

December 2022

# WIVES WITHOUT BORDERS

**A One-Hour, Dramatic Series**  
**By Susan Lee Hahn**  
**Based on her novel of the same name**

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# WIVES WITHOUT BORDERS

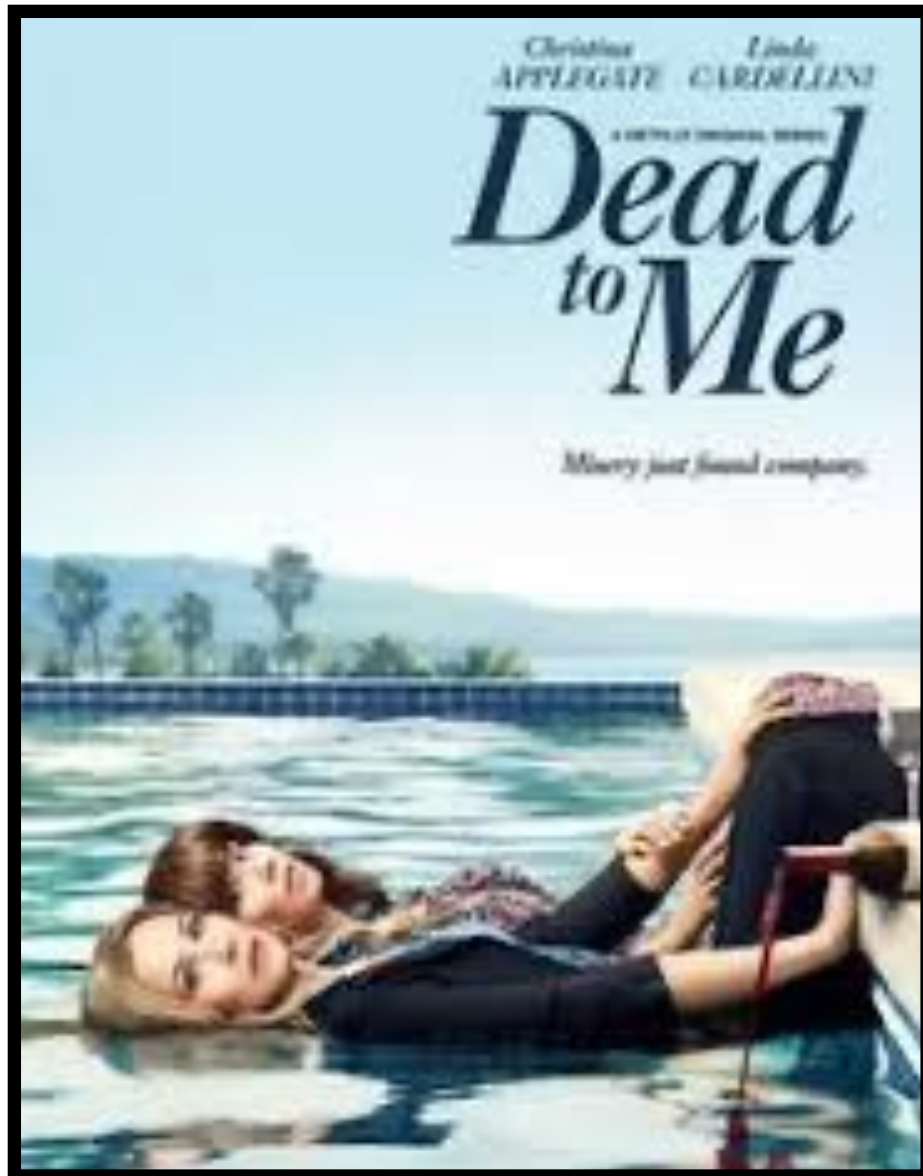
A woman discovers her personal and psychic powers and uses them to change her life and the lives of others.

