



THE
PARADOX HOTEL

BOOK CLUB KIT

ROB HART





THE PARADOX
HOTEL

ACTIVITIES TO ENJOY DURING YOUR STAY

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DEAR READER,

Thank you for reading *The Paradox Hotel*. It's a book that is both deeply personal to me and, also, a little scary. Because, first, when I pitched it to my agent, he shot it down. And he was right to do so! The pitch was terrible. A lot of rambling nonsense about time travel mechanics that a physicist would go cross-eyed trying to unravel.

Plus, this is very different from *The Warehouse*, which was much more of a social and political commentary wrapped in a techno-thriller. I'll never stray too far from writing about how I see the world, and how I hope it can be better—but this was me digging into some raw and vulnerable places. I was reaching for a zone of emotional honesty, which is always the hardest thing to write.

I wasn't sure it would work, or if people would respond to it in the same way they did my previous book. But I saw the story. I saw the characters. I felt like I knew January. And I realized it was something I had to pursue. So I stamped my feet and whined until my agent agreed to let me do it and, when I finally delivered the manuscript, he was shocked and excited that I had pulled it off.

(This is in no way a criticism of him. He's great. I say again: my initial pitch was not good.)

I've always loved time travel stories, and I thought one of my own would be a great mechanism to play with ideas like how to cope with loss and move on from grief, while at the same time exploring concepts of Eastern philosophy that I thought dovetailed nicely with quantum mechanics.

It was a difficult project, in the sense that: It *sounds* like a lot of fun to write time travel until you're actually doing it, and then you realize it is very complicated. And I knew I wanted to bring something new to the table, while at the same time maintaining my love for anti-capitalism commentary. And—on top of all that—write a story that was fun and engaging.

Hence the dinosaurs and robots, and the twisty murder mystery and invisible killer. It makes the whole process of exploring deep emotions fun for me and, hopefully, for you too.

Everything I write is autobiography in some way—each book a snapshot of who and where I am as a person at that given point in time. And this one feels very personal in that sense, because January was an opportunity to explore some issues that I've been grappling with. . . .

The hardest thing we have to do is face ourselves, accept who we are, and move on to the next level.

I hope you are enjoying your stay at The Paradox Hotel. I owe a big debt to my friends, for helping me develop the idea; my agent, for believing in me; my editor, for helping me make sense of time travel mechanics; and my fantastic team at Ballantine, for making this book so damn pretty and getting it in front of you.

For, as personal as this is, it was a team effort. It's important to acknowledge that. And I think that, once you read the book, you'll understand why.

Happy reading. Avoid room 526.

ROB



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. January is Unstuck and she sees things out of time, which makes her daily life a little confusing. She is halfway in—and halfway out of—reality. Did you find her to be a reliable narrator despite this? Or did it make her extra unreliable? Do you think she portrayed things as they happened, or does she have a blind spot? Why or why not?
2. At the same time as being futuristic novel about time travel, *The Paradox Hotel* is also a locked-room murder mystery. Did you enjoy this take on the genre? How did classic tropes from science fiction and mystery work together? Was there anything unexpected? Genre-bending?
3. “It’s not really a memory if it didn’t happen yet.” Time travel and memory are key components to the story. How do they work together? Is memory reliable? Can a revisited moment be reliable? What defines reality?
4. If time travel ever became possible, do you think it would be industrialized and commodified in the way the author describes? Do you think only rich people would be able to go on vacations through time? Why or why not?
5. If you could visit anywhere in time, where would you go? Why?
6. When January is told she can’t stay at the hotel forever, she stubbornly replies, “I can try.” January’s pain and anger over the death of Mena are a huge reason she stays at the Paradox Hotel. Were you surprised to learn the truth about the accident? How did you feel about it?
7. January tries to embrace the Paradox Hotel staff not only as her friends but as her found family. What do you think it means to “find” your family? In your opinion, what makes it different from finding a group of good friends? Can you think of any friends, coworkers, teammates, etc., who feel like family to you?
8. It’s said this novel: “break the rules, break reality.” Did the non-sequential elements of the story make it hard to follow? Or did you enjoy the twists and surprises of things coming together once things happened in the proper order? Did you feel lost in time? Why or why not?
9. Why do you think the author referenced *Through the Looking Glass*? How is January similar to Alice?
10. Were you surprised to discover the truth about Mena? Why or why not?
11. Were you satisfied by the ending? Do you think January got what she deserved? Why or why not?



