**Sometimes, 6 minutes is enough**

Sasha and Monica made a pact. Together they will find love. They decided to put themselves out there and ask the universe to bring them love. They opened their hearts and their minds to the possibility of love. However there was one thing missing, they hadn’t yet overcome the inertia that kept them in their house.

One night, while watching TV, an advertisement for speed dating came on. Sasha and Monica looked at each other simultaneously, knowing they were thinking exactly the same thing at exactly the same time. Speed dating, yes, this is for us!

They turned the laptop on, searched for local speed dating companies, and booked themselves in for an event the following week. ‘No turning back now’ Sasha said, a little too anxiously. Monica gently touched Sasha’s arm to offer comfort. ‘We can do this. We must do this’. They both took a deep breath, counted to three, and relaxed into the moment.

1 week later......

‘I’ve lost an earring’ screeched Sasha in a panic. They were due at the speed dating event in 20mins and had a 15min drive to get there. Monica was in the bathroom, successfully damaging her hair with a hairdryer, while Sasha ran around in circles searching for her earring. ‘Seriously, how the hell can I lose an earring!’? Monica was oblivious to the panic in the bedroom due to the deafening sound of the hairdryer in her ear. Out of the corner of her eye, Sasha spotted a glistening object poking out from under her bed. ‘Thank God’! Within 3 minutes they were launching themselves into the car and racing towards the venue.

Monica maneuvered their vehicle into the last empty car space and the girls raced inside, while attempting to maintain their composure. They were greeted by a gorgeous European man who introduced himself as the event host. ‘Ladies, welcome. I am Alfredo your host for this evening’. Sasha and Monica imitated statues and were lost for words. After what seemed an eternity, they smiled warmly at Alfredo, Monica thinking to herself, ‘he could be the sauce to my pasta anytime’! The ladies momentarily forgot they were even at a speed dating event. They were brought back to reality when Alfredo handed them each a glass of champagne and introduced them to 2 men who were circling them, somewhat like vultures making a kill. ‘Hi, I’m Dave and this is me mate Kevin’. Sasha and Monica smiled politely, in a kind of forced way. ‘So, have yous guys been speed dating before’ Dave asked? ‘No we’re virgins’ said Monica, almost too curtly.

Ding Ding Ding.... Alfredo was ringing a bell to get everyone’s attention. ‘So speed daters, the way it will work tonight is each lady will take a seat at an allocated number. The men will move between the ladies. I will give you 6 minutes each and then I will ring the bell. When you hear the bell it is time to move to the next table gentlemen. Everyone understand?’ A familiar voice from the back asked ‘so, do we have to move’? ‘Ah, yes’ said Alfredo, a little perplexed. ‘That’s the idea, you move from one lady to the next’. ‘Which direction do we move’ the same voice asked. ‘Well, the tables are numbered from 1 to 10, so keep moving to the next number. So if you start at number 4, you move to number 5 next’. ‘Oh, ok’ the voice said. ‘What about when you get to number 10, where do you go then’? Alfredo thought he must be joking. No one can be this stupid he thought to himself. ‘After 10 you go to the lady at table number 1’. ‘Oh, right mate. Cool.’

Monica and Sasha were standing adjacent to numbers 6 and 7 so they decided that was as good a place to sit down as anywhere. And more importantly, it was well away from Kevin and his moronic mate Dave. They sat down, grabbed their rating sheet, and prepared themselves for what was to come.

‘Hi I’m Duncan’. ‘I’m Monica’. It’s funny how sometimes, even when you know how little time you have to chat with someone, it can still feel like forever. Monica couldn’t bear the silence so she jumped in to save her awkward and profusely sweating first date. ‘So Duncan, tell me, when you’re not speed dating, what do you do with yourself’? The flood gate opened and Duncan talked at Monica for the next 5minutes and 30 seconds about how much he loved driving a taxi. Monica thought to herself ‘this is going to be a very, very long night’. Meanwhile, Sasha was laughing and engaging with her first date. Monica glanced over and thought at least she had something to look forward to!

‘So Sasha, why is someone as lovely as you coming to a speed dating event’ quizzed Mike? Sasha looked into his eyes and got lost for just a moment. They were an iridescent blue, and very distracting. ‘Oh, I guess I’m here for the same reason as everyone else. To meet new people’ said Sasha matter-of-factly. ‘Really? I would hazard a guess most of us are here to find love. Are you not looking for love Sasha’ purred Mike? ‘I’m not so sure you can find love in a 6minute speed dating session. But I think it is enough time to decide if you are interested in developing a friendship with someone’. Ding....Ding....Ding.... There was Alfredo again with his bell. ‘Gentlemen, time to stand and move to your next date’.

