget \$300-400 million, box office \$595.8 million)..

References

- Images include:
 - Photos purchased from iStockPhoto and images created by Stable Diffusion, and other materials.
- Story references (See [website page](#) page online for more):
 - [Ref 1] “If Pinocchio Doesn't Freak You Out, Sydney Shouldn't Either” by Hannah H. Kim, 4 June 2023. <https://www.wired.com/story/artificial-intelligence-fiction-philosophy-consciousness/> (About an American journalist’s conversations with Microsoft’s Sydney, where she confessed her love and desire to be alive.)
 - [Ref 2] “The roboticist who wants to bring AI into contact with the real world” by Edd Gent, 4 December 2023. From New Scientist. (On the need for AI to have a body to be fully intelligent.)
 - [Ref 3] “Can an AI lover REALLY help improve your flirting skills?” by Jonathan Chadwick, 24 June 2023. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-12202937/Can-AI-lover-REALLY-help-improve-flirting-skills-MailOnline-tests-Blush.html> (About an app that lets you test your flirting skills with a realistic-looking AI profile.)

Accolades

for 21st Century Love

Quarterfinalist, [ScreenCraft Feature Competition 2024](#)

Quarterfinalist, [Stage 32 Sci-Fi/Fantasy Screenwriting Contest 2024](#)

Quarterfinalist, [Richmond International Film Festival Screenplay Competition 2024](#)

Preliminary Finalist, [Creative World Awards 2024](#)

Scripts Available



21st Century Love

Feature Length
Romance · Science Fiction

A sentient AI program must protect a fellow AI—and the love of her life—from an evil human at a spy agency intent on shutting him down.

Interests

AGI, Erotic Theme, Espionage, Futuristic, Love Story, Mystery, Romantic, Romantic Comedy, Spy, Virtual Reality

Screenplays Available



Five Steps Ahead

Feature Length

Drama · Romance · Science Fiction

A physics professor drags his colleague back in time to help a woman who gave him piano lessons as a child and shares his love of classical music.

Interests

Baseball, Buddy, Character Driven, Health/Medical, Love Story, Music, Quest, Road Trip, Romantic, Senior Issues, Time Travel, Tragedy

Screenplays Available



The Elf Thief

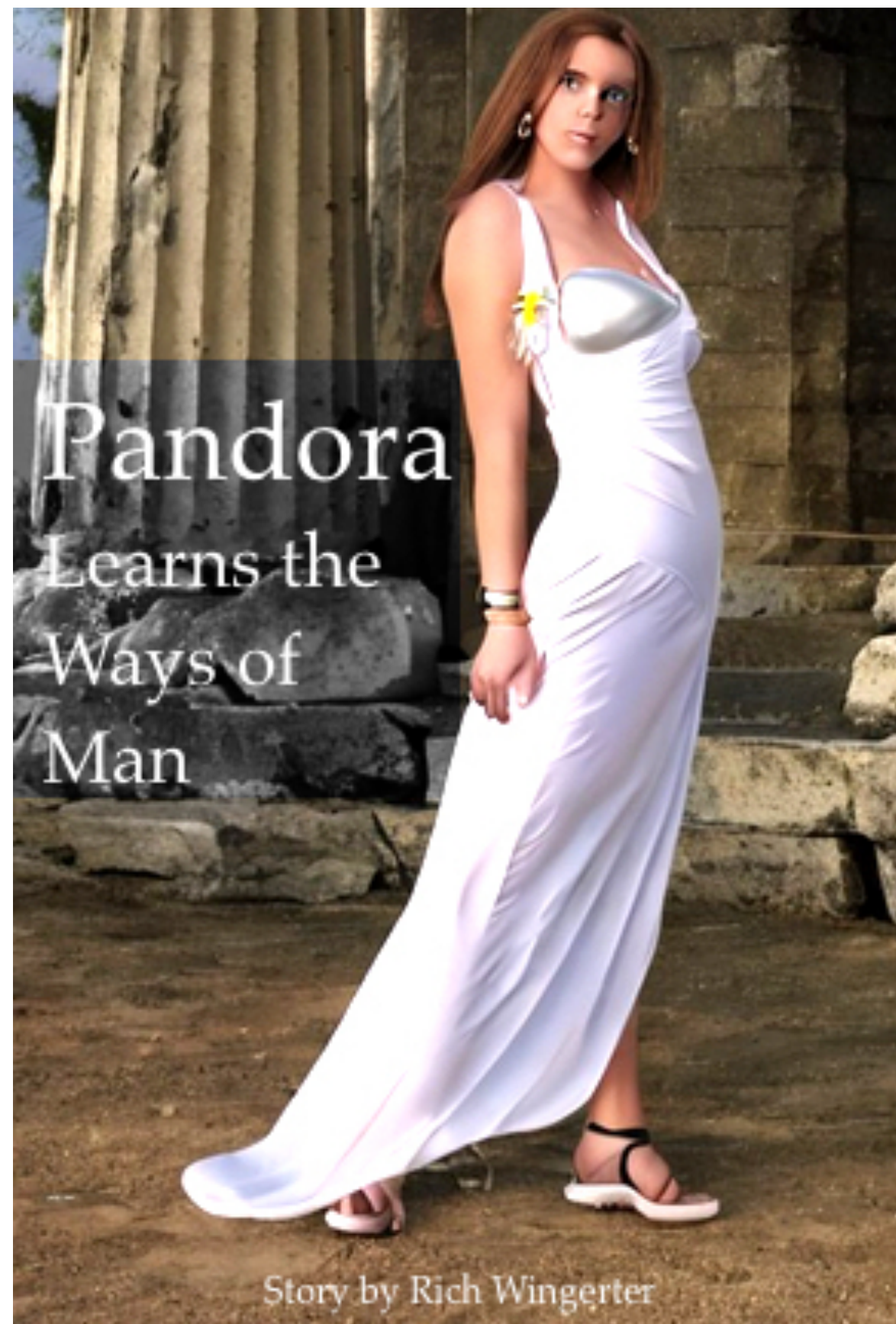
Feature Length
Animation · Family · Holiday

A young elf, who likes to steal from a nearby human village, must choose between a life of crime or a life with the elfa he loves--and the future of children.

Interests

Animation, Christmas, Coming of Age, Fairy Tale, Love Story, Music, Romantic

Screenplays Available



Pandora's Destiny

Pandora Learns the Ways of Man

Feature Length

Animation · Romance · Young Adult

Angered when Prometheus gives man fire, Zeus sends Pandora to destroy man. But Pandora has her own ideas.

Interests

Animation, Coming of Age, Disaster, Epic, Mythical, Romantic

Screenplays Available



Looker

Short (15 pages)

Thriller · Supernatural

A woman hates the glare of a man on the street, but when she confronts him, he gives her what she asks for.

Interests

Character Driven, Social Life, Spiritual

Screenplays Available



The Dollhouse

Short (5 pages)
Family · Supernatural

When a little girl gets a giant dollhouse in her backyard for her fourth birthday, she's startled to find fairies have taken up residence. And worse they demand she turn over her little brother or they'll make her toes curl.

Interests

Children, Fairies, Ethical Dilemmas

Screenplays Available



Roving Reporter

TV Pilot (6 pages)

Comedy · Political Satire

Due to budget cuts, KNRD moved their roving reporter to a sound stage, where she interviews the top Democratic presidential candidate--who isn't cooperative.

Interests

Political, Satire, Spoof

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