PLAYLIST



The book's plot is set in motion when January stumbles upon a body only she can see, but the core of the book is her inability to process her own grief, to face herself, and to let go of the woman who saved her and made her better . . . so a lot of the songs on this list were aimed at getting at that emotional core.

HOTEL CALIFORNIA - THE EAGLES

DONA NOBIS PACEM 2 - MAX RICHTER

WHEN YOU DRIVE - CHROMA KEY

5 MILLION WAYS TO KILL A CEO - THE COUP

TIME AFTER TIME - CYNDI LAUPER

FOND FAREWELL - ELLIOTT SMITH

IS THAT ALL THERE IS? - PEGGY LEE

VARÚÐ - SIGUR ROS

HURT - JOHNNY CASH

TAKE IT ALL BACK (STRING QUARTET VERSION) - JUDAH & THE LION

THIS YEAR - THE MOUNTAIN GOATS

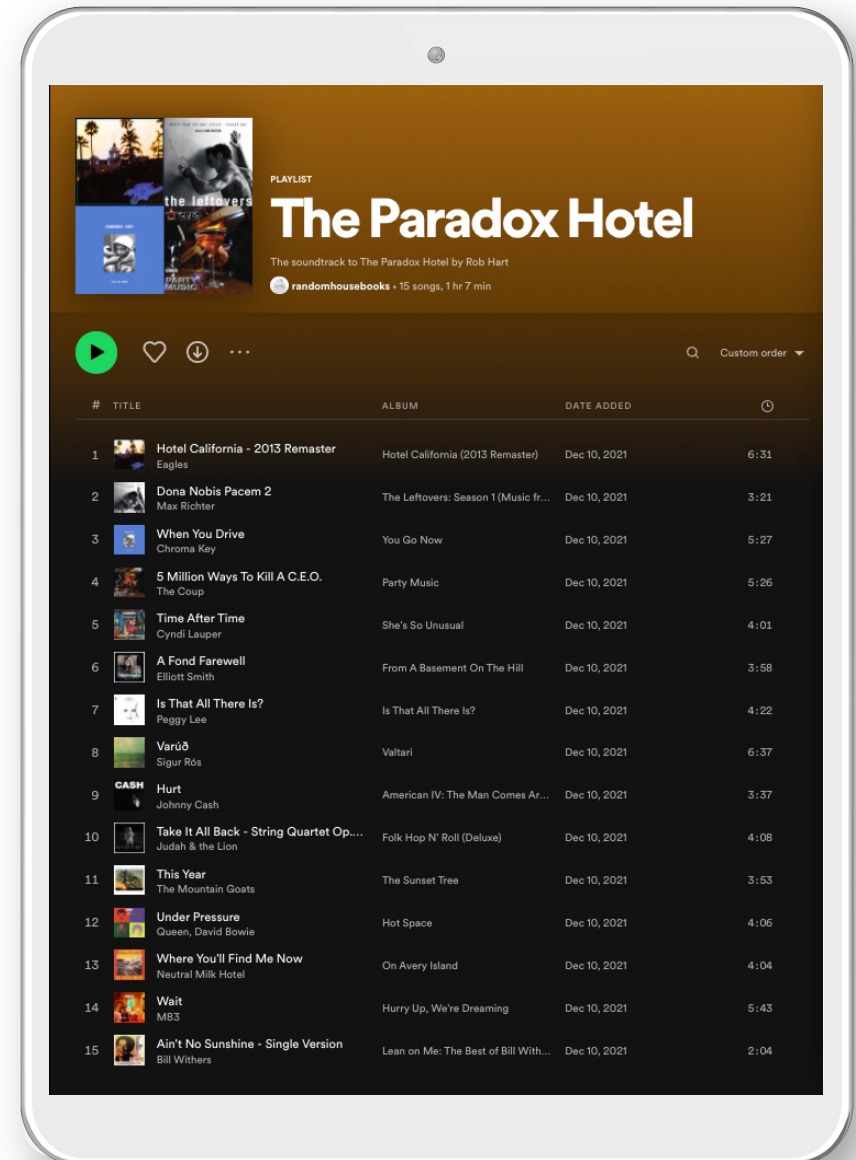
UNDER PRESSURE - QUEEN AND DAVID BOWIE

WHERE YOU'LL FIND ME NOW - NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL

WAIT - M83

AIN'T NO SUNSHINE - BILL WITHERS

LISTEN ON SPOTIFY





DRINK RECIPES



COLD BREW NEGRONI

Because we all know January likes her coffee . . .

INGREDIENTS

1 fluid oz. gin
1 fluid oz. Campari
1 ½ fluid oz. cold
brew coffee
1 ½ fluid oz.
of vermouth

DIRECTIONS

Simplicity itself: just fill a rocks glass with ice cubes, pour in all the ingredients, give a quick stir, and add a twist of orange zest to garnish.

Source:

food52.com/recipes/72771-cold-brew-negroni

TEQUILA SUNRISE

January also used to like tequila.

And the taste of cherries is a strong memory for her.

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ oz. tequila
¾ cup orange juice
¾ oz. grenadine syrup
Orange slice, for garnish
High-quality maraschino
cherry, such as Luxardo,
for garnish

DIRECTIONS

