

The Screen Savers

BOOK EXTRAS

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Deleted Passage: Wall Street

The following section, 'Wall Street', was deleted from Chapter 22. While I loved this section, in which Sockball talks about the origin of sock-ball, it detracted from the momentum of the chapter and had to be cut:

Sockball didn't wake up one morning and just decide to throw socks at a wall, in case you're wondering. Certainly not. It started, as obsessions often do, as a work-avoidance strategy. It started with a piece of paper, crushed and thrown in the direction of a large tin bin.

'Crushing paper in your hand, throwing it at a wastepaper bin – is that the action of a lunatic?' Sockball asks Adam, unwilling to let Adam's jibe drop.

Adam blinks.

Sockball takes this to be a 'no' and continues telling of the origin of sock-ball, of how it had started as a game and had turned into something more serious. And Adam listens, half listens, to a story with a predictable ending.

Sockball was working – an ordinary day at the bank – and he was bored, and like any normal bored banker he started to throw paper at a bin.

Adam rejoins the story – certainly, he can associate with throwing things into bins.

After a week of boredom, Sockball had used up all the paper on his desk and was still bored – a building-wide drive to reduce needless paper consumption had put a serious strain on his paper-throwing activities.

Business activities, though, were improving: paper ball missing the bin signified an order to sell a stock; paper ball straight into the bin, a buy order; and ricochets and near misses, a hold.

There were people in the office who thought it strange. They laughed at first, thought it amusing, but as the days progressed they noticed Sockball's portfolio was making a profit. He had created enemies. People in positions of power felt threatened.

Like any sane man, he'd already emptied the photocopier and printers and had more paper on order. Stock market success created an expectation he wanted to live up to. He was hooked on adulation.

He tried to reuse the paper balls already thrown – and lost two hundred thousand in confectionery.

Several more days of this activity resulted in record stock market performances. The whole trading floor began throwing paper. Some of them brought their own paper, some used newspaper, some recycled.

More paper was shipped in and used immediately.

Some feared his success. Others tried to emulate him. He had become king of the trading floor.

A pre-post-er-ous notion, thinks Adam, thinking about something else completely.

But the advent of a paperless office and a very boring week put a strain on Sockball's hobby.

One day, he had no choice.

He threw his shoes.

Then his socks – one of which missed and hit the wall:

THUD.

Forgetting about profit, he got hooked on the noise. Not just the noise: the weight of

socks in hand, the texture of sock, the reusability. A multipurpose item of clothing that he could throw towards a bin all day, then wear on the way home.

Sockball missed the bin on purpose. He liked the thud. He liked his socks clean.

This new activity caught on – until the Chairman Of The Board happened to pass by, accompanied by the press. The sight of sixty grown men frantically throwing socks at bins and walls made an interesting photograph.

And the need for a scapegoat.

Deleted Passage: A Snack Limit

In the final screening at the cinema (Chapter 23), Adam, perturbed by the sight of many noisy-looking snacks, comes up with the notion of a Snack Limit, an idea he intends to enforce the next time they screen a film. As an alternative to having Adam mention this notion, I considered setting up the notion of a Snack Limit in an earlier chapter and giving the following short scene to Mr Geoff Porter and Cat Man.

Mr Geoff Porter and the Cat Man, dressed in black tie, frisk customers on entry to Screen Seven. They talk to a man clearly breaching their guidelines. Mr Geoff Porter takes from him a hot dog and bag of wrapped sweets.

Cat Man frisks the man, and then holds his hand out in front of his face:

'Spit.'

Two large gobstoppers fall into Cat Man's hand.

The man is allowed to enter.

It is funnier to show the Snack Limit imposed in this way, but I wanted to keep the focus on Adam in this chapter.

Deleted Passage: Another Feet-Soaking Incident

In Chapter 18, Adam tries his friend-making experiment after being prodded by Yvette, who asks why he is spending so much time fussing about a blackbird and a goldfish rather than going out with his real friends. I played with expanding this section, having Yvette prod him further about the issues he has with old friends.

Yvette takes the bucket out from beneath his sink and starts to fill it with water.

'Why don't you just talk to them about it? Your friends, they can't be all that bad, can they? I mean, putting up with you—' the bucket is full now and she's dunking the mop into it while looking at his feet '— you can be a little grumpy, can't you?'

'Yes, I suppose I can.'

He puts his binoculars down and retreats to the bedroom, where he can watch his feathered friends and avoid another feet-wetting incident.

Yvette follows.