**Premise:** A newly heartbroken woman (39+) poses as a psychic medium to meet eligible widowers, then discovers that she can actually see the dead wives from the grief group of men she counsels, which opens a Pandora's Box of problems, theirs and hers. After she falls for one of the men, his dead wife appears in her kitchen one night and claims that he killed her. An unlikely friendship develops between them, but she's haunted by the question: *Is his deceased wife trustworthy and going to help her, or is she jealous, vindictive, and out to derail her new romance?*

**Motivation:** The main character, MADDIE STONE has recently lost just about everything from her 'previous' life in Northern CA (her job to budget cuts, her live-in boyfriend to another man, and her home to wildfires). She moves back to Chicago to live with her Femme Fatale mother, GYPSY STONE (60) to create the next chapter of her life and to resolve her issues. The deceased wives from the grief group have lost their lives and need to create the next chapter in their spiritual evolution. Maddie and wives end up collaborating so they all benefit in their quest to reinvent or reincarnate themselves. They now all realize that ... *it's not all the way over when it's over.*

**About the Title:** It's meant to be catchy and conjure the well-known, **Doctors Without Borders** with its spirit of exploration and healing in remote places. It's also a kind of war cry for women to break out of the constraints of the traditional role of "Wife" and to find new territory for their own personal healing.

# TONE



The unlikely female friendship between Maddie (the fake psychic turned real psychic) and Jessie (the jealous dead wife of her lover) has an edgy, yet heartfelt sensibility, which is similar to the female friendship in the dark comedy, **Dead to Me**.

The juxtaposition of grief with humor is somewhat similar in tone and texture to the Netflix series, **After Life**, though not quite as dark and more female-centric.





# The Story Worlds

**Maddie's Physical World:** Present day. Chicago + Northern CA.

**Maddie's Inner World:** As Maddie navigates her newfound psychic ability, she creates a metaphor in her imagination of a house with an attic window that gives her access to their energetic realm. This setting also has other wisdom to offer her about her past and her soul.

**The World of the Wives:** This energetic world often resembles settings in nature (a beautiful forest), but can change instantly to stranger locations (the shark tank at the aquarium, the top of a building), which keeps the wives alert and off-balance. In order to keep Maddie safe, they must find whoever opened the door to the physical realm and into Maddie's life. Psychic mediums usually open the 'door' from their side so they can control the flow of spirits into their lives.





# Main Characters



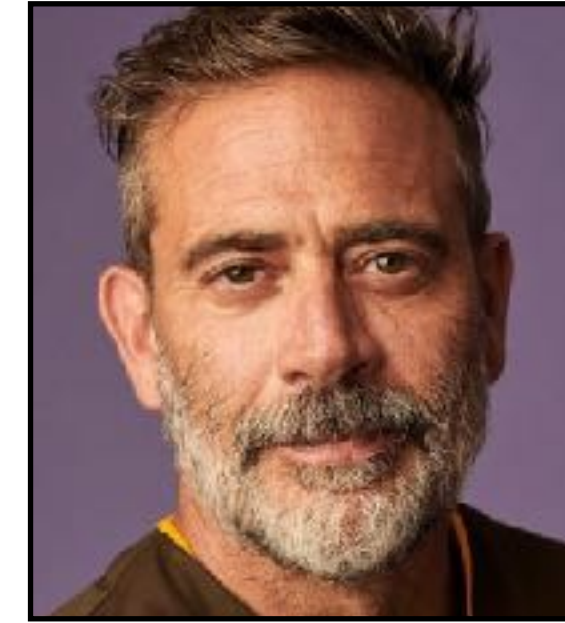
**MADDIE STONE:**  
With her quick wit, kind heart, and wounded self esteem, Maddie makes new friends easily, and finds the courage to confront her complicated childhood



**JESSIE HAMMERSTEIN:**  
Outspoken, outrageous, and jealous, yet genuine, Jessie is furious that her life ended so soon. She has a big heart and a voracious appetite.



**GYPSY STONE:**  
Maddie's Femme mother has a fear of abandonment and becoming 'invisible' as her beauty fades. She has a great sense of humor, lots of charisma, and plenty of secrets.



**HARVEY HAMMERSTEIN:**  
A sexy doctor and saver of lives, he neglected to save Jessie's life. He loves Maddie, but uses her gift to alleviate his guilt and to help him win at gambling, his addiction.



**SAM ROSENBERG :**  
The FBI agent who investigates her alleged involvement with an international jewelry ring. He's smitten, sensitive,



**CRISPY COLLINS:**  
Maddie's best childhood friend who recently transitioned from a gay man to a woman. Smart, savvy, and socially conscious, she's Maddie's mentor, confident, and fashionista.



