

Part III – August – Personal Transformation

Chapter 37

A Speed-Dating Disaster Wednesday, August 9th

“One day, in retrospect, the years of struggle will strike you as the most beautiful.” – Sigmund Freud

Daily Highlights

Dating disaster: 1 (explained below). Times I listened to James Blunt’s “Goodbye My Lover”: 5 (all they keep playing... do have reason to believe it is a conspiracy, but nevertheless on some level enjoy feeling sorry for myself). Concluding that I am surely destined to die alone while singing along to “All By Myself” with Eric Carmen: 1.

6:00 a.m. I woke up on the wrong side of the bed after dreaming about my ex-fiancé, McBlue Eyes, all night long. In my dreams, he told me that he loves me and asked to come back. Again, and again, and again.

I dragged myself out of bed, made some coffee, and made my morning commute from the coffee pot to my computer. I sipped my coffee while staring at my computer aimlessly. Then I noticed an email from McPlayer inviting me to a singles party. *Just what I need*, I thought to myself, *another singles event. Don’t even want to be single.*

I made a decision – or more like a promise to myself – to focus on work and *ONLY* work, at least until 5 p.m., then stress out about (hopefully in this order): (1) speed-dating, (2) missing McBlue Eyes, and (3) not having a boyfriend and possibly being single forever and dying alone.

5:00 p.m. Made it through my workday without any man interruptions, but still felt a bit emotional and overwhelmed with my whole missing McBlue Eyes thing. I found myself listening to a song on the radio, “Goodbye My Lover,” over, and over, and over again. *I wish they would stop playing it*, I thought. *It makes me cry*. Then again, I could have just turned the radio off, but I really didn’t want to... and maybe I was enjoying feeling sorry for myself a lil’ (scary thought indeed, but *good for me* for recognizing it!).

5:05 p.m. I decided that perhaps eating something (low carb preferably) would help me feel better. I made my way into the kitchen and stared at my empty cupboard having a hard time deciding between *low-carb* dark chocolate (LOVE *low-carb* chocolate) and *low-carb* milk chocolate. After a few indecisive long moments of staring, I chose the *low-carb* milk chocolate candy bar and then ended up eating the dark one as well. Almost instantaneously, I did feel a little better prepared, and somewhat more emotionally ready for Tawny to pick me up for the speed-dating event (*I now declare chocolate to be a miracle drug!*).

5:10 p.m. I made my way into my bedroom and stared at my clothes in the closet. It was so very packed, I couldn’t even see what was in there. Therefore, without rampaging through it, I soon arrived at the scary conclusion that *I have NOTHING to wear*. Then I went through my closet, item by item, piece by piece, and confirmed that I was right. *I still don’t know what to wear*. Most of my clothes were from my “fat days” and others were from my “skinny days.” So again, it was between the black dress, or the brown skirt, black shirt combo. *Good thing I only go on two dates with each guy ’cause I have*

nothing else to wear after that, I told myself, trying to find the silver lining and look at the glass half-full.

5:39 p.m. I decided to call Tawny to ask for her opinion. (She's seen all my clothes and always gives me an honest opinion when I need one.) I remembered her picking me up for the barbecue that fateful Sunday just before McShorty broke up with me. As soon as she saw me, Tawny was telling me the painful truth about the blush and lipstick that didn't match. Later (post breakup) I was horrified that "the clowny" look was the way McShorty will remember me FOREVER... and perhaps why he broke up with me in the first place! (Note to self: Blame breakup on the makeup artist.) "Black dress or brown skirt?" I questioned Tawny.

"Black dress definitely... it's a cocktail party."

So I put on my fabulous black dress, and by the time Tawny called to tell me she was outside, I was ready and looking glamorous.

"Your carriage is here," Tawny said cheerfully over the phone, and I went out to join her.

Tawny was in a very good mood, too good a mood actually, bubbling away all about her Ex, McJerk, and how they were "friends" now.

"Since the 'pressure' is off," she told me, "he is calling every day."

I must say she was glowing. However, I felt that if she said McJerk's real name one more time, I would definitely, without question, surely explode.