'What exactly is wrong with them?' she says, after asking him where he keeps his Hoover.

'Well, I don't know really; it's just, well, complicated.' If he had the lists still, of course, he could show her, but he doesn't.

Hoovering now, just around his feet, bashing his ankles as she goes.

'Well maybe you should stop stressing and start communicating ...' The noise of the Hoover drowns out the rest of her speech.

I decided that, as Yvette has already prodded Adam, this might be labouring the point. There wasn't enough room for it alongside the surrounding paragraphs, so I had to cut it out.

Deleted Passage: Learning From Sockball

There are a few incidents that lead up to Adam's almost-change in sentiment towards his old friends, one of which is in Chapter 22 ('Pride and Prejudice'), where Adam witnesses his neighbour Sockball entertaining a difficult, discouraging friend and being unaffected by his friend's negative comments. Here is an extra passage that was excluded from this section:

'What if they constantly hound you to drink even though you've told them you can't, and it pisses you off?'

'Oh, that!' says Sockball. 'Everybody hounds you about something or another – I just give them a cuddle.'

'Give them a cuddle!' Preposterous notion. What a fool this man is. Hello, Mr Attacker, would you like a cuddle? Nonsense.

'You cannot avoid it,' Sockball continues, 'unless you get rid of all your friends. Everybody's a nutcase one way or another, aren't they – most people are, at least – you just need to look at yourself to see that.'

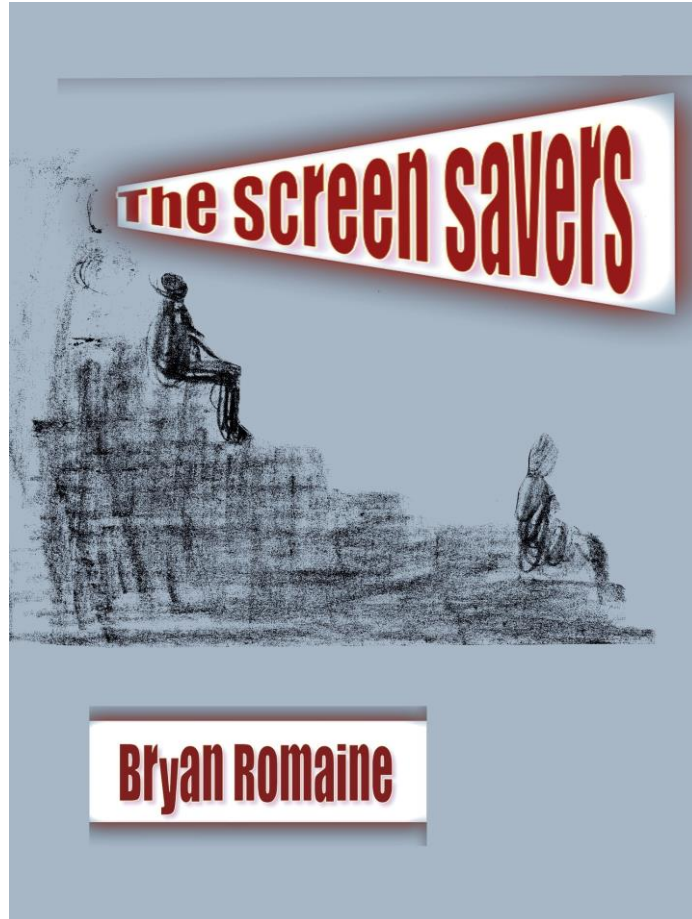
'What? I'm not a nutcase.'

'OK, a lunatic then!'

