

DATING PREDICAMENTS

By Kelly Biggs and Richard Overfield

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BY KELLY BIGGS AND RICHARD OVERFIELD

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 MEN, 4 WOMEN, 1 EITHER)

CLAUDINE Molly's mom, 73, widow, spunky. (73 lines)
MOLLY Claudine's daughter, 37, never married, teacher. (56 lines)
ERNEST Matt's dad, 73, widower, feisty. (63 lines)
MATT Ernest's son, 37, never married, Businessman. (59 lines)
TOM Matt's friend, 37, dating Janelle. (38 lines)
JANELLE Molly's friend, 37, dating Tom. (28 lines)
MARGE Claudine's friend, typical overweight old lady. (30 lines)
PIERRE French restaurant owner, accent, flamboyant. (53 lines)
SALVADOR Mobster, New Yorker, accent. (25 lines)
PC VOICE Typical computer voice, male or female. (7 lines)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: A dark ally in the outskirts of Meshoppen, Pennsylvania.
ACT ONE, SCENE 2: The living room in the homes of Claudine McDermitt and Ernest Donski.
ACT TWO, SCENE 1: The living room in the homes of Claudine McDermitt and Ernest Donski.
ACT TWO, SCENE 2: The living room in the homes of Claudine McDermitt and Ernest Donski.
ACT THREE: *Pierre's*, the newest and finest French restaurant.

TIME: Late summer, present day.

RUNNING TIME: Approximately 60 minutes

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING:

The curtains to the stage are closed. The apron is bare and represents a cold, damp ally in the less desirable part of the town.

AT RISE:

Midnight. Lights rise slightly and remain dim. PIERRE is seen cautiously poking his head around the corner stage right. He slowly and fearfully inches his way to the center of the apron quietly calling out.

PIERRE: Hello, hello? *(Hears sound of police sirens.)* Cute little Frenchman here, not vinting to hurt anyone. *(Hears loud boom in the distance and jumps.)* Or be hurt by someone! *(Looks at watch.)* It tis midnight, I vonder vhere my little New York friend vith the bad breathe and anger management issues is?

PIERRE is startled by a voice off stage left.

SALVADOR: So I gotta weakness for onions, you wanna make something of it?

PIERRE screams and falls to his knees as SALVADOR enters stage left.

PIERRE: Sal, Sal I did not know you there. *(Crawls to SALVADOR and grabs his hand.)* Please forgive me!

SALVADOR brushes away PIERRE.

SALVADOR: Get away, ya bother me.

PIERRE: So did you bring the money?

SALVADOR: Slow down, there some conditions that goes along with this loan. *(Pulls out a bag of cash from his trench coat.)* First, there is the interest rate we discussed.

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PIERRE: Yes, I was wondering if that was negotiable?

SALVADOR: You don't seem to understand, I got these investors. They don't give you the money for nothing and if they don't make money they aren't too happy. And if they're not happy, I'm not happy. And if I'm not happy, then you won't be breathing much longer.

PIERRE: I think I understand now. But certainly you will give me enough time to pay you back?

SALVADOR: Sure I will kid, I like ya. I will give you as much time as you need. *(He helps PIERRE up, puts his arms around his back, and they both stare off into the audience.)*

PIERRE: Oh good.

SALVADOR: Ya have two months or I break your legs. *(He exits stage right as PIERRE shouts back to him.)*

PIERRE: *(Meaningfully.)* Thank you for not being too harsh! *(Looks back to audience.)* America is so wonderful! I have two months to open a restaurant, which means buy a building, remodel it, hire a cook, make a profit, and payback my loan with fifty percent interest. *(Prances off stage left.)* Piece of cake!

