

#Happy

By Sarah Quick

© 2018

Setting

The time is today, the place is a small city in Ontario. The stage is split into two halves with one side comprising of a cosy, independent coffee shop where our female characters congregate and the other a neighbourhood pub where their male counterparts frequently reside. (Occasionally the ladies can be found in the pub because they are not adverse to alcoholic beverages and occasionally the men grab a coffee...when the pub is not yet open)

Characters

SONIA:

Just turned 50. Strong, independent divorcee. Forthright and well liked.

TEE:

Early 50s. Shy and reserved. Newly divorced from a cheating husband.

LIZZIE:

Mid 20s. Feisty and fun. Girl power personified. Biding her time before she takes on the world.

GARY:

49. A widower of three years. Kind, gentle, lovely.

TOM:

Early 50s. Rugged. A man's man. Generous and well liked. A confirmed bachelor.

DANNY:

Late 20s. Fun and funny. A good-looking charmer. Does not take life too seriously (Danny 'takes on' characters wherever he works to brighten up his day, therefore we see him initially as Michel the French waiter and Murphy the Irish bartender)

Act 1 Scene 1

The Coffee Shop. Sonia and Tee are regular patrons. Lizzie works there and as such the ladies have become good friends. It is Wednesday night knitting club. Tee has abandoned her knitting having been distracted by one of the 'women's' magazines to which she is quite partial.

TEE “A recent survey into the world of online dating reveals that women are most afraid of meeting a serial killer”.

LIZZIE Yep.

SONIA Sounds about right.

TEE Men however...wait for it...*Men* are afraid of meeting someone fat.

SONIA What?

LIZZIE That’s their biggest fear?

TEE Only 3% of men are psychopaths; only a *tiny percentage* of those are serial killers. And in their profiles women drop their weight by an average of 8.5lbs.

SONIA/LIZZIE *(Nod to themselves murmuring agreement – they did!)*

TEE Shoot me now. That’s why I could never do it, the judgement and ridicule.

SONIA And I have been telling you for ages now, you’d be fine! You’re gorgeous, vivacious-

LIZZIE -Desperate-

SONIA Exactly, what’s not to love?!

TEE I am not desperate. That's just it; I need to be more desperate. At the moment I'm happy. Zumba on a Monday; Knitting Club on Wednesdays; and "Mojito and a Movie" night with the girls from work on a Friday. Boom. Social life taken care of. No man required.

LIZZIE It's not much of a club. You're the only two left.

SONIA Everyone else has gone and gotten a life.

TEE This is a life! I'd rather be knitting than out on a date with someone I'd never met before. I'm too old for all of that

SONIA 'Rather be knitting'? We're 6 weeks in and you've only done about 3 lines of your pussy hat.

TEE Well, I'm juggling here (*indicates magazine, knitting and large glass of wine*). It's tricky!

SONIA And you're not old. You're the same age as me and *I* am in my prime!

LIZZIE Dating when you're older has got to be easier. You get more self-assured, don't you? You know what you want. The people you're (*hooking up with*) 'dating' know what *they* want.

TEE That's the theory...I just never expected to have to do it all over again.

SONIA I hear ya.

LIZZIE Yes...but see this time you've got it figured out, you know what's important. You have perspective.

SONIA You relish your independence, that's good!-

LIZZIE -you're more sexually confident and liberated-

TEE Nope.

LIZZIE -more financially secure

TEE Barely. Besides, I don't have the time. Dating takes time, precious time, that hot commodity. Dates mean drinks. And drinks mean-

LIZZIE -Hangovers.

TEE Who has the time!

SONIA You have to find the time!... (*indicating the magazine*) what other pearls of wisdom does Zoomer have to impart?

TEE It's not Zoomer! (*swats her with the magazine*) It's erm, (*has to check*) Woman's World.

LIZZIE (*teasing*) Wait. Don't tell me. Have they found yet another way of writing the article "100 ways to keep your man!"?

SONIA (*laughs*) 100 ways of saying the names a misnomer and you don't actually blow!

TEE It is quite fascinating actually. Fact or fiction? it takes an average of 12 – 14 dates before a couple exchange house keys.

SONIA Sounds about right. Should be enough time to figure out if he's a complete psycho.

TEE I don't know about that – it took me almost 30 years with Trevor. I guess some men hide it well.

SONIA What do you think Lizzie, 12 to 14 dates sound about right?

LIZZIE No idea, in my world of online dating it's more like 'it takes an average 12 – 14 seconds before a couple combine DNA profiles'.

TEE It is a fact. Here are some more. There are more single women than there are single men. Fact. 37% of online daters were previously married. Fact.

SONIA And 76% of statistics are made up on the spot.

SONIA/LIZZIE Fact

TEE Men are most likely to lie about income?

LIZZIE Fact?

TEE Correct. 10% of users don't actually exist?

LIZZIE Sad fact?

TEE Correct

SONIA And everyone lies about age. Fact!

TEE Which, pretty much means that if you're looking for a long-term, meaningful, committed-

LIZZIE -Not just based on getting your rocks off with any available Tom, Dick or Sally then moving onto the next one before you've had a chance to say-

TEE/LIZZIE Relationship

TEE Well, then you're pretty well- *(she indicates for Lizzie to finish the sentence)*

LIZZIE FACT! (*F@#ked*)

TEE Exactly!

SONIA It isn't all like that – you just have to sift through the flotsam and jetsam before you get to the good stuff.

LIZZIE Flotsam like, oh! ...that one you had who was the salesman?

SONIA Thank you, I had managed to forget him.

LIZZIE Jon.

TEE Jon with no H, that's right!

LIZZIE (*as jon*) I'm Jon. No H. And I'm a salesman. All about the product, moi. And the consumer, you.

