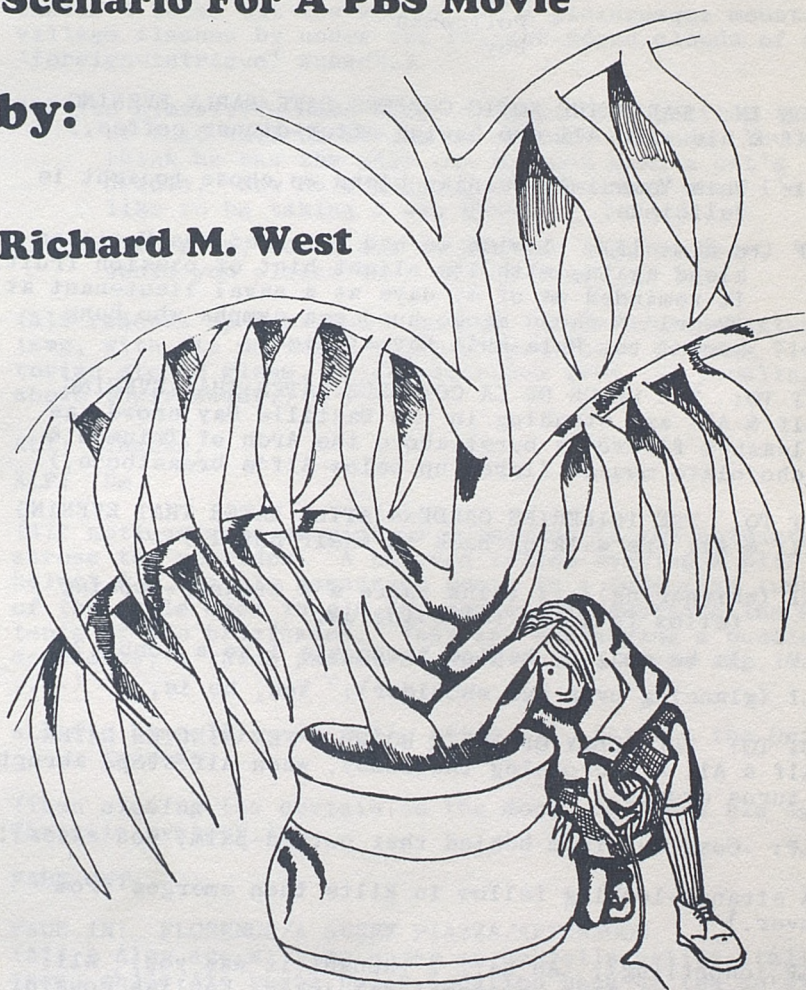


**How Alf & Ali Spent Their
European Vacation:
Scenario For A PBS Movie**

by:

Richard M. West



Title Art: Peter West

CAST OF CHARACTERS: Alf
Ali, Alf's wife
Algy, Alf's cousin
Alona Magaresquilay
General Sir Alex Tonsbury
Amanda
Policeman
Boy

FADE IN: PARIS/THE XOTIC COFFEES CAFE/EARLY EVENING
(Alf & his wife Ali are having after-dinner coffee.)

ALI: This Yemeni-Abyssinian blend we chose tonight is delicious!

ALF (to himself): I wish we had selected the Hawaiian blend again, with its slight hint of passion fruit. It reminded me of my days as a naval lieutenant at 'Pearl' & those mango-hued sea nymphs who hung around the Hula-Hula Bar at night.

CUT TO: THE PLACE DE LA CONCORDE/LATER THAT EVENING
(Alf & Ali are standing in the Bastille Day crowd, as unleashed fireworks burst above the Arch of Triumph & a chocolate mousse flares up below Alf's breastbone.)

CUT TO: THE TUILERIES GARDENS/STILL LATER THAT EVENING
(Alf & Ali are walking back to their hotel.)

ALI (whispering): I think there's a strange-looking fellow in kilts following us.

ALF: Is he dodging behind lampposts like a hobbit?

ALI (glancing over her shoulder): Yes, he is.

CUT TO: THE LOBBY OF THEIR HOTEL/A FEW MINUTES LATER
(Alf & Ali are crossing the lobby, when Alf stops abruptly & turns around.)

ALF: Come out from behind that potted palm, you rascal!