Then she did say it, and surprisingly, I found that my threshold for people and their stories was a lot higher than what I originally thought. But while I didn't completely lose it, I **REALLY** wanted to.

6:25 p.m. Since Tawny didn't want us to run into anyone we know, she had chosen a secluded restaurant way out in the Valley for our little escapade, which I thought was very clever (cause God forbid anyone would know we are desperate enough for speed-dating). Traffic was as always LA-horrific, and the freeway looked like a never-ending parking lot as we crawled to the Valley at about five miles an hour. It was so hot that both Tawny and I were pretty much way beyond melting in her non-air-conditioned car. When against all odds, traffic lightened up and we were finally making some progress, Tawny started singing what seemed to be tunes from *The Sound of Music*.

“How come you're so happy?” I questioned Tawny regarding her unnatural current state of bliss.

“I'm not happy,” she reassured me. “I am nervous about the speed-dating thingy, and singing always makes me feel better.”

I noticed that *I'm not nervous*. See, the thing about dating a million and a half guys (other than being utterly confused about all those men in your life) is you're not really nervous about dating fifteen in one night.

We made a few wrong turns and seemed to be driving directionless in circles as I wondered if Tawny subconsciously was trying to get lost (so we would never get there). At this point, she revealed that they had sent her instructions on what to talk about, and what not to talk about, at the speed-dating event.

“You're not supposed to ask about exes, religion, politics, or what they do for a living. Instead,” she was eager to explain, “it's always a safe bet to ask about their hobbies and interests.”

I thought to myself that it sounded easy enough because I'd had lots of practice at this on my recent *many* first date experiences.

6:55 p.m. We finally found the restaurant and, as in every typical Los Angeles scene, the parking lot was packed.

"Parking is going to be a nightmare," Tawny mumbled, and just as she did, someone pulled out right in front.

"I come with the best parking Karma," I told Tawny, who laughed. After parking, we walked into the casual-looking eatery, way too early for the event. The place was jam-packed with families having their dinner, and since we were very overdressed (so much for Tawny's advice), everyone looked our way, sizing us up from head to toe. The hostess stared at us as well, but we were too embarrassed to tell her what we were there for.

"You tell her," I nudged Tawny.

"No, you tell her," Tawny nudged back, and we both giggled like little schoolgirls.

"We're here for the dating thing," Tawny finally managed to blurt, well, more like whisper, and we both looked around to make sure no one had heard her.

The hostess smiled as though she were keeping our little secret, and sent us to the back room.

The two of us trudged down a long hall, and when we got to the entrance of the back room, the organizers greeted us with ear-to-ear smiles.

Tawny almost apologized for being there and explained that I was there 'cause I'm "writing a book about dating," and she was there 'cause she is "in between things and was trying to keep busy."

As they gave us our name badges, I wondered why she had to tell everyone all about her life (gotta love Tawny!).

There was loud country music playing in the background as Tawny and I stepped inside to look around, and we saw a big white room almost like an empty warehouse. There were two rows of tables, with chairs on either side. Numbers had been taped along the sides of the tables, one in front of each chair.

The organizers had given Tawny and me each a sheet of paper, and we both wrote our names and contact information along the top. (I gave my email only. I decided that, for now, I had *way too many* stalkers.). Under our name, there were 15 lines with numbers by each one. As we women rotated from one numbered seating spot to the next, we'd be writing down the name of the man we just met and only circling a "yes" by the ones we would be interested in seeing/talking to again. The men would get their own sheet and mark their interest in the same way. Every five minutes a hotel-style bell was going to ring, and the women were to change seats and move on to the next guy, while the men stayed in their chairs.

When we questioned why the women were the ones who had to rotate, the organizers justified it by saying, "If they left it up to the men, they would be a lot less polite. Instead of going in order, they wouldn't follow instructions and would only go to the tables with the attractive women."

Easy enough, we thought to ourselves. Only looking around, other than us, there was only one guy there.

When he noticed us, the man rushed over and introduced himself. I hate to be mean, but really, McStrange was not only a hillbilly, he talked stranger than he looked (red crazy hair and missing some teeth), and it didn't seem like he got out much.

