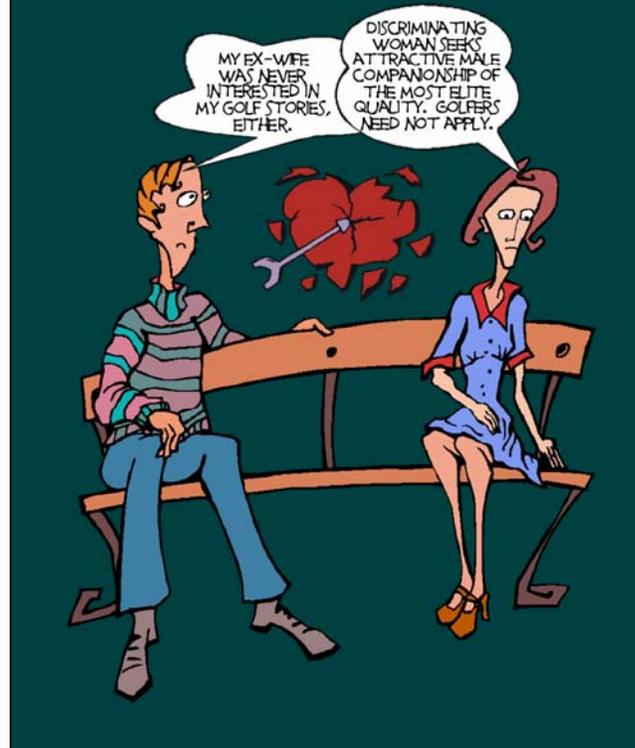


Four and Twenty Wretched Dates



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Four and Twenty Wretched Dates

Winner, One Act Showcase, Henrico Theatre Company, Richmond, VA, 2012
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COMEDY. With deepest apologies, a narrator introduces two dozen “romantic” dates that go dreadfully, horribly, horrendously wrong. There’s a woman who brings a backup date on a blind date, a couple who reveals *all* the skeletons in their closets (never a good idea), and a couple of medical professionals who discuss their patients’ maladies over lunch. And to cap it off, cautionary dating dilemmas are examined like the potential barriers of speed-dating at a women’s prison, how to survive a golfer who relives old golf holes, and what to do when you’re attracted to someone at a family reunion but you don’t know how closely you’re related. Humorous, absurd, and sadly familiar, audiences will love this sidesplitting comedy. Easy to stage with a flexible cast and minimal props. May be performed as a staged reading if desired.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Characters

(22 M, 20 F, 2 flexible, 5 extras)

(Doubling possible. Minimum cast: 2 M, 2 F, 1 flexible)

NARRATOR: Introduces dates; flexible.

MARK: Sandra's blind date; male.

SANDRA: Mark's sunny, confident, outgoing blind date; female.

OZZIE: Sandra's grouchy, slouching backup date; male.

JIMMY: Clarice's date; male.

CLARICE: Wants to date Jimmy's friend; female.

RICK: Madeleine's date; thinks he's a macho athlete; male.

MADELEINE: Rick's date, a stuck-up drama queen; female.

PAUL: An intense air-traffic controller obsessed with getting married; male.

DANA: On a first date with Paul; female.

WAITER/WAITRESS: Waits on Paul and Dana; flexible.

TRISTAN: Dog-loving, libertarian, physics major who went on a date with a cat-loving, new-age, bleeding-heart girl; male.

STEVE: Tristan's college roommate who is eager to hear about his date; male.

FRANK: Doesn't think his date, Fran, looks nice; male.

FRAN: Frank's date; female.

JUDI: Samantha's friend; female.

SAMANTHA: Judi's friend who is inadvertently dating Judi's boyfriend; female.

GWENDOLYN: Prim, proper woman who has exceptionally high expectations for a boyfriend; elegantly dressed; female.

HANK: Slovenly guy who has exceptionally low expectations for a girlfriend; male.

TOM: Thinks the "Chris" he is going on a blind date with is female; male.

CHRIS: Tom's blind date; male.

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MR. MOYNIHAN: On a date with a mother and her three unruly kids; male.

CASEY: 10, unruly child; female.

CINDY: 8, unruly child; female.