# Supporting Roles: The Wives & Spirits



**Pat Burton:** She's a firecracker, wild, hilarious, and manic. She's Jessie's side kick, and becomes Maddie's friend. She lived recklessly with her bipolar disorder, which caused her untimely death.



**Hope Tremont:** The wounded soul who was too emotionally damaged to have sex with Frank or give him a family. She grappled with depression and a dark past and wants him to have love and passion in his life.



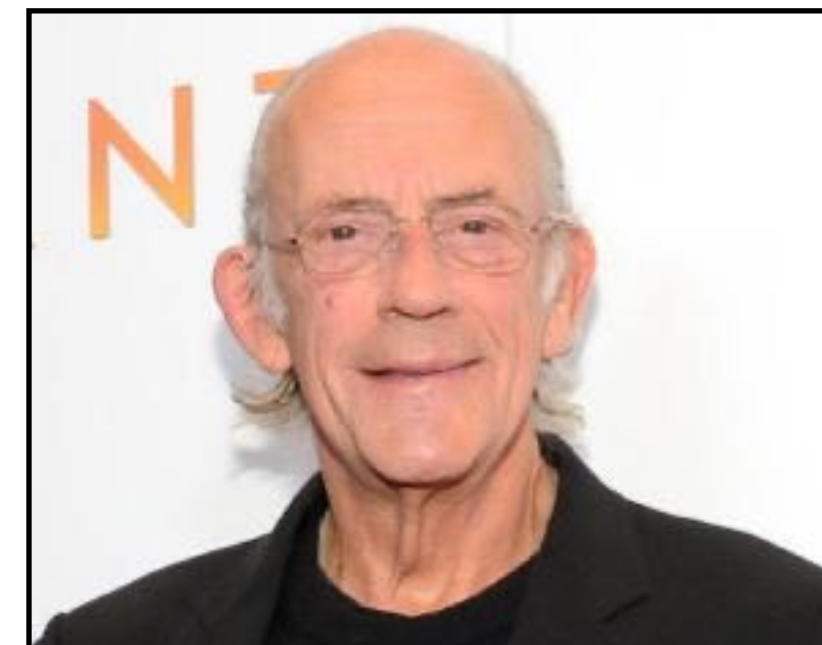
**Ginny (GT) Grant:** The earthy, nurturing first wife who was in love with her college roommate and secretly had an affair with Gary for decades. She needed some space and financial independence to blossom.



**April Grant:** The glamorous, sexy career woman who lured Gary away and set it up so they'd both marry him and 'divorce well' so they could retire. She has a big heart underneath her scheming.



**Chip Wadsworth:** His 'Blue Blood' background didn't dissuade him from following his heart into an unconventional relationship.



**Max Stone:** Maddie's deceased and loving Jewish grandfather who imparts his wisdom and humor, helping her navigate this new psychic world with confidence, peppered with his perpetually corny jokes.