"Goodness gracious," I whispered to Tawny and she gave me a very reassuring look.

"The early ones are always the weirdoes," she whispered back, and smiled graciously at McStrange (again, love Tawny. So very positive always!).

"We're the ones who are early," I said quietly back to Tawny as I tried to smile at McStrange. However I felt like my tears, which had been building up all day, were about to start to pour and flood the speed-dating event.

7:15 p.m. Tawny noticed that I was upset, so she made an excuse and we literally ran away to the restroom.

When there, Tawny and I took what seemed to be a permanent residency in front of the mirror. Since we discovered that we looked just about as awful as we felt, we both tried to do some damage control by pulling out just about anything we had in our magic purses.

"I'm so fat," I said out loud to my reflection.

"No, you're not... I am," Tawny said to hers.

"I feel like I gained about twenty pounds just on our drive. I swear I remember looking skinnier when I left home," I whined.

"It's just the lighting here, it is really bad..." Tawny reassured me.

“After tonight, not only am I giving up dating, I just might be ready to marry McNice on our first date on Saturday... that’s even if he’s wounded, or psycho, or anything else,” I told Tawny while we both applied our lip gloss for maybe the hundredth time. By the minute, I swear we were both looking more and more like a cross between Pamela Anderson and Angelina Jolie.

“No you’re not. You still love McBlue Eyes.” Tawny had pretty much said it like it is. She gave me a really serious look, and then casually put her lipstick back in her purse.

It’s funny how when someone else states the obvious, it still strikes you like lightning even though you’ve known it all along.

“No, I don’t,” I blabbed almost too eagerly, but both Tawny and I knew I might, and may always... and we wondered what took both of us so damn long to see right through me. I knew that McBlue Eyes was damaged, and challenged, and a mess, but I had yet to meet anyone who made me laugh, and yes, cry the way he did.

“It’s so *not* my fault,” I declared while giving up on the whole trying to look like Pamela Anderson, Angelina, or even somewhat presentable for this speed-dating thingy. As I was putting all my secret weapons (hair spray, lipstick, blush, perfume, etc.) back into my over-packed purse, I added, “If God, the Universe, or whoever is pulling those strings up there wants me to get over McBlue Eyes and freakin’ move on, he better send someone *really amazing* my way!”

“Let’s get us a drink,” Tawny suggested since all she *really* cared about anyway was *her* McJerk and she had no idea what else to do or say. “We will definitely need a drink to handle McStrange and whatever or whoever else will come along,” she advised.

7:30 p.m. Since one cannot argue with Tawny, some way, somehow we made our way to the bar to hang out for a few minutes.

“Just until the place fills up,” I whispered.

As we sat at the empty bar, I wanted to order an apple martini, but instead stuck to my guns and against all odds decided to be good and order Bacardi and *Diet Coke* (’cuz it doesn’t have any carbs). I was determined to stay on my protein diet (*much better to be miserable while skinny, than miserable AND overweight*).

An adorable young McBartender in his early twenties (cute smile and shaved head) rushed to our aid, and I ordered my drink while Tawny ordered *my* favorite apple martini. “What in the world are you doing at an event like this?” he asked us after Tawny and I confessed we were there to speed-date.

“She’s writing a book about dating and I’m in between relationships,” Tawny was quick to explain as I pondered once more, *why the hell does she have to tell everyone all that?* But instead of wisecracking, I practiced for speed-dating and put on my sexiest flirtatious smile.

McBartender gave us our drinks for free and made Tawny promise that I wouldn’t put it in my book (oops, didn’t tell you who he was, and what restaurant though...).

As we sat there all nonchalant, flirting with McBartender, a familiar face sat next to Tawny. I looked that way again, and almost screamed in horror. Of all people, McFull of Bull had just appeared out of nowhere. I just couldn’t believe my eyes. If at all possible I am afraid to report, McFull of Bull looked even worse than I remembered. With his crooked smile, sunglasses (in a dark restaurant), and mustard suit, he looked like a strange cross between a slimy rat with long hair, and Frankenstein having just stepped

out from an interview on *Entertainment Tonight*. He ordered a drink while I quickly hid behind Tawny and whispered, “Oh my God, McFull of Bull!!!”