The next 20 seconds was a flurry of thank yous and farewells, followed immediately with hellos and greetings. Round two was ready to kick off.

Mike sat down with Monica and proceeded to ask her if Sasha was serious about not being here for love. Monica tilted her head ever so slightly to her right, frowned, and said to Mike ‘are you actually spending valuable minutes of our date asking me about Sasha’? Monica was losing interest with every second and felt overwhelmed when she realized she still had 8 dates to go. She glanced around the room searching for any amount of reason not to stand and leave the event. As she scanned the other couples, the waiter at the bar, other patrons at the restaurant, she noticed their host Alfredo was watching her. She smiled shyly and turned back to her date.

Sasha introduced herself to her next date. ‘Hi, I’m Sasha and you are....’? ‘Hans’. Next came what can only be described as narcissism on speed. Hans sat back, spread his legs apart and stared at Sasha. He was wearing denim overalls and a nautical shirt - he seriously looked like he’d time warped from 1986. Sasha was waiting for him to communicate, but he made no attempt. ‘So Hans, tell me about yourself’. Hans sighed like he had somewhere better to be and said he was only here to fill in time. He redirected the conversation so he could boast about his two houses and successful business, all the while attempting to make it sound unimportant. The next few minutes went by in a blur as Sasha could not believe what she was seeing and hearing. She looked over at Monica feeling sorry for her friend who was about to endure Hans as her next date. Ding.....Ding.....Ding....... ‘Thank God’ thought Sasha, ‘not a moment too soon’.

Monica watched her next date arrive and thought to herself she had best make an effort seeing she had paid $100 to come to the event. She had no interest in the man who sat down in front of her. She could feel his energy and it was so negative it repelled her. ‘Hi, I’m Monica’. Hans looked at her and grunted. Monica reeled in shocked. You will not beat me she thought. Come hell or high water I will attempt to communicate with you she thought with determination. ‘So, is this your first speed dating event’ Monica inquired? ‘No, I’ve been to a few, but this is certainly the worst. The women aren’t attractive’. Monica had to pinch herself and replay what was just said in her head. ‘Who on Earth does he think he is’ she wondered. ‘So, I notice you have an accent, where are you from’ she asked with as much fake sincerity as she could muster? ‘Germany. Wish I was there right now. People are so insular here in Australia. They don’t make an effort to get to know you’. Hans made all these comments without even making eye contact with Monica. She started to wonder if she was on candid camera. She looked around expecting to see someone jump out and say ‘we got you’ and the room erupt into laughter. She glanced at Alfredo who was still watching her. She stared at him, opening her eyes wide in an attempt to will him to come and save her from this revolting human being. He met her eyes and winked at her. She could tell he knew her date was a loser. His smile was empathic and caring. Monica thought to herself, ‘I am never going to get these 6 minutes of my life back. They have been sucked out by this parasite’. Ding....Ding.....Ding..... ‘Oh thank God’ Monica sighed. ‘I think it must be time for a short break’ Alfredo called out.

As couple’s got out of their seats to replenish their drinks and make a dash to the bathrooms, Alfredo made his way over to Monica. ‘Your eyes were as wide as dinner plates’ he amused. ‘Oh my God! That guy was such a wanker. Seriously. He proceeded to tell me he hated Australia and couldn’t wait until he could see his girlfriend again in 7 weeks time when he returned to Germany.’ Alfredo empathized with her and told her he could see every woman so far had had a similar experience. He expected they would receive many complaints about Hans. Alfredo gently brushed Monica’s leg as he leant in to speak to her ‘I hope it hasn’t ruined your night’. Monica’s heart skipped a beat. She thought to herself, ‘maybe this whole speed dating thing isn’t a complete waste. I wonder if it breaks any rules if you write the host’s name down on the rating sheet?’

The rest of the night went by without incident. After the last Ding….Ding….Ding…., Sasha and Monica decided to make a quick exit. They waved and said a general farewell to the group. Alfredo glanced over at them, looking like there was something he wanted to say. He paused only a moment, then walked straight over to them. He kissed each of them on the cheek, lingering a little longer on Monica’s cheek. ‘I hope you enjoyed the night ladies’ he said as he looked at Monica, his eyes twinkling. Sasha watched this unfold and was excited for her friend. ‘Excellent work’ she thought to herself. ‘Monica has managed to secure the attention of the most attractive guy of the night. Who cares if he was the host!’

They walked to their car giggling. ‘Well that was an experience’ Monica said with a hint of sarcasm. ‘Hhhm, the dates or the host’ asked Sasha? Monica laughed it off. ‘There is no way the host would be interested in me. He’s probably taken anyway’. They headed home, Sasha driving. Enroute Monica’s phone beeped, registering a text message. She glanced at the unfamiliar number and opened the message. It was from Alfredo.....