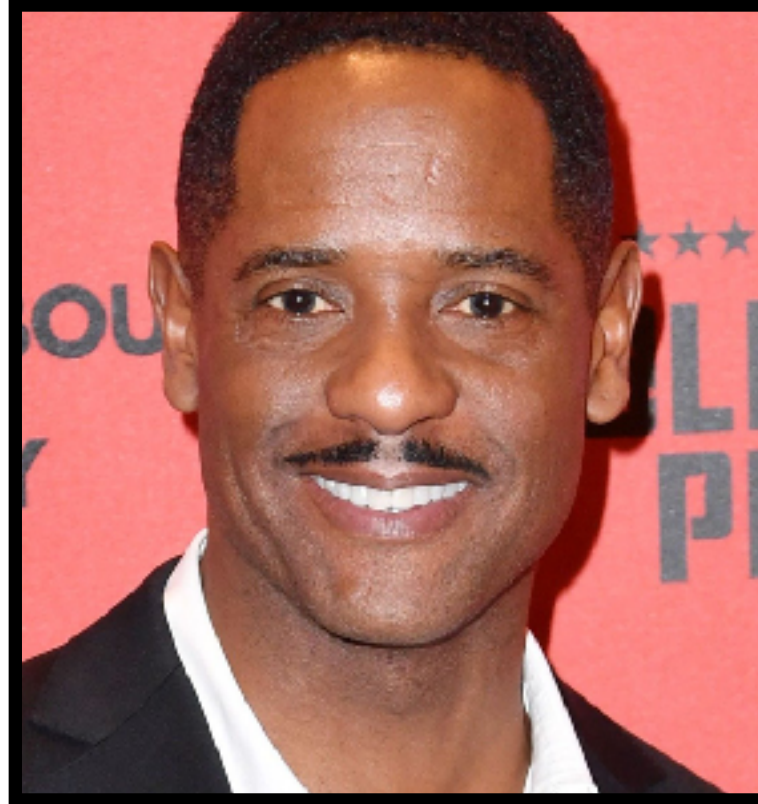


**Ida Stone:** Maddie's outspoken, Jewish grandmother who has been deceased for decades and has watched over her. She's unfiltered and unfettering in her love for Maddie and Max, even though she drives them both a bit crazy.

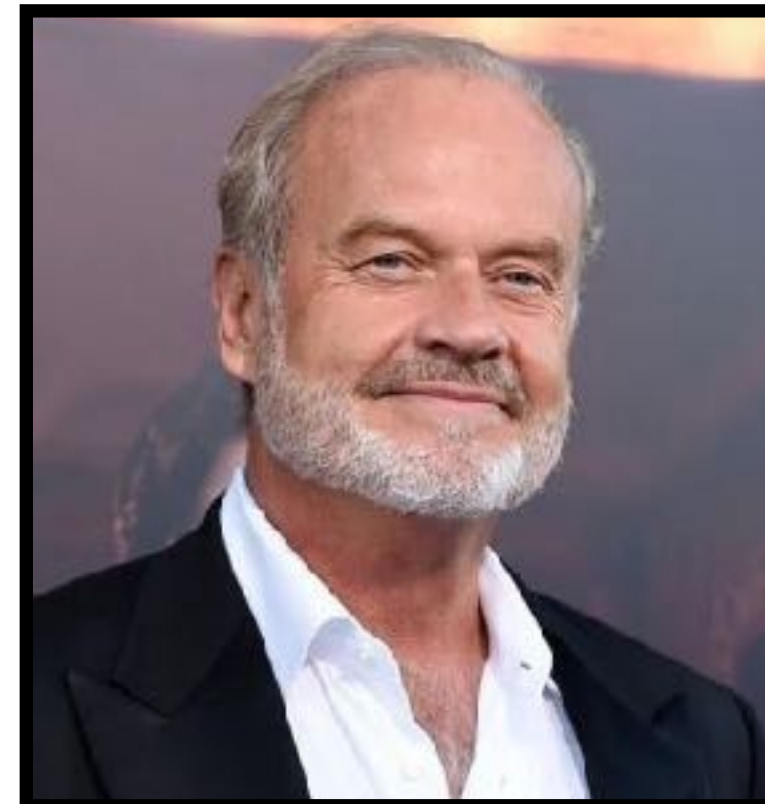
\* Images do not represent any attachments or commitments from the actors



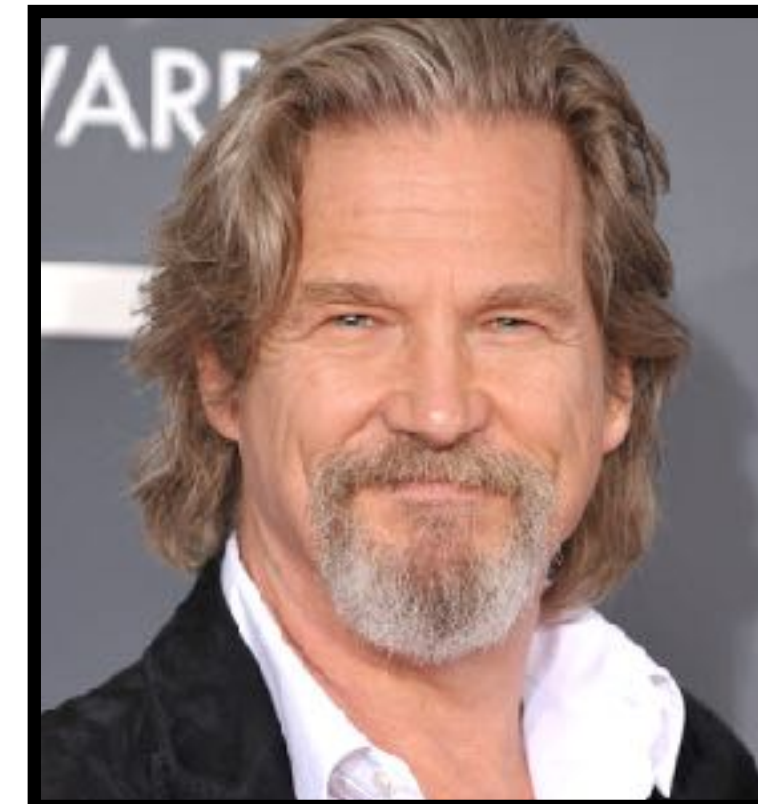
# Supporting Roles: The Men in the Grief Group



