

HAL: Cody? Did you say Cody? I love that name! I had a goldfish named Cody.

NICOLE: Really? Did you take good care of him?

HAL: Of course! Until Lee got him. My cat.

NICOLE: No way! That's what I picked for his middle name, Cody Lee.

HAL: Freaky! Don't tell me your last name is Spot?

NICOLE: How did you . . . ? *(She smiles.)* Rosedale actually.

HAL: That's very pretty. It suits you.

NICOLE: So . . . have you ever dated a pregnant girl before?

HAL: Not that I'm aware of.

NICOLE: What if you *were* aware?

HAL: Well, that could be interesting.

NICOLE: Yeah?

HAL: As long as you stay away from the hashbrowns!

NICOLE: Deal. *(Smiles.)* Oops. Don't look now, but there's a kid with a remote-controlled fire engine.

HAL: I know. But guess who pinched the remote? *(He wiggles his eyebrows suggestively.)*

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Dan and Bess, twenties, are best friends on a quest to find their perfect mates. Every week they meet for brunch to discuss the "personals" dates they went on the weekend before. Today, they meet to discuss their disastrous dates.

CHARACTERS

Dan: 20s, gay

Bess: 20s, Dan's best friend

SETTING

An International House of Pancakes

TIME

The present, Sunday breakfast

DAN: Hey, it wasn't my fault! Two trains passed me by. I was waiting for like twenty minutes. I started at nine fifteen. Right when I called you. I really did, Bess.

BESS: Um-hum.

DAN: And I had a crazy person try to rip me off on Thornedale! I'm fine. I didn't get hurt or anything. He was one of those drunks from the rehab around the corner. Had awful teeth. I could have been killed. It was really scary! *(Beat. She pats his shoulder.)* You don't believe a word of this, do you? *(She looks at him.)* Oh my God! You honestly don't believe me at all?!

BESS: You left at nine-forty-five, didn't you?

DAN: I can't believe you! *(Beat.)* Ten to.

BESS: Figures. I ordered you coffee. Cream?

DAN: You ordered me coffee? You're sweet. You're understanding.

BESS: You're buying.

DAN: I'm broke.

BESS: Yes, and I'm on time. And I don't lie incessantly.

DAN: OK. Good point.

BESS: And I might have bought it if you didn't leave your cell phone on after you called me.

DAN: Oh my God! What did I say? Did I talk? Out loud?

BESS: (*Baby voice.*) "I love you little puddie, little kitty, my squishy, little Holleroo."

DAN: Oh no!

BESS: (*Continuing.*) "I'm very late and Bessie is going to be a total and complete witch!"

DAN: I didn't say that.

BESS: (*Bess nods.*) Then you threw on the shower and started to sing the theme song to *Titanic*, which you *said* you hated by the way.

DAN: Yes, but was I on key?

BESS: No. Finally, you let loose with a mouthful of rather colorful language. I guess you must have noticed the time. Running to catch the train, panting, heavily — more colorful language.

DAN: Well, at least I'm colorful.

BESS: (*She laughs.*) True.

DAN: I'm hungry. Let's order.

BESS: I already did.

DAN: You ordered food for me too?

BESS: Of course. (*He looks disappointed.*) You're upset? You always get the same thing.

DAN: No, I don't.

BESS: OK, there was that one time you got the Mexican omelet. You didn't like it.

DAN: No! I got the waffles once. That was different.

BESS: No you didn't. You *debated* getting the waffles once, but you talked yourself out of them.

DAN: Well!

BESS: Face it, Dan. Steady and dependable with a dollop of sour cream on the side is how you like everything. So cut to the chase. And get to the heart of it. How was it?

DAN: I told you on the phone. (*Beat.*) Blah.

BESS: Yeah, but what kind of "blah"?

DAN: What do you mean by "what kind"? Are there several kinds?

BESS: Well, was it just blah-blah or was it OK and then end blah?

DAN: (*Thinking.*) Blah sporadically with an explosion of blah at the end.

BESS: Oh no. Details?

DAN: Fine. He was kinda cute when he came to my door. I definitely thought . . . "He's cute." So I showed him around my apartment, which he thought was great. And very manly. He said that — manly.

BESS: Was that when he was looking at your honey-colored Martha Stewart comforter and matching pillow set or when he was perusing your Judy Garland doll collection?

DAN: Shut up! So we decided to go to eat at Mario's and there were moments of uncomfortable silence when we were eating and I thought, "He has no personality at all. Here he gets to listen to people's problems all day long and he has nothing to say for himself. Has he no life? No interests? The least he could do is dish up some dirt about some old client whose confidentiality agreement has expired or something. But nooooo . . . he'd rather sit there in silence eating ravioli and listening to me gag on my meatball." Then I realize that the whole time I was thinking this thought, *I* was probably looking like *I'm* the one who appears to have no personality because I'm sitting here *thinking*. Then I thought, "Oh God, now I'm thinking this thought about thinking I have no personality, which is perpetuating this continued silence at the table. I've got to stop thinking thoughts and talk." So I took a sip of wine and said, "Do you like pigs?"