(A strange-looking fellow in kilts then emerges from cover.)

ALF (chortling): Ah ha! I thought it was you! Ali, this is Algy, my practical-joking English cousin.

ALI: I say! I didn't expect to meet you until we reached Florence.

ALF (to himself): Yecchh! I can't stand those yo-yo Italian pizzas!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: THE ORIENT EXPRESS/LATE AFTERNOON

(Alf & Ali are sitting side by side in a wood-paneled compartment of the Orient Express, while Algy lies on the opposite seat taking a nap. Ali is engrossed in a magazine article about stolen Italian art. Alf is listening idly to the click-clack sound of the train wheels & looks out the window, as a picturesque mountain village flashes by under the crimson-edged clouds of a 'foreign-intrigue' sunset.)

ALF (to himself): Damn Algy, anyway! I'm getting tired of that ball of string he carries around. You'd think he was the only one who can make a cat's cradle. Now he's hogging a whole seat when I'd like to be taking a nap myself.

ALI (whispering, so as not to disturb Algy): Dear, would you please turn on the lamp?

(Alf reaches up & switches on the little bronze-fixture lamp, with its delicate tulip-shaped shade of pink Victorian etched glass, which protrudes from the paneling above their heads.)

ALI: Thanks.

ALF: Um.

(Alf notices some suspicious goings-on in the compartment across the corridor. A bearded fellow wearing a pith helmet & a heavily mascaraed woman in a turquoise turban of the style seen in old spy movies are emptying the contents of two briefcases. They are exchanging a bundle of documents, a thick packet of bank notes, a red wig, a)

ALF (to himself): Oh well, after all, this is the Orient Express.

(Then closing the curtain on the door, he opens his Agatha Christie mystery.)

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: FLORENCE/A SUNNY PIAZZA/AFTERNOON

(Alf & Algy are sitting under an umbrella eating Italian ices, while Ali rests under sedation back at the hotel.)

ALGY: Don't worry, chum. This so-called Florence Syndrome is quite common & should pass quickly.

ALF: Yes, but

(Alf pauses to wipe a splash of raspberry ice from the front of his yellow, green & lavender Hawaiian shirt.)

ALGY (with a sweeping gesture): Alf, just look around! Here in this little square we are surrounded by a clutter of Renaissance masterpieces. Such a profusion of great art can sometimes cause — well, disorientation in a sensitive person like your wife.

ALF (to himself): Damn Algy & his damn ball of string. I wish he would stop rolling it back & forth, back & forth — back & forth across the damn table.

CUT TO: A HOTEL ROOM/EARLY THAT EVENING

(Ali is propped up in bed with a towel wrapped around her head & the blinds drawn, as Alf enters the room.)

ALI (weakly): Who is it?

ALF: Alf. How are you feeling?

ALI: A little better. Where is Algy?

ALF (clearing his throat): Ali, I must tell you something.

ALI (impatiently): Well, if you must.

ALF: Ali, you are not married to my cousin Algy.

ALI (scathingly): Not married to my own husband!

ALF: Ali, I think you should see Dr. Parisi, the eminent expert on Florence Syndrome.

ALI: I will only if my husband agrees. Does Dr. Parisi paint or sculpt?

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: BUDAPEST/LATE MORNING

(Alf & Ali are strolling through a winding & gabled street of Budapest's old Gypsy Quarter.)

ALI (happily squeezing Alf's hand): Oh, how can we ever thank Dr. Parisi enough?

ALF: Well, his bill was pretty high. But I guess we could send him a picture post-card of Budapest.

ALI: That's a sweet thought! I have one here in my purse with a nice view of the Danube.

ALF: There's a sidewalk cafe at the corner with four & twenty blackbirds perched on the awning. Let's stop for coffee & a snack, my feet are starting to hurt.

(While Ali writes the post-card for Dr. Parisi, Alf eats a slice of pie & wonders where his cousin Algy is.)

ALF (to himself): Damn that Algy! He hasn't been back to the hotel since he met that sexy Hungarian singer two

nights ago in the former Red October Cabaret & started showing her those tricks he does with that damn ball of string.

CUT TO: AN APARTMENT HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE FORMER RED VANGUARD TIN FACTORY/MOMENTS LATER

(Algy is exiting the apartment house disguised as a Gypsy musician, followed through an open window by the tremulous voice of Alona Magaresquilay, as she sings her famous rendition of Sunset Caravan of Broken Dreams.)