JASON: 8, Cindy's unruly twin; male.

TOM 2: Thinks the "Chris" he is going on a blind date with is male; male.

CHRIS 2: Tom 2's blind date; female.

CUSTOMER: Lousy tipper; nonspeaking or may be unseen; male.

DATE: Customer's date; nonspeaking or may be unseen; female.

GLADYS: Gum-chewing waitress who is tired of lousy tippers; speaks with a strong Brooklyn accent; female.

JAKE: Guy who doesn't have much experience with "normal" girls; has a flustered, hangdog look; male.

DATE 2: Jake's date; nonspeaking or may be unseen; female.

DALE: Darci's date; loves to talk about golf; male.

DARCI: Dale's date who hates golf; female.

PAT: Has a foot disease; flexible.

VALERIE: Thinks it's time she reveals all the skeletons in her closet to Douglas; female.

DOUGLAS: Thinks it's time he reveals all the skeletons in his closet to Valerie; male.

DON: Overly blunt and obnoxious; male.

SHARON: Don's date; female.

TIM: Speed-dating participant at a women's prison; male.

JEANETTE: Prison inmate looking for a long-term relationship; female.

RONNIE: Prison inmate who murdered her last boyfriend and is looking for a new boyfriend; female.

TONY: Medical professional who likes to talk about patient health maladies while dining in public; male.

RENATA: Tony's wife, a medical professional who likes to talk about patient health maladies while dining in public; female.

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LILI: Blunt teenager; female.

LANCE: Insurance salesman who wants to sell life insurance to his girlfriend; male.

MONICA: Lance's girlfriend; nonspeaking or may be unseen; female.

JUSTIN: Lucy's relative who has no idea how he is related to her; male.

LUCY: Justin's relative who has no idea how she is related to him; female.

Setting

Various locations represented with set pieces.

Set

The stage is bare except for a podium off to one side for the Narrator. Some "dates" require a few simple set pieces that can be moved on and off quickly including a small dining table and two chairs, a row of four chairs to represent theatre seats, and two chairs with a glass or plastic partition between them and two phones to represent a prison visiting room. Other set pieces and props may be brought on as needed. Lights should rise and fall in rapid succession.

Props

Glass of ice water, for Dana
TV (opt.) for Steve and Tristan's dorm room
Coffee cup, for Samantha
Cream colored tablet, for Gwendolyn
Golden calligraphy pen, for Gwendolyn
Pencil stub, for Hank
Rumpled scratch pad, for Hank
Plastic cup for cherry slushy, for Casey
Order pad, for Gladys
2 Desserts, for Paul and Dana
Menus
Cell phone, for Lili
Sheaf of papers and pen, for Lance
2 Drinks, for Justin and Lucy
2 Coffee cups, for Dana and Paul

NOTE: Some props may be pantomimed, if desired.

Sound Effects

Romantic 1980's song
Bell ringing

“I was surprised, Paul,
by the 14 messages
you left on my work phone
over the weekend.”

— Dana

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(AT RISE: Spotlight up the Narrator, who is at a podium off to one side. Note: Actors exit and enter quickly between "dates.")

NARRATOR: (To audience.) Good evening. With our deepest apologies, we now present "Four and Twenty Wretched Dates," a series of two dozen romantic interludes gone horribly wrong. Date number one: an unpromising start...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Mark as he enters. Marks stands, waiting. Sandra enters with Ozzie, who is following closely. Sandra approaches Mark.)

SANDRA: (Sunny, confident, outgoing.) Mark? Hi, I'm Sandra.

MARK: (Awkward.) Sandra, wow, so nice to finally meet you!

Heh-heh. Gosh, you're even cuter than Alan said. Heh-heh.

SANDRA: Oh, aren't you sweet?! And I want you to meet Ozzie.

OZZIE: (Grungy, slouching, hands in pockets.) Dude, how's it hangin'?

MARK: Hi...um...?

(Sandra starts to lead Mark offstage with Ozzie ambling after her.)

SANDRA: (Explaining.) Oh, Ozzie is my backup date...in case you and I don't hit it off. So, where are you taking us?

(Mark, Sandra, and Ozzie exit. Lights down. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: (To audience.) Date number two: The incident at the dance that made you decide at the tender age of 14 that you would never, ever, ever attend a high school reunion...