BLACKOUT. END OF ACT ONE, SCENE 1.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING:

The stage is a split set. Occupying the left half of the stage is CLAUDINE'S living room. The room is nicely decorated in a bit of an outdated style. There is a doorway stage left leading from the living room to the rest of her house. There is a table with two chairs located down left. Occupying the right half of the stage is Ernest's living room. The room has the appearance of once being decorated but now has a bachelor's touch. There is a doorway stage right leading from the living room to the rest of his house. There is a recliner down stage right with a newspaper rack next to it. A fish bowl with a fish is located on top of a bookcase upstage. Center stage is a large desk that sits half on one

side of the split and half on the other. Each room has a matching window up stage.

AT RISE:

One month later. Afternoon. Lights raise stage left. CLAUDINE and MOLLY are heard off stage arguing. They enter stage left. MOLLY is carrying many papers and binders followed by CLAUDINE.

CLAUDINE: *(Nagging.)* All I'm saying, Molly, is that you're 37 years old and if you keep spending all of your time thinking about work you'll never meet a man.

MOLLY: *(Annoyed.)* Mother, I'm working on new curriculum for my classroom. *(Sits at table and begins working.)* I'm almost done with math and then I'll still have a whole month to enjoy my summer.

CLAUDINE: Then it will be the reading curriculum and then the science curriculum. This is the excuse you use every summer. You need to forget about work and think about meeting "Mister Right."

MOLLY: When the time is right, the right man will come along. Who knows maybe I'll meet Mr. "Right" at work.

CLAUDINE: You work at a private school for girls Molly. There are no "Mister Rights!"

MOLLY: Mother, it seems like ever since Dad passed away, you have an awfully big interest in my love life.

CLAUDINE: *(Sentimental.)* I just don't want to see you be alone, like I am now.

MOLLY: *(Curious.)* So, if you're so alone, why don't you go and meet someone.

CLAUDINE: Oh don't try to get me involved in this. *(Tries to keep subject on MOLLY.)* I've been Claudine Upfajamema McDermitt for over 40 years. Your father and I had a wonderful marriage, and before I met your father I had my share of dates.

CLAUDINE pulls a feather boa from the desk drawer, dramatically drapes it around her neck and goes center stage for her monologue.

MOLLY: *(Rolls eyes.)* Oh no, not the Hollywood story.

CLAUDINE: I was just 17 when my parents moved to Hollywood, California, the movie star capital of the World. I had at least 3 dates a week.

MOLLY stands up to leave.

CLAUDINE: Actors, writers, directors, I was quite the looker Molly. (*Tries to inspire MOLLY.*) It's your turn to discover romance, love . . .

MOLLY: (*Interrupts.*) UHHHH! (*She exits stage left.*)

CLAUDINE: (*Angry.*) Don't walk away from me young lady! We aren't through with this conversation! I haven't done my solo yet.

CLAUDINE follows behind MOLLY. Lights fade out stage left as they raise stage right. ERNEST and MATT enter stage right. MATT is carrying a box containing his laptop computer and other desk accessories. ERNEST is behind, scolding him for moving away to New York and coming back.

ERNEST: (*Lecturing.*) I told you New York was no place for you.

MATT: (*Annoyed.*) What's your problem with New York? You lived their half your life. That's where you met mom.

ERNEST: And I was smart enough to know that we had to get out of there to raise a family. Do you know what it's like to be a kid living in the slums of New York, dodging traffic as you go to retrieve your baseball, holes in your shoes, gangs taking over the neighborhood?

MATT: Grandpa was a famous lawyer. You never lived in the slum—you had a penthouse in Manhattan.

ERNEST: Oh details, details. Penthouse, slum, it's all the same thing. I'm just glad you've come to your senses and moved back home to raise a family.

MATT: A family? Dad, I only moved back home because I don't like seeing you alone. (*Begins to clean and setup desk.*) And with my computer I can run my business from anywhere.

ERNEST: (*Angry.*) I'm 73 years old; I can take care of myself!

MATT stops and turns to ERNEST.

MATT: *(Sarcastic.)* Dropping your dentures in the toilet and getting your hand stuck trying to get them out is not someone who can take care of themselves?