“What?” Tawny was, as always, a little slow, and probably thought I had officially lost it as she had no idea what I was doing hiding behind her or what I had been trying to say.

“It’s McFull of Bull, the one I dated, and told off, the one that always lies. I can’t believe he’s here!!!”

Tawny tried to look at him discreetly but he noticed, took off his sunglasses, and gave her a sexy stare as if to say *hey*. She smiled and turned back to me.

“You think he saw me?” I whispered.

She shook her head no.

I grabbed my drink (cannot waste a good Bacardi and Diet Coke), ducked, and, well, almost crawled away, trying to be as invisible as possible (which can be a tad difficult wearing a little, sexy black dress in a casual bar/restaurant).

I made it to a corner of the restaurant somewhat safely, and called Tawny on her cell to let her know why I left. “I was just avoiding McFull of Bull,” I explained and then described the spot where I was patiently waiting for her.

Tawny joined me shortly thereafter and we both couldn’t believe that out of all people in the world (millions really...) and out of all places, I had just run into McFull of Bull.

“You don’t think he’s here for the dating thingy, do you?” I asked Tawny, trying to disguise the fear in my voice.

“I’m sure he isn’t,” she reassured me as we got back to the dating chamber.

7:45 p.m. The room had thankfully filled up, and there were now even some decent appetizers. Due to the traumatic event that had just transpired, I attacked the appetizer plate. As I loaded up on mozzarella sticks (Love ’em! And no carbs! Tons of fat, but hey, a no carb diet is a no carb diet...), I lost myself a little in the moment, and when I finally looked up from my little plate of food, McFull of Bull was standing right next to me!

I wanted to scream, but managed to say: “Oh hey...” in a very calm and nonchalant way, like I just saw a long-lost friend. (Note to self: Thank goodness for those acting classes, highly recommended.) “I can’t believe you’re here,” I said truthfully. “What are the odds?”

“Maybe it’s destiny?” said McFull of Bull as he raised an eyebrow mischievously, and I almost choked on my cheese stick. (Note to you and self: Do not engage in eating and talking at the same time, especially with strange people or bull-shitters.)

“How have you been?” I asked, completely ignoring his last comment.

“Great,” he told me, and tried (unsuccessfully) to smile charmingly at the very same time.

“All girls outside!” I heard a voice in the background say and the bell went off saving me from McFull of Bull. (Thank God!)

About fifteen of us gals of all sizes, shapes, ethnicities, and height gathered outside on the patio while the men took their seats.

“Just be yourselves,” said one of the organizers to us nervous ladies, and we all tried to figure out what “be yourselves” actually entailed, while smiling and looking at each other carefully, sizing up the competition.

“Do I really have to spend the five minutes with McFull of Bull? It’s ridiculous, ’cause I already know all about how Full of Bull ‘McFull of Bull’ is and I have no desire to speak with him EVER!” I pouted to Tawny even though I knew I not only should, but also surely would.

“You should be gracious and spend the five minutes with him,” Tawny answered and all fifteen of us courageous women stepped back into the lion’s den.

8:00 p.m. The night officially began.

I took my seat in front of Victim #1. He was a university professor with thick glasses, no hair and small black eyes. The man was so nervous speaking with me, that he was sweating bullets and looked as white as a ghost (kind of like a white raccoon on speed). I felt really bad, and already sensed my energy slowly draining as McNutty Professor broke the rules and asked me, “What do you do for a living?”

“Business Account Manager for an office supply company,” I answered, and asked myself, *how bad can five minutes be?*

Then I discovered that when speaking to a McNutty Professor, who has no idea what to say to me, five minutes could last (if not forever) for a *very, very, very* long time. As the professor and I just sat there staring at each other awkwardly, I prayed for the bell. I pleaded with God. I promised to be a better person. I even promised to never hurt McBlue Eyes again, to even be nicer to my sister (never realized I could pray so much in five minutes, nor that speed-dating can be a religious experience), and all along I tried to stay nice and smile. Finally, I heard the ding and almost jumped off my seat onto my next victim.

