

"Speed Date"
Romantic/Comedic Writing Sample

Excerpt from the full-length play, "Speed Date"
By Justin Pierce

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ACT ONE

SCENE ONE:

Lights up on the Full Moon Cafe, Morning.

A loud buzzer sound is heard.

At lights, ISABELLE stands at the back wall struggling to hang a banner that reads: "The Full Moon Cafe Presents: Speed Date! 11-4 every Saturday!" She wears an apron with her name tag fastened on the front.

KAT enters with her apron on one shoulder. She holds her name tag in one hand and scrolls on her phone with the other. She notices ISABELLE and immediately moves to help her, dropping her things as she does. She picks up the other half of the banner for her.

KAT

I gotcha.

KAT begins to help ISABELLE hang the banner.

ISABELLE

Oh my god- you're a hero. Thank you.

KAT

No problem. I- uh- know how hard these things are to put up by yourself. Viv goes through these phases. Last month it was Saturday Morning Poetry Readings and I was the banner hanger for *that* project, so...

ISABELLE

Is this what hazing is? Like- outside of TV?

KAT

Oh, no, they aren't hazing you. I think in the food industry it's called paying your dues. Different name so it's technically a different thing. Legal, too.

ISABELLE

Great. I hate this place already.

KAT

I mean, as far as jobs go, at least we've got Viv.

ISABELLE

Yeah, she seems sweet.

KAT

And if having her around means that the new hire has to put up the Saturday Morning Banner- I'll let them take that sacrifice.

ISABELLE

It hurts because them is me.

KAT

Eh, just for the moment. I was the new hire until you got here, you know.

ISABELLE

So, *you're* the lucky SOB I replaced.

KAT

I'll try not to be too happy about it in your presence.

KAT and ISABELLE finish hanging the banner.
They look at the finished product for a moment,
before...

ISABELLE

You can consider us officially even. I don't think I would've gotten it up there without you. That thing is stupid heavy.

KAT

Yeah, they order the heavy-duty ones so they'll last forever. The kicker is that events usually don't even last a month.

ISABELLE

Well, god bless the forethought.

The two enjoy the moment, before...

KAT

You all good?

ISABELLE

Oh, yeah- thank you. I spent longer on that than I care to mention.

KAT

It'll be our little secret.

The two enjoy the moment. KAT begins to collect her belongings.

KAT

Alright, I better go open up shop. I'm Kat, by the way.

ISABELLE

Isabelle.

KAT

Nice to meet you, Isabelle. You need a latte, I'm your girl.

ISABELLE

Sounds good.

KAT collects her belongings and leaves.

ISABELLE goes to the cafe table and begins to place the chairs onto the ground when she spots KAT's name tag on the ground. She picks it up and reads it for a moment, before looking off towards KAT.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

Lights up on the Full Moon Cafe, later that morning.

VIV holds a microphone and hops onto a makeshift stage. Seeing the crowd, she is immediately wide-eyed. Eventually she collects her nerves and addresses the audience.

VIV

Oh, wow, there's a lot of folks here this week! Like *a lot*, a lot. I gotta be honest- you know- didn't expect such a healthy group of folks who are both lonely *and* openly admit it! That is just so awesome! Can we get a, "hell yeah" for self-awareness?

VIV holds the microphone out. There is scattered, unsure applause.

VIV (CONT.)

OK! Well. Hi there, my name is Vivian but you can call me Viv. I'm the manager here at the Full Moon Cafe and I wanna welcome you all to our first ever Saturday Morning Speed Date!

There is scattered applause.

VIV (CONT.)

Now we here at FMC know that some of you are used to spending your Saturday mornings at The Blasé Cafe down on Fourteenth and Vine and we also know about the tragedy that is currently occurring there and KAT be occurring for the next seven to ten years, if you're picking up what I'm putting down. It's bankruptcy, folks, and that is just never a good thing. Our hearts go out to Terrance and Milly Blasé and we hope everything works out in their favor. And we are just tickled pink that they're letting us step in and host this wonderful event so y'all get back to the dating! Oh- also we'll be sending around a drink cart. A small percentage of the proceeds is gonna go to helping the Blasé's in their time of need so spend, spend, spend and help out a good cause!

Scattered applause.

VIV (CONT.)

Alright, real quick- here are a few rules. Because what's potential love without strict control and restraint?

Silence.

VIV (CONT.)

Now, everyone should have gotten a nice little number when they signed up. My assistant Roxy is gonna call out names of individual people, two at a time. It's really simple. When you hear your name, your gonna go to the table Roxy's pointing to, you'll sit down with your date and then you're both gonna hear something that sounds like this.

A loud buzzer sound is heard.

VIV (CONT.)

Once you hear that, you'll know that you have 10 minutes to share stories, feelings, desires- anything that you need to do to make that connection, baby! Once 10 minutes have passed, you're gonna hear another-

A loud buzzer sound is heard.

VIV (CONT.)

And at that point all the ladies are gonna move one table down and we'll continue that until everyone has partnered up and is ready to get married!

Silence.

VIV (CONT.)

That's another joke, folks. You guys are gonna be hearing these all day so ya better start laughin'!

Silence.

VIV (CONT.)

Really?

VIV storms off.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE THREE

Lights up on the Full Moon Cafe, a few minutes later.

At lights, a cafe table sits center stage with two chairs positioned across from each other.

ROXY (V.O.)

Eli, Table 6.

ELI enters and sits down at the table, slightly unsure. He has a nametag fastened to his shirt.

ROXY (V.O.)

Dakota, Table 6.

DAKOTA enters. She has a nametag fastened to his shirt and holds her phone in one hand, texting.

When she gets to the table and looks from her phone, she sees ELI and looks surprised.

DAKOTA

Oh- hey! Eli, right?