MATT continues working.

ERNEST: Are you ever going to forget about that? Don't you know how much these things cost? *(Sees MATT is concentrating on setting up the desk.)* What's that you're hooking up over there anyway?

MATT: It's a computer, Dad. *(Speaks like ERNEST is a child.)* It's how I can do business in the big city of Meshoppen, Pennsylvania with the little people in New York.

ERNEST: *(Curious.)* So is this why you don't have any time to date?

MATT: *(Annoyed.)* Are you going to bring that up again? *(He stops setting up the desk and turns to argue with ERNEST.)*

ERNEST: Well, your younger brother John has been married for 11 years and has 2 kids. It's not normal for a 37 year old man to not want to get married. *(Pauses and thinks.)* You're not one of those - ?

ERNEST holds up his fist, only extending his pinky.

MATT: *(Embarrassed.)* Dad!

ERNEST: I'm just saying you need to quit spending so much time on that business of yours and think about settling down and having a family like your brothers.

MATT: *(Annoyed.)* Would you stop comparing me to my brothers. That's all I hear is how perfect they are. When mom was alive she understood that I wanted to make a life for myself.

ERNEST walks to a framed picture of MATT'S mother hanging on the wall.

MATT: That's why I moved to New York, so I could get away and start a life of my own. Not everyone wants to spend the rest of their life in Meshoppen, Pennsylvania.

ERNEST: (*Angry.*) Don't speak of your mother in that tone. I promised her on her death bed that I would make sure that you moved back to Meshoppen so you could start a family. (*Becomes emotional and speaks to the audience.*) I remember it like it was yesterday. (*Sad music begins to play while ERNEST acts out the scene portraying MATT'S mother and himself. As MATT'S mother.*) Ernie dear, are you there? (*As ERNEST.*) Yes honey, I'm right here. (*As MATT'S mother.*) Ernie, you must promise me something. (*As ERNEST.*) Anything dear. (*As MATT'S mother.*) Bring my Matthew back to Meshoppen, where he can start a family. New York is no place for him. (*As ERNEST.*) It was her last request.

MATT: (*Unaffected.*) Dad, Mom is the one who drove me to New York. You were the one who chased us for 2 miles yelling, "Don't go, don't go!"

Music abruptly stops. ERNEST turns to MATT.

ERNEST: (*Angry.*) Don't try and change the subject. You know your mother wanted you to have a family.

MATT: Mom wanted me to be happy.

ERNEST: Well, what's happier then a little family, living in the small town of Meshoppen, going to church on Sunday and eating fried chicken.

MATT: Dad, that's what you want, not what I want.

ERNEST: I'm not the only one who wants that. Think about Jerry.

MATT: Jerry?

ERNEST: Don't tell me you've forgotten about Jerry! Is that all it takes, run off to New York for a few years and you forget about your family?

MATT: I don't have time to listen to this; I've got to unpack the rest of my things.

MATT exits as ERNEST crosses over to the fish bowl.

ERNEST: It's okay Jerry, he didn't mean it. And don't you worry, I'll find a way to get Matt that little family we always dreamed about.

Lights fade out stage right as they raise stage left. MOLLY is sitting at the table working on her teacher plans. Claudine is heard off stage singing Elvis' "Love me Tender." She enters wearing an Elvis apron, dish rag in hand drying a pot.

CLAUDINE: Love me tender, love me sweet, never let me go... (*Sees Molly working and becomes annoyed.*) I can't believe after everything I've said to you, that you're still sitting there working.

MOLLY: Mother, just drop it already. I'm not going to talk about it anymore.

CLAUDINE walks over to the computer desk.

CLAUDINE: Fine, fine we won't talk about it anymore (*Picks up a cutout newspaper article.*) except for this.

MOLLY: (*Annoyed.*) What now?

CLAUDINE: You read this and I won't mention it again.

CLAUDINE walks to and hands article to MOLLY. MOLLY stands, takes article and reads it out loud like an advertiser.

