

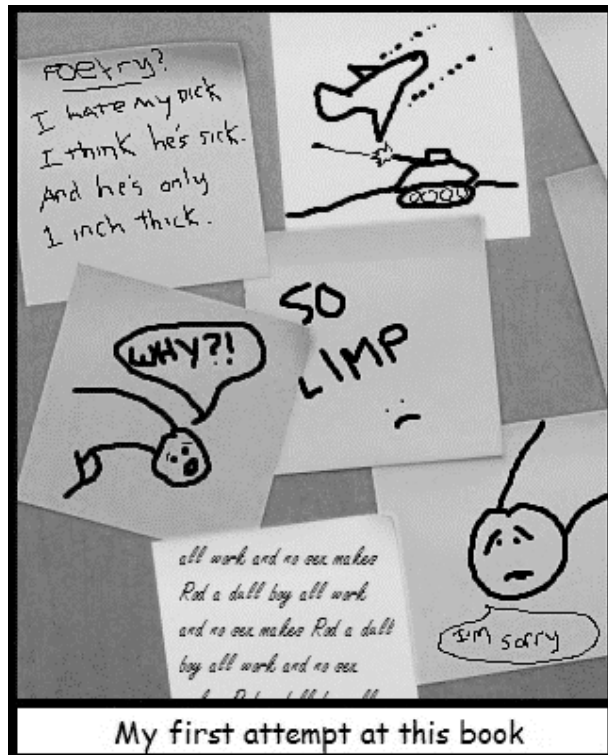
Introduction

You, my friend, are about to read my third book.

After the success of my first two books, I was a bit stumped on what to approach as the subject matter. Turning to my publisher/editor, I asked him what I should write next, and he simply said:

"Write what you know."

With that advice in mind, I started writing a book about erectile dysfunction. Unfortunately, it ended up as a small pile of sticky-notes with sad-faced penis drawings on them, all stained with my tears.



I then turned to the next thing I know how to do very well: parenting. That project was also canned early because the children would not leave me the hell alone long enough to write a single page. Why can't children open yogurt themselves without repainting the kitchen walls in strawberry-banana? It boggles the mind.

My wife, Kerri, then suggested I write a book on "romance tips."

I couldn't disagree with her on this one, mainly because she wins most arguments anyway. To her point, though, over time I have somehow managed to master the art of wooing. "The Art of Woo" sounds like a contemporary soft-rock band. The Art of Woo would release one single called "Shame Is Forever," and then fade into obscurity. They should have chosen a better name.

This book was originally written as a "How To" type of book. It had projects and crafts that would have made Martha Stewart proud, and maybe even a little fidgety in her panty area. After reading it she would become obsessed with having me, and then I'd hit it, and she would call it "a good thing" and we would laugh and she'd kill a pig with her bare hands so she could make me breakfast sausages.

If you've never read anything of mine before, this is how the entire book is going to go. Fair warning.

After reading *Romantic As Hell* in its original format, I realized the layout and projects—although awesome and boner-inducing—didn't sound like they came from my voice. It was also pointed out that you can find most everything I wrote posted on Pinterest, so my dream of a Martha Stewart amateur porn video went right out the window.

Sometimes I really hate the Internet.

A complete overhaul ensued, and the result is what you now have sitting before you. Each chapter is called an "Act," and is introduced as if I'm presenting it as a theatrical event. This is ironic, because I hate theater unless it's a production of *Sweeney Todd*. What I'm saying is, don't be surprised by

the opening format of the chapters and also don't be shocked if I kill off all the main characters by slicing their throats open in a barber's chair.

My overall goal is to make *you* look better in the eyes of your partner, along with a boatload of face-palms and laughs. If you already experienced some of this with the picture of the limp dicks two pages ago, I'd call that a good start.

Enjoy.

Instructions Before Proceeding

MEN: *Please proceed immediately to the next page. Do not follow the instructions for the ladies unless you are confused about your sexuality (or confident in it, whatever).*

LADIES: *Meet me at the very last section of this book for a special message before continuing. Wear something slinky.*

PRELUDE - THE STAGE IS SET



"Prelude" Means "Before the Lewdness"

A small boy wanders out onto the stage in front of a quiet, fidgeting audience. He stops dead center on the platform and looks blankly into a sea of people who are, for the most part, still looking down into their laps because they're playing Candy Crush on their iPhones.

In their defense, it's pretty addicting even though Level 65 is a real bitch.