**Joe Burton:** Tough and tender, he's a Chicago cop who was madly in love with his unpredictable and sexy wife, He feels responsible for her death (she killed herself with his gun) and can't get past his grief



**Frank Tremont:** An ordinary accountant who was faithful to his wife of forty years, and is in search of passion. He falls for Gypsy and is Maddie's ideal father figure with his compassionate heart and moral compass.



**Gary Grant:** The Casanova of the crowd, he suffers from grief and remorse. Driven by his libido, he had an affair and married his wife's college roommate, then fell back in love with his wife, had an affair with her, then remarried her.



**Bobby Minster:** Formerly a sorority girl who transitioned to a man, and stayed with his college sweetheart, Chip who loved him and stood by him for decades. Bobby finally shares this secret and eventually falls in love with Crispy.



# Who is Maddie...

## And why is she lying to grieving widowers?

- **Character:** She's a good person, loyal, loving, intelligent, romantic, and desperate. She's a pleaser and has a penchant for avoidance. Maddie's way of dealing with her mother's overpowering personality has been to move away and/or to try to make her mother happy. Now she needs to make herself happy.
- **Challenges:** Times are tough for Maddie, she's out of money (too independent and too smart to take money from her mother who has control issues). Being back, she confronts her past and discovers an unsavory secret of Gypsy's, which she needs to understand in order to move on with her own life.
- **What She Yearns For:** Maddie yearns for a family since she never really had one growing up with her mother's five husbands and countless lovers. On a deeper level, she wants to feel her own power, to form authentic connections, and to be acknowledged for being unique.
- **How She Transforms:** Maddie transforms into a woman who's confident enough to breakthrough the traditional role of 'being a wife' and ventures beyond society's borders to embrace having her own family in a very unconventional way.





# Pilot Episode: Medium Well

## *Maddie's Awakening as a Psychic Medium*



**TEASER:** After Maddie catches her boyfriend of ten years (STEVIE) in bed with another man, she signs up for a week at a spa to escape/relax, but discovers that it's a silent meditation retreat. Once alone with her thoughts, her life's most traumatic moments flash like fireworks into her consciousness, culminating in a **Big Inner Scream**, which serves as a catalyst for a 'door' being open to another realm. She screams aloud, then gestures that she was sleeping or going crazy. **A quick glimpse at the OTHER SIDE OF LIFE where several people hover near a big oak tree with a door in it.** Maddie is shocked when a deranged female apparition (MAMUSHKA) shows up and instructs her to tell another participant (SOBBING SOFIA) these three locations. Maddie freaks out, convinced that her inner Schizophrenic has just emerged. At the end of the week, she makes a deal with the apparition, she'll share the locations in exchange for no more visits. Maddie worries that she's losing her mind.

**ACT ONE:** Maddie flies back to Chicago to live with her Femme Fatale mother, GYPSY who is between husbands (she's had five) and is determined to get Maddie married before she's forty. Gypsy doesn't want Maddie to miss out on the best part of her life, having a daughter. Maddie wants children, but isn't sure about a husband after living through so many of Gypsy's divorces and her recent discovery of Stevie's infidelity. Gypsy has inventive ideas about how to find eligible men (meet all the Rabbis in town and get first dibs on any fresh widowers). Maddie sees another apparition of an elegant woman in the elevator. She's not sure if it's an apparition because the elevator doors close so quickly. Maddie reconnects with her best, childhood friend, CRISPY a formerly gay male who has newly transitioned to a female. Maddie meets her at her New Age cafe and bookstore called, The Expanding Heart. A longtime friend and mentor, Maddie shares her challenges with Crispy, especially her money woes. She gets a call from Sobbing Sofia, thanking her for the information and insisting on giving her a reward. She Venmos Maddie twenty-five thousand dollars, which is a huge gift and could change Maddie's life. However, the money is frozen and so are her bank accounts. The answer to her financial problem is (almost) within reach. What the hell is happening to her? Is her life in Mercury Retrograde?