MOLLY: Are you lonely, tired of sitting home on Friday nights wishing you had someone to share those special moments with. Then Dating Predicaments is for you! Mail your profile to Dating Predicaments, 100 South Alibis Road, Meshoppen, PA 18630 or visit us online at Dating Predicaments.com. (*Pauses and then starts to burst out in laughing.*) Do you really think I am so desperate that I would sign up for some dating service? (*Throws article on the table and begins to work again.*) Do you know what kind of weirdoes do that sort of thing?

CLAUDINE: Well Marge's beautician, Byron, do you remember him from the Town Square Social?

MOLLY: Is that the guy you tried to set me up with a few years ago who had the hairless poodle with matching outfits?

CLAUDINE: No, that was Peter the plumber. Byron is from last year's Social.

MOLLY: Whatever Mother!

CLAUDINE sits at the table with MOLLY.

CLAUDINE: Anyway, Byron subscribed to a dating service, even though everyone said it would never work, and just 48 hours after he signed up he met the person of his dreams.

MOLLY: (*Confirming.*) Just like I was saying, only weirdoes turn to a dating service.

CLAUDINE: Doesn't it bother you that all of your friends are married and have families?

MOLLY: Name one of my friends who's married.

CLAUDINE: Well, Vanessa got married to that rich stockbroker and lives in that big house in DC.

MOLLY, knowing her mother might win the argument, comes up with a lame excuse.

MOLLY: Vanessa? From high school? I haven't talked to her for at least 6 months.

CLAUDINE: What about Laura. That pilot swept her off her feet and now they travel all over the country.

MOLLY, still knowing her mother might win the argument, comes up with another lame excuse.

MOLLY: Well, Laura and I were never that good of friends anyway. I always hated the way she flipped her hair. (*MOLLY pretends to be Laura, flipping her hair wildly.*) Oh look at me, I'm Laura and I'm married to a pilot.

CLAUDINE: And then there's Abby and Lizzy who married the twins and had that double wedding.

MOLLY: (*Angry.*) I said name one friend, Mother!

CLAUDINE: Fine, you name one friend who isn't married.

MOLLY: Well there's - - *(Cannot think of one.)* What about - - *(She still cannot think of one.)*

CLAUDINE: *(Antagonizing.)* Yes, go on.

MOLLY: Ruby! She was married to Bob the butcher but they got divorced. So there! Ruby is not married.

MOLLY thinks she won as CLAUDINE starts to applaud sarcastically. CLAUDINE soon stops to break unfortunate news to MOLLY.

CLAUDINE: Last week Ruby ran off to Las Vegas with Peter the Plumber.

MOLLY rolls her eyes.

CLAUDINE: Got anymore single people in your pocket?

MOLLY: *(Excited.)* Janelle! Janelle Wickawitz! I don't know why I didn't think of her first.

CLAUDINE: Oh but Molly, Janelle is a beautiful woman who could meet someone at a moments notice.

MOLLY: *(Hurt.)* So what am I, just some old worn out rug that you walk on everyday?

CLAUDINE: It's not that you're not pretty Molly. You just have to work a little harder at attracting a man than other women do.

MOLLY: *(Immature.)* That's it. I'm not talking to you anymore! *(Jumps up from the table.)*

CLAUDINE: *(Immature.)* Fine!

CLAUDINE jumps up from the table. They both turn their backs on each other like little kids. There is a long pause and CLAUDINE looks like she is dying to have the last word. Suddenly, she breaks the silence.

CLAUDINE: Come on, just a one month trial?

CLAUDINE turns to look at MOLLY.

MOLLY: Mother! (*Remembering previous conversation.*) Wait a minute, you said if I read the article, you wouldn't mention it again.

CLAUDINE: (*Upset.*) Fine, if you want to be a spinster the rest of your life go ahead! What do I know? I'm just your mother who carried you for nine months and worked so you could have the best of everything.