CUT TO: THE NEW ECONOMICS GYPSY RESTAURANT/THAT SAME EVENING

(Alf & Ali are sitting in the restaurant's candlelight glow dining on goulash & a bottle of Tokai aszu, when a roving Gypsy hummer approaches their table.)

ALI: Do you know Sunset Caravan of Broken Dreams?

GYPSY HUMMER (groaning emotionally): Ja ja.

ALI (enthusiastically): Oh, Alf, Gypsy humming is so emotional, don't you think?

ALF (suspiciously): I suppose so. But there's something curious about that fellow. Despite his gold earring, ruffled shirt, scarlet cummerbund, edelweiss embroidered vest, handlebar mustache, long sideburns & dark glasses — I have a strange feeling he's not quite what he appears to be.

ALI: Don't you think so?

ALF: Well, maybe I'm mistaken

(Alf pauses, as some goulash gravy drips from his fork & falls on the lapel of his cream-colored linen jacket.)

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: RIGA/EARLY AFTERNOON

(Algy & Alona Magaresquilay enter the lively dining room of the Hotel Perestroika where they are met by Algy's father, the strapping & walrus-mustached General Sir Alex Tonsbury.)

SIR ALEX (thunderingly): So this is the famous Hungarian torch singer?

ALGY (proudly): Yes, father, this is my Alona.

ALONA MAGARESQUILAY: What brings you also to Latvia, Sir Alex?

SIR ALEX: Amber, my dear, I'm a collector. The Baltic coast is — I am sure you must know — loaded with the stuff.

ALGY: We are here to observe the political situation.
The Balts have been in an uproar all summer.

SIR ALEX: Quite so! But I hope things don't get too rowdy.

ALI (breathlessly, as she & Alf join the others at the table): Do you think there might be violence?

SIR ALEX (ominously): One never knows with these Balts.

(Alf rises from his chair & peers out at the Bay of Riga.)

ALF (to himself): Well, there's still no sign of the Russian battleship Potemkin.

CUT TO: THE BEACH BELOW THE HOTEL PERESTROIKA/LATE AFTERNOON

(General Sir Alex Tonsbury strikes a commanding pose on the wind-swept beach, despite the fact that he is bare-footed & his gray-striped trouser legs are both rolled to his knees.)

SIR ALEX (urgently): Go to it, lads!

(As three Latvian school boys he has hired madly rake the sand for amber.)

(Meanwhile, Algy sits nearby on a granite monolith dangling his ball of string in the surf.)

SIR ALEX (angrily thumping his ditty-bag): Blast that useless pup! There he is angling for amber again with that damn ball of string. I've told him before that you don't angle for amber!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: MOSCOW/NIGHTFALL

(Alf stands in the darkness of a Moscow square waiting for Ali, a '15th Century' icon he has purchased surreptitiously from a taxi driver hidden under his jacket. Alf has been waiting in the square since before sunset but still there is no sign of Ali. In fact, the square is completely empty. Alf begins to wonder if he is waiting in the right square. He also wonders what time it is, as a policeman comes by.)

ALF: Excuse me, do you know the time?

POLICEMAN: Da.

(Then the policeman continues walking across the square.)

CUT TO: THE LOBBY OF THE BOLSHOI THEATER/LATER THAT EVENING

(An excited throng is leaving the theater after the premiere performance of a new ballet.)

ALI: Oh, Alf, wasn't it lucky we were able to find you before the ballet started?

ALF: Yes, these K.G.B. fellows are still pretty clever at finding people.

ALI: Didn't you think the new "Glasnost" ballet was great?

ALF: There sure was a lot of 'openness' but — bare-breasted ballerinas?

CUT TO: A MOSCOW STREET CORNER/THE NEXT AFTERNOON
(A disconsolate couple are sitting on the curbstone. Alona Magaresquilay attempts to console the old woman & her white-bearded husband, as Algy kneels in the gutter lowering his ball of string through the grating of a storm drain.)

ALGY: I can see it quite clearly now.

ALONA MAGARESQUILAY (in broken Russian): My friend sees it!

ALGY: My string is long enough.