TEE (*as jon*) "I'm packaged right and priced to sell" Eww.

SONIA Eww is right, but I'll bet you anything that he's with someone now. It takes all sorts. And that's why online dating is good. It opens up a world of possibilities. There are 91 million people in the world using dating apps.

LIZZIE Yeah - And I got poked, pulled or propositioned by about 3% of them last week! And not a single one looking for love let me tell ya!

TEE Are you? Looking for love?

LIZZIE I am not. I am looking for ways to pass the time...until I can get the heck out of this place and see the world. I want some trans-Atlantic adventures; the feel of a different breeze, the smell of a different continent. I want to be serenaded beside

an ocean; and wooed in a language I can't understand. Then *maybe* I'll think about falling in love.

Which is why this is fine (*indicates her phone*) You want a transient, data-generated hook-up? "There's an app for that!" booty-calls with each fleeting moment demarcated with a desperate attempt not to allude to the C-word.

SONIA C-word?

TEE (*concerned*) Cancer?

LIZZIE Commitment!

TEE I see. (*ugh*)

LIZZIE But not all the sites are like that. Sonia's on some proper *dating* platforms.

SONIA *Exactly*, I've been at it for over a year now.

LIZZIE Well, not 'at it', at it.

TEE She's been 'at it' a bit.

SONIA Damn straight! What about you? Are you telling me that, having had no action at all since losing 200lbs of lying, cheating scumbag, you aren't even a little bit up for it?

TEE Not even a little...bit...up for *it*, no! *It* is what scares me to death. *It* is what puts me off even contemplating digital dating. (*conspiratorial*) Trevor was...*is* the only guy I've ever slept with.

(*Sonia is intrigued and surprised...Lizzie is downright flabbergasted*)

LIZZIE Wait up...what?! The *only* guy?

TEE The only one.

LIZZIE How!?

TEE Well, we met when I was 19. We were engaged at 22, married 2 years later and together for 27 years. It transpired that *he* had sex with lots of other people during that time but for me there was only him.
So the thought of *being* with someone else is terrifying. And I'm guessing that sex plays a pretty major part in this online dating world.

SONIA It's a *part*, yes. But it doesn't all have to be about sex.

LIZZIE Unless you're on Tinder.

SONIA There are connections to be made, friendships. Courtships believe it or not. And, sometimes I think it can be magical - two people trying to connect. Intelligent people.

LIZZIE Alongside those for whom common sense, decency and grammatical fortitude have never materialized.

SONIA It's a virtual age of wanting to believe...

LIZZIE And sheer incredulity at the people that are out there.

TEE It's too complicated! - platforms and profiles, surfing, statistics.

SONIA Au contraire, mon amie! It's as easy as online shopping. It's an anthropological Amazon! Just find the one that you want and click.

LIZZIE (*PSA*) Only as a shopper please be aware that once you take delivery of the items they are often harder to return!

TEE Exactly – who knows what I’d end up with? No, no. The only hopes of me ever dating again are if a real life person were to walk through that door right there and I could see immediately that he was hunky...and ask if he was handy.

LIZZIE Handy?

TEE You know, useful...around the house. Trevor was worse than useless. I would find a man very sexy if he could fix things. Fix things *and* have the raw animal magnetism of Tom.

LIZZIE Tom?

SONIA Jones. Tom Jones.

TEE *Sir* Tom Jones OBE. Greatest singer and Welsh piece of loveliness ever to walk this earth.

LIZZIE Oh!

SONIA Don’t tell me you’ve not heard about her Tom Jones obsession. Thirteen times she’s seen him in concert.

TEE Vancouver, Buffalo, New York, twice; Toronto of course, London, 3 nights in a row; Paris, Berlin, Cardiff, Dublin and Glasgow.

LIZZIE Holy heck.

TEE I saw him twice last year (*she finds a photo on her phone or a memento ticket stub she’s been using as a bookmark to show them*)

SONIA Bardavon 1869?

TEE It's the name of the opera house in Poughkeepsie.

SONIA Oh, I thought maybe it was the year of his first concert!

TEE Oi! No, actually his first New York concert was in 1968. The Copacabana Supper Club.

SONIA Same year you were born.

TEE Hey, listen! He's a heartthrob who transcends generations. He is a living legend.

LIZZIE But for how much longer?

TEE He played 53 concerts last year, to thousands of people. He is sexier now than he's ever been. You should see the women going crazy, throwing panties, hundreds of them!

LIZZIE Who does that?

SONIA Yeah, Tee, who does that?

TEE Lots of people.

SONIA Tell her-

LIZZIE Tell me/what?

TEE /nothing.

SONIA About when she threw her panties at him.

LIZZIE You didn't?

SONIA She did.

TEE I was young! I swore I was never going to. I thought no, never – he’s got too much class. *(pause)* And I’ve got too much class-

LIZZIE/SONIA Right!

TEE I thought, he’s up there singing in that deep, hypnotic, velvety sex voice, he doesn’t need to be dodging damp underpants.
But then in Glasgow it happened. 35,000 people there were in the stadium. 34 ½ thousand of them women, all hopped up on vodka and iron bru. The sun had set, the night was warm; lights flickered illuminating this beautiful man, singing the perfect rendition of Green, Green Grass of Home. And something just came over me. I took off my underwear, not without some difficulty, and I launched them right at him.
I don’t know if it was the breeze, the strength of my pitching arm or the fact that they were quite substantial material-wise. But they flew through the night, reached the stage and landed right on his microphone.
Of course he had to remove them.

SONIA Tom Jones had to remove her panties; that’s what she tells people.

TEE It’s true! And that’s not all - he gestured for me to come up and stage with him!!

LIZZY No way.