**ACT TWO:** Maddie works with Crispy at the cafe and agrees to lead the Grief Group that meets on Wednesday nights. She's an art therapist, but can stand in for their therapist who died recently of a heart attack. Here, she meets the five widowers HARVEY HAMMERSTEIN, a handsome ER doctor who's still grieving the loss of his young wife and is ripe for a new romance. He's instantly attracted to Maddie. Crispy has a crush on one of the other guys (BOBBY). The three other men, Gary, Frank, and Joe each tell their stories. At the end of the grief group, Crispy announces that Maddie is available for private counseling sessions and as a psychic medium. Maddie looks stunned, but plays along. After they're gone, she insists that this is a bad idea because she's a horrible liar and has a conscience, but she could use the money and does kind of like that handsome Harvey. When she returns back to Gypsy's condo, she finds her mother attempting to cook dinner for a man (BARRY) who is a lawyer and offers to help Maddie chase an inheritance from her biological father who dies years ago. Maddie wonders if this is one of Gypsy's schemes since her biological father never left his wife and kids for Gypsy and Maddie. She googles Harvey's dead wife and finds a video of her skiing, laughing and shrieking on some challenging slopes. Later that night as she's falling asleep, she thinks she hears the same sounds in the kitchen.



# Pilot Episode: Medium Well

## *Maddie's Awakening as a Psychic Medium*

**ACT THREE:** Back at the Expanding Heart Cafe, Maddie confides in Crispy that she knew in her soul that Stevie was cheating on her and wonders why she put up with it. Crispy suggests that he was 'safe' as a romantic partner because Gypsy would never want to sleep with him. As she's pondering this, two FBI agents enter and question her about Sobbing and Sofia and Mamushka who are international jewelry thieves. They froze the assets in Maddie's Venmo account, which lead them to her. She's now a suspect. There was no way to know if the apparition was a 'good witch or bad witch' as they say. Crispy insists that Maddie is psychic, then Harvey arrives for a session to corroborate her alibi. Maddie is catapulted into her first session as a fake psychic. At first she's freaked out because she's a terrible liar, then she loves the power and position it gives her with this new romantic interest. The session goes well, and Harvey is reduced to tears. He's so moved that he asks her out. Later, Maddie confesses to Crispy that she made it all up, but that she could tell what he needed to hear. She feels like a fraud, but also loves the feeling of power and connectedness. She goes to Barry's office to ask about her biological father whom she never met. He thinks there's a chance for an inheritance, which would give her some freedom. She meets Harvey and his friend, JOE (a Chicago cop, also from the grief group) at a restaurant and is confronted with an impromptu psychic session. She fails miserably! She makes stuff up about his wife's illness, and is called out for her bullshit. She admits that she's full of it and excuses herself to go throw up. She's really a mess. At the end of the dinner, she blurts out the word, 'banana,' which was their secret, code word for sex. Joe gets very emotional and now believes she's psychic.

**ACT FOUR:** Maddie recounts the roller coaster of the Joe session as AGENT ROSENBERG (one of the FBI guys) returns off-duty and asks Maddie for a session. Crispy refuses, afraid that Maddie will incriminate herself. Rosenberg seems smitten with Maddie and tells her that he really wants to contact his mother who he believes may have been murdered. Maddie still won't give him a session, but they form a kind of unspoken connection. While he's there, a flower delivery arrives (from Joe, thanking her for the session) and another package arrives from Harvey with expensive perfume and a gift card to an upscale department store where Maddie and Crispy shop for her date. Maddie has a bit of a meltdown because she doesn't know her own style. She's done with hippie chic, but can't see herself in skimpy slut wear. She asks Crispy to just decide for her, tell her what to wear, but Crispy loves her too much and would rather help her find her own style. The big date arrives. Maddie looks stunning, classy and sensual. Harvey is even more smitten with her. They eat, dance, kiss, and kiss some more. It's a very hot date.

