

# FLAKING OUT

Anxiety is a terrible co-pilot



WRITTEN BY TESSA SHAFFER & SHANE SHAFFER



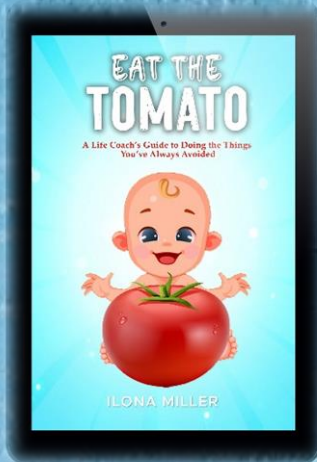


**LOGLINE:** A life coach and her anxiety-ridden boyfriend reluctantly spend her birthday weekend traveling through the backwoods of Virginia to surprise the dying dad who abandoned her as a teenager.

**An award-winning romantic comedy based on an embarrassingly true story.**



# CHARACTERS



## **ILONA lives in the moment.**

She's a bartender turned motivational life coach—because bartending pretty much is a certification in therapy. Now with a best-selling book out, “Eat the Tomato”, she has to face her own abandonment issues head on.

Her character arc goes from an upbeat person who inspires Mike to live life to the fullest, to someone who avoids her own reality at all costs. In the end, she faces her own past only through the lives of others but embraces this as sufficient growth.

## **MIKE can't live in the moment because the current moment is filled with anxiety.**

He never ate a tomato until he was twenty-five, and if not for Ilona forcing him to do so he probably would have went twenty-five more years without one.

His character arc goes from someone who is pushed out of his comfort zone for the sake of love, to someone who—thanks to anxiety medication—becomes the anchor Ilona needs to reel her in from spouts of intense overwhelm and visits her dying dad alone to bring her the closure she needs.









# SYNOPSIS

When Ilona gets a phone call from an estranged relative, she learns the father who abandoned her when she was thirteen is now on hospice and wants to see her. As a life coach with a popular book just released, she knows she has to face this fear of confronting her dad to find out why he left without so much as a goodbye or risk losing closure and forever feel like a fraud to her fans.

Ilona's agent reminds her of a forgotten book appearance hours from her dying dad, and through a reluctant road trip, Ilona and Mike's relationship is tested for the first and possibly the last time.

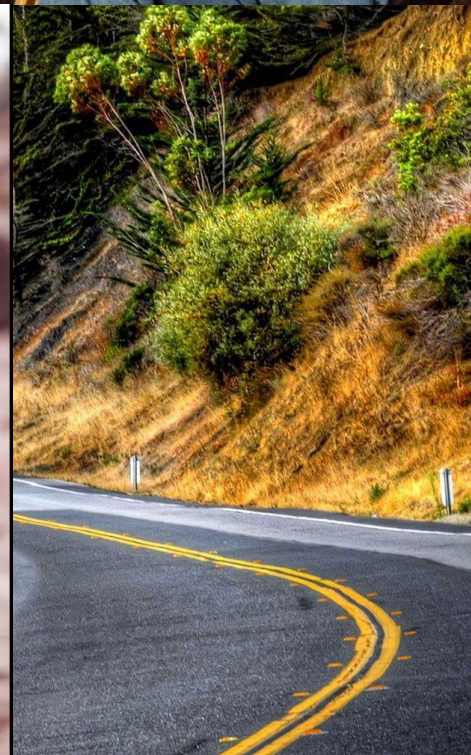
Mike's frequent anxiety is already running rampant—it's Ilona's birthday weekend and the weekend he had big plans to propose, but not anymore.

Ilona gets her purse stolen from their rental SUV, Mike gets accosted by a "slushie soldier" at a truck stop, and Ilona gets food poisoning and loses more than sleep at a camp cabin that shares a porch with a family roasting tiny fish on sticks instead of s'mores.

