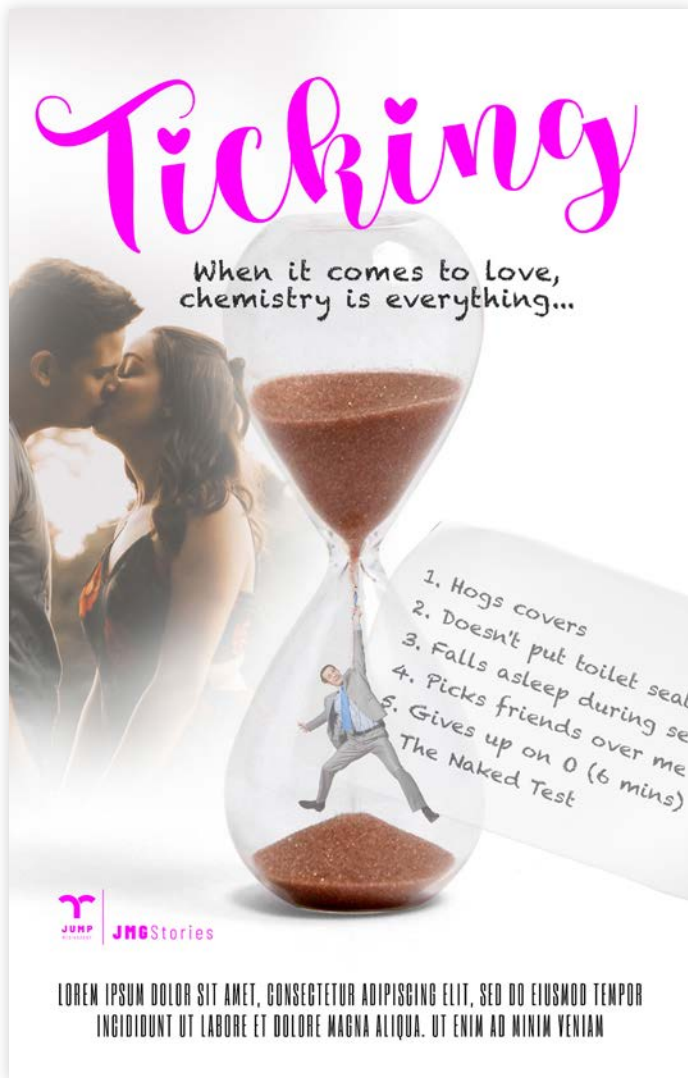


TICKING

— *When it comes to love, chemistry is everything...* —

Written by: Alex Lynch & Rebecca Sandeman



Genre: *Comedy*

Format: *1h 30min*

Targetgroup: *15 to 60-year-olds*

At Pitch-level end Q4 2021

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HANNAH:

We're all animals at the end of the day. Our core behaviours are parental, copulatory or antagonistic. Essentially, something's put in front of us and all we want to know - all we need to know - is, is it family? Do we fight it? Can we fuck it? We're no better than dogs really but at least dogs own those behaviours. There's no shame, no complications... I mean they have sex in the park in broad daylight with everyone watching, they eat shit they find on the sidewalk, they go up to strangers and just sniff their asses. And that's normal. To them, that is normal. It's so pure and primal and just so... Unapologetic. Isn't it? Maybe I should get a dog... Sorry I went off on one a bit there. Tell me about you.

SPEED DATER:

*(Trying to digest all that)
Um... My name is Mark-*

BELL RINGS

HOST:

Okay, speed daters. Time's up! Please move to the next table.

HANNAH:

Well... Nice to meet you.

After a bad teenage breakup, bioengineer Hannah uses a checklist to chase the “honeymoon period” with different men. When she meets ‘the one’, she decides to use science to boost his dopamine levels in order to make their relationship last.

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Hannah, a 28 year-old bioengineer living in San Francisco is a woman who is moulded by a formative event in her teenage years. This is something she pays her increasingly long-suffering therapist, Donna, over \$300 an hour to tackle . When she was 16, Hannah had her heart broken by her nerdy boyfriend, Danny, who cheated on her with popular girl - and airhead cheerleader – Charity Springs. In the science lab. Next to her project on Vesuvian volcanic eruptions. They both tried hiding behind her scaled model of Pompeii, crushing Hannah’s dreams and Temple of Apollo in the process. She thought Danny was her soulmate, but in that moment the bubble burst and she realised he was just like the basic jocks they used to ridicule, only concerned with pretty girls or their own dicks (or both).

Most people would have let it go and moved on, but Hannah is not most people. At college she learns about the effects that biochemistry and dopamine have on the body when you first meet a partner, in particular the hormone norepinephrine, creating a giddy, euphoric mood often known as the ‘honeymoon period’. Hannah rationalizes that it was only chemical reactions that caused Danny to stray; sexual urges that’re fundamentally rooted in science. Armed with this information, Hannah re-enters the dating scene, chasing the highs of the initial dating period and attraction with a revolving door of different guys. She has a checklist that she closely adheres to. Once everything has been ticked off and she deems that time with her almost-boyfriend is

drawing towards the end of the honeymoon period, Hannah abruptly breaks it off and moves on to a new target. That way, nobody gets hurt. Well, she doesn’t get hurt. And that’s all that matters.

That is until she meets Rob and everything is turned on its head. Cue: elaborate fireworks. Fast forward to the white wedding with salmon canapes. Cut to: the two golden labradors and organic vegetable patch. The problem is, Rob is already nearing the end of the first love stage. Desperate not to lose him, Hannah throws out her old checklist and makes a new one, employing any tactics necessary to stimulate Rob’s dopamine levels and keep him interested in her and their dwindling relationship.

Her friends at the lab, wannabe-lad Bryan and overachiever Lucy, are originally on board with Hannah’s hare-brained scheme; it is in the pursuit of science, after all. This involves gentler tactics at first, such as slipping sardines into his breakfast smoothie, hugging for exactly 20 seconds and cutting off the hot water in the shower – anything to raise the hormone levels. As things progress but soon begin to falter, Hannah ramps up the intensity, signing them up to ironman competitions (despite her hating all competitive sport) and making them join a local Parkour group. With the sands of time falling fast, her experiment starts to border on obsession when Rob’s perfect ex-girlfriend, Alana returns from volunteering in a school in Nepal for 18 months.

Rob and Alana have remained on good terms and only broke up because of the distance. Alana is the polar opposite to Hannah. She is fluent in five languages, is a former professional soprano and a well established environmentalist. She is also a distant cousin of Barbara Streisand. This causes Hannah to resort to increasingly desperate tactics, trickling over into sabotage, including

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terrible relationship advice from a dusty woman's magazine she finds in a cupboard from 2003. Soon Hannah is turning to potions and entering, frankly, dangerous scientific territory - with a few unwitting participants/guinea pigs getting caught in the process (with mixed results) but never being able to get her concoctions to Robert. Eventually, this culminates into Hannah contacting Lucy's grandmother behind her back, using ancient homeopathic medicine as a kind of love potion to win Rob's affections once and for all. But has Hannah finally gone too far in order to prove her theory?

Ticking is a romantic comedy with a complex, female protagonist whom the audience, whilst feeling off-kilter towards her neurosis and motivations, will ultimately root for as the film progresses. It builds upon comedic conventions of *Trainwreck* and *It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia*, presenting characters that are flawed, selfish and somewhat unlikable. Does Hannah deserve the 'Happy Ever After' she's so focused on obtaining, or does she need a reality check?