**ACT FIVE:** After their first, steamy date, Maddie speaks to Harvey from her bathtub. It's very seductive, then he asks her if she can predict the future, specifically if she knows who's going to win the Bears/Packers game on Sunday. She doesn't. She realizes that she might be getting in over her head, metaphorically. After she goes to sleep, she hears noises in the kitchen and discovers that she actually is psychic as she meets Harvey's deceased wife, JESSIE HAMMERSTEIN with her sidekick, PAT BURTON (Joe's deceased wife.) The two wives are up to their usual antics. They devour her food and are extremely entertaining, until Jessie claims that she didn't die from suicide, but insists that Harvey killed her. They disappear. Maddie is left stunned and confused in the kitchen, crestfallen and furious. The wives burst back through the door in the tree on the 'energetic' side of life. END.



# Episode Concepts

**Episode 2: The Forgiveness Pill:** The Wives in 'Detention' get their first lesson on forgiveness from Maddie's grandparents, IDA and MAX. Jessie and Pat pop in and derail her romantic momentum with Harvey. At Harvey's condo, she senses Jessie's death and blames her stalled sexual energy on Stevie. She calls him up and shares her feelings on voicemail, then deletes any social media trace of him. Gypsy tries to set her up at Karaoke night. Crispy confesses her crush on Bobby and her concerns about finding love. Maddie goes through her childhood memorabilia and gets triggered to start her journey of discovery (did her biological father leave her an inheritance?) and realizes that she doesn't know her mother's whole story after all.

**Episode 3: Breakfast Reuben:** Maddie agrees to meet Rosenberg at Manny's deli where she sees her deceased grandparents, Ida and Max who warn her about 'opening up' her psychic field to the wrong people. Rosenberg asks her to use her psychic powers to help him with the case. She declines. Ida lets her know that he's smitten with her. Gypsy crashes the grief group and flirts with Frank and Gary, offering them private yoga lessons. Harvey and Joe miss meeting Gypsy. Harvey implores Maddie to predict the winner of the Bears/Packers game. Maddie declines the money from Sofia, but pursues the potential inheritance from her father.

**Episode 4: In the Attic.** As Maddie and Harvey's romance moves forward, she's stalked by two deceased wives, Ginny (GT) and April who implore her to tell Gary the truth - they've always been lovers, conned him into two expensive divorces, still love him, and want him to move on with his life and be happy. When she refuses to break his heart, they make a deal and teach her how to control the intrusion of spirits with the invention of the 'attic' and a window that she can close. Jessie keeps her distance as Maddie makes love to Harvey, which is unspectacular. Then Maddie asks Jessie for advice, which she gives with skyrocketing results.

**Episode 5: Punch Him in the Dick:** Harvey finally meets Gypsy and is enamored with her immediately. Maddie hates her mother for being so flirtatious and sexually alluring. Later, Jessie won't let up about Harvey's bad behavior. At the Bears/Packers game, Maddie predicts Packers will win and they do. Harvey wins a lot of money and is even more enamored with Maddie. She has a psychic medium session with Bobby (Crispy's crush), meets Chip and learns that Bobby has a life-altering secret. Maddie convinces Bobby to confide in Crispy. They go out and fall in love.

**Episode 6: So Shiny and Big!** Maddie discovers that Gypsy is sleeping with both Gary and Frank from the grief group. She's furious and insists that she stop 'test driving' them (they're grieving men, not luxury sedans). Gypsy and Harvey have a secret shopping date for an engagement ring and things get a little out of hand. Bobby tells the others his big secret (he transitioned to a man). Maddie sees HOPE again in the elevator and discovers she's really Frank's deceased wife. She orchestrates a meeting with Hope and Frank, without Frank realizing it. Maddie gets closer to Frank. Gary schedules a session with Maddie and learns the truth about GT and April (they were lovers), which pisses him off, makes him laugh hysterically, then ultimately sets him free.



# Episode Concepts

**Episode 7: Who's the Turkey?** Maddie hosts Thanksgiving with Gypsy, Frank, Crispy, Bobby, and the deceased wives (Harvey's working). She gets a terrifying, surprise visit from Mamushka who disguises as the turkey. She grants Rosenberg a session to help her solve the case and learns that his life is in danger. She can get the answers from Mamushka, but doing so will lead to his death. She refuses to ask, then convinces Sam to quit his job to save his life. Unexpectedly, his late mother, EVIE shows up and reveals their family secrets, which connects them and she forms a heartfelt bond with Sam. Maddie moves out and into an AirBNB to get some space from Gypsy and some privacy.