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(Spotlight down on Narrator. Romantic 1980's song is heard. Lights up on Clarice and Jimmy, who are slow dancing.)

CLARICE: You know I've always really liked you, Jimmy.

JIMMY: I've always really liked you too, Clarice.

CLARICE: I mean, you're so nice, and I feel so comfortable around you, like I could ask you anything.

JIMMY: Gee, I feel the same way, Clarice.

(Clarice stops dancing and looks at Jimmy very seriously.)

CLARICE: Then I need to ask you something right now, Jimmy, and you've got to promise to answer truthfully.

JIMMY: Well, sure, Clarice. Anything!

(Pause as Clarice works up her courage.)

CLARICE: Do you think your friend Danny Hofmeier would go out with me?

(Lights down on Clarice and Jimmy. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Date number three: Finding common interests...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Madeleine and Rick, who are standing outside a restaurant. They are not making eye contact.)

MADELEINE: *(Trying to be civil.)* Rick, I think maybe we should call it an evening.

RICK: Fine by me!

MADELEINE: Oh, that's sweet! What a surprise!

RICK: Hey, why pretend? This whole date has sucked! You wanna drag out the misery?!

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MADELEINE: Maybe we could have had a pleasant time if you hadn't spent all dinner bragging about what a macho athlete you are.

RICK: And when did you hear me? Sometime between your 30 phone calls?

(Madeleine shoots Rick an icy look and shakes her head in disgust.)

MADELEINE: I could kill Alex for setting me up with an arrogant jerk like you.

RICK: I can't believe he set me up with a stuck-up drama queen like *you*.

MADELEINE: It figures you'd be his friend. He acts like such a nice person, "just wants everyone to be happy," but actually –

RICK: Alex is no friend of mine! *(In a nasally whine.)* "Oh, I bet you guys will get along great together!" What a fool!

MADELEINE: Whoa! That's his voice exactly!

RICK: It matches those stupid Hawaiian shirts he always wears.

MADELEINE: Oh my gosh, don't you *hate* those? And does he ever wash them?

RICK: Tell me about it! I had to share a six-hour car trip with the guy once!

MADELEINE: Ewwwww! Alex has got to be *the* most disgusting human being on the planet!

RICK: I don't care if I never see that rat-faced cretin again in my life!

MADELEINE: I *hate* Alex!

RICK: Not as much as I do! *(Pause. They look at each other, speculating.)* Wanna get a drink?

MADELEINE: Whatever.

(Rick and Madeleine exit together. Lights down. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Date number four, part 1:
Getting ahead of oneself...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Paul and Dana, who are at a restaurant seated at a table and have just finishing ordering.)

PAUL: *(To Waiter.)* And I'll have the halibut. That's fresh, isn't it? *(Waiter nods.)* Great. *(Waiter exits. Attentive, Paul turns to Dana, who is nervous but careful to keep smiling.)* Well...gosh, Dana, it's so nice that we're finally getting together. Persistence pays off, huh?

DANA: I suppose. I was a *little* surprised, Paul, by the 14 messages you left on my work phone over the weekend.

PAUL: I'd have called your cell, but my sister lost your number. Wow, as soon as she told me a little about you and showed me your photo, I knew you were a woman I wanted to meet.

DANA: *(Flattered but uneasy.)* Oh, that's nice. Um, I'm having a nice time.

PAUL: Me, too! You kidding?! A *great* time! Occasionally, you meet somebody new and you just feel sure of it: This is a person you're destined to know.

DANA: *(Noncommittal.)* Uh-huh. Yes, that can happen.

(Pause. Feeling awkward, Dana sips some ice water. Paul, happy as a clam, looks around the restaurant. Absentmindedly, he begins to hum the Wagner's "Bridal Chorus." Dana affords him a slow sidelong look.)

PAUL: *(Suddenly.)* Nice place, isn't it?

DANA: *(Startled.)* Oh, very!

(Paul looks about with the same contented smile. He begins humming again, starting where he left off. As lights fade to black, Dana looks extremely uncomfortable. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

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NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Date number five: The college dorm debriefing...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Steve, who is watching TV. Tristan enters.)