ALONA MAGARESQUILAY (in broken Russian): My friend's string can reach it!

(The old man puts his head in his hands & rocks back & forth on the curbstone.)

ALGY (looking up at Alona Magaresquilay in frustration): But the damn chewing gum won't stick!

(The old man raises his head & tries to whistle, but his upper denture is missing.)

ALONA MAGARESQUILAY (in broken Russian): Grandmother, don't you or your husband have any chewing gum other than Free Dent?

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: THE BALTIC SEA/A SLOOP IS MOVING THROUGH FOG & GALE WINDS/TIME OF DAY UNCERTAIN

(Sir Alex Tonsbury, zippered up in nautical gear, stands at the helm under scudding black clouds. Alf, Ali, Algy & Alona Magaresquilay steady themselves against the rail again, as another wave breaks across the deck.)

SIR ALEX (shouting): Ahg! This is the way to travel to England — by sea!

(The others groan through the spindrift.)

SIR ALEX (shouting again): Someone fetch me the sextant!

ALGY (to himself): Before we set sail from Poland, I went into this chandlery shop in Gdansk. They only had a second-hand sextant, but it was shined up & cheap, so I bought it. The proprietor was a nice chap. He offered me some Polish schnapps. He was keen on learning a few English phrases, so I taught him a few English phrases. We drank more Polish schnapps. He took out a piece of rope & showed me how to tie some sailor knots. We drank more Polish schnapps. I showed him some tricks with my ball of string. We drank more Polish schnapps

SIR ALEX (shouting louder): Someone fetch me the damn sextant!

ALGY (shouting back through the sea spray): Damn it, father! I left the damn sextant on the damn chandlery counter in Gdansk, Poland!

CUT TO: A ROCKY & DESOLATE COVE/A SHORT DISTANCE OUT TO SEA THE UPTURNED PROW OF A SLOOP IS VISIBLE POKING UP THROUGH THE SURF/EARLY MORNING

(The five wet & marooned voyagers are huddled around a fire on the beach. They watch hopefully, as a small boy descends toward them from a bluff.)

ALF: I say we're in Sweden.

ALI: We could be as far as Denmark.

SIR ALEX (bellowing at the approaching boy): In God's name, my lad, where have we landed?

BOY: Gdansk, Poland, my lord.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: ENGLAND/THE TONSBURY ANCESTRAL ESTATE/A SUNNY AFTERNOON

(Tonsbury Castle, a turreted gray-stone pile, stands amid the bucolic splendor of rolling greensward, oak-lined avenues, copses of yew, vast flower beds, brooks, meadows & bird song.)

CUT TO: A DANK, DIM CHAMBER IN THE LOWER REACHES OF TONSBURY CASTLE/THE SAME SUNNY AFTERNOON

(Ooze can be heard slithering down the wet granite walls of the square cell. Two figures are barely discernible in the gloom: one is Alf, the other is Algy, dressed in a quasi-military jump suit bearing a winged R.A.F. emblem. Algy is repairing the 'dorsal' area of a large bat-shaped kite made of black & scarlet rayon. The problem of the

'dorsal' area must be solved before the scheduled "kite-shot" from the east tower early the next morning — weather, of course, permitting.)

ALF (to himself): Damn Algy! Why would he put his workshop down in the damn 'donjon' — I mean, dungeon, anyway!

ALGY: Alf, you're really being a great help, but would you mind holding the bull's-eye — I mean, 'lantern' a bit closer to the workbench?

ALF: Here! Now is the damn lantern — I mean, 'bull's-eye' close enough?

CUT TO: THE LIBRARY OF TONSBURY CASTLE/THE FOLLOWING DAY (The large wainscoted room contains shelves of antiquarian tomes that soar to the egg-&-dart molding just below the ceiling. Algy stands dejectedly at a casement window hugging his kite & ball of string, as outside not a leaf stirs anywhere on the estate. His scheduled 'kiteshot' had to be cancelled, of course, due to a lack of wind. Across the room, Alf sits in a leather chair pensively studying the Russian icon he rescued from the recent sloop disaster. Ali lounges on a sofa in front of the fireplace browsing through one of the gilt-edged Tonsbury volumes.)

ALI: Umm, this book about the occult is fascinating!

ALF: Is it?