TEE I couldn’t believe it – I was in a daze. I made it up there, he sang the rest of the song to me and then he leant down and he said “Sweetheart, I believe these belong to you, am I right?” Of course, I go beet red, nod uncontrollably and run off the stage! And that’s that! Best night of my life...Apart from having my kids...

SONIA You have to say that.

TEE Yup.

SONIA Well, let's get online and find you a Tom – you won't know who's out there 'til you look.

TEE No point. You've been doing this for a year with no luck.

SONIA Yes well, I've got a theory. See, the busiest day to try out online dating is the first Sunday after New Year's Day between 5pm and 8pm. But, I was picking up the kids from a weekend with their father at that prime time...so I started a day late. Which I think meant most of the good ones had already gone.
But I'm not giving up!
There was someone new on there just the other day who seemed nice. I saw his profile in a newspaper first.

LIZZIE A newspaper?

SONIA I was at the dentists. They had a copy of the local paper in the waiting room, which I hadn't read for ages-

TEE -who has the time?

SONIA Turns out it actually doesn't take that long to read after all. (*gets newspaper page out of her handbag*) I brought myself fully up to date with local council happenings, various shop openings...knew more than really anyone needed to about him - the hero of a one-man campaign to stop dogs fouling the medical centre's car park

LIZZIE (*reading*) "Pooper Snooper is Super Duper"

SONIA When I came across this

TEE *(reading)* “Connections Section”.

SONIA Worth noting that this ‘Connection’ is spelled properly, with no x...unlike the version spelt with 3 x’s over here *(on the other side of the page)*. Nobody needs to see that.

LIZZIE It’s so quaint. Like stepping into another era.

SONIA Yep. People searching for their mate using 17 words or less.

LIZZIE No picture.

SONIA No profile really. Just a list of preferences and a plea to call!
This is the one that caught my eye. Male 49

TEE WLTM, FS, NS,

SONIA GSOH, OC,

LIZZIE WWC, DW,

SONIA WBFPL...

Lights fade down on the coffee shop and crossfade up onto the pub.

Act 1 Scene 2

At the Pub - Gary and Tom are sitting with pints watching the hockey game

GARY ...I just copied from all the others. Turns out that means I want to meet a financially secure, non-smoker, with a good sense of humour, own car, wall to wall carpeting, dish-washer and wood-burning fireplace!

TOM It's astounding really that you didn't get any response.

GARY It was the girls at work that persuaded me to do it. "You've been on your own long enough, Gary", "It's time you found yourself a woman, Gary", "You may be old Gary but you've still got it!"

TOM Still got it?

GARY Yeah. Whatever 'it' is. And more's to the point how to find someone who wants 'it'. I saw they had a special on in this – 3 lines - \$30 and thought "Why not?"

TOM There's hardly any ads. (*turns page*) Whoa!

GARY Yeah – I nearly contacted the nice looking Greek girl on that page but I spotted the three x's in time.

TOM Realized that you'd be paying more than 83cents a word.

GARY I'm no idiot. I was quite excited that there weren't many 'connections' listed. 'Result', I thought, 'less competition'.

TOM Except there is competition only they're all in the arena and you're warming up in the parking lot. You've got to get online - display your wares. Or rather describe, not display. Displaying is definitely frowned upon.

GARY I have. I wasn't getting any response from this so I did an online profile.

TOM You did?

GARY Well, I thought 'I've nothing to lose'! (*they cheers and drink*) I used the same name as in the newspaper for my screen name 'Nice-guy 69' - let them know what I have to offer...and the year I was born of course.

As Gary gets a laptop out of his bag and proceeds to get online the lights come back up on the coffee shop – both locations are now ‘in play’

SONIA *(scrolling on her phone)* I spotted a new profile on here on Tuesday and recognized it as the same guy straight away. ‘Nice-guy 69’?

LIZZIE Interesting. And is his online profile a bit more descriptive?

SONIA Yep. more words, less abbreviations.
A decent description. Funny. Self-deprecating but positive; assured but not arrogant.

LIZZY It’s a fine line.

SONIA And...a photo of course. *(She shows them his photo)*

GARY In the ‘helpful hints’ section it said “Profiles accompanied by a selfie are likely to attract 5% more responses”

TOM Well yeah, and a full body photo gets you loads more response.

GARY Providing, of course, that you have an amazing body.

TOM Headshot?

GARY Yup.

TEE He looks distinguished.

LIZZIE Grey hair – well, silvery.

TEE Hey, if they’re not a silver fox by our age, they’re a complete dyer!

SONIA I had a good feeling about him.

GARY So, I posted it! Three days ago now.

TOM Any response?

GARY Not looked – we’ve had a rush on at work so I’ve not had any time...besides, I didn’t want to seem too keen...

SONIA So, I waited an hour and I replied. I didn’t want to seem too keen. I said I wanted to know more about him and asked him to chat!

LIZZIE And?

SONIA And...nothing! Not a peep. Three days it’s been. Shame. I really thought we’d be a match somehow.

Lights down on coffee shop

GARY Hold on! What does that mean? Oh! I’ve got a reply.

TOM Don’t get too excited.

GARY I’ve got a reply!!

TOM Like I said-

GARY There’s a message. Oh my god how do I open the message?

TOM Here.

GARY *(starts to read message)* ‘hello’ *(reads more)*...she seems nice ‘want to know more’...She wants to know more! About me!

What do I do now?

TOM How does she look?

GARY What? Oh, great! I mean she looks nice.

TOM Nothing suspicious about her message?

GARY No. Profile sounds great...and she wants to know more! About me!
I should get in touch. (*reads*) "Message me...or give me a call and we can chat"

TOM Message.

GARY Oh god. I don't know. "Message me..."

TOM Yep.

GARY or call..."

TOM Don't call.

GARY Don't call?