8:05 p.m. Victim #2 was not bad-looking. He had a sweet face, blue eyes, and a goatee. When this man told me he had cats (*I love cats*), I was almost ready to elope!

Then he kept talking *all* about his cats, and *only* about his cats. As McAlso a Cat Owner pulled out about a hundred cat pictures from his wallet, he made me look at each and every one. All the while he was bragging about how “My cats are this expensive, rare breed, with only a few left in the whole wide world...” Blah, blah, blah...

I managed to look fascinated while going through the countless pictures, and staying politically correct, I tried to change the subject to all about *my* cats. However, McAlso a Cat Owner would hardly let me speak. Soon our conversation turned into more of a competition than anything else. (Note to self: Not only can't date men who are allergic to cats, can't date men who *have* cats 'cause we're gonna compete over whose animals are cuter, and mine of course always will be – no matter what!) Even though I really, really tried to like McAlso a Cat Owner, I didn't.

Really didn't.

These five minutes were dragging along just as slowly, if not more so, than my first. Not only was I extremely annoyed by the time I got to Numerous Three, I was slightly suicidal and in desperate need of anti-depressants (sorry Tom Cruise!) or at least some extra-strength Vicodan. And the future didn't look much brighter. McStrange was waiting for me at Table Number Five, and I glanced in horror at Table Number Six where McFull of Bull was awaiting patiently.

8:25 p.m. By almost zoning out completely and going on what seemed to be autopilot (moving through life without paying attention), I survived yet another ten minutes with a couple more guys who were also *so very wrong* for me. (The first could not speak a word

of English but managed to tell me, “I look for wife, for getting green card.” The other one told me with an ear-to-ear smile, “I just got out of a long fifteen-year relationship and I am looking for someone to do some sexual experimentation with... you look sexy, would you mind?”) At that point, I made it still alive and kicking (especially the kicking part) to McStrange.

“*I can do this, I can do this, I can do this...*” I chanted in my head, and then I inhaled one deep breath and took my seat in front of him.

McStrange didn’t waste one precious moment, cleared his voice, and went into a speech (as though he were at least running for President and not speed-dating). He told me all about his job as a movie set carpenter and his father who apparently owns an avocado ranch. (*Love avocados, but I would rather die before ever giving McStrange a chance... in fact, if I am ever desperate enough to even consider going out with him, please shoot me to save me from the misery!*).

“I love avocados,” I shared, and wanted to (pick one) cry/scream/run away _____. I even contemplated marrying someone, *anyone*, so I wouldn’t have to go out dating *anymore*. (Note to you and self: Speed-dating can make one feel very desperate, especially when one was already emotional and nostalgic over a messed-up Ex.)

8:27 p.m. Then, just when I seriously thought it *couldn’t* possibly get any worse, McStrange proved me wrong. After disclosing that he’s really a singer at heart, he started to awkwardly serenade me with the song “Lady In Red.” (Note to you and self: I was wearing black.) McStrange’s singing was not only bad; it was also *very loud*. As everyone looked at us, I was so embarrassed that I wished for the earth to swallow me whole. I thought I was going to die from the humiliation, right there and then in front of

everyone! But by some godly miracle, I pulled up a smile, and in one last remaining effort (and 'cause I wanted him to stop), I said, "You know Tawny's a singer; you should really sing to her."

"But I'm attracted *to you*," McStrange was more than happy to tell me, and he continued singing until the bell rang.

8:30 p.m. My Number Six, just before McFull of Bull, was actually not bad. McTall was a very tall and handsome man, with a full head of sandy-blond hair (which I do find sexy) and piercing blue eyes. He was a little quiet, and after we smiled at each other silently for a few brief seconds, I did manage to get out of him that he was from up north, and came to LA to be an actor ('kay, maybe that fact was a little scary). However, thankfully, he ended up with a real job and was working as a finance manager at a car dealership.