The boy pauses, nonplussed. He holds up a large poster-board that reads:
The Quest ...

trumpets blare from the orchestra and the startled boy drops the sign

43 members of the audience crap themselves, and five of them drop their phones. One guy cracks his screen and yells SONOFABITCH I WAS JUST ABOUT TO CLEAR LEVEL 65

Candy Crush, Level 65: *Ruining people's lives since 2012.*

The boy retrieves the sign from the stage floor and holds it aloft again. You finish reading it: *The Quest for the Perfect Gift.*

Face it, we've all been there at one time or another: on the prowl for a special something for that special someone to show her that she's, well, special. I'm not talking *special* special, but *romantically* special. I'm not saying you can't have something *romantically* special with someone who is *special* special, because I'm not a complete a-hole.

Also, I've written *special* so many times now that the word "special" looks really weird to me. Does it look weird to you? I forget where I was going with this. Ah, yes.

The Quest for the Perfect Gift.

trumpets die out in a terrible fart-like sound because that paragraph went on far too long

As the curtain to the stage draws open we find our underdog—you—standing at the entrance of a Hallmark Store, hands jammed deep in pockets, mouth agape. Slowly your head turns from side to side, scanning ... searching. Like the *Terminator*, thrust into an unknown world to hunt down Sarah Conner (the hot Sarah from the first movie, before she got all spindly, muscly, and gross) a heads-up display appears before you.

SEEKING ... SEEKING ... SEEKING

Clerk: Can I help you, sir?

You turn to face the cheerful employee who is only asking because it is required, and her manager is watching. Your display flashes:

Subject: Store Employee ...

Query: Asking to help you ...

Proper responses: "Yes please," "No thank you," "Maybe," "I'm not sure," "What year is it?" and "Kill me now, this is torture."

You: I'm not sure.

Clerk: Well, if you need any help, let me know.

You: Kill me now, this is torture.

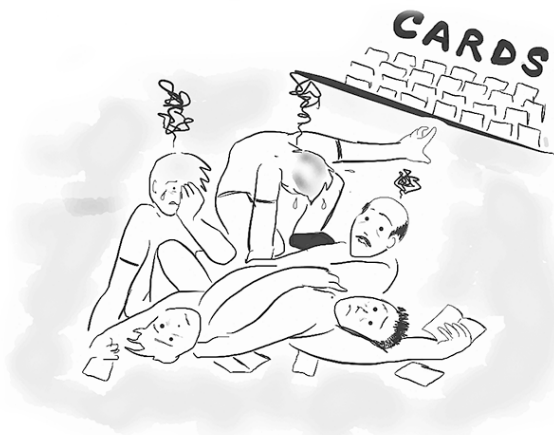
The clerk smiles and runs into the back.

Realizing that you just lost the only friend who could possibly help your quest, you return to scanning the store. The smell of Yankee Candles (What is that? Apple? Cinnamon? Death?), Vera Bradley purses, and potpourri overwhelms you. Cautiously you step over the bodies of several men who came in here with their wives hours earlier—each wearing a death-mask stare that says, "Why?"

Ignoring them, but heeding their fate for future visits, you pray that joyous cherubs will appear from the ether, and the aisles will part like the Red Sea, and a quintessential keepsake will illuminate from the rear wall of the store, as if it were screaming, "HERE I AM, EXACTLY THE GIFT YOU NEED!"

But nothing happens.

No inspiration comes to you, and the only person you see resembling a cherub is the nice lady behind the counter wrapping fudge. You are alone in a sea of paisley wallets, weird-looking figurines with large eyeballs and heads that defy biological accuracies, and—of course—the whole counter of Alex and Ani bracelets¹.



That Eureka feeling you so desire eludes you.

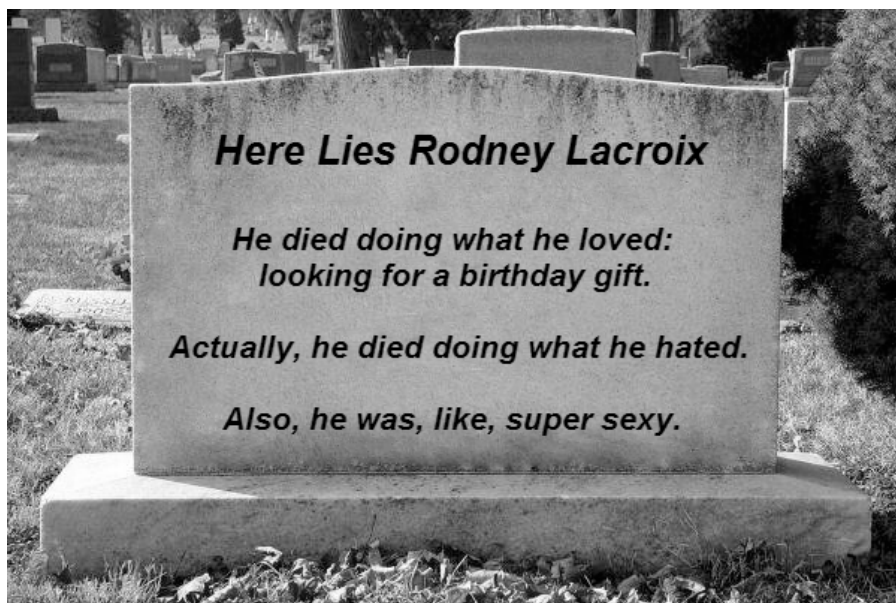
Resigned to your fate, you slowly turn left and begin trudging through the aisles. Each step is deliberate and includes calculations that would make Albert Einstein quiver with fear.