TOM Nooooooo. Too soon for a call. Message her and you have time to think of a reply. Less danger of putting your foot in it and seeming like the idiot you actually are... when it comes to women.

GARY OK. Message.

TOM Something witty, clever...suave.

GARY (*types*) "Hello". Send – 'fraid that is the best I've got at the moment.

Lights up on coffee shop

SONIA Oh hello. Talk of the devil! About time.

LIZZIE *(looking over her shoulder)* I hope he doesn't think he can leave you hanging for 3 days and then waltz in here with a "Hello" and expect you to just drop whatever you're doing.

TEE Yeah – You could be doing a ton of exciting things.

LIZZIE and expect you to just start chatting away-

GARY "How are you" *(sends)*

LIZZIE *(reads message)* Now, that's more like it!

SONIA "I am very well thank you."*(sends and continues to type)*

GARY Wow – that was quick! *(reads)* "Lovely to "meet" you". Ha! This is fantastic...

SONIA "Busy week?" Send.

LIZZIE Or were you just ignoring her!

GARY Ah. *(types)* "Not really" Send. Definitely shouldn't include boring work details in our first conversation – I know that much!

SONIA Right. Ok. Well you're going to have to work a bit harder now buddy. This girl is no pushover.

GARY *(types)* "I was hoping you might be available to go on a date this weekend"
(sends)

LIZZIE Oooh! Yes?

SONIA Yes! Yes, yes, yes! Or rather *(types)* “Maybe” *(sends)* Ha!

GARY *(reads)* “Maybe”. Awesome! Oh my – first date in, a long time. *(thinks)* First date this century. Wow.

SONIA *(types)* “What did you have in mind?”

GARY *(reads)* what do I have in mind? Oh god. I don’t know. What do I have in mind?

TOM I don’t know? Didn’t you think this far?

GARY No! Oh god, I really am useless.

TOM Think, think. Stall for time. Put the ball in her court,

GARY Yes, good. *(types)* “You look like a lady who knows what she wants on a date”

TOM no, no

GARY Right *(deletes)* that sounds awful “Where would you like to be taken?”

TOM Again, not great!

GARY “I really like your profile and photo” There. Send.

LIZZIE/TEE *(reads)* Ahhh.

SONIA *(writes)* “I like yours too. Your hair is such an interesting colour”

GARY We could go to the movies!

TOM Perfect. People do that all the time.

GARY *(Types)* “Would you like to see a movie?”

SONIA Erm...*(types)* It’s very debonaire - I can’t tell if it’s silver or white or what!”

GARY Send

SONIA Send. *(reads)* A movie?

Gary Silver or white? Or “50 Shades of Gray” *(Laughs)*

SONIA “If we were going to see a movie what would we see?”

GARY Send.

SONIA Send.

LIZZIE *(reads)* 50 Shades of Gray!

TEE What the-?

SONIA Now that I was not expecting.

TEE Too soon, buster, too soon. I mean never say never but-

SONIA *(types)* “Not exactly a first date movie” send.

GARY *(reads)* A first date movie? Ohhhh! God no. “Not the movie” Send “My hair” send. “Oh god” *(deletes)* don’t send. “Maybe we should just” Send “Go foursome” Send. “Food” Send. Phew

LIZZIE *(laughs)* Interesting typo

SONIA *(types)* “Foursome???” *(send)*

GARY Whaaat! Nooooooo. Not foursome. For some!! Oh god, I can’t keep up.

SONIA *(laughing)* I have to go pee.

GARY Stupid bloody messaging - gives far too much opportunity to be misunderstood.
Idiot! I’m going to call.

TOM Oh god.

SONIA I’ll have another glass please Lizzie. *(exits)*

GARY Get this done face to face rather than hiding behind a computer. Well, not face to
face per se, more mouth to mouth. Or, not! Oh god this is going to be a disaster...

SFX *Phone rings*

TEE Ooh, her phones ringing.

LIZZIE So?

TEE Well, should I answer it.

LIZZIE Noooo.

TEE What if it’s him?

LIZZIE Especially if it’s him! Swipe left! Swipe left!

SFX *(voicemail)* Hello!

GARY Hi!

SFX (voicemail) This is Sonia-

GARY Hi Sonia, I'm Gar-

SFX (voicemail) I'm afraid I'm not available-

GARY You're not?

SFX (voicemail) -to take your call at the minute/but please leave me your name and number and I'll get right back to you-

GARY /Oooh, voicemail. Right. I knew that! Perfect – good chance to leave excellent first impression with suave, witty, intelligent-

SFX - (beeeeeeeep)

GARY Hangs up in a panic. Oh god. Need more time to practice being suave, witty and intelligent.
Ok, start with hello. "Hello. Hi. Buongiorno".
"Hello. Er, hi, this is Gary, from the erm, the erm, the computer. Internet, Web place."

Sonia enters

TEE Your phone rang.

GARY "Hi, this is Gary. We connected online".

SONIA Did it? Who was it?

GARY Connected? (*thinks. yes*) "We seem to have made an online connection" (*he likes that*).

TEE Don't know, we didn't answer it.

GARY "I was hoping to chat and find out more about you - delve into your particulars".

TOM Nope!

GARY "I was hoping to chat and. Find. Out. More. About. You." Yes! "I was hoping to chat and find out more about you" Keep It Simple Stupid. KISS, kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss. *(dials)* "Hi, ...Gary, connection online...hoping to chat..."

SFX – phone rings
"...find out more about you."

SONIA (picks up phone)

GARY K-I-S-S.

SONIA Hello-

GARY Ah ha! *(to Tom)* Voicemail.

SONIA This is Sonia.

GARY Sonia's voicemail! Not making that mistake again.

SONIA Hello?

GARY Waiting for the beep.

SONIA Beep?