"I came here originally to be an actress but ended up with a real job as well," I told McTall while he smiled kindly. There was this special light in his eyes when he smiled, and it made me wonder if he wanted to have kids and if *we* ever had them what they'd look like. At the same time, I questioned why the only guy in the room that had potential was sitting right next to McFull of Bull. It was as though the Universe were playing some cruel joke on me. I tried not to, but couldn't help myself from getting a bit paranoid while imagining the horror stories McFull of Bull had surely told the man about me. I'm sure in different circumstances I would have been a lot more charming, but truthfully... being on what felt like a date with fifteen men can be beyond draining.

I did manage to circle a "yes" by McTall's name, and then I panicked for a second when my insecurities took over. I thought: *Since McTall seems to be the only normal one*

in the room, what if every woman has chosen him as well...? Or what if I circle a "Yes," and he doesn't feel the same way? That would be just a little devastating; after all, I never was very good with rejection... (One might say 'cause of my father/abandonment issues, but let's not go there right now.)

8:30 p.m. Just then, the bell rang again and brought me back to earth, and to sitting across from McFull of Bull.

"What's *your* name?" joked McFull of Bull.

"You look familiar," I answered, playing his game.

"It's too bad you didn't like me, 'cause I was planning on taking you with me to Fiji for your birthday," bragged McFull of Bull.

I wanted to say that my birthday was way far away in February, and that being with him, Fiji would have turned very quickly from Paradise to Hell. But since I thought that might be a bit mean (not to mention bitchy), I smiled, and told him as softly and as kindly as I possibly could, "I'm sorry... I just didn't feel it."

"It's OK, I understand," said McFull of Bull. "Actually... I met someone."

"I'm so glad," and I was, but I also thought, *McFull of Bull is, like always, full of bull*. "So what are you doing here?" I asked him.

"I paid for this three weeks ago, and since I'm cheap..." (His words, not mine, I swear) "...I wanted to get my money's worth and maybe keep my options open."

"I am so happy you found someone," I told him, but really I was so happy *for me*, 'cause hopefully, I'd never ever have to see him again.

"So, have you heard about the party next week?" McFull of Bull asked as though he had been reading my mind.

“What party?” I was more than horrified at the possibility of seeing him there too, and almost having a minor panic attack while I began pleading again with God. I felt guilty as I knew that God not only might be busy with more urgent matters (such as creating world peace and such), but also I felt I had probably used up all my prayer time by now on this dreadful evening. Still, I knew for a fact that if I ran into McFull of Bull one more time, I couldn’t guarantee I wouldn’t completely flip out and join a convent, for real. (Note to self: Might this be God’s purpose for tonight’s speed-dating in the first place?)

“McStripper’s party in the city.” McFull of Bull said and smiled.

Oh no, oh no, oh please God, no! I screamed inside, yet somehow managed to reply: “Oh, that’s strange, yes I was invited. McStripper just happens to be my ex-husband, so that’s great... I guess I’ll see you there.”

9:00 p.m. After I met a few more men (really boring ones), they gave us a much needed break. I was so overwhelmed and tired that I was literally falling asleep.

When I caught up with Tawny outside on the patio, she confirmed that McFull of Bull told her all the same lies and stories (that I had heard before on my previous dates with him) – all about the theme parks he’s building in Fiji, and taking over Disneyland and Russia and stuff. But on a positive note, she was happy to report, “No,” McStrange did not serenade her. I told her that this night was so beyond torturous, and that: “I hate to sound dramatic, but I almost want to die.”

Tawny actually looked slightly suicidal herself, but reassured me, “The other half’s a lil’ better,” and then she gave me a hug. (Just between you and me, sometimes I do think Tawny’s the better person.)

9:20 p.m. We were called back to work... I mean to speed-date (yes, on this night in particular, dating officially felt like my second job), and somehow, some way, I eventually got to the second-to-last date.

Victim #14 had great energy and a charismatic spirit about him. He was dressed from head to toe in motorcycle “biker” gear, wearing a black leather jacket and gloves. McBiker told me all about his motorcycle (hate to say it but he was definitely not for me... not only am I a scaredy-cat, I would also rather *die* than ride the back of a motorcycle). After McBiker confessed that he had circled “yes” to ALL fifteen women (can you say womanizer???), I was actually surprised to find him spiritually minded. He and I dove right into an intriguing conversation all about the power of the mind, and how it works.