CLAUDINE sits at the table starts to cry. MOLLY angrily picks up her school papers and exits. CLAUDINE abruptly stops crying and thinks.

CLAUDINE: Now what am I going to do?

Suddenly, she jumps up, grabs the article and tapes it to the front of the computer. She then exits singing "Love Me Tender". Lights fade out stage left as they raise stage right. MATT enters with more desk equipment. ERNEST is following closely behind holding a newspaper above his head.

ERNEST: (*Excited.*) So what do you think?

MATT: What do I think about what? (*He walks to the desk to set up the rest of his things.*)

ERNEST: What I've been talking about for the last 20 minutes. Finding a girl through this pen pal service.

MATT: Only weirdoes try to find a date through the newspaper. (*MATT continues.*) Pen pals? That's so out of date. If I wanted to meet someone I'd use an online dating service. (*Points at his computer.*) That's technical, Dad, for "computer."

ERNEST: That's what's great about it! They have one of those, those, computer things. You obviously weren't listening. I'll read it to you again. (*Reads article.*) Are you lonely, tired of sitting home on Friday nights wishing you had someone to share those special moments with. Then *Dating Predicaments* is for you! Mail your profile to *Dating Predicaments*, 100 South Alibis Road, Meshoppen, PA 18630 or visit us online at *Dating Predicaments.com*. (*Stops reading and sets the newspaper on the desk.*) Doesn't it sound exciting?

MATT: *(Sarcastic.)* Yes it does! Why don't you send in your profile?

ERNEST: *(Shocked.)* Me?

MATT: Yeah, it will give you something to do besides bug me!

MATT continues to fix the stuff on his desk. Lights fade out stage right as they raise stage left. MOLLY enters talking to herself. She sees her mother has taped the article to her computer and rips it off. She crumples it up and throws it in the trash. She then turns on the computer.

MOLLY: Who's she calling a spinster? I've dated. I just haven't found the right person. There are tons of people my age that are single. I just couldn't think of any on the spot.

PC VOICE: *(Voiceover.)* Welcome Molly. You have one new message.

MOLLY looks at her computer.

MOLLY: Hey mom I just got an email from Janelle.

CLAUDINE: Oh, how's she doing? Is she back from her vacation?

MOLLY: I don't know, hold on. *(Reads off screen.)* She's sent some type of a new voice email.

JANELLE: *(Voiceover.)* Hey Molly, I hope this works. I've never done a voice email before but I just had to tell you my news. Okay, so you know how I've been planning this trip to Europe for like ever? Well, just before my plane was getting ready to take off the cutest guy came and sat next to me. I mean like don't we know everyone in Meshoppen? I had never seen this guy before. Well anyway, can't talk long, but I just had to tell you that I've had the best summer of my life. I think I'm in love! Well, I'll be home in a few days, gotta go. *(Realizes she has gone on about herself.)* Oh, I hope you've had a good summer too. Bye!

MOLLY: *(Depressed.)* Great, I really am the last spinster! *(Stops and thinks.)* Wait a minute . . .

MOLLY looks down and sees the crumpled article in the trash. She

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picks it up, pauses and looks at the audience. She smiles. Lights fade out stage left as they raise stage right. A phone ringing is heard offstage right. MATT is at his computer, connecting the last little bit of wires.

MATT: That should do it. Let's see if everything's working. *(Turns on the computer.)* I better check my internet connection. *(Clicks something on the screen.)* I'll do a search under - - *(Looks down and sees paper.)* Online dating. *(Types something in and presses enter.)* Wow, 13,800 sites. I didn't realize there were that many losers looking for love.

ERNEST steps into the doorway.

ERNEST: *(Excited.)* Hey Matt, that was Betty on the phone.

MATT turns to ERNEST.