GARY Beep, diddy beep, beep beep.

SONIA Hello?

GARY (*hulk voice*) Hul-lo.

SONIA This is Sonia.

GARY (*hulk voice*) I know!

SONIA Actual Sonia.

GARY (*hulk voice*) Actual Sonia.

SONIA Not the voicemail.

GARY (*hulk voice*) Not. The. Voice- (*normal voice*) Sorry, what?

SONIA This is Sonia...not the voicemail.

GARY Oh god.

SONIA Hi.

GARY Hi. Sorry, only I called a minute ago and it was the voicemail.

SONIA Yes, I was just on the t...er...the...er, treadmill! (*down wine*) Quite the workout!
Pheew.

GARY Right. Only I didn't leave a message because I wanted a moment to er, to prepare.
To talk, about our connection...and find out more...about it...the
connection...and you! Find out more about you! ...and chat.

SONIA Great. I like talking on the phone. Much more natural than messaging backwards
and forwards.

GARY Exactly! I thought I should call because I don't want a foursome and I don't want to see 50 Shades of Gray.

SONIA On a first date?

GARY Exactly!

SONIA I see.

GARY Or at all in fact.

SONIA Oh! Well, glad you cleared that up.

GARY Not that there's anything wrong with it...that 'lifestyle' I just...it's not me...not at all. But for others, you know, it's perfectly fine. Whatever floats your boat...
(pause) this is terrible isn't it? I am awful at this-

SONIA -You're doing fine.

GARY I'm not really am I?

SONIA I've had worse.

GARY Really? That's great! I mean, not for you. But for me, it's great. I am not sucking the worse. It's what I aspire to in life.

SONIA Cut yourself some slack. It takes a lot of courage to call up someone new. – it's a leap of faith, to just pick up the phone and start chatting, takes balls.

GARY Yeah, well, you know - I thought I'd take the bull by the horns-

SONIA Did you!

GARY Not that you're a bull. I'm not saying that you're a bull. Or that you're horny. Er, have horns. I just- I'm Gary.

SONIA I'm (*hulk voice*) Actual Sonia

GARY Oh god.

SONIA No, I like it. I think I'm going to use that name from now on. "Thank you for calling Tatterhills, this is 'Actual Sonia' speaking, how may I help you today?"

GARY Is that where you work? Tatterhills as in the brewery?

SONIA Yep – 15 years this year. I manage the corporate hospitality division.

GARY Wow, so you literally-

SONIA -organize the proverbial piss-ups in a brewery? Yep! It's a great job but harder than people give you credit for.

GARY I'm sure. Listen, do you want to maybe...

SONIA Yes

GARY -Go on a-

SONIA Date?

GARY Right.

SONIA Sure, why not?

GARY Really? I mean. Great. Great.

SONIA Where did you have in mind?

GARY Where did I have in mind? Well, erm, nowhere to tell you the truth. I don't think I was expecting to get this far. We could...er

TOM ...go to the gym.

GARY Go to the gym!

SONIA The gym?

GARY *(To Tom)* The gym?

LIZZIE/TEE The gym?

TOM It said in her profile she likes the gym

GARY Yeah! You say you like the gym...and I do too! So, you know, we could go together.

SONIA Riiight. Yes, of course, I like going to the gym, you're absolutely right. The gym...yes, love it.

GARY Great.

SONIA Or, we could go to the pub!

GARY The pub? *(boys give each other thumbs up)*

SONIA Yes! I like drinking! And you...you like drinking, you said that, in your profile.

TEE Actually he put 'socializing'.

SONIA Or rather 'socializing' but we all know that means 'drinking' (*nervous laugh, waits for response*)

LIZZIE ...or maybe it doesn't in his case.

SONIA Or, maybe you don't drink? Which would be fine,

TEE If by fine you mean 'awful'!

SONIA I mean-

GARY I do.

SONIA What?

GARY Drink.

SONIA Oh, thank god! That's great! For you I mean, good for you! I do...drink...a bit. It sounds like I do a lot from this conversation but, erm, yes! So. The gym. Would, er. Would, er. Be. Great!

GARY Are you sure?

SONIA Yes, of course!

GARY If you'd rather drink-

SONIA Nooooo. No, no, no. Ex-er-size! Love it! (*pause*)

TEE Or eating!

SONIA Eating?

TEE You could eat.

SONIA Yes...I could eat! Or, I mean, we could eat.

GARY Eat?

SONIA Yes. Do you-

GARY Eat?

SONIA Yes!

GARY I do.

SONIA Then we could eat! We could go to a restaurant...

GARY A restaurant, this Saturday?

SONIA Sounds great. A restaurant.

LIZZIE Come here.

SONIA What?

LIZZIE Come here on Saturday. Brian's opening for supper at the weekends now – you can come here.

SONIA Oh! Sounds good!

TEE Yeah, that way if it's a complete disaster you'll already know all the escape routes.

SONIA Shhhhhush. *(to Gary)* I know somewhere we can meet, it's right in town, I'll send you a link.

GARY Great! 7 o'clock?

SONIA Sounds perfect...see you then. Bye now.

GARY Bye.

LX lights fade to black

Act 1 Scene 3

Lights up. Saturday. Gary is seated at a table in the coffee shop. Looking hopeless and out of place as Sonia enters...

SONIA Hi? Gary?

GARY Hi, Sonia, hi.

SONIA Sorry if I'm a bit late-

GARY No, no, I was early. Wasn't sure how long it would take to get here. Nice to meet you. And they were very specific about being on time for the reservation.

SONIA Ah yes. Who knew-?

GARY Valentine's Day!

SONIA Great. I had no idea.

GARY Neither did I! When I suggested 'this Saturday' I didn't know it was-

SONIA Valentine's Day. Great. I mean, I knew it was coming up.