ALI: Yes, here it tells about curses! It says that sometimes objects resembling religious icons are thought to have 'engendered' natural calamities, as well as supernatural phenomena!

ALF (slipping the icon under the cushion of his chair): 'Engendered'? That sounds pretty far-fetched, if you ask me.

ALGY (to himself): I wish Alf would get over his snit. After all, he did volunteer to help me work on my kite in the donjon. Besides, I even offered to lend him my prized balloonist outfit to ward off the subterranean chill.

CUT TO: THE GREAT SITTING ROOM OF TONSBURY CASTLE/TAPES-TRIES DEPICTING THE EXPLOITS OF THE TONSBURY CLAN COVER THE WALLS, ANCIENT WEAPONS HANG AMONG THE TAPESTRIES, SUITS OF ARMOR STAND ABOUT THE ROOM IN CLUSTERS, A WALL OF FRENCH WINDOWS LOOKS OUT ON A CROQUET LAWN/A DRIZZLY AFTERNOON

(Amanda, Algy's older sister, sits on a sofa rolling a ball of yarn. Alf, holding the skein, sits on a chair facing Amanda & the wall of French windows. From time to time, the sound of a mallet striking a ball is heard in

the room, as the others play croquet on the misty lawn.)

ALF (to himself): Amanda isn't a bad looking wench, but she is awfully pale.

AMANDA: Alf, you're really being a great help.

ALF: Oh, I don't think playing croquet in the rain would be much fun.

AMANDA: I suppose Algy has told you the story of our grandfather, Albertus Tonsbury.

ALF: No, I don't think he has.

AMANDA: Our grandfather was an inveterate croquet player -- he would play in far worse weather than this. One afternoon, he was playing during a thunderstorm & was struck dead by a bolt of lightning.

ALF: That was bad luck.

AMANDA (shuddering slightly): I don't suppose you believe in ghosts?

ALF (chuckling): No, not really.

AMANDA: I don't either, but -- there are those who say that sometimes on stormy days grandfather can still be heard playing croquet right out there on the lawn.

(Alf glances through the French windows. Lightning bolts have begun flashing across the sky, rain is pouring down & the croquet lawn now seems deserted -- but still he can hear the sound of a mallet striking a ball.)

AMANDA: Would you like some tea?

ALF: You wouldn't have something a bit stronger?

FADE OUT.

FADE IN: SEATTLE/THE GAY PAREE COFFEE BAR/NIGHT
(Alf & Ali are having coffee on the rainy Seattle waterfront. They sit at a table surrounded by their luggage. They have just returned from their vacation & are suffering from jet lag. The last ferry is late & they can barely wait to crawl into their snug bed on Bainbridge Island.)

ALI: What do you think of the coffee?

ALF: It's not bad.

ALI: Well, at least it should keep us awake a little longer.

ALF (to himself): I wish they had the Hawaiian blend, with its slight hint of passion fruit. It reminded me of my days as a naval lieutenant at 'Pearl' &

those mango-hued sea nymphs -- damn, I wish that lousy ferry would get in

FINAL FADE OUT.

* * *

MS. LONELYHEARTS & MR. FEELGOOD

Things hadn't been going exactly swimmingly. She said we weren't 'communicating.' So we decided to go out to dinner & try to 'reconnect.'

We went to her favorite Italian restaurant but the smoking section was full. We took a number & went into the bar to wait for a table. I lit up an El Producto Corona.

"Did you hear about Lance?" she asked.

"He's marrying Monica, isn't he?" I said.

"Nooo!" she said.

I caught the bartender's eye.

"What would you like to drink?" I asked.

"A Chianti," she said.

"A glass of Chianti," I said to the bartender, "& a double vodka on the rocks."

"A double?" she said.

"Yes, I think I can handle it okay."

"Didn't you hear what happened to Lance?" she said.

"Uh, no"

I asked the bartender for another book of matches.

"Lance has been in the hospital," she said.

"You're kidding."

"Nooo! He was run down by a drunk driver."

"Is he all right?"

"He's home now, if that's what you mean."

I tried to catch the bartender's eye again.

"It happened down in L.A. during his tour," she said. "He was crossing the street in front of his hotel."

"How are the hands?" I asked.

"I mean, the hands are important to a jazz pianist."

"His hands are fine ... it's his head. He can't remember how to play the piano."