“You are magical,” McBiker told me while looking almost straight through me (gotta love him for that, at least he was original). I turned bright tomato-red and actually almost believed him (but still could not and would not get over the motorcycle part, nor over him choosing ALL fifteen women).

And just like that, miracles did happen, and prayers were answered, and I made it (barely) alive and breathing to the *last* guy.

9:50 p.m. Victim #15 was short (at about 4' 9", shorter than even McShorty), bold and a little ugly (hate to say it, but I'm being honest), and he was wearing a mustard suit. (Note to you and self: Men in mustard suits = bad... *both McFull of Bull and Victim #15 were wearing this*). Plus as Tawny and I were about to find out later, he was *absolutely classless*.

McClassless told me how rich he was, and how he designs houses for the stars. After going on and on about all his money and the many women he has slept with, McClassless went on to say, "I'm looking for a wife," as he checked me out from head to toe.

"Great," I said smiling. However, in my heart, I already felt so very sorry for the poor, poor woman who would be so very misfortunate to end up with him.

And finally, the bell rang for the very last time, symbolizing the end of the nightmare as our dreadful speed-dating night officially *ended*.

10:00 p.m. Both Tawny and I tried to sneak out to get another emergency drink (we needed it now more than ever!). We had almost made it to the door of the dating chamber when McClassless caught up with us, and offered to buy us drinks. We wanted to say no, but felt guilty and bad for him, so we found ourselves saying yes. As we were talking, he spotted a tall skinny blonde and while he was distracted, Tawny and I quickly headed for the bar.

Just before we escaped, McTall caught us by the door and tried to make conversation by asking me, "So did you get any professional acting jobs?"

"Not so much..." I told him and then got quiet. Although he was sweet, and I did hope that he'd picked me as well, I was so drained by this evening of speed-dating that I wanted to avoid anyone of the opposite-sex possibly for life, but at least until tomorrow.

I looked McTall straight in the eye and said, "I'll talk to you soon," as though I knew it was definitely true, and walked away. (Note to self: Great job playing mysterious, not to mention unattainable.)

10:10 p.m. Tawny and I took seats at the bar and got drinks from our new best friend, McBartender.

“McStrange bought three drinks for himself and left a penny for the tip,” McBartender told us.

“Ewww!” Tawny said, and she and I were not surprised and more than sympathetic. Oddly enough (’cause the Karma thing sucks), we did honestly feel so much better now about having made so much fun of McStrange earlier.

10:20 p.m. Speed-dating made us, well more like me, even more emotional and when emotional I get overwhelmingly hungry. So before going home, Tawny and I got ourselves a table. Just a second before we ordered; McClassless appeared out of nowhere and joined us.

He talked our ears off *all* about the celebrities he has worked with, and I couldn’t help thinking, *If I needed celebrity gossip, I could have just stayed home and watched Extra.*

“Are you a belly dancer?” he turned and asked me suddenly, and I felt as though he was undressing me with his eyes.

“No.” I was not only shocked, but I had no idea where that came from.

“What are you doing with your exoticness?” he asked.

“Dating,” I joked, but really maybe I was also being serious.

10:50 p.m. McClassless didn’t stop talking, so I knew it was up to me to make a move.

“We do really have to get going,” I told him, finally, even though we had not ordered any food.

So McClassless got insulted, stood up, slammed his drink, and made a point to pay for his drink... and *only* his drink.

Tawny and I looked at each other and were more than a little stunned.

Always quick to take on the blame, “What did we do?” Tawny whispered.

“Are you serious??” I asked her, “We didn’t do anything... he is just classless!”

“Maybe his feelings were hurt when you said we had to go,” Tawny tried.

“We do have to go, and his feelings were *not* hurt...” I reassured her.

As Tawny and I made our way out, we joked with McBartender who said to us, and I quote: “Never trust a man in a mustard suit.” (Thought so!)