In a highball glass filled with ice, pour in the tequila and orange juice. Slowly pour the grenadine into the glass over the back of a spoon or by drizzling it down the side of the glass, allowing it to settle at the bottom. Garnish with an orange slice and maraschino cherry.

Source:

foodnetwork.com/recipes/geoffrey-zakarian/tequila-sunrise-2810699

CHERRY SHIRLEY TEMPLE MOCKTAIL

A non-alcoholic classic with the taste of cherries.

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp. simple syrup
1 tbsp. cherry syrup from the
maraschino cherry jar
1 ½ oz. lemon-lime soda
Splash of Sparkling
Ice brand Cherry Limeade
Ice
3 maraschino cherries
for garnish
Sprig of mint for garnish

DIRECTIONS

Fill a glass with ice. Add one tablespoon of simple syrup, one tablespoon of cherry juice, and 1 ½ oz. of lemon-lime soda. Give it a small stir.

Top off with cherry limeade. Garnish with 3 maraschino cherries and a sprig of mint. Serve.

Source:

homecookingmemories.com/cherry-shirley-temple-mocktail-recipe/



© Julia Gartland



© Food Network



© Homecookingmemories.com



SNACKS ACROSS TIME

Make a variety of snacks from
different eras in history!



ANCIENT GREEK PITA CUPS

Visit the home of the gods from the comfort of your kitchen.

INGREDIENTS

3 pitas	2 tsp. chopped parsley
1 large container garlic hummus (17 oz.)	2 tsp. chopped dill
2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil	1 container crumbled feta cheese (about 3 oz.)
½ cup diced cucumber	9 grape tomatoes, halved
¼ cup chopped, pitted kalamata olives	

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spritz cups of a muffin tin with cooking spray. Slice each pita into six slices, like you'd cut a pizza. Place each triangle in a muffin cup, pressing down gently so it forms a bowl-like shape.

Bake 5–7 minutes, or until lightly golden. Let cool for 10 minutes before removing. Fill each cup half-full with hummus.