GARY Right. The shops have been plastered in red hearts since Jan 1st. But it escaped me that tonight was the night.

SONIA Me too. Or else I'd never have suggested...a restaurant.

GARY no!

SONIA I mean this place is usually really chill. I do knitting club here...and other, more interesting-sounding activities...Look at all the love-sick couples! Cheesy music. Rose sellers taking advantage of smaltzy suckers with no imagination.

LIZZY *(French accent)* Sir, the rose you ordered for your beautiful lady when she arrive.

BOTH What? Oh!

GARY Sorry, I got flustered. I'm a sucker.

SONIA No, it's lovely. Very thoughtful. *(to Lizzie)* Why didn't you tell me it was Valentine's day?-

LIZZY -I thought you knew-

SONIA -And what's with the accent?

LIZZY It is a theme francaise ce soir! 'appy Valentine.

SONIA Oh god.

LIZZY Oh come on - You are surrounded by 'appy couples celebrating many years of loving. It is romantic, non?

SONIA Non! I mean no! *We're* not celebrating.

GARY Not years

SONIA Not loving!

GARY Just eating-

SONIA -right-

GARY -together-

SONIA -for the first time-

GARY On Valentine's Day.

LIZZY *(back to her own accent)* You'll be fine! The menu's awesome and we've got some music later on. Michel's gonna be your server but I'll get the important stuff - drinks?

SONIA Large house red for me please.

GARY I'll take a Rickards please.

LIZZY Coming right away. Nice to meet you Gary – you've got a good one here, Sonia's great.

SONIA Thank you Lizzy!

LIZZY *(French accent)* 'appy Valentine's first eating together day. *(exits)*

SONIA Sorry, this is not what I was expecting.

GARY No, no. Let's just relax, enjoy some food.

SONIA Valentines Smalenties!

GARY Exactly! ...the menu does look good.

SONIA Great! And after we can shake our stuff and make inappropriate requests.

GARY Sorry?

SONIA of the DJ!

GARY Oh! Right. Of course. Gotcha.

SONIA Like, “Love Bites”

GARY “Love Stinks”

SONIA “Love hurts”

GARY “What’s love got to do with it?”

SONIA Exactly. Boy, do we sound jaded.

GARY No...just, pragmatic.

SONIA Right. Cheers to being pragmatic. Could do with that drink – oh here we are!

MICHEL *(French)* Bonjour good evening. Happy Valentine’s I am Michel, your server on this most romantic of nights. Have you got any questions?

SONIA Nope, I don’t think so I’m going to start with the lobster bisque please.

MICHEL Excellent choice. We do also have oysters on special tonight.

GARY Escargot for me please.

MICHEL You know what they say about oysters, eh?

SONIA I'll have the linguine for my main.

GARY And the Gnocchi for me please.

MICHEL OK! And for dessert, some dark chocolate? Also an aphrodisiac, you know. With fruit of passion, eh?

SONIA Nothing for me thanks.

MICHEL Ah, you have passion enough! You must leave room. Not get too full for the lovemaking.

GARY Oh my god!

SONIA OK!

GARY We're not...

MICHEL Sorry?

GARY We're not doing...what you're talking about.

MICHEL The lovemaking?

GARY Right.

MICHEL You are not making the love on Valentine's Day.

GARY No

SONIA Probably not.

MICHEL Ahh. How many years have you been married?

BOTH Oh!

GARY No, not married. Not-?

SONIA -Not married. First date.

MICHEL Ahhh. First date.

ALL Right.

SONIA Which I really wish Lizzie had told you.

MICHEL Ooooh! She mention something but I was confused – I think ‘why would somebody have a first going-out date on the Valentine’s Day?’ Eh?

GARY Exactly.

MICHEL It not make the sense.

SONIA We didn’t know.

MICHEL But *now* this make the sense. Why you are not make the love on Valentine’s Day, eh?

GARY No.

SONIA Probably not.

MICHEL So, first date with each other. But not first date forever. You 'ave had others?
Other wives, other husbands?

SONIA Well, yes, I was married. Haven't talked about this with each other yet but yes.
One ex.

MICHEL And you?

GARY Oh, yes. Same.

MICHEL And why she leave you hey? You no make love to her on Valentine's Day?
(laughs)

GARY No, no. She er she died.

MICHEL *(pause)* OK, well bon appetite!

(pause)

SONIA Sorry about that.

GARY I'm sorry. Pretty sure you're not supposed to talk about your deceased wife on
your first date.

SONIA Don't be silly. When are you supposed to? Just before you take someone to bed?
Just after?

GARY No, no – I, definitely not.

SONIA I'm glad I know. Just wish you'd waited until our third date to tell me and that
way I'd have felt like I was in with a shot.

GARY Oh! You are.

SONIA I am?

GARY 100% ... So...tell me more...about you. I mean I read your profile. You like sports, that's great!

SONIA Erm, yep – love sports. Very sporty. Very sports-loving. Go team!

GARY *(excitedly)* Hockey?

SONIA Oh god yes. Especially hockey.

GARY My kind of lady. Mind you I guess I should find out who you cheer for, first.

SONIA Oh, well I-

GARY -Coz if you're a Habs fan, you and I are going to fall out very quickly.

SONIA Ew, no way. No Habs for me. I follow the, er, the leafs-

GARY Yes!

SONIA -Of course.

GARY No wonder you were a bit hesitant there – not an easy thing to admit at the moment. Oh, the last game, eh?

SONIA Ooh yeah. Against the er-

GARY Blue

SONIA/GARY Jays/Jackets

SONIA Jackets, right. Those bloody Blue Jackets, gah!

GARY Kadri & Marner shut out again.

SONIA Right. How are we supposed to win if they can't even get in?

