

LAST DATE

by
Richard F. Russell

Wordmstr007@gmail.com
910-285-3321

FADE IN:

EXT SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

Small, intimate tables under a sun-drenched sky. Half the tables are filled as MATT weaves through them. He approaches a table where a pretty woman, EMILY, sips water and studies the sidewalk traffic.

MATT
Bonnie?

EMILY
Will?

They look at each other a moment, not quite understanding.

EMILY
My name is Emily. I'm here for
Bonnie.

MATT
Ahhh, that makes this a bit
awkward. I'm Matt, here for Will.

They study a moment.

EMILY
Sit down, sit down.

MATT
(sitting)
This is a first for me. What
agency?

EMILY
I'm a freelancer, you?

MATT
Last Date.

EMILY
Oooh, national.

MATT
I own the local franchise.

EMILY
Hiring?

MATT
I'm always looking for talent.

EMILY
Since we've both been paid, why
don't we order.

Matt waves, and a waiter approaches.

MATT
Beer for me.

EMILY
She said he drinks vodka and cran.

MATT
Make this real?
(to waiter)
Vodka and cran on the rocks.

EMILY
And I'll have the house red.

The waiter leaves.

MATT
So how did you get into this?

EMILY
I'm good with people. One day my
girl friend asked me to handle a
situation for her. I didn't jump,
so she added fifty dollars. For
fifty dollars, I'd face Satan
himself. She told a friend who
told a friend, and pretty soon I
was getting calls. You?

MATT
I read a blog by a guy who had it
done to him. I did some research,
found a need, and developed a
business model. Last Date was
selling franchises, so I bit.

EMILY
What did you get for your money?

MATT
Training, advertising, leads, web
page, they're pretty supportive.
You exist on word of mouth?

EMILY
My name bubbles to the top of a
google list, so I get some play
that way.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

And I have a web presence. But mostly it's word of mouth. Women network that way.

MATT

You enjoy this line of work?

EMILY

I do, and I don't. I mean, giving people bad news isn't fun, but I get a sense of accomplishment when I get someone to accept his new status.

MATT

They don't all get it, do they?

The waiter returns with the drinks, and they pause till he's gone.

MATT

How many of these gigs have you done?

EMILY

This is my ninety-sixth. You?

MATT

Personally, this is number fifty. My agency has handled over four hundred.

EMILY

I'm impressed. I didn't realize there was such a market.

MATT

Research says the average relationship lasts 217 days, and that most people wish they had ended it sooner. There's a market.

EMILY

According to my client, you're overbearing.

MATT

Want me to scowl?

EMILY

I'm just trying to earn my fee.

MATT

Then, you should ask for my cell phone so you can check my calls.

EMILY

Paranoid?

MATT

And a bit frigid, but most of my clients say that.

She laughs.

EMILY

You're not that good in bed either.

He laughs, and they toast.

MATT

So, tell me, what was your toughest assignment?

EMILY

That's easy. I had an Iranian man who threatened to cut off my head and mail it to my parents. It took me two hours to convince him that cutting off a head would be incredibly stupid and unproductive. He left with a promise to flood the net with negative reviews and ruin my hair styling business.

MATT

Did he do it?

EMILY

No, he was all talk. They mostly are. Who was your worst?

MATT

Gay guy who couldn't believe that he was being dumped. He kept insisting that I was banging his boy friend. I had to fail a quiz on gay lingo in order to convince him.

EMILY

(laughing)

Did he hit on you too?

MATT

You get that?

EMILY

Occasionally. Some guys look at a woman and see a challenge.

MATT

No wonder their women are breaking up with them.

EMILY

Cheating is probably the number one reason women call me.

MATT

On your side maybe. It's clinginess for me. Women suffocate.

A pretty woman, AMBER, passes and sits at the next table. Matt's gaze follows her.

EMILY

Some women suffocate. Who was your oddest? One client flew me across the country to read a ten page essay to her long-distance significant other. I had to wear a puce top and a tight, white miniskirt with black stiletto heels. I had to deliver it at six o'clock in his favorite bar in front of his drinking buddies. He tried to leave after the first page, but his half-drunk buds held him and made him listen to all ten pages. They cheered when I walked out.

Matt looks back and forth from Emily to Amber.

MATT

Overkill, don't you think?

She shrugs and sips.

MATT

I met her for dinner, a very elaborate dinner that we ate while waiting for my client to arrive. Of course, he never did. I was under strict orders to not end things until after dessert. At which time I was to give her a set of gold earrings and pay the bill. He wanted to end it with style.

EMILY

That's cruel.

MATT

No more than a ten page essay.

Matt catches the eye of Amber, and they exchange smiles.

EMILY

You can go sit with her if you want.

MATT

We have rules. I'm sure you do too.

EMILY

It's not like she's really here. I'm a surrogate.

MATT

If you want to work for me, you'll have to adopt my standards.

EMILY

Please, like you're not giving her the eye? You're practically undressing her.

MATT

Do attractive women threaten you?

EMILY

Threaten? No more than hunks probably threaten you.

MATT

Feel free to ogle any hunk that comes along.

EMILY

You know, that's the problem with men. They assume women fixate on looks like men do.

MATT

You mean, you haven't dumped guys just because they look more couch potato than beef cake?

EMILY

My clients dumped potatoes, not me.

MATT

So you're ok with a blob for a boyfriend?

EMILY

I try to look past outward appearance.

MATT

Oh, come on. That's hokey, advice column pap. Humans are drawn to beauty for a reason. Don't feel bad about it, embrace it.

EMILY

I can see now why I'm breaking up with you. You're totally superficial. Big tits, bubble butt, that's all you really need isn't it.

MATT

You're not breaking up with me. You're breaking up with Will, and since he gave me some idea of your looks, I'd say he wasn't overly concerned with beauty.

She bristles and leans forward.

EMILY

You're just like the rest of them. The only thing you commit to is non-commitment.

MATT

Why is it the first thing a woman does is shackle the man she's with? It's the nesting instinct on steroids. No man goes unchained. It's like a prison sentence.

EMILY

Men need chains. Without chains, they would abandon wife and kids for the first female that happens past. Without chains, untamed men would fight and spit and screw and disappear, leaving women and children to battle by themselves. Without CHAINS, society becomes a thing of the past, a dream as insubstantial as the garden of Eden and Shangri-la.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

And in its place we have a world where the strong bully the weak, where fairness is determined by testosterone, where families are no longer dysfunctional because there are no more FAMILIES!

MATT

Women are blankets. They smother. They latch onto a man of passion and drive, and they bury the flames beneath layers of drama and tears and recriminations until not even a spark remains. They and children destroy dreams with disposable diapers and PTA meetings. If that's not enough, they pile on mortgages, braces, ipads, cell phones, credit cards without limits. And to make sure men can never soar, they add sobs and mewlings and suspicions until the noise won't allow a man to even THINK!

They stare at each other.

EMILY

Pig!

MATT

Bitch!

She stands, grabs her wine, and throws it in his face. She waits as he takes his napkin and slowly wipes his face.

EMILY

Well, what do you say?

MATT

(taking out a business card)

Call me in the morning.

She smiles and pats his shoulder as she walks away.

He looks over and finds Amber staring at him.

MATT

What?

AMBER

You got exactly what you deserve.

ROY, 20s, sure of himself, arrives at Amber's table.

ROY
Amber?

AMBER
Who are you?

ROY
(sitting)
I'm here for Jeff.

Matt nods to Roy who returns the nod.

AMBER
You're what?

Matt picks up his drink, sips, and smiles.

FADE OUT.