

Blind Date

I am going to kill Bridget Jones.

Curse her for setting me up on this bloody date. Only a few more hours until showtime, and I look like a ridiculous mess.

I have barely stepped out of the shower when I notice that the time is, shockingly, 4 in the afternoon. That leaves me with 2 hours, give or take, to shave, style, suit up, and do everything else that a girl needs to do in order to look presentable enough for society.

And I know it's not Bridget's fault that the traffic on the way home from the office was horrendous, or that my cab driver lacked a certain understanding of what the words, "Hurry the fuck up!" meant. But if it weren't for her, I could be relaxing in a bath on this lovely Saturday evening right now, rather than running around my flat looking for knickers and my cheap knock-off Louis Vuitton handbag.

Apparently, one of Bridget's boyfriend's co-worker's friends is in desperate need of a last-minute date for some fete being thrown at the British Museum. His girlfriend had to cancel on him because her photo shoot is being delayed over in Majorca. As if it weren't bad enough that Bridget is setting me up with an already-taken man, she has to fix me with one who prefers dating glamorous supermodels.

Excuse me while I go dry off my frumpy brown hair.

There is a strong feeling growing inside of me that just knows tonight is going to be a disaster in some way, shape, or form. I had left my flat at 5:57, hailed the first taxi that passed by, and ordered the cabbie to get to the Museum in manner of Formula One racer or getaway driver. By the time I had arrived – 30 minutes later, the traffic was just as god-awful as usual – the fancy dinner event had finished receiving guests and I

had to beg the security at the doors to let me in. It was humiliating in all respects, and I didn't even have my mobile on me so I couldn't even call Bridget to let her know how horrible of a night I'd been having so far.

My "date" for the evening turns out to be some bloke named Maxwell Whittaker, a barrister who works in the same firm as Bridget's boyfriend, Mark Darcy. He had sent out a last-minute distress signal to all his colleagues yesterday when his model girlfriend called him the night before to tell him she couldn't go to the Museum dinner. When Mark told Bridget about it, she somehow came up with the *fantastic* idea of setting me up. I don't know what must have been running through her mind when she phoned me in the wee hours of last night, telling me about some gorgeous bachelor who was in need of a companion to a fabulous dinner gathering at the British Museum. Moreover, I don't know what possessed me to agree to the idea.

Maxwell isn't the most handsome of men, but I do suppose one can get used to his short stature, the drab wig sitting on top of his balding head, and the extremely strong scent of cologne that seems to be emanating from every inch of him. "You look, er, pleasant," he tells me as we are taking our places in the grand golden-lit ballroom, with mirrors the size of a house and numerous waiters flittering about madly.

Now, I am wearing an old dress from Marks and Spencer, a tiny black number with a beaded pattern around the waist. My mum has told me it fits my body nicely, but, and I quote, "I do believe those kinds of dresses are meant for younger women, dear."

I take Maxwell's comment as a compliment. After all, he *is* dating a supermodel, so he must have good taste. "Thank you," I reply.

Soon enough, the luminous atmosphere of the ballroom is dimmed, and a band in the far corner begins to play the first strings of a waltz. The other guests at our

table are chattering loudly, and they are kind enough to try and include me in the conversation.

“So, Max, my boy, who are you here with? Where’s that lovely model of yours?” a huge, heavysset man with an equally huge dark brown beard booms loudly as he sits down next to Maxwell. Inside I cringe.

Maxwell sips his champagne before answering. “She’s still in Majorca,” he murmurs.

The man then turns his attentions on me and, with that rambunctious voice of his, begins to query me next. “Young lady! What, pray tell, is your name?”

I try to smile gracefully, although I suspect that there must something stuck between my teeth because as soon as I have smiled, an elderly woman sitting on the other side next to the heavysset man shifts in her seat, a look of disapproval on her face. “My name is Allison, sir,” I say meekly.

“Allison, eh? And how do you know our Max here?” he practically shouts.

Maxwell answers for me here. “She’s a friend of Mark, I believe.”

Bloody hell. I am just failing disastrously here. I barely even know Mark, having only met him once before when I stumbled into Bridget’s flat one drunken night, emotional and wailing about my lack of a proper love life and why men just didn’t want to be with me.

The man pats Maxwell on the back. “Well, aren’t you the spry little one here! Now, Allison, does your boyfriend know you’re here with Maxwell Whittaker, one of *the* most eligible bachelors in London?”

My face turns a bright, deep shade of red. How on earth am I supposed to answer this most horrifying of questions? “I don’t have a boyfriend at the moment,” I almost whisper.

“You don’t? Max, my dear boy, you must watch out for this one! Birds like her don’t have that much time left, you know, and they’re always on the prowl.” I can feel the redness on my face deepen even more.

I try to rectify the situation as best as I can.

“Well, I *am* seeing someone, but it’s not serious. I’m just not in a relationship or anything,” I quickly reply, trying to cover up the hideous status of my singlehood.

The woman sitting next to this boisterous fellow finally speaks up. “You must be one of those...*swingers* my son keeps on talking about,” she remarks, sneering as she says it, and the man next to her roars in laughter. I assume then, that this horrible woman is his mum. Of course.

I sit there in silence. Where on earth did this people come from? And why don’t they like me? Maxwell, for his part, is merely downing his champagne, one glass after another.

And now I want to cry. It really isn’t my fault that I’m still alone and not married. I try, but it is really hard. It’s bad enough that I had to come here as Maxwell’s backup date, one who obviously is not on par with his glamorous model girlfriend. I push my chair

back, and quietly excuse myself from the table.

Maxwell, meanwhile, looks down at his plate, surely because he is now too embarrassed to be seen with me, and continues to drink copious amounts of liquor.

Excuse me while I go and kill Bridget Jones.