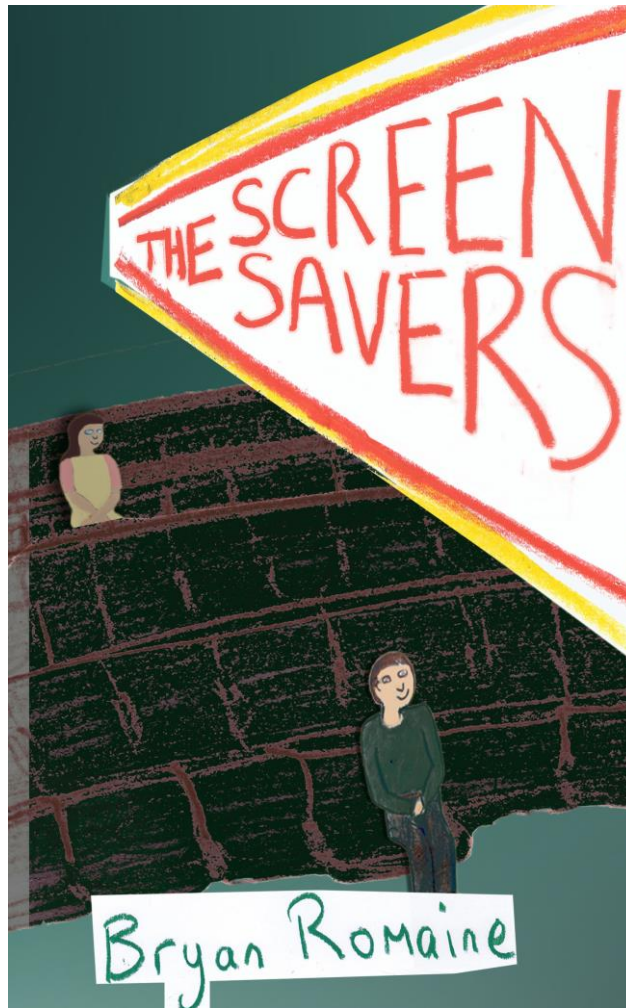
It would have been a nice addition to the chapter. I stumbled across it while preparing these Book Extra notes. I can't recall why I didn't include it: it's an excellent passage.

Creating The Book Cover

My original sketches for the book cover had Adam and Yvette sitting in the screening room, the book title highlighted by the light cast from the cinema projector:

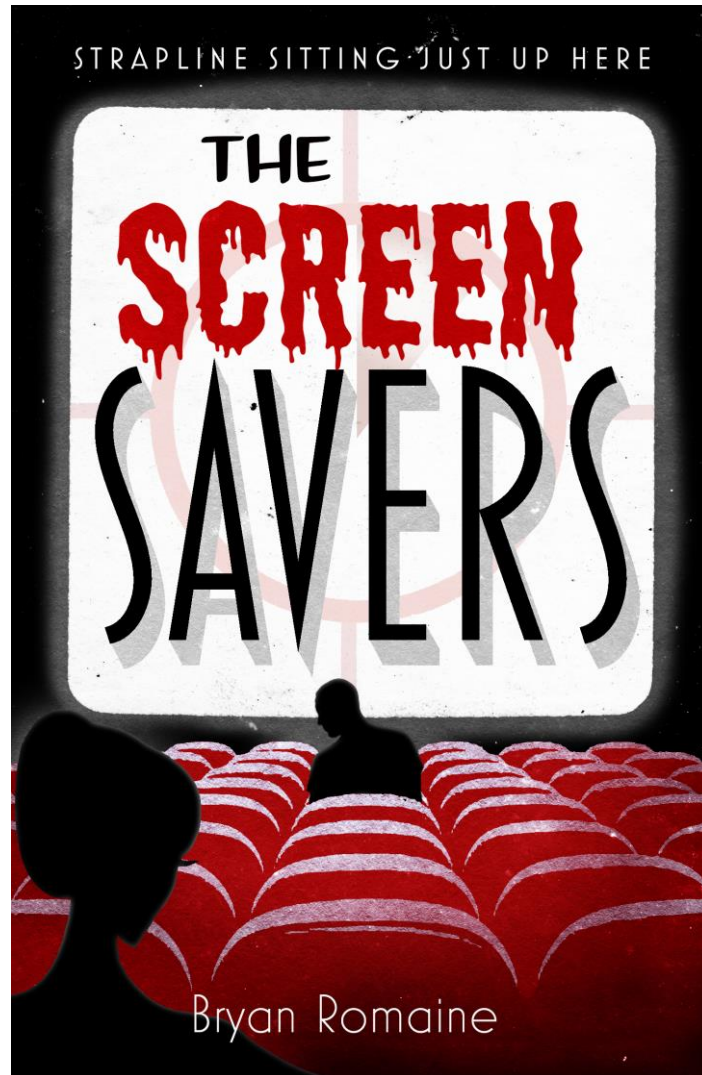


A large amount of work went into this image, hundreds of hours of work, but my drawings weren't good enough. I tried framing the book cover from another point of view within the cinema:



