

21st April, 2000

THE BLIND DATE

DEAR DIARY, as a woman in my 20s, I should know better. I've never accepted a blind date in my life because of the stigma attached to them. But I'd agreed to one and the day of reckoning came quicker than you could say Jack Robinson. Alarm bells started ringing from the time I stepped out of the bath. They were still ringing as I got dressed and they continued to ring as I left the house. I should have cancelled, but sadly I didn't. I assumed it was better than watching TV from the sofa with my dinner on my lap. Besides, getting dressed up midweek is a novelty. My dress looked at me and said where in the hell do you think you're going sister? My strappy heels couldn't believe they were being pulled out of the shoe-box on a Wednesday.

I told myself not to take the date seriously and not to expect a Sean John run-way model look-a-like. I also made sure that I had no cleavage on show. I made a note of not wearing the type of dress that if I dropped my keys, I'd have to kick them all the way home. The makeup was as close to natural as possible. And I promised myself not to drink too much. It's not a good look to end the night vomiting out of a taxi window.

The date was in aid of my friend Eve who was meeting her new boyfriend Gerry for dinner at a chic restaurant in Knightsbridge. Gerry's cousin from Jamaica wanted to meet a girl on his business trip to London. This cousin of Gerry's had relocated from Jamaica to New York through his job and had been living in the US for the past seven years.

As the restaurant was in Knightsbridge, I brought all the money I had in my account and all my credit cards because you never know if a meal's going to cost £30 per head or 30 something more than I've got!

We got there and I felt like a round-the-way girl crashing a cocktail party. Although I looked the part, deep inside I would have been more at home at The Harvester. Anyway, the introductions were made and handshaking took place. From this point onwards, my face was fixed like a smacked arse. You see, the first thing 'the date' said in his transatlantic accent was "oh, rough domesticated hands. I like a woman who knows what to do with a dustpan and brush. And I notice you've got short finger nails too, all the better for kneading

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dumplings and peeling green banana". Little does he know that I haven't peeled a green banana since leaving home at 21 for a life of independence, misery and poverty.

He looked at my hands again and narrowed his eyes this time and said Jesus... black nail polish! Lady did you do that intentionally?

Theo 'the date' was good looking. He could definitely give Sean Jean's run-way models a run for their money but his attitude was so horrible.

He criticised my hair. Said it was too short and I looked like... he whispered a lesbian! He went on to say women with long hair like Jennifer Lopez were feminine. Well words simply cannot express how much I don't look like J Lo, not even if I sewed on a two foot weave. He also criticised the colour too. He said red was for danger and it looked strange because crimson isn't a natural colour and if I wanted to fake it and dye it, I should have dyed it a subtle shade of brown.

Theo said my job as a writer wasn't a 'real' job because any fool can write. He wanted to know what I really did for a living. Honestly, every 10 minutes, he'd say come on girl, what do you really do?

He asked me what possessed me to 'bore' a hole in my nose when I had so many in my ears and said I was a puppy show, which I know is Jamaican talk for a dog's dinner!

He said my name wasn't a real name but a calendar month and that my parents were wrong for naming me August and that they must have meant Audrey. And do you know, from this point onwards, he called me Audrey. After about the fourth Audrey, I couldn't be bothered to correct him anymore.

I looked at Eve and said with my eyes, 'I hate you'. She whispered sorry while shrugging her shoulders and turned around to continue finger-feeding Gerry-Springer with king prawn.

Theo obviously couldn't see that he was making me sick and continued with his malevolent questions like why did I feel it necessary to be a single parent and asked me what I had done to drive away the 'babyfather' (his phrase, not mine). He also pointed out that I was being irresponsible by believing I could teach my boys to be men.

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He asked me what car I drove. I replied a metro. He laughed and said it was about the size of his new plasma TV. What a first class w*****!

He brushed his hands up and down my legs and told me my legs needed waxing and that his ex never had stubble. I replied "oh didn't he?" He continued to point out that my plucked eyebrows were two different shapes. Told me that the dark circles under my eyes should be covered with concealer and mentioned that I should look into getting my teeth bleached and straightened.

The nightmare ended at around midnight.

He asked me if I wanted dessert, coffee or cognac. He then said to put my purse away when I offered to contribute to the bill. He said I should ask the restaurant to call a cab and he would pay for it. His final words were Audrey, have a good sleep, it was nice meeting you and he gave me his business card.

I put the card in my bag and vowed to tear it into little pieces, put it in my witches cauldron and set fire to it. I left Eve with Gerryiatric and went home.

Before I ripped up the man's card, I checked it out, and I quote: "Theodore J. Franklin III, Senior Vice President, Investment Banking Division, Morgan Stanley". In my head, I heard the sound of a cash register. Ching! Ching! I know good, hard working investment bankers earn shed loads of money. So before I set the card on fire, I had the good manners to call him. I let him know I arrived home safely. I told him how much I enjoyed his company and said that I'd love to do it again. That was two weeks ago. He hasn't returned any of my calls. But it's OK, it taught me two valuable lessons. 1) Never go on blind dates; and 2) I am as shallow as they come and I must never judge anyone for being shallow ever again.

August Mayfield