

The Action-Packed Life of a Novelist

The life of a writer is the stuff of legend.

The Algonquin Round Table. Dashiell Hammett, Lillian Hellman and William Faulkner discussing current events. John Steinbeck sailing in the Sea of Cortez. Jack London taking off for the Klondike Gold Rush.

When I was finally able to quit my day-job at a Downtown law firm to become a full-time novelist, my brain was filled with these images. Which frontier would I conquer first on my journey to the top of the literary heap? Would I hole up in a hotel room for nine days, drink whisky and produce nothing but brilliance in the end?

Not quite.

Come to find out – the life of this writer is more...shall we say... mundane. Like, let's just look at one completely random page on my calendar. Not that I have a calendar. DO YOU THINK JACK LONDON HAD A CALENDAR?! Echem. I have a BlackBerry. Jack London probably didn't have a BlackBerry. Let's scroll to the Calendar Icon – click the wheelie thing...okay, there....let's see what I did on that day. That's right. Nothing. Wait...I take that back, it wasn't nothing. I was writing my third novel, but when I wasn't doing that...I became more and more obsessed with finding out who the voice of Pixar's new reluctant hero, *Ratatouille* was. An epic journey, I can tell you. Rivaling the Klondike Gold Rush.

Instead of boarding a steamer ship to Alaska, I typed in the URL to the Internet Movie Data Base – IMDB to the cool kids. Kinda like when people refer to Robert DeNiro as Bobby. In the back of my mind, I couldn't shake the sneaking feeling that The Mystery Voice was Hollywood's new It-Boy, Shia LeBeouf. No. *He's* the voice in that new penguin movie. The movie that inexplicably sets its penguin hi-jinx in Hawaii. Like *that* could happen.

I type *Ratatouille* into the search engine of IMDB. Up comes an error message. Something went wrong, it says. It can't process my instructions. Wait, what? I click back to the homepage. There's some huge story about *Pirates of the Caribbean* – I click on that and I'm led to the *Pirates* page. Okay...so maybe I typed in the title incorrectly. I go back, type in *Ratatouille* again...and again I get the Error Message. Now I'm enraged. The novel can wait. I. MUST. KNOW.

I go back to the only thing that I can click on: *The Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* page. Okay – here's where all my years of playing **Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon** finally come in handy. How can I get to *Ratatouille* from *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*?

I instinctively click on Johnny Depp. I can't help myself. Even electronically – he's magnetic. I scroll through his credits – god, remember when he was on *21 Jump Street* –

and decide my next move must be *Sleepy Hollow*. Large ensemble- a lot of choices. It's then that I decide that I've got to get to Tom Hanks. Tom Hanks was in *Toy Story*. *Toy Story* was made by Pixar. I click on the Pixar link – I get to *Ratatouille*. I find my Mystery Voice.

Okay...so *Sleepy Hollow*. I scroll through the names. It's a veritable Who's Who of every Tim Burton movie. Can't click on Lisa Marie – only Tim Burton movies will come up. Walken. Gotta go with Walken.

I click on Christopher Walken and his IMDB page comes up. Reading over his credits is like being at a party and having someone spill a pitcher of sangria on you. Shit everywhere. Red wine? Lemons? Oranges? Limes? Booze? A little vodka maybe? Completely random, but a delicious mix of eccentricity that will get you seriously fucked up. *Gigli*? He was in *Gigli*? Really? How was he bulletproof in that catastrophe? *Kangaroo Jack*? What the...I am stunned into open-mouthed terror as I scan through Walken's credits. Like I'm driving through a bad part of town – keeping my head down, looking for something – *anything* - that looks remotely familiar. A-ha!

Catch Me if You Can. Now we're cooking with gas. Hanks is within striking distance. God, remember *Striking Distance*: Bruce Willis + Sarah Jessica Parker + Coast Guard = Crazy Delicious.

There he is. Tom Hanks. I can feel my heart skip a beat as I near my destination. This must be how Dashiell Hammet felt as he was closing in on finishing *The Thin Man*. It's all very blurry as I click on Hanks, click on the Pixar link and the IMDB page for *Ratatouille* comes up. My breath catches.

Patton Oswalt.

Huh.

Maybe...maybe I'll make a playlist on my iTunes or something.