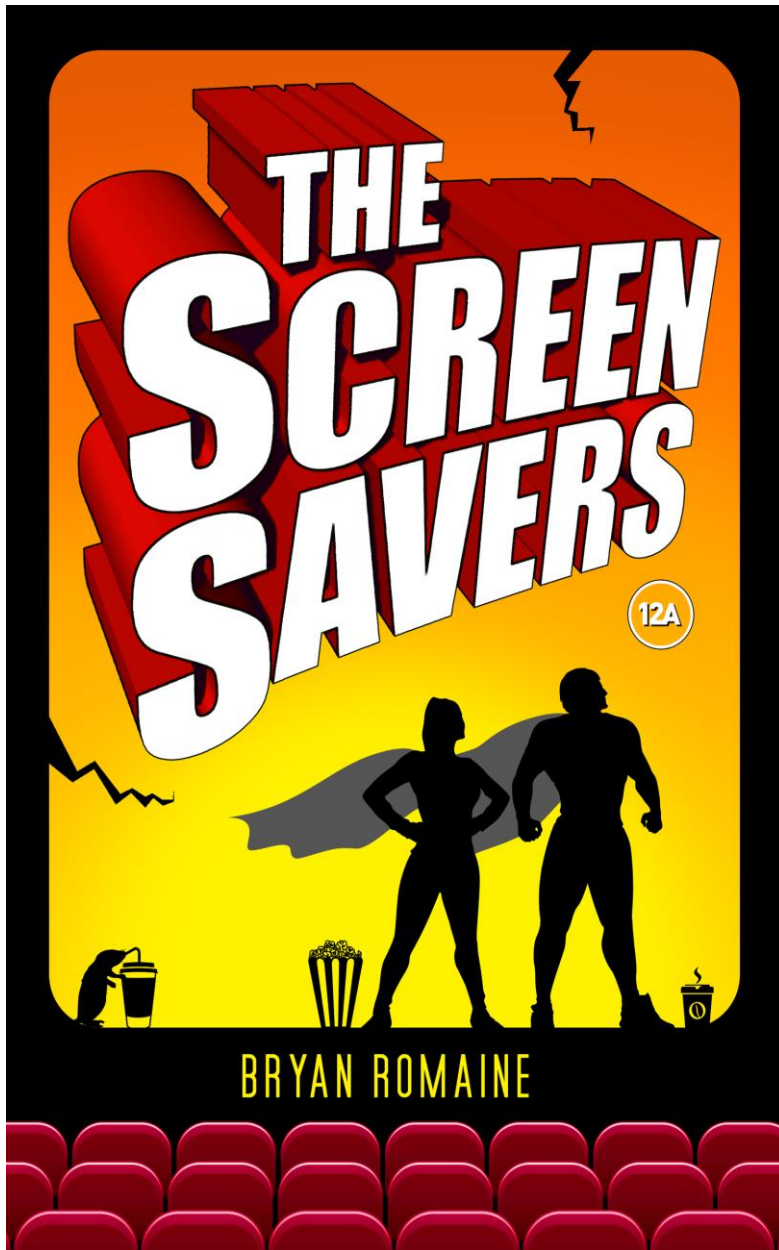
These efforts took months to achieve, hundreds of hours, partly because I'm not very good with Photoshop, partly because I'm not very good at drawing, and partly because I couldn't afford to get somebody else to do it for me. I was trying to convey a sense of mystery and comedy; I wanted the characters to be in awe of the image on screen; I wanted the book title to leap out of the projector unit in a superhero-style font; I wanted mystery and romance and darkness and comedy. I liked it, but it wasn't polished enough for the book cover.

As soon as I had some spare money, I looked for a cover designer. A networking group called Byte The Book, which runs events discussing publishing, recommended the cover designer Mark Ecob. Given my brief, his initial rough design focused around indie films and the mystery of Adam meeting Yvette in the opening chapter:

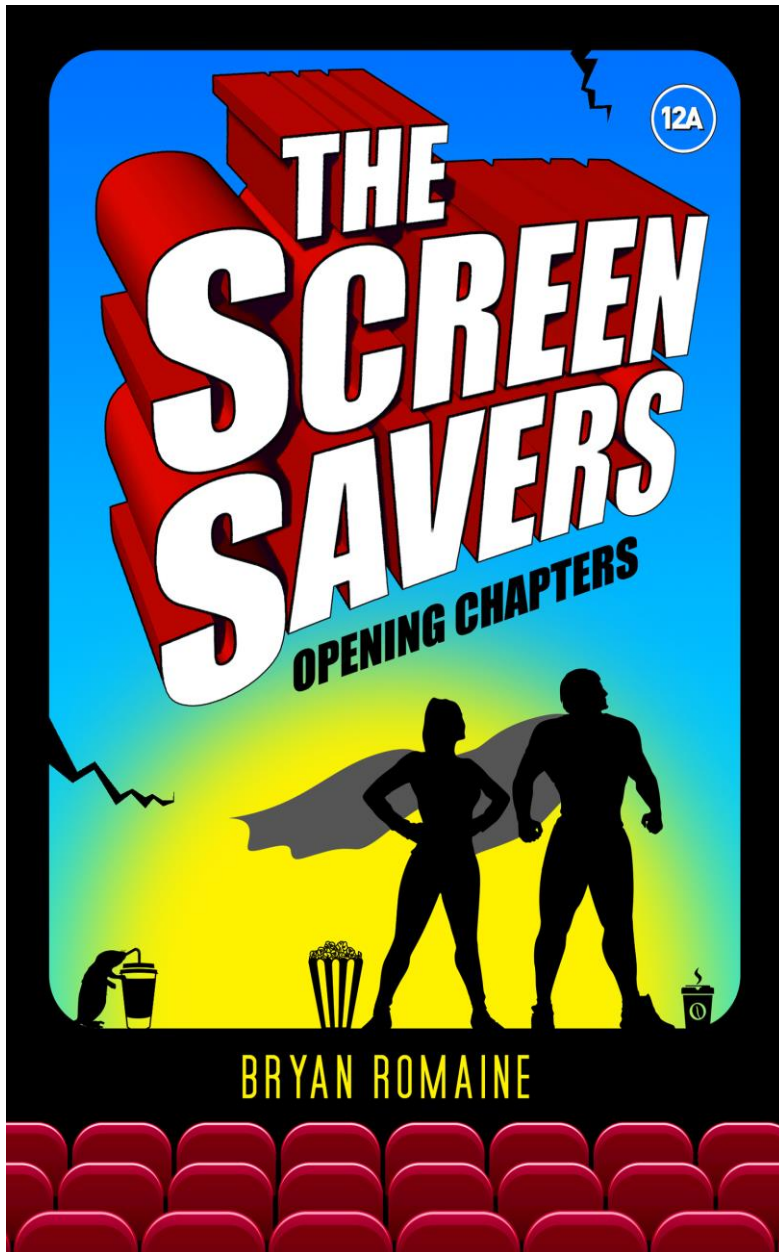


(Cover images: © Shutterstock.com /
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zzveillust woman, © Shutterstock.com /
majivecka man)

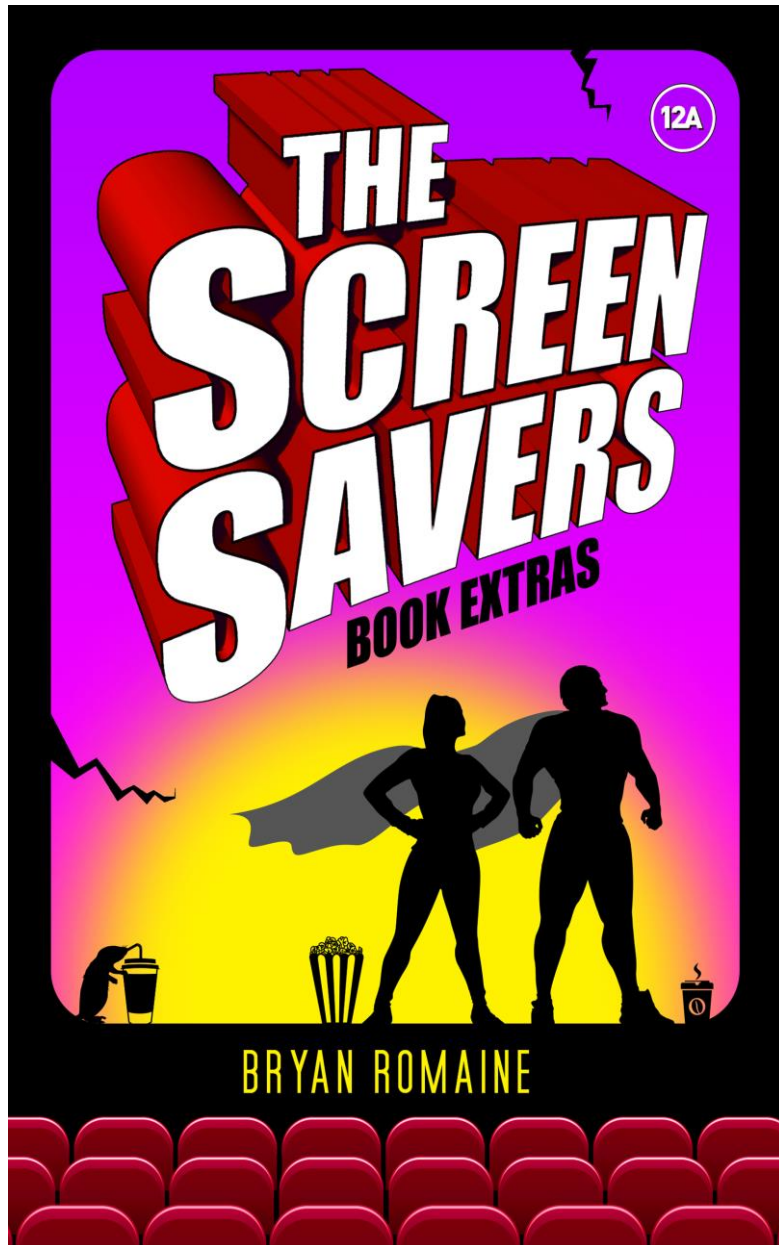
The quality of Mark's work shone immediately. I loved his design. It had many of the ingredients I needed, but not in the right proportions for the novel. It had the boy-meets-girl mystery I was looking for and it shouted indie cinema, but I was concerned that the romance angle was too tilted towards romantic drama – my romance element is more of a quirky, comic boy-meets-girl. The overall tone wasn't comic enough. We could have worked on the cover: we could have worked on the text on cinema screen, and changed the look and poses of the seated characters – maybe I should have progressed along that route. Instead, I simplified the brief to focus on the offbeat comic tone of the novel as a priority. My original brief had included notes on making the title of the novel more heroic, more superhero-like. Mark picked up on that element, looked more at depicting overarching plot of the novel, which is about saving the indie screening programme, and came up with the design I have used:



To promote the release of the novel, I wanted to give people the chance to read the opening chapter of the book for free, pre-release. Mark provided a cover for this too, tweaking the design and changing the the colour scheme:



He then produced a cover for the Book Extras:



We also worked on a range of adverts, social media banners, posters and postcards revolving around the film theme. A range of these images can be found on my website—

www.bryanromaine.com

—my Facebook page—

www.facebook.com/BryanRomaineAuthor

—and on my other social media sites. I think the characters in my novel would have approved. I'm very pleased with the way the film theme is woven into the artwork for my marketing material.

If you sign up to my newsletter, you'll also be able to see this artwork as the marketing

material is released. Sign up here:

www.bryanromaine.com/newsletter

Sockball's Tree Of The Week

I'm sure that by now you are missing Sockball and his tree watching activities – I am, and I'm the author. In order to avoid civil unrest I thought I would occasionally give updates on his life. The most important update to date is that Sockball, tired of watching trees from his or his neighbour's flat, and inspired by his book of trees and by numerous wildlife documentaries, has ventured out into the world and has taken Adam with him – tree watching. Sockball, now *at one* with the tree world, has studied them in detail and is passing on his newfound knowledge to you, the reader, in the form of "Tree Of The Week". He feels that it is unlikely he will actually post a tree update every week, as getting in touch with them to the extent he must if he is to understand them properly takes too much time away from his preferred pastime of sock-ball. He does, though, hope to post, via this author, occasional updates. You will get some updates if you have subscribed to my newsletter, but for instant information, follow me on Twitter at—

www.twitter.com/bryanromaine

—and Instagram at:

www.instagram.com/bryanjromaine

Sockball's first *Tree Of The Week* is Humphrey!

Sockball's Tree Of The Week. Week 1:

HUMPHREY



Humphrey likes the great outdoors, summer meadows, gale-force winds and ping-pong. His main hobby is hang gliding.

#TreeOfTheWeek

(Week 1)

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Sockball's Tree Of The Week. Week 2:

NIGEL



Nigel likes sunbathing, stand-up
comedy and flapjacks.
His best friend is Humphrey.

#TreeOfTheWeek

(Week 2)

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About The Author

The Screen Savers was initially written between 2000 and 2002. However, many of the characters in the novel predated even this. I've been writing since 1990 (novels, screenplays and short films), but had been struggling with writer's block since 2011. After a friend read this novel I saw her eyes light up with enthusiasm, and I thought that even if the writing wasn't happening for me I could at least work on releasing some of my existing projects. I have changed very little of the novel since the first draft, as I like to keep the flow of the work intact. Thankfully, now, as I type this, my writing is flowing again – I'll be returning to old screenplays and novels shortly, and will be writing new material: short films, comedy sketches, more novels and screenplays.