ELI

Uh- yeah? You're-

ELI begins to read her nametag.

DAKOTA

Like *Samantha's* Eli?

ELI

(immediately crestfallen)

Oh.

A loud buzzer sound is heard.

The two jump and ELI is thrown off his train of thought but attempts to get back on track.

ELI (CONT.)

Uh- yeah, I'm- well, I don't know if you'd really call me that anymore but... Please- sit, if you like. I think the drink cart is on the way.

DAKOTA

Sure.

She sets her phone down on the table and sits.

DAKOTA (CONT.)

I'm Dakota.

ELI

Nice to meet you, Dakota. So, you know Sam?

DAKOTA

We worked together last summer and got pretty close. I was actually at- we've met before.

ELI

We've met?

DAKOTA

Yeah, it's- I mean, of course you don't remember- it was like a second of second of a busy day but- yeah, we met at Sam's birthday party last year. God, was that almost a year ago?

ELI

Nine months. Something like that.

DAKOTA

(sizing ELI up)

Yeah.

ELI

Well, I'm sorry I don't quite remember us meeting.

DAKOTA

Hey, it's understandable. Y'all were experiencing a lot back then. I mean, I'd imagine. I don't...

But you're looking for love again, I see! Very exciting!

ELI

Oh, this? Uh- yeah. This is-

DAKOTA

It's nothing to be ashamed of- really. I mean, that's why *I'm* here. Probably why about 46% of the room right now is here.

ELI

That's a very specific percentage.

DAKOTA

You come to enough of these, you begin to learn a thing or two about the Speed Dating community.

ELI

There's a whole community?

DAKOTA

Oh, my god- -it's fascinating. Honestly, it's what kept me coming at first. So. Just looking around the room, you've got your regulars. These are the folks you see every week at these events. You've got Joe over there, there's Troy, Meredith, I think I saw Kinsey around here somewhere. They're the regulars. Then you've got your normies- the folks who are just here for the food or the coffee or whatever. They're kind of the victims of this whole process- they have to take waves of awkward introductions and intense silences right in the face. Then you've got the dudes who're just here to get laid. There's usually at least two at every event. They're usually wearing shirts with too many of the buttons unbuttoned. It's very alarming. And then there's folks like you. The newbies. The hopefuls. The freshmen of love's high school. You add the Regulars and The Newbies up, you get around 46% give or take.

ELI

Oh my god.

DAKOTA

I know.

(putting on an accent)

"You're a Speed Dater , Harry."

The two enjoy the moment.

ELI

So, knowing all of that, can I ask a question?

DAKOTA

Sure.

ELI

Do you actually think there's someone here that you could actually fall in love with?

DAKOTA

Do you?

ELI

I asked you first.

DAKOTA

What do you want me to say? Of course I do.

ELI

Really?

DAKOTA

Yeah, really.

ELI

Could you point them out, specifically?

DAKOTA

Like- right now?

ELI

Yeah- show me whom, in this room, you truly believe that you could spend the rest of your life with.

DAKOTA

OK, first of all you're moving the goalposts. You said, "fall in love." That's way different than, "spending the rest of your life with." I can fall in love with somebody and never even date 'em.

ELI

OK, you got me there. Who could you fall in love with?

DAKOTA repositions in her seat to get a better view of the room.

DAKOTA

Not him, not him, maybe him.

ELI

Maybe who?

DAKOTA points off stage.

DAKOTA

That guy.

ELI

You think you're gonna fall for *that* guy?

DAKOTA

I think it's *possible* that I could fall for that guy. Under the right circumstances-

ELI

What about under these circumstances? Like under the circumstances of reality?

DAKOTA continues to look around for a moment before pointing off.

DAKOTA

You're right, I was imagining a kind of Mad Max: Fury Road situation.

She continues to look around the room, before gesturing off.

DAKOTA

I mean, *she's* cute.

ELI

OK. Cool. Now, are we talking *love* love?

DAKOTA

Why is this suddenly an interview?

ELI

Hey, no interview. Just interested. I mean, these are the topics we're here to address, right?

DAKOTA sizes ELI up for a moment, before...

DAKOTA

Ok, *love* love...

DAKOTA spares another glance at the unseen woman.

DAKOTA (CONT.)

Yeah, I am totally of the opinion that she could sweep me off my feet. Here's to hoping she's playing for the right team.

ELI

Well, she's here, so at least you know she's looking.

DAKOTA

So, are you saying there's no-one in this room who you could see yourself with?

ELI

I'm not saying anything like that. I mean, I'm here too.

DAKOTA

So, what was that all about?

ELI

I'm just talking. Guess I'm trying to make a point.

DAKOTA

A point made by a man? I've never heard one of those before.

ELI

Speed dates are just not a realistic place to find love.

DAKOTA

Well, that just shows that you're looking at it all wrong. You don't find love at a Speed Date. You find connection. You make a spark. It's up to you two to turn that spark into love together.

ELI

And it was all about the friends we made along the way?

DAKOTA

OK, you're so pessimistic about these events- why're you even here?

ELI

I write here on my free time. Saw the event and said, "why not?"

DAKOTA

So that's where you are in your current search for love, then? The, "Why Not?" phase?

ELI thinks about it and shrugs.

ELI

Why not?

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE FOUR:

Mid-day lights up on a room in Chicago, Illinois.

At lights, JUSTIN sits at a desk typing on the keyboard of his laptop. After a moment, he stops, stands up, and addresses the reader.

JUSTIN

Hey there! This is the end of the writing sample! If you enjoy my work and want to enquire about any creative or business projects, I encourage you to reach out! My email is **justinpierceplaywright@gmail.com** and I am open to any jobs, opportunities, or collaborations! Thank you so much for your consideration.

BLACKOUT.