The closer they get to reaching her dad, the more Mike and Ilona's roles reverse. Ilona spirals with anxiety and emotions of abandonment until she instigates a fight over a sexy selfie on Mike's phone and flakes out on him after her book appearance, leaving Mike to visit her dying dad alone.

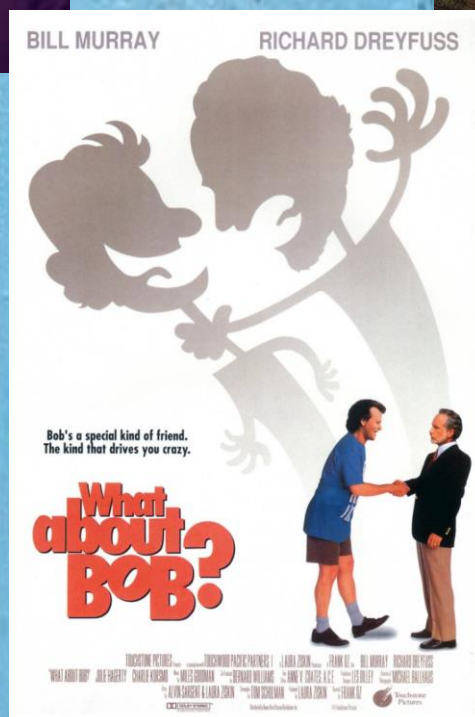
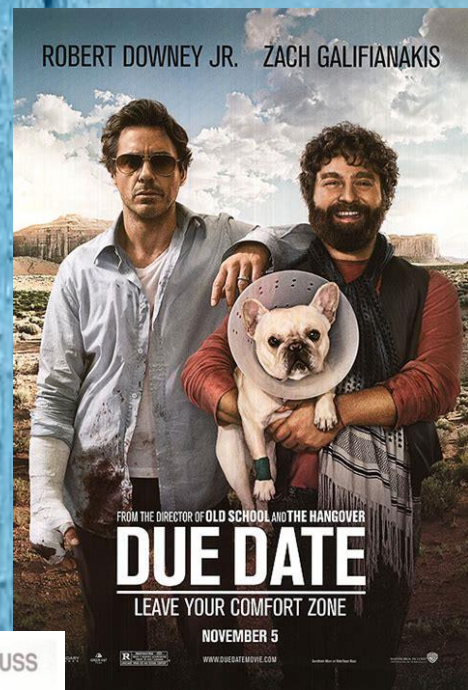
Mike arrives to confront Ilona's dad, but finds himself talking to a fresh corpse. Refusing to go back home empty handed, Mike retraces the steps of their nightmare of a road trip to bring Ilona the closure and birthday she deserves.







# COMP TITLES



**FLAKING OUT IS A FRESH ROMCOM TWIST ON HOW ANXIETY AFFECTS RELATIONSHIPS**



# THE WRITERS



TESSA & SHANE SHAFFER

This feature was conceived during a blackout. My husband and I got drunk by the light of our dying cell phones and threw shade at all the best and worst moments of our relationship while I scribbled those scenes into an outline.

- He likes to bring up that one about me getting sick and almost shitting into a plastic bag.
- I like to bring up the anxiety attack he had that almost forced him to cancel his appointment from the *parking lot* of his anxiety therapist.
- But neither of us ever bring up that summer eleven years ago when we took that awkward road trip to see the dying dad who abandoned me, **only to have him flake out one last time by dying right before we got there.**

We wrote *FLAKING OUT* centered around the most awkward road trip of our lives, coupled with the second worst, third worst, and “*almost was the worst*” moments we’ve shared.

**Tessa Shaffer** is an award-winning novelist and screenwriter who searches for universal truths that bleed through any genre. Whether it’s finding the humor in the hurt, the evil in the good, or the strange in the familiar—her personal brand of writing focuses on multi-dimensional stories that leave audiences with a changed perspective.



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