Follow my journey and find out more about my work by following me on social media, here:

www.facebook.com/BryanRomaineAuthor

www.twitter.com/bryanromaine

www.instagram.com/bryanjromaine

www.pinterest.com/bryanjromaine

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And sign up to my mailing list here:

www.bryanromaine.com/newsletter

You can find out more about me, *The Screen Savers* and my other stories by visiting my website:

www.bryanromaine.com

***The Screen Savers* Needs YOU**

Getting a novel noticed is difficult for an indie author. Being reviewed helps enormously. If you liked *The Screen Savers*, it would be great to see your comments on Amazon ([UK](#), [US](#), [CAN](#)), [Goodreads](#), or the website of the bookstore from which you purchased the novel. You can find links to review/discuss/spread the word about this novel here:

www.bryanromaine.com/tss-needs-you

In order to save *The Screen Savers* from obscurity, please take action – reviewing the novel, or sharing links to content/webpages that you have enjoyed, can make a big difference.

The Screen Savers

(OPENING CHAPTER)

Meeting: 2001

Adam likes spending the afternoon in the cinema, where he can be alone – think he’s alone at least. He’ll sit at the front watching *Bamboozled*, a Spike Lee film. Nobody goes to see his films, not around here, not in the day – it’s like his own private cinema.

He asks for a cappuccino and is given white coffee. He does not cause a fuss. The cinema hasn’t quite understood the whole speciality coffee revolution. It’s got a machine with lots of sticky labels: ‘cappuccino’, ‘latte’, ‘espresso’, ‘decaf’; but they all produce the same thing – white coffee. They do, though, have nutmeg, and chocolate, and are ahead of their time in many ways. They have other toppings, like hundreds-and-thousands, small chocolate Flakes (20 pence extra) and chocolate crunch (an all-sort mixture of chunky bits of chocolate that he suspects are ‘pick and mix’ crunched up: chocolate mutants past their sell-by). Once, he’d had the crunch and a crushed jelly baby floated to the surface – so the crunch is not all chocolate, or all crunchy. It shouldn’t even be called topping, because it sinks: the bits are far too heavy, what with them only serving white coffee with no supportive foamy top. You’re left with really sweet coffee and a sticky mess at the bottom of the cup which is impossible to get at. It can’t be dug out – they don’t provide spoons. No. If you actually want to eat the crunch, you have to take a mouthful of chocolate, add the coffee, and gargle.

Oh, there is a spoon. Adam uses it to dish out the crunch. But it is chained to the desk.

He takes his coffee and pays for it. He slips a Flake into his pocket without paying – call it compensation for the cappuccino fiasco – and enters the screening room. It’s empty: what a relief.

He sits in row four. The bottom section: the flat bit at the front. He’s never known anybody but him to sit in any of the front section of seven rows – well, almost nobody – not for a small film like this. Of course, yes, people sat there for blockbusters, after six o’clock and at weekends, when the seats in middle and back are, say, fifty percent full. Oh, and school holidays, how could he forget school holidays – some kids like to sit at the front and get neck-ache. This is a pain for him too. If they sit at the front so must he. And, yes, he too gets neck-ache. (There’s a big difference in degrees of head-neck elevation between row one and row four, a surprising variation for, what, ten feet in seat-to-seat distance.)

He likes all styles of cinema – low-budget, art film, foreign and mainstream. He enjoys the less mainstream films for reasons which include the additional pleasure of an empty screening room. (In this cinema, off-peak, anyway.) Screen Seven. That’s where they show that kind of material – anything non-mainstream. They show them in bouts of one to two weeks. Last week, a low-budget called *The Martins*; today it’s *Bamboozled*.

They dim the lights very slightly and the adverts begin – they vary the degree of darkness as the main feature gets closer, as if they’re trying to add to the tension (or allow people to find their seats – that’s another reason). For the adverts they dim, but you can still make out the pattern in the ceiling, quite a lot of light really; for the trailers it gets a lot darker, you can’t see any pattern. And for the feature, you lose all perception of ceiling, as if it no longer existed. There’s just blackness. Could be to infinity. Could be to ten feet above the screen, where it was before the adverts, when they play radio.

During the second advert, a woman walks past and sits in the first row. Right within his field of reality.

He checks – centre and back seats are empty. The cinema, apart from the woman, and him, is full of space.