11:01 p.m. On the way home, the usually calm, well-mannered Tawny began to curse like a sailor (the first time I heard this in my hang-out life with her), which was both alarming and amusing at the very same time. We each agreed that this evening turned out to be a complete and utter disaster. Between McNutty Professor asking Tawny (who was nervous and fidgeting with her pen) if she had Attention Deficit Disorder, and McClassless inviting us for a drink and not paying for it, we had seen and had enough. I was even more guilt-stricken and mortified when I remembered that I had actually cancelled therapy with my wonderful McTherapist for this night.

“I’m saving myself for McJerk,” Tawny declared, interrupting my thoughts.

“*Not only is McJerk the biggest jerk, he is so awful for you!!!*” I wanted so badly to yell at Tawny, but I knew she was not ready to hear that, so I stayed silent.

“BIG and Carrie from *Sex and the City* worked it out...” she added.

I laughed as I recalled that two months earlier, Tawny didn't even know what *Sex and the City* was, and all of a sudden, she was not only a fan, but also an expert and an addict (to the show and McJerk).

11:35 p.m. I was back home.

Alone.

All alone.

I was tired, lonely, sad, exhausted, and didn't want to date *ever* again. I checked my answering machine to find there were *no* messages. I checked my caller I.D. just to confirm, and indeed, found that I had no calls. *NONE*. I picked up my phone to make sure it was working and it seemed like it was. In an attempt to cheer myself up, I turned on the radio, and as though by request, Eric Carmen was singing "All By Myself," and I held back my tears and sang along. I didn't just get into singing the lyrics; I pretty much resigned and accepted my "cat lady" status as a life sentence, while a part of me contemplated getting on a plane to the Midwest and begging McBlue Eyes to take me back. Fortunately, just as I was checking ticket prices online (at \$450, way too expensive), Angel called, interrupting my lil' pity party.

She and I talked for a while all about how awful it was to speed-date, and how L.A. just sucks.

"If we were anywhere else, we would have had boyfriends by now," Angel told me for maybe the thousandth time. "Not that we couldn't have boyfriends," she quickly stood corrected. "Just ones we wanted, without settling, or talking ourselves into it," and I knew what she meant. We could just *be* with someone in LA, but we both needed that spark, the passion, and the friendship. (I know that I settled for McShorty for a while, but

he did have some spark left over from his “bad boy” days, and also I have hopefully learned since then that settling backfires.)

“You think it’s LA?” I asked her.

“LA sucks,” she said matter of factly. “The men here suck.”

I did wonder whether she was right, or if we were just using it as an excuse for being so picky and staying single. “Maybe we should move somewhere else,” I wondered out loud.

“I am telling you, a year from now, if we are still single, we should both pack our bags and go to another state.” Angel got excited. “Maybe Texas. My roommate says Texan men are great... Or maybe Alaska.” She was thinking out loud. “I heard that in Alaska, there are ten men to every woman.”

“You’re kidding!” (I was sold.) “Maybe I should just forget all about the Mr. Right deal and have a baby alone like you...?”

“Let me tell you,” said Angel, “the love that you get from a baby is like nothing else. You still miss the love of a man, but this baby is the best thing that has ever happened to me!”

01:00 a.m. We hung up the phone. Even though I was way beyond depressed, I stayed somewhat optimistic (or is it being *really* stubborn??), and I went to sleep chanting my positive affirmations:

*“I am happily married to a wonderful man,
I am happily married to a wonderful man,
I am happily married to a wonderful man...”*

Today's insight: Remember to always *stay positive* no matter what obstacles you face on your Road to Love! There are other nights, other dates, and other people out there. As my mother used to say, "There's somebody for everybody!" Never give up. Remember, it's when you're closest to your dreams, to your "land of happiness," that it seems the farthest away. And just like right before dawn, just at your darkest hour, before sunrise, is when the sun is just moments away. Keep going! Your dreams are a lot closer than you can ever imagine.

Oh, and going speed-dating when emotional and overwhelmed after dreaming all night about your Ex is not highly recommended.