BESS: What?!

DAN: I didn't know what to say. It was the first thing that came into my head.

BESS: Right. Of course.

DAN: I just thought it would open up the conversation.

BESS: To what? The subject of your insanity?

DAN: Well, it turns out, little smarty-pants, he loves pigs. Ever

since seeing *Charlotte's Web*. In fact, he went to a pig racing thing recently.

BESS: He did not!

DAN: He did! And . . . he's got a Porky Pig thing. He also thinks Miss Piggy might be Porky "in drag."

BESS: What?! What do you mean he's got a Porky Pig thing?

(*Beat.*) What kind of thing?!

DAN: I don't know. He likes him. Anyway, it all lead to a game with us asking, "Do you like — dot, dot, dot?" I tried things like . . . do you like squash, do you like nuns, do you like hammers, do you like me?

BESS: What did he say to all that?

DAN: Yes, if prepared with brown sugar. Nuns, if they sing in choirs and act like Whoopee, and need you ask?

BESS: Oh my God! Wait? Was the "need you ask" the hammer or you?

DAN: Me! (*Brief beat.*) I think.

BESS: That's great! This is blah?!

DAN: Then it came.

BESS: What?!

DAN: The knee thing — the tap.

BESS: A tap on the knee?

DAN: That's right. The ole knee . . . *tap*.

BESS: As opposed to what? The knee smack, the knee shake, the knee bend?

DAN: The knee rub.

BESS: Ohhhh. (*Beat.*) Are you sure it wasn't a tap with a little rub? Because that would be something, right?

DAN: That would. But nope, straight tap. Just your regular knee *tap*.

BESS: Awwww. Well, that's just . . . Maybe in time the tap will be converted to a rub.

DAN: No, no. Not this time. Not next time. No time. It was a two-tap knee-tap with a vocal. "You seem great."

BESS: Ohhh. That's almost insulting. So it wasn't really "blah-
blah," it was just blah because . . .

DAN: He rejected me! Friends. He wants to be friends. Like I need another friend!

BESS: Well, if it makes you feel any better, my date sucked too.

DAN: It doesn't. At all. (*Beat.*) So what was wrong with Mr. Convertible?

BESS: He was so not convertible. He was such a "top up" kinda guy. All the fantasies of us on a mountaintop out West — me in my head scarf, him in his leather went to hell when he pulled up in his SUV. He had the voice of a guy with a convertible, but the truth was he was a gas-guzzling jerk with no awareness of the SUV turnover problem.

DAN: SUVs have a turnover problem? (*Beat.*) What's a turnover problem?

BESS: What's wrong with you? They flip. They roll. They turn upside down and kill people.

DAN: Ohhh. That's not good.

BESS: People have been dying right and left in SUVs since the early eighties due to the turnover problem. There's a height-width ratio problem that somebody didn't want to fix — Republicans — because it would cost the auto industry too much. And they didn't want to compete with Japan's much better, nonturnover cars. Didn't you see "Frontline's" feature on the SUV turnover problem?!

DAN: No, but I saw "The View's" feature on pizza turnovers.

BESS: (*Throwing up her hands.*) Uhhh.

DAN: You didn't say that to him, did you?!

BESS: Of course I did.

DAN: You know, hon, sometimes guys don't particularly like it when you bring up faulty aspects about their cars. Their car is kind of like their . . . their, an extension of their . . .

BESS: Ewww. I get it! Well, his "extension" is an accident waiting to happen. Somebody needs to shrink his extension or make it disappear all together.

DAN: Umm. Sounds like you might have done that already. So it didn't go well?

BESS: No, we had a good time. At the pool hall. I won and he didn't bellyache.

DAN: Well, good. This is sounding good.
BESS: Yeah, I think things would have been fine if he didn't have to be hospitalized.
DAN: Whoa! Missed that. Back it up there.
BESS: It wasn't my fault. He insisted on watching my technique up close.
DAN: I'm sure.
BESS: Stop. (*Pointing to her eye.*) I backed the cue stick into his eye. By accident.
DAN: Well, I should hope.
BESS: And then his eye started gushing blood!
DAN: (*Mortified and disgusted, contorted in vogue-style poses.*) Uck. Ckk. Uhh. Nnn.
BESS: What a crybaby he was. It was just a little blood.
DAN: Eww. Very eww. Stop.
BESS: But that's not the worst of it.
DAN: (*New pose of disgust out of fear of what's to come.*) No!
BESS: As I was changing his gauze, he told me he had a great time — the best ever — and wanted to see me again this weekend.
DAN: With what? His one remaining eye! Eww.
BESS: He really did. He was so sincere.
DAN: (*Still somewhat disgusted, but positive.*) That's so cute and puppy dog. Awww.
BESS: Right.
DAN: And he sounds very "nice guy"?
BESS: Um-hmm.
DAN: Has a kind of decency.
BESS: Exactly!
DAN: Yeah, that's never been for you. This is the kind of guy you shove, and maim, and beat, not the kind you actually date.
BESS: Right, but God, now that you say that I sound kind of terrible.
DAN: Well . . .
BESS: I love that about me. (*She opens the paper.*) I think we ought to dive right in again and give it another shot with someone new. Have you seen any good prospects for me?