STEVE: Hey, roomie, how'd it go?

TRISTAN: Oh, dude, worst date ever!

STEVE: How come?

TRISTAN: We had, like, *nothing* to talk about. I'm a physics major; she's into this New Age junk. I'm libertarian; she's a bleeding heart. She's a cat person; I like dogs. We couldn't even agree about what to get on our pizza. There was just *zero* common ground!

STEVE: Did you like *anything* about her?

(Tristan ponders this.)

TRISTAN: Awesome bod.

STEVE: So you're seeing her again?

TRISTAN: Friday.

(Lights down on Tristan and Steve. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Date number six: A meeting at a fine restaurant, the couple's second and presumably final date...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Frank and Fran.)

FRANK: *(To Fran.)* Why, don't you look nice!

FRAN: Thank you!

FRANK: No, seriously, why don't you look nice? I told you it's a fancy place!

(Lights down on Frank and Fran. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

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NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Date number seven: Overheard at Starbucks...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Samantha. She is seated at a table, sipping coffee. Judi enters quickly and takes a seat. Note: Samantha and Judi speak but pay no attention to each other.)

JUDI: *(Worried.)* Sam, I've got to talk to you.

SAMANTHA: *(Giddy.)* Judi, I've got to talk to you!

JUDI: Nick disappeared for three hours last night.

SAMANTHA: I had the most wonderful date last night!

JUDI: He said he was just going to the grocery store.

SAMANTHA: I met a man at the grocery store. We started talking, and he asked me out to dinner right then and there!

JUDI: I had dinner ready when Nick got back, but he said he wasn't hungry.

SAMANTHA: We had lobster!

JUDI: And there was a stain on his jacket that I swear was melted butter.

SAMANTHA: He gave me the most romantic kiss goodnight.

JUDI: I smelled perfume...like orange blossoms!

(Judi sniffs the air near Sam and has a look of recognition.)

SAMANTHA: Today, we've already talked on the phone, like, half a dozen times.

JUDI: Today, I called Nick half a dozen times, but I kept getting sent to his voicemail. Finally, he called back.

SAMANTHA: Tonight, he's invited me to a polka concert!

JUDI: I asked to see him tonight, but he says he's taking a friend to a polka concert!

(Eyes wide, Judi and Sam turn and look at each other for the first time.)

SAMANTHA: *(Innocently.)* What?

JUDI: *(Dismissing the thought.)* Oh, nothing...

(Lights down on Sam and Judi. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Seeking date number eight: High standards...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Gwendolyn, who is prim and proper, elegantly dressed, and is seated with a cream-colored tablet and a golden calligraphy pen.)

GWENDOLYN: *(From the tablet, reads.)* “Discriminating woman seeks attractive male companionship of the most elite quality. Ivy League education required, doctorate preferred. Minimum income in the high six figures. Must be conversant in classical literature and art and have a cultivated appreciation of fine wines, Mediterranean cuisine, and the later concertos of Chopin. Fluent French a plus. Those with a passion for yachting and polo are welcome. Golfers need not reply.” *(Thinks. Jots down one more note. Reads.)* “No snobs.”

(Lights down on Gwendolyn. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Seeking date number nine: The other end of the spectrum...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Hank, slovenly, who lumbers on and sits. With the stub of a pencil, he writes laboriously on a rumpled scratch pad.)

HANK: *(Reads.)* “Male seeks female...” *(Long pause. Stares into space. Pause. Writes.)* “Human preferred.”

(Lights down on Hank. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

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NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Date number four...revisited...

(Spotlight down on Narrator. Lights up on Paul and Dana, who have begun their meal and are in the midst of a conversation.)

PAUL: *(To Dana.)* So, yes, air-traffic control can be a high-pressure job, but I absolutely love it.

DANA: It sounds quite interesting.

PAUL: Mmmm-hmmm. But that's enough about me, Dana, I'd really rather talk about you.

DANA: *(Flattered.)* Oh, okay. What would you like to know?

PAUL: Uh, well, first thing off the top of my head...what's your ring size?

(Lights down on Dana and Paul. Spotlight up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Date number ten: An uncomfortable moment...

[END OF FREEVIEW]