

Pitch for "Côte d'Azur," a feature screenplay by Alan C. Baird

Introduction: During my 20s, I spent a year selling t-shirts in southern France with a Danish business partner. The venture wasn't successful at all, and we still laughingly refer to that period as "The Year Of Failing Miserably." But it was a lot of fun, and it convinced us that we could accomplish great things in life. Well, medium-great, anyway. I filled several notebooks with our daily adventures, and later threatened for decades to dramatize our year abroad. After a few of my other screenplays placed well in international competitions (quarters, semis and finals), I figured it was time to dig out the notebooks.

So I fictionalized our experiences, then converted the screenplay into an ebook. That proof-of-concept adaptation has appeared on Amazon's Performing Arts Best Sellers list since it was first published, in July 2019, with reviews averaging 5 out of 5 stars.

Format: Feature screenplay. It's compact (71 pages), but it can be easily expanded. I just wanted to distill the story into a quick and easy read, using flash-fiction techniques, before starting the development process and receiving feedback from an experienced producer.

Genre/Tone: Coming-of-age buddy movie, with adventure, romance, fantasy, humor and a touch of magic.

Nutshell/Comps: Junior year abroad, with independent 20-somethings taking the place of students. "[L'auberge espagnole](#)" meets "[The Motorcycle Diaries](#)."

Rating: R, for language and sexual situations.

Log Line: There's nothing quite so romantic as spending one's youth in a foreign land.

Main Characters:

>>Younger Eric is a 20-something American guy who's having the time of his life on the French Riviera. But he's also a wheeler-dealer and a bit of a cad.

>>Older Eric is a 60-something who's looking back on his earlier years with nostalgic regret and trying to alter the course of his life.

>>Doudou is a 20-something French woman. She's an innocent who trusts strangers much too easily.

>>Younger Jens is a 20-something Dane who serves as a sidekick and drinking buddy for Younger Eric.

>>Older Jens (60s) is still Eric's sidekick. But he's also become Eric's conscience.

>>Younger Thalia (20s) is a spectacular specimen of young American womanhood: bright, funny and gorgeous.

>>Older Thalia (60s) is still attractive, but she's been through the wringer.

Story: This script was inspired by Lawrence Durrell, and his experiments with metafictional techniques in *The Avignon Quintet* ("fictional" characters interacting with "real" characters) and *The Alexandria Quartet* (the Rashomon of literature, with multiple points of view). It might be described as a hedonistic tale in the shape of a Möbius strip, trapped in an Escher wood engraving: magical realism with just a dash of irrealism, drenched in Mediterranean sunshine. The first few pages set up the overall structure, bouncing between two time frames: 1979 and 2019.

Act One: In 1979, Younger Eric is hitchhiking along a road in southern France, when he's picked up by the older version of himself, a man who's driving a sports car with Doudou in the front seat. After a car crash, the older man dies. In 2019, Older Eric and Older Jens discuss the screenplay they've been writing about these "fictional" events. Back in the 1979 "fictional world," Younger Eric ditches Doudou following a one-night stand, and makes an unsuccessful pass at Younger Thalia. There's a short interlude in 2019, but the story then sticks with Younger Eric in the 1979 "fictional world" and chronicles his humorously calamitous and often outrageous adventures, sexual and otherwise, during a brief hitchhiking trip through Spain and Morocco.

Act Two: Younger Eric returns to southern France... and he's immediately shot down by the woman he loves. He gets drunk with Younger Jens, and they make plans to set up a business selling t-shirts. Even though their biz goes slowly down the tubes, the two owners keep busy with memorable escapades at the Cannes Film Festival, the Monaco Grand Prix, and the Foreign Legion headquarters in Nice. Eric tells Jens about his relaxing idyll in the mountains of Italy which somehow connected sex with yodeling. Intense bonding experiences and shared adversity transform the two guys from relative strangers into buddies for life, in spite of their failed business venture.

Act Three: In 2019, Older Jens leaves to comfort Older Thalia about her botched mastectomy and resulting divorce, while Older Eric is dismayed to discover that the cute 20-ish French woman he's stashed in the back bedroom is actually the daughter of Older Jens. So he takes her for a ride in his sports car, and they pick up a hitchhiker: Younger Eric. After the inevitable car crash foreshadowed in Act One, Older Eric briefly returns from the dead and offers insightful advice to Younger Eric, who's been planning to seduce and abandon the young woman, Doudou. A year later, Older Jens and Older Thalia share a kiss and happily play with an infant, while the baby's parents, Doudou and Younger Eric, watch them proudly.

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