

RICHARD TYLER JORDAN

July Newsletter

It's summertime, and that's when the romantic in me seems to start imagining moonlit dinners on a balcony in Italy, handwritten love letters tucked into books, and warm breezes that carry secrets only I can hear. *Yeah, I'm a starry-eyed romantic. Bite me. Ha!*

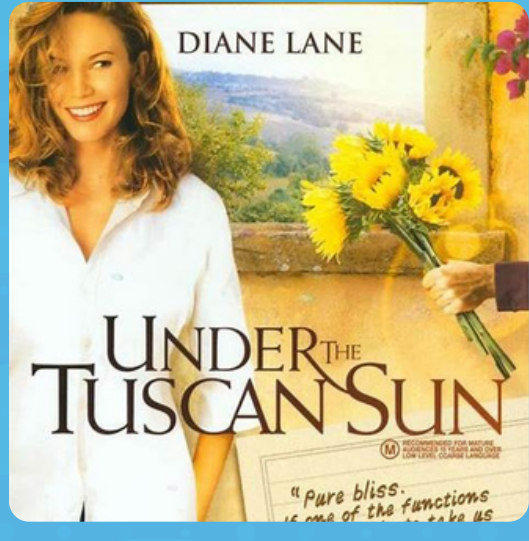
But just the other day, while day-dreaming by the pond in my garden (yes, I'm a dreamer and I have a pond!), I started thinking about two of my all-time favorite movies: *Somewhere in Time* (1980) and *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003 I got to work on the film's publicity campaign when I worked at Disney!). I've seen them repeatedly, but it only just dawned on me—both movies open in pretty much the same way! Both start with a literary celebration—and an unexpected guest who changes the lives of the main characters.



In *Somewhere in Time*, playwright Richard Collier (played by Christopher Reeve) is being fêted backstage after the successful premiere of his first play. In *Under the Tuscan Sun*, Frances Mayes (played by Diane Lane), a respected author and teacher, is attending a book launch—ironically, for someone else's success.

At first glance, the two films seem worlds apart—one is a time-travel fantasy steeped in longing and tragedy; the other is a romantic drama about personal renewal in the Italian countryside. But look a little closer, and you'll find a curious kinship between them.

ENTER THE STRANGER.



In *Somewhere in Time*, an elderly woman approaches Richard and presses a pocket watch into his hand, whispering, "*Come back to me.*" It's a surreal, unsettling moment that launches a story of obsession, metaphysics, and time-bending love.

In *Under the Tuscan Sun*, the stranger is less spectral but just as consequential. A man approaches

Frances and quietly informs her that her husband is having an affair. It's a truth bomb that explodes her stable life and sets her on a journey to Italy—and ultimately, to herself.

These strangers function like mythological messengers—external agents of fate who tip the protagonists into a world of transformation. From that moment on, both Richard and Frances begin a kind of pilgrimage: he into the past, she into a possible future.

And in both films, the settings becomes kind of co-conspirators. Richard travels to a grand hotel on Mackinac Island, built in the 1800's. Frances buys a rundown villa begging to be loved back to life in Tuscany. These places aren't just backdrops; they are mirrors of the characters' emotional states and facilitators of their change.



Yet while *Somewhere in Time* ends in transcendent tragedy, *Under the Tuscan Sun* opts for quiet hope. Richard dies for love; Frances rediscovers how to live for it. And in both cases, what begins at literary celebrations end in emotional resurrections.



Perhaps the most touching parallel is this: each film reminds us that our lives can change in an instant—and that change is sometimes ushered in not by the people we know but by the strangers who interrupt the party.

The next time you're watching a film, reading a novel—or just living your own life—pay attention to the uninvited guests. They might hand you a pocket

watch, a painful truth, or something far subtler and consequential.

Whatever the gift, the question is the same: Will you step through the door they open?

It happened once to me. More detail at a later date (perhaps it will appear in a future novel!), but in an instant, I accepted an invitation and said these exact words: "*Why not?*" In that *instant*, my life changed *irrevocably*—and truly began.

Have you ever had such a moment? Please tell me about it!

Thanks again for taking the time to read July's Newsletter. Next month, I'll have some exciting information about the latest Polly Pepper Mystery, ***Murder in Mint Condition***, which I'm putting the final touches on, and I can't wait to tell you about it!

Oh, and if you liked this bit about *Somewhere in Time* and *Under the Tuscan Sun* (both great movies and novels!), I've got a longer article on the subject in the Blog section of my website, ***Richardtylerjordan.com***. I hope you'll visit!

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