In a large bowl, combine olive oil, cucumbers, olives, parsley, and dill. Top each hummus cup with a spoonful of the cucumber mixture. Top each with a sprinkle of feta and a grape tomato half. Serve.

Source: delish.com/cooking/recipes/a50741/greek-pita-cups-recipe/

BALSAMIC CHERRY CROSTINI

Crostini are thought to have originated in medieval times when peasants ate their meals on slices of bread.

INGREDIENTS

Micro-chives, finely chopped	2 tbsp. brown sugar
Goat cheese	1 tsp. lemon juice
1 baguette	Salt and pepper
1 tbsp. balsamic vinegar	Olive oil
2 cups cherries, pitted and sliced	

DIRECTIONS

In a bowl, combine sliced cherries, balsamic, brown sugar, lemon juice, and fresh cracked black pepper. Stir until brown sugar is dissolved and cherries are coated. Allow to sit for 1 hour.

Slice the baguette into ½-inch thick slices. Brush slices with olive oil. Season slices with salt and pepper.

Place in a 375°F oven for around 5 minutes per side or until toasted.

Spread goat cheese onto slices. Place cherries atop goat cheese. Drizzle with some of the cherry balsamic liquid. Top with chopped chives.

Source: gastronomblog.com/tangy-balsamic-cherry-crostini/

SWEDISH MEATBALLS

An 80s dinner party classic. Who doesn't love a comeback?

INGREDIENTS

3 oz. fresh white bread, crusts removed, bread cut into ½-inch pieces (about 1 ¾ unpacked cups)
½ cup (120 ml) milk
5 tbsp. unsalted butter, divided
1 medium onion, minced or grated, divided (see note)
1 lb. 4 oz. ground beef chuck (about 20% fat)
12 oz. ground pork (about 25% fat)
4 tsp. kosher salt, plus more for seasoning
2 large eggs
¼ tsp. ground white pepper, plus more for seasoning
⅛ tsp. ground allspice
Canola or vegetable oil, for frying
3 tbsp. flour
2 cups homemade chicken stock or store-bought or store-bought low-sodium chicken broth
1 tsp. soy sauce
½ teaspoon apple cider vinegar
Minced flat-leaf parsley, to garnish
Buttered boiled Yukon Gold potatoes and lingonberry jam, for serving (optional)

Special equipment: Stand mixer or food processor

DIRECTIONS

In a medium bowl, combine bread with milk, tossing to coat. Let stand until bread is completely softened and most of the milk has been absorbed, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small skillet, melt 2 tablespoons butter over medium-high heat. Add half of minced onion and cook, stirring, until onion is golden and tender, about 7 minutes.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or in a food processor, combine ground beef, ground pork, soaked bread and any remaining milk, cooked onion, remaining raw onion, 4 teaspoons salt, eggs, white pepper, and allspice. Starting on low speed and increasing to medium-high, beat mixture until ingredients are thoroughly combined, about 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Dipping your hands in water as needed to prevent meatball mixture from sticking, roll roughly tablespoon-sized portions of meatball mixture into balls slightly smaller than golf-ball size. Transfer to lined baking sheet.

Set a rack over a clean baking sheet and heat oven to 200°F. Heat about ½-inch oil in a wide skillet to 350°F. Working in batches, lower meatballs into oil and fry, turning until well browned all over, about 2 minutes. Transfer browned meatballs to rack and keep warm in the oven.

In a medium saucepan, melt remaining 3 tablespoons butter over medium-high heat until foamy. Whisk in flour and cook, whisking, until raw flour smell is gone, about 3 minutes. Whisk in chicken stock, bring to a boil, lower heat to a simmer, and cook until thickened, about 3 minutes. Whisk in soy sauce and cider vinegar. Season with salt and white pepper.