1. *Lift foot up.*
2. *Move leg forward.*
3. *Turn head left.*
4. *Scan up.*
5. *Scan down.*
6. *Place foot down.*
7. *Turn head right.*
8. *Scan up.*
9. *Scan down.*

¹ "Alex and Ani" is a \$100 million dollar company that makes bracelets, mostly from recycled materials, in case you needed another reason to question your life's decisions as you eat cold spaghetti rings from a can.

Do you see an acceptable item? If *yes*, acquire and proceed to checkout. If *no*, repeat steps 1-9 using other leg.

Time stands still as you wander through aisles of beaded picture frames, painted wine glasses, and fur-covered hand puppets. After spending a few minutes making a puppet talk with a terrible Italian accent that deteriorates into a bad Dracula impression, you continue with your search because you don't want to die in this store like those other poor bastards.



By the time the manager yells, "STORE CLOSING," you realize you have been wandering around for three hours and have lost almost two pounds. Your FitBit is really proud of you, but you still haven't ... wait ...

You look down. You're holding a card in your hand. You barely remember looking at them, but at some point you must have stood in front of the giant wall of cards deciding between funny or smooshy or "For Her" or "From Him" or "Love" or "Like" or "Meh, You're Okay" or the ones that open and OHMYGOD WHY IS THIS ONE SINGING?!

Cover: *To the one I love*

Inside: *Blah blah blah. I looked through 400 cards. This was better than*

nothing. Blah blah blah.

That's not what it says, but that's what it *should* say because finding the perfect card is a day trip in and of itself. If you get a card that is 60% of what you would normally say, in a voice you'd normally say it in, that's the winner.

"To my love, our love is like a summer ..." NOPE.

"You are my everything. You are the wind ben-." AYFKM¹ who talks like that? No.

"I love you. Thanks for not leaving me for someone better who has abs and doesn't pressure you to do butt stuff."

Awesome. Card requirement? DONE.

But the store is closing, so in desperation, you grab one of those stupid Troll dolls because it's right there at the checkout counter, and it's kind of cute, right?

No, it's terrible, but you're out of time. Maybe you'll throw in a homemade "free backrub coupon" to even it all out. Stop talking now because you're making it worse. You really are terrible at this.

It's okay. Because I was once like you.

That's why I wanted to write this book. With a little perseverance and a lot of trial and error (and some errors that led to trials, but my lawyer will not allow me to discuss those), I have done my best to fix my pathetic ways.

And so, with some innovative ideas and tragic stories in hand, and a word processor at my fingertips, this book began to take shape. If dredging step-by-step through a 300-page book that lists over 1000 supposedly romantic ideas sounds like hell, you've come to the right place.

Take my hand. Walk with me.

I'm about to spin some tales of romantic woe and several tips of romantic woo. Take what you can from these stories and run with them. That is, unless

¹ Acronym for "Are You F**king Kidding Me" in case you didn't know that because you're either really old or really young. If you're really young, please return this book to your mom or dad ASAP².

² Acronym for "As Soon As Possible." Okay, this is starting to get silly.

you're like me and hate doing any type of cardio.

What I'm saying is, don't fall into the same traps and mistakes I've made in the past. What traps and mistakes? Trust me, you'll know them when you read them.

Worst Case: You laugh.

Better Case: You laugh AND get some tips that strengthen your position in the dating community or in your own relationship.

Best Possible Case Ever: You laugh AND get some good tips AND make your significant other's friends think you're amazing, thus increasing the odds of a threesome.

Always, always, aim for the best possible case ever. I cannot emphasize this enough.

Um, by the way, you do realize you forgot to get her something from the kids, right?

Go on.

I'll be here when you get back.