



REUNITED, AND IT FEELS SO GOOD

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REUNITED, AND IT FEELS SO GOOD -- MARISA TOMEI CATCHES UP WITH OLD PALS IN 'HAPPY

ACCIDENTS'

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"Happy Accidents" is a romantic comedy concerning, of all things, time travel. So it's only natural that Marisa Tomei, who stars with Vincent D'Onofrio in the film, takes a trip back...back...back:

Back to Camp Kinderland in the Berkshires, where 13-year-old Marisa met Caroline Kaplan.

"It was a socialist camp," the Brooklyn-raised Tomei says. "I went because my friends were going. Caroline and I have been close ever since."

Turns out, all these years later, Kaplan is one of the producers of "Happy Accidents," and she sent writer-director Brad Anderson's script to Tomei with the idea that she'd like to star.

There's more. "Happy Accidents" takes Tomei back...back...back:

Back 15 years, to the time she met a man named Terry Stacey in a bar. Tomei gave Stacey her number, and he called. They dated, and one day went to a tattoo parlor together.

Stacey was in a reggae band called Rebel Soul, and a recurring graphic the band used for promotion was the Egyptian third eye. So, when Tomei spied the design on the wall of the parlor, she had it tattooed onto the top of her right foot.

"I was really in love with Terry," Tomei says. "This was before the tattoo craze, so I didn't have any idea what I would get. I saw this symbol on the wall, and I went for it. It's been a good charm for me."

Turns out, all these years later, Stacey is the cinematographer for "Happy Accidents."

"He was always a great artist and photographer, and now he's a remarkable cinematographer," Tomei says. "That was another reason I did the film.

"The opportunity came at a time when I needed to be in a situation where I felt safe and people knew me. It was just perfect. I couldn't believe my luck, to shoot something with Terry and with Caroline. To work with your friends -- everybody wants to do that."

That's not all. There's more time travel for Tomei. Go back...to 1997, when she starred with Natasha Lyonne and Alan Arkin in "Slums of Beverly Hills."

Well, turns out, the writer-director of that picture, Tamara Jenkins, plays one of Tomei's "Happy Accidents."

"It's another great thing that kept happening," Tomei says. "New York is small for the acting field. You see people again and again."

And though Tomei doesn't have that same kind of history with D'Onofrio, "Happy Accidents" is kind of a reunion for the two of them, too.

"I've been wanting to work with Vincent for so long," Tomei says. "There was this play we were supposed to do 10 years ago, and other things where we were close to working together. I'm so happy we finally did it."

In "Happy Accidents," Tomei plays Ruby Weaver, a serial monogamist in therapy because of repeated relationship mistakes. She meets and

falls for D'Onofrio's character, Sam Deeds, an odd guy who shocks Ruby with the announcement that he's a traveler through time and space from thousands of years in the future. Understandably, Ruby doesn't know what to think at first, but because she loves Sam, she decides to ignore the implorations of her therapist (played by Holland Taylor) and go along with Sam's "game."

"Vincent brought me to a new consciousness about acting and behaving on a set," Tomei says. "He's really articulate and he can express what an actor's going through. The three of us -- Brad, Vincent, and I -- really worked hard on this."

"Happy Accidents" was filmed two summers ago in New York. Writer-director Anderson, who made his name with 1998's "Next Stop Wonderland," started work on another film, "Session 9," which was completed and released before "Happy Accidents."

"It was a tough shoot," Anderson says. "It was 110 degrees inside with the lights. We didn't have a lot of money, so we were under the gun. The logistics of making the movie were tough, but Vince and Marisa are the kinds of actors who really want to get into the roles. They want to analyze. I felt secure that they'd deliver the goods."

Incidentally, therapist Taylor, whose credits include TV's "The Practice," "The Truman Show," and, most recently, "Legally Blonde," goes way back...back...back with Anderson.

She's his aunt.

Anderson shrugs at all the happy accidents in "Happy Accidents."

"Every movie milks connections," he says.

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Illustrations/Photos: PHOTO BY CARMINE GALASSO / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER - Marisa Tomei meets up with an old camp buddy, and old boyfriend, and a familiar writer-director.

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