**Episode 8: A Clomid Proposal.** Maddie and Harvey take a New Year's cruise. He proposes. She accepts. He convinces her to start on CLOMID so they can hedge their bets and have at least one child, hopefully two. Maddie helps Harvey win at Roulette, based on a tip from April who warns her to never do this again. Gypsy plans the wedding. Maddie spends time with Rosenberg. Maddie finally goes through her old boxes of memorabilia and confesses into her 'Truth or Dare' tape recorder that she's a fake psychic and worried that Harvey killed Jessie. Old photos trigger her memories of STELLA who kept her . She cleans out Jessie's closet at Harvey's and brings home clothes to celebrate the one-year anniversary of her passing. Jessie is touched.

**Episode 9: Jessie's Wedding Present.** Maddie spends time in the psychic attic and discovers her 'Ancestor Chest' a treasure trove of her previous lives and the people who contributed to the sparks in her soul. She turns on the psychic projector and sees her future self holding her newborn twins wrapped in pink and blue blanket from a hospital on Oakland, CA. Jessie tells her how to discern if she overdosed on drugs, so she asks Rosenberg to pull the toxicology report, which jeopardizes his job. Jessie gifts her with a visit from her former boyfriend, Stevie as a wedding present, which provides some closure, a bit of comfort, and the heartbreak that he is dead.

**Episode 10: Impulse Purchase Pregnancy.** The day before her wedding while at a spa with Gypsy, Harvey snoops around her house and discovers her taped confession that she's a fake psychic and wonders if he killed Jessie. Then he discovers Jessie's clothes in her closet, the ones she was supposed to be giving away. He decides that Maddie is crazy and is also mad at her because she won't use her psychic powers to help him win and fuel his gambling addiction. A blow-out fight ensues. He calls off the wedding. She gasps out her sorrow to Gypsy who confesses to kissing Harvey when shopping for the engagement ring. Maddie cuts ties with Gypsy and finally takes the emotional space she needs. The next day, Maddie gets impregnated with Crispy's sperm, which she froze before her transition, then leaves for California. On the plane, she meets the spirit of Stella, the deceased wife of her biological father and learns that she's the one who opened the door so she could apologize for being so horrible. Maddie learns that in her desperation, Gypsy used her body to support them financially. Upon Maddie's request, Stella closes the psychic door as she leaves Maddie to start her new life on her own terms. In the months that follow, Maddie rebuilds her life in California, discovers that she and Crispy are expecting twins, she falls in love with Sam, and sees Jessie and Pat one more time. They have graduated from 'Bad Girls' Camp' and insist that their names would be perfect for Maddie's babies, no matter what the sex, implying that they might be coming back as her children.



# A Personal Note

## The Origins of this Story

The concept for *Wives Without Borders*, along with some of these characters grew out of my personal experience with breast cancer, which I battled alongside one of my dearest friends who later succumbed to the disease. We promised to always continue our heartfelt conversations across realms, which inspired me to write this story.

## About Me

I'm an avid reader and writer and have completed several novels, a collection of short fiction, and over two dozen feature film scripts, along with a couple of TV pilots (with pitch decks). I've received numerous accolades over the years from some noteworthy competitions.

As a former educator, I taught screenwriting at DePaul University and essay writing at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. I've worked as a story consultant and associate producer on several occasions and served as the Business Development Director for the postproduction facility, Filmworkers in Nashville and for Resolution Digital Studios in Chicago. I'm active in Nashville's film community and have been on the Advisory Board of Film-Com for many years and on the judging panel for the Nashville Film Festival's screenwriting competition.

I currently split my time between Nashville, TN and Evanston, IL and work in real estate.





# THE FEMALE MYTH

## A Shift to Collaborative, Compassionate Storytelling

**Wives Without Borders** champions the storytelling shift to the **Female Myth** with its 'gather and grow' sensibility and its celebration of women as a source of power, resilience, beauty, and love. All of my work as a writer in fiction, film, and television embodies this shift and illuminates new ways to evolve one's soul and to champion collaboration and unwavering compassion.



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