GARY They were never in, you're right. If you want to win you've got to get in the game!

SONIA And that moment just before intermission when they came down the side and

GARY Matthews deflected

SONIA The-

GARY -puck-

SONIA -from-

GARY Nylander. Unbelievable!

SONIA Incredible.

GARY So close.

SONIA So close. I was like "Argh, that was so close"

GARY Hockey'll do that to you. (*Pause – they look around for their drinks.*) And you like theatre too, according to your profile. Or is that just something you say to sound cultured?

SONIA No, I really do like theatre.

GARY Oh!...yeah, me too.

SONIA Really?

GARY What's not to love?
You know I have to admit I'm having a hard time believing that a wonderful woman such as yourself is really single.

SONIA Well, I am - I'm really single.

GARY Through choice.

SONIA Yep. *(beat)* Everybody else's. No, I'm only joking. I am definitely single and somewhat through choice. My husband left me – I usually say he died but obviously that would be in poor taste given your experience. In actuality he cheated on me, several times, and then left me on Mother's Day...so the truth is I just wish the bastard was dead. Sorry.

GARY No, I'm sorry – that you had to go through that.

SONIA Yeah, well. I think it made me a stronger person – he was never easy to live with. Never particularly kind. Which is why I am now single out of choice. Much happier.

GARY Happy's good.

SONIA No intention of putting up with a bad un' again.

GARY I'll drink to that.

SONIA Which is what I've been doing a lot of since he left. But, I have two gorgeous children thanks in a *small* part to him so the ordeal wasn't without merit.

GARY Two kids?

SONIA Yeah. You'd like them. Nathan and Natasha. They're twins. Just turned 13. They're at their dads tonight though, sooo...

The food arrives.

LIZZY Here you are guys. Enjoy!

SONIA What happened to *(mocking)* 'Bon Appetite! 'appy Valentines'

LIZZY A crepe suzette almost singed my eyebrows off so that's the faint odour of burnt hair that you can smell amongst the god-awful cologne in here; I've spent a large proportion of the evening wrapping two bites of steak and three leftover French fries into foil twisted to look like a swan; and if that man over there with arms like an octopus puts his hand on my ass one more time I'm going to ram that cupid shaped candle right up his- *(another guest grabs her attention)* Butter Madam? Certainly *(adopts French accent as she exits)* More butter coming right away!

SONIA Oh dear. The course of true love running bumpier than ever. Where were we?

GARY I was about to do a traditional Valentines move and propose...a toast!

SONIA Oh! By all means...

GARY To being happy.

SONIA I can go with that...to happiness, may we find it in each and every place that it is hidden. Cheers!

GARY Cheers.

SONIA I hope you're a sharer. I love tasting everything that comes to the table.

GARY Me too! I like a woman who's enthusiastic about food – it's very attractive.

SONIA I do like food!

GARY And, I feel confident that you will be able to focus on it...rather than the couple making out three feet away.

SONIA Choosing to ignore!

LX – lights fade down as Gary and Sonia begin to eat.

Act 1 Scene 4

At the coffee shop the following Wednesday

TEE So, you're not going to see him again?

SONIA That's right.

LIZZIE I thought it looked like it was going great.

SONIA It was – no thanks to you and your mate Michel. "You are not making ze love on Valentines?" Ass.

LIZZIE *(laughing)* He's alright really, not even French! He was just trying to *(French accent)* "inject a leedle romance into your evening".

TEE Doesn't sound like it worked. *(to Sonia)* You didn't like him?

SONIA Well, no, it wasn't that. I did like him. He's a nice guy.

LIZZIE Nice?

SONIA Yes! And gentlemanly...and polite...funny...

TEE But not sexy?

SONIA No, he was pretty sexy-

TEE Oooh!

LIZZIE So what happened? One minute you're laughing and joking and the next you were nowhere to be seen?

SONIA I left...in a hurry.

TEE You left?

LIZZIE Didn't even say 'au revoir'.

TEE Wow, why, what did he do?

SONIA He-

LIZZIE Don't tell me he's married.

SONIA No, he-

TEE He's an escaped convict.

LIZZIE On the run from the law!

SONIA No! He...went in for a kiss and...

TEE/LIZZIE ...And?!

SONIA And, I panicked. He went in for a kiss and I panicked...and then I left.

LIZZIE I didn't think you were usually adverse to a bit of smooching on the first date?

SONIA/TEE I'm not!/She's not!

SONIA But, it just didn't feel right. I didn't want to lead him on...if nothing else was going to happen.

LIZZIE Which you didn't think it would because...?

SONIA He's a nice guy – it caught me off guard. I'm not used to meeting them – I got discombobulated.

TEE But that is what we're looking for right?

SONIA I don't know. I suddenly had this strong feeling that I'd been in this position many times before but with the roles reversed. I didn't want to be the one to hurt him down the line, I didn't want to be the one who gets cold feet, who lets him invest in this emotional rollercoaster and then bails. I know how it feels to be on the receiving end of that. I am more than able to protect my own heart – I'm well versed at that, but I don't want to be responsible for bruising someone else's.

LIZZIE You don't want to be happy?

SONIA I do! I do, I want that very much. You know I do.

TEE Then you need more Mr Nice Guy! Who says you'll hurt him? – it could be wonderful! He could be your destiny, your 'happy ever after'.

SONIA My Prince Charming? I don't think so. Even if he was, I blew it. I couldn't leave fast enough. He hasn't messaged me and I don't blame him. I guess I'm not destined to live the life of a Disney princess and be whisked off into the sunset.

LIZZIE So, if you've lost your shoe at midnight we should just assume you're drunk?

SONIA Exactly.

TEE Huh, with my luck if life were a Disney movie I'd be the one down an alley sharing spaghetti with a dog.