ERNEST: Her daughter Gretchen just got released and is on parole. There's gonna be a big shin dig tonight down at the Piggly Wiggly. She's gonna pick you up at 7:00. It's only you're first night back and you already have a date. *(Starts to leave and then remembers.)* Oh and don't worry if it doesn't work out; Gretchen's parole officer is single too.

MATT: *(Curious.)* Dad, isn't Gretchen the one whose husband "accidentally" got poisoned from eating her macaroni salad?

ERNEST: It's only a date, Matt. I'm not asking you to marry her. *(To audience.)* Not tonight anyway.

ERNEST exits from the doorway as MATT turns to his computer.

MATT: 13,800 sites, huh? *(Looks at newspaper again.)* *Dating Predicaments?*

ERNEST is heard screaming offstage. Matt speaks to himself.

MATT: What now? (*Yells to offstage.*) Dad, you didn't get your hand stuck in the toilet again did you?

ERNEST runs in frantically waving another newspaper.

ERNEST: It's today's paper!

MATT: (*Sarcastic.*) What did you find this time, a mail order bride?

ERNEST: (*Upset.*) No, the French are invading Meshoppen!

MATT: What?

ERNEST: It's all right here in big bold print. *Pierre's storms Meshoppen, PA!*

MATT takes the newspaper and reads the article to himself.

MATT: *Pierre's storms Meshoppen, PA. (Glances at ERNEST and continues reading.)* In just seven days Pennsylvanians will be able to enjoy authentic French cuisine. (*Throws newspaper back to ERNEST.*) Dad, it's a restaurant.

ERNEST: Oh. (*Gets an idea.*) Well, if a new restaurant is coming to town maybe you can take Gretchen there on a date. (*He nudges MATT and then exits stage right.*)

MATT: (*Mischievous.*) Alright Dad, if you're so into this dating thing. Let's just sign you up - -

PC VOICE: (*Voiceover.*) Welcome to *Dating Predicaments*. If you are a new user, please enter your full name now.

MATT: Ernest Eugene Donski.

Lights rise on stage left. All stage lights are up.

MOLLY: Molly Elizabeth McDermitt. (*Stops.*) Wait a minute, what am I doing? What if someone from work sees my name? (*She deletes her name.*) Should I use a fake name?

CLAUDINE yells from offstage left.

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CLAUDINE: *(Nagging.)* Molly! Are you still in there working?

MOLLY: *(Frustrated.)* Uhhh, that woman! *(Smiles.)* I know a name.

Claudine Upfajamema McDermitt.

PC VOICE: *(Voiceover.)* Please enter your age and status.

MATT: Age 73, marital status widower.

MOLLY: Age 37. *(She is interrupted by CLAUDINE who yells.)*

CLAUDINE: Why don't you give Manny the Mortician a call? He may not be the best looking man, but at this point, beggars can't be choosers! Can they Molly?

MOLLY: *(Angry.)* That's it. *(She deletes her age.)* I'm not the one who needs to meet someone. She is!

PC VOICE: *(Voiceover.)* Please reenter age and status.

MOLLY: 73, widow.

MATT and MOLLY continue typing. ERNEST pokes his head in the doorway and is holding a handwritten letter.

ERNEST: Hey Matt, do you have any envelopes?

MATT engrossed in typing does not look at Ernest.

MATT: Yeah, I got some in my briefcase by my room.

MATT does not turn, but waves his hand in the direction of ERNEST. ERNEST exits as CLAUDINE pokes her head in the doorway and is holding an addressed envelope.

CLAUDINE: Molly, have you seen the stamps?

MOLLY: Yeah, they're in the top kitchen drawer by the phone.

CLAUDINE exits as MATT and MOLLY finish typing.

PC VOICE: *(Voiceover.)* Your profile is now complete. There is one person online who matches your profile 98%. Would you like to chat? Press enter to begin a chat.

MATT and MOLLY look hesitantly at the enter key. Then, they look off stage, toward the rooms where their parents are. They both close their eyes and press enter together.

BLACKOUT. END OF ACT ONE, SCENE 2.

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