There are five seats in row one. She sits in the second, one seat from the aisle.

He moves past her, and sits in seat four (he'll not sit at the end of a row, for reasons he keeps to himself).

This time it is she who looks around, and notices, too, that the cinema, apart from them, is still empty.

'I'm not a lunatic,' he announces with some confidence.

Pause.

'I know,' she replies with equal assurance.

Another pause. Advert number three finishes – there are usually four adverts for a film like this.

'I've seen you before,' she says.

An awkward pause.

'I'm not a lunatic either,' she continues.

Leaning across their dividing seat, she tells him she likes to sit at the back. That she comes to see films on her own. Thinks of it as being *her* cinema, this screen number seven, where they show the less mainstream films. Only he's always there, sitting at the front, and though she's accepted him being there she just wanted to see one film sitting at the front, with nobody else ahead.

They watch two adverts in silence. Two adverts during which he finds himself distracted, first by the pattern on the ceiling, which has now, given his new head elevation, become far more distractible, then by her coffee – which he imagines she'll slurp through the entire film, but is sipped quietly, with some grace, and is finished by the end of advert four.

She puts the cup down in the cup holder fixed to the seat next to him. An empty cup but for its mushy chocolate bottom.

'What did you have?' he asks.

'Latte.'

'And chocolate crunch?'

'Yes,' she replies, then quietly: 'but I didn't pay for it.'

He could see how you could get confused – the '20 pence extra' sign hangs over the Flakes, but you could easily presume it applied to all toppings. He doesn't mention it.

'Well, you haven't eaten it yet.'

'No,' she says. 'You got a spoon?'

'No,' he says.

They spend some time conversing about the coffee-making facilities and the benefits of various sitting locations within Screen Seven – a subject matter of which his knowledge is limited to the first few rows. While talking, the adverts finish and the trailers start.

'Why don't we both sit at the back? It's like sitting at the front but you feel you're in a bigger room,' she says.

'Yeah?' He takes a look at the back of the cinema. The room is still empty. Really empty. Sometimes, when he went in and sat near the front, he pretended it was empty when he knew very well that a few people had come in after the trailers. He hadn't seen them but could hear their rustle and blocked it from his mind. Once, he had turned around to see four people in the middle seats; they too had stayed on until the end of the credits. There had been popcorn also, covering the gangway, crunching under foot as he left, evidence that there had been others who'd left before the credits had finished.

The chances of their being invaded now, though, are low: the film is about to begin; trailers have finished; opening credits are rolling.

They move towards the back, sitting next to each other with just the one seat in between, and watch the movie.

Halfway through the film, Adam would confess to be enjoying the proceedings. Sitting in the middle towards the back is proving to be an exhilarating experience and he is able to see the whole screen without straining the tendons in his neck; there is in fact no need to move his head at all.

At this moment a man strolls by. A cinema hooligan: noisy looking, snack-heavy, eating popcorn in handfuls and choosing to sit in the middle by the aisle.

You see, this is the problem with sitting at the back. This is the hell you have to go through. He knew he should have stayed where he was. What was he thinking? A man almost in his line of view and munching popcorn! They really shouldn't let you in once the film has begun.

She senses his discomfort even though he tries to hide it.

'It's OK.' She pats him on the knee, and moves to the seat adjacent.

The man in the middle gets up and walks out.

'He's in the wrong screen,' she tells him, still making knee contact. 'It happens all the time.'

They watch the rest of the film, distraction-free, both staying until the very end. Afterwards, in the foyer, he asks her out. A date. To the cinema sometime. And she tells him she doesn't do the cinema coupling thing, or the cinema dating thing. But she will be doing the cinema alone thing next Thursday at 3:30. There's a screening of *Amores Perros* that nobody will want to see around here and it'll be good to see him there, at the back?

And she makes a movement toward him, as if to kiss him, then retreats. And he responds by kissing her. And she kisses him back.

He tells her that it's a date then, and she says no it's not, and he tells her that he'll not be at the 3:30 unless it is a date, and that he's attracted to her and that he doesn't play games.

She kisses him again, and tells him that she doesn't play games either.

Then she leaves.

But she won't go to see *Amores Perros* at the 3:30. And neither will he.

Want to read *The Screen Savers*?

This novel is available in print and ebook versions. You can purchase it from [Amazon](#) and from most other retail outlets. You can find links to places to purchase this novel by looking at my website's page for *The Screen Savers*, here:

www.bryanromaine.com/the-screen-savers

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Edition 1

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