DAN: I don't know, Bess. I saw a massage therapist with a thing for hot air ballooning and yogurt.
BESS: Umm, nice but too Mary Poppins. I think I found a good one for you. Shall I read? (*He shrugs.*) "Cultured painter with professional day job" —
DAN: Oh God. He has no money.
BESS: Now wait . . . "Attractive, emotionally secure, stable" —
DAN: A stable painter? You can't fool me. I saw *Pollock*.
BESS: "Looking for someone who's cute, cuddly, and sweet."
DAN: Sounds like he wants a Cabbage Patch doll.
BESS: (*Reading more.*) "A good sense of humor." Huh? Huh? (*Quickly since this part doesn't describe him.*) "With a complex, intense worldview."
DAN: That doesn't sound like me.
BESS: Well . . . you have cable? (*Continues reading.*) "A guy who likes to go out for brunch" . . . Huh, huh? "Who enjoys good talks." Huh, huh?
DAN: Who's going to smack you, huh, huh?!BESS: Fine. (*Quickly again because he doesn't look Italian.*) "Italian looks a plus."
DAN: OK. So let's review. We both like breakfast. We're both broke. And I'm as Italian as Meryl Streep.
BESS: You kinda look sorta Italian. Anyway, that was just his plus thing.
DAN: Oh, oooy for extra points. Look, Bess, I think this personal ad thing is getting a little old.
BESS: But we've only just begun.
DAN: I've met twenty-nine guys! And I haven't had more than one date with any of them.
BESS: OK, OK, I admit things haven't been perfect.
DAN: Not perfect? Try disastrous for both of us.
BESS: I think you're overstating this.
DAN: I never overstate! Your third date almost drove you off a cliff.
BESS: It was a hill, and it wasn't on purpose: His glasses fogged.
DAN: Oh, sure, fine, as long as it wasn't an SUV with a turnover problem.

BESS: Oh shush!

DAN: My fourth date wanted me to meet his mother.

BESS: OK, so he was a little too ready for wedlock. That's just part of the search.

DAN: The twenty-third took me to a folk-music-slash-poetry-slam.

BESS: OK. That was unforgivable. But, but, we . . . All right, things haven't been great, uh . . . Maybe you're right. Maybe this personals thing is not the way to go.

DAN: Definitely. It's too spotty. You can't know what you're going to get by reading a list of random attributes. "Barbra Streisand fan, enjoys yoga." He could mean that he heard a Barbra song once or that he plasters life-size posters of her all over his bedroom while saluting her sun. (*Sun salutation yoga posture.*) Besides, these "dates" create false expectations, more pressure, and attract more weirdos. I think sometimes the old-fashioned meet-the-guy-at-the-bar-or-gym is the best way to go.

BESS: Yeah, you're right. You're right. Gym?

DAN: Well bar. The point is that the personals set up a false, uncomfortable situation — a fabrication through words. You need to meet in person.

BESS: Yes. I agree. Better to go much more natural.

DAN: Exactly!

BESS: (*She nods.*) Open the paper. Where's the next singles three-minute dating thing? (*He looks at her.*) That's natural. You talk for three minutes. You meet. You dump. Just like in the bar. You don't read about each other. It's more bang for your buck. Twenty-five dates in seventy-five minutes. You just churn those rejects out. You can't lose!

DAN: Are you insane?! (*Pause.*) Page twenty-seven. There's one at five tonight! (*Gasps.*) I've got to go shower and change. (*He starts to leave in an excited fluster.*)

BESS: Well, call me when you're ready! But do me a favor. Kill the cell phone in the shower. Judy you are not.

CAREER MATCH

Dennis, thirties, works as a career counselor. Today he is meeting with a new client, Sally, late twenties. At the beginning of each session, Dennis likes to conduct exercises in order to discover what careers would best suit his client's personality. As the scene opens, a rather sad and angry Sally tries to maintain a positive attitude toward this process.

CHARACTERS

Dennis: 30s, a career counselor

Sally: 20s, a client

SETTING

Dennis's office

TIME

The present

DENNIS: It's very nice to meet you, Sally.

SALLY: Thank you. You too, uh . . .

DENNIS: Dennis. It's Dennis. Well . . . I always think it's best to just jump right in.

SALLY: Jumping is good. Let's do it.

DENNIS: OK. Now in order to find the perfect career match for you, I need to know a bit about your personality. So, I'd like to do a little exercise with you.

SALLY: OK.

DENNIS: It's very simple. I am going to say a word and I want you to respond with the first thing that pops into your mind.

SALLY: Like word association?

DENNIS: Exactly.

SALLY: OK. Shoot.

DENNIS: Money.

SALLY: None.

DENNIS: Sales.