Tom enters – the ladies eye him appreciatively, especially Tee. He goes to the counter.

LIZZIE How can I help you?

TOM Erm, I'll have a coffee to go please. Black.

LIZZIE No worries, it'll just be a moment, I'm brewing a fresh pot.

TOM If that's ok, I don't want to put you to any trouble.

SONIA Any trouble! She only has to press a button – most people have her frothing, frappeing and cinoing their lattes, she'll love you!

TOM Is that right?

SONIA By this time of the day she's usually given up which is why we have to put up with this (*wine*)

LIZZIE Oh yeah, it's a wonder you keep on coming back! Besides, I read on facebook that said one bottle of Red is the equivalent of going to the gym for two hours.

SONIA Apparently my doctor would beg to differ. He was giving me the old units-per-week reminder and he compared me to a bottle of wine.

LIZZIE eh?

SONIA Well, exactly...I tried to make a joke about ‘full-bodied with a delightful bouquet?’ But he said. “No, you are like a wine bottle – a receptacle with a lot of wine inside it”.

TEE Ouch.

SONIA Touché.

TOM What are you knitting?

TEE This? Oh, it’s a pussy hat.

TOM Nice...what’s it’s name?

TEE Sorry?

TOM Your cat, what’s it’s name?

TEE Oh, no! I mean...I...

SONIA Tiddles.

TOM Ahh. That’s nice. I’ve got a great big Hamish.

They are just looking at him

TOM Fattest orange tabby you ever saw.

SONIA Riiight.

TOM I do a fair bit of rallying at the weekends and Hamish is my navigator – comes with me everywhere.

TEE Rallying?

TOM Yeah, I work in the auto shop over by the Parkview Mall and I tend to tinker on a few of the cars that are on their last legs. Get them roadworthy and tear up a few hills with them for fun.

TEE *(smitten)* Wow.

SONIA Auto mechanic eh? That's a pretty *handy* job isn't it?

LIZZIE Mmm, very *handy* I would imagine.

TOM Oh yes, I'm afraid I'm never happier than when I'm up to my elbows in a project to be solved. I'm Tom by the way.

SONIA Tom! I'm Sonia.

LIZZIE Lizzie. Your coffee should be ready now.

TOM *(to Tee)* And...?

TEE Oh! Teresa. As in Mother Teresa. Only a bit less nun-like! ...well actually not a lot less nun-like...erm, my friends call me Tee. As in T for...

TOM Tom!

TEE Yes...T for Tom.

LIZZIE There you go. Two-ninety please.

TOM *(reaches in pocket)* Oh, I also came in because...My buddy was in here with a date last weekend and she left in a hurry and forgot this. *(earring)*

LIZZIE Isn't that-?

TEE *(gasp)* The metaphorical glass slipper.

TOM Sorry?

LIZZIE Why didn't your buddy just text his date?

TOM He's embarrassed. Apparently, he moved in for a cheeky kiss and she high-tailed it out of there faster than Usain Bolt.

TEE Maybe she was about to turn into a pumpkin.

TOM Eh?

TEE This is Cinderella right here.

LIZZIE Although I'm not sure I like what that makes us!

SONIA What they are trying to say is, it was me, on a date...with Gary. Thank you *(getting earring back)* It was kind of you to take the time to...and of him to rescue it that night...

TOM Yeah, well he's a nice guy.

TEE Looks like you both are.

TOM Well, you could do a lot worse than Gary. But I guess if it's not right it's not right...nice chatting to you ladies.

Tom goes to exit – the next few lines stop him

TEE No wait!

LIZZIE It is right!

TEE She does like him.

TOM You do?

TEE She does! She just panicked.

LIZZIE She's not used to nice guys – she feels conflicted.

TEE It's a subconscious, self-sabotage really – not willing to allow in a person to make her happy.

SONIA Alright! Thank you Dr Phils. *(no nonsense)* They're right. I do like Gary. I would like to see him again.

TOM Gr-

SONIA It strikes me that maybe you should come with us. Tee will accompany me and we can go somewhere informal and rectify this situation. *(beat)* somewhere with beer.

TOM Beer. Right. I can do beer. We can make this er, thing, happen. I could absolutely come with him...you know...if it's for, for a beer.

LIZZY They could put it in writing if you'd like.

SONIA Do you know a good pub?

TOM I do.

LIZZY With beer?

TOM Rope & Anchor, opposite the library.

SONIA Roger that.

TOM Next Saturday?

SONIA Tee's busy then. She's got a very full social life. The Saturday after next. 7 o'clock.

TOM Right. The Saturday after next. 7 o'clock. *(pause)* See you then.

Tom exits

LIZZY Wow – I'm impressed.

SONIA Well, sometimes you just have to cut to the chase. Tee, would it be fair to say that you are more interested in our 'handy Tom' there, than embarking on a journey into the world of online dating?

TEE Oh yes.

LIZZIE And you, Son, are willing to take one for the team and go on a second date with Gary?

SONIA I am.

LIZZIE Nice...gentlemanly...polite...funny-

TEE -pretty sexy-

LIZZIE -pretty sexy Gary

SONIA I will.

LIZZIE You are a good friend.

SONIA Well, I've never seen Tee like this before.

TEE I'm keen.

SONIA She's keen.

TEE I'm enthused.

LIZZIE Enthused!

TEE I finally feel ready.

LIZZIE/SONIA Really?

TEE Oh, I don't know! I want to be...I am, I think...but, emotionally, I've spent the last year feeling like the stuffing's been knocked out of me.

SONIA Right! Well, then you just need...re-...stuffing...

LIZZIE So to speak!

SONIA You need to feel what it's like to have someone make you happy again. And this date, my friend, will be a good place to start. Cheers!

They cheers as the lights fade to black