Add meatballs to gravy and stir to coat. Simmer until meatballs are heated through. Serve right away with buttered potatoes and lingonberry jam or speared with toothpicks as an hors d'oeuvre.

NOTES

Mincing the onion will produce fine pieces for a more textured result, while grating will produce softer bits of onion that blend into the mix. Grating, however, can create bitter flavor in the onion. Once fully cooked, those bitter flavors tend to dissipate, but it is a risk worth considering.

THIEBOUDIENNE: SENEGALESE JOLLOF RICE AND FISH

For the advanced chef at the Tick Tock . . .

If you're feeling brave in the kitchen, try out this thieboudienne recipe. It's complicated, so no pressure if you're not feeling ready for it!

INGREDIENTS

The Fish

A handful of parsley (about a heaping cup)
3 cloves of garlic
1 Scotch bonnet/ habanero pepper
1 tsp. shrimp bouillon
1 tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. salt
2 ½ lb. blue snapper fish, preferably cut into fish steaks or
any white fish of your choice

The Rice

2 cups of broken jasmine rice or regular jasmine rice soaking
1 sweet potato
1 purple eggplant
4 carrots (I used orange purple and yellow carrots)
½ a head of cabbage
2 bell peppers
3 scotch bonnet/habanero peppers

For the Sauce

1 cup vegetable oil
1 cup tomato paste
1 large onion, sliced
3 cloves of garlic
2 scotch bonnet/ habanero peppers (I used green
scotch bonnets, the color doesn't really matter)
3 tbsp. shrimp bouillon
1 tsp. black pepper
Salt to taste

DIRECTIONS

Marinating the Fish

1. With a mortar and pestle or in a food processor, grind the parsley, garlic, scotch bonnet, bullion, black pepper, and salt into a rough paste.
2. Poke two holes into the flesh of the fish and stuff them with the parsley mix.
3. Broil or fry the fish until it is golden brown on each side and set aside for the sauce.

How to Cook the Rice

4. In a mortar and pestle or in a food processor grind the scotch bonnet peppers and garlic into a rough paste.
5. Sauté the sliced onions in the oil over medium heat until translucent.
6. Add in the tomato paste and stir fry for 5 minutes. The tomato paste may start to brown a little.
7. Add in the ground garlic and scotch bonnet and stir fry for another 2 minutes
8. Add in bullion, black pepper, and 8 cups of water. At this stage, taste the sauce for salt, and adjust to your preference.
9. Add in the tough vegetable first to the sauce and cook until tender. In this case, add in the sweet potatoes, cook until tender and remove; then add the carrots, cook until tender and remove. Continue adding in the vegetables until all the vegetables are cooked.
10. Set the cooked vegetables aside and then add in the fish and cook in the sauce for 2–5 minutes.
11. Once the fish has simmered in the sauce for 2–5 minutes, gently remove it from the sauce.
12. At this point, drain the rice that has been cooking and pour into the sauce. The sauce should just cover the rice. Adjust the amount of water at this stage if needed to make sure that the rice is just covered.

THIEBOUDIENNE: SENEGALESE JOLLOF RICE AND FISH



© Yummy Medley

DIRECTIONS (CONTINUED)

13. Cover the pot and simmer on low-medium heat for 15–20 minutes. You may seal the cover of the pot with foil to prevent steam from escaping.
14. At the 15-minute mark, check that the rice has absorbed the moisture and is soft. Cover and cook for another 5 minutes if it needs more time. If the water has dried up and the rice is still not soft, add in 4 tbsp. of water, cover and allow to cook.
15. Serve hot with the vegetables and fish, and lime wedges.

NOTES

Senegalese Jollof Rice and Fish Calories and Nutrition

This dish is quite rich and calorie-dense (one of the reasons it was such a local favorite as an expensive but tasty energy source), so minimal servings are definitely recommended!

Source: yummymedley.com/thieboudienne-senegalese-rice-fish/



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WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED YOUR STAY!