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## Set Up

Yvette lived according to a pretty strict routine until her friends signed her up for a night of speed dating. Before then her mornings were as blank as her sheets. Hit the alarm. Brush her teeth. Wash her face. Slacks or skirt. Straight or ponytail. She would put on the smallest amount of makeup with the gloss to top it off. Feed the fish. Grab a bagel and head out the door. Being an on the go person, an automatic start always left a black Benz all toasty waiting for her arrival.

Her role as partner at the firm of Goldberg and Swendelkin was one of her greatest but hardest accomplishments. Only a block from work and she could hear the manila folders in the file cabinet calling her name. She hoped that the sign on the front of the building would one day show her as an owner. A woman who wanted work to be done would follow her lead. There were always constant business meetings, phones ringing off the hooks, and frequent email checks. When her assistant could not go out to pick up lunch, Yvette would reach for those Ritz Peanut Butter Crackers and a Dasni in the mini bar. Everything continued to be constant from the moment she got ready for work to when she got home at night.

Not having seen her friends in a while, she had to recap everything that had happened in the last couple of weeks. Knowing where their last talk ended, they

were more than happy to find out the outcome of their meddling. Yvette couldn't believe that she would ever go speed dating but she did. She thought of that line of hopeful strangers changing seats like musical chairs. To her speed dating was for those who had been so unfortunate and desperate that they needed someone else to line up dating options for them. She wondered if her friends thought that she was one of those people. Though hesitant to go, she thought of what she had to lose. Not much, she would at least get a free meal. Her friends set her up knowing that she would get something out of it whether good or bad. Either way they knew it would be an experience.

While recapping, it occurred to her that the day that she met her friends for brunch had already gone a little different from the ordinary. She switched it up and had Special K and did not have to feed the fish because it died. You have to feed it like you feed a person. She did not have that time.

It was after work when eight o'clock hit she was in one of those musical chairs. It started out really quiet. There was one woman and one man there to tell how the dating system worked. The women remained seated as the males shifted when the bell rang. Everyone got ten minutes to talk before changing partners. All because of her friends, she met them.

There was Tim who had been divorced three times and was now trying to get his prenuptial agreement altered. There was Michael who was in a custody battle for his two kids. There was Sean the plumber from Illinois. She could tell he was, because when he bent over to pick up a paper that flew behind him, his crack

said it all. There was Preston, the prestigious scholar with a stick up his butt. He critiqued her every sentence. Nouns, predicates, and subject verb agreements. Yvette started to feel as if her friends had signed her up for an English class as well.

There was Stanley who was so sweet and flirtatious but turned her off when he asked if she could give him a ride afterwards even if they did not work out. He asked her to take him to the strip club on Third Street where he is a bartender. She is not the type to put up with a guy who has females half naked shaking it around him all day. There was Unmet from India; she had no clue what he was saying. She felt so bad to keep asking him to repeat himself. Also there was Raymond. Raymond was just too shy for her. You would've thought that he never talked to people, let alone girls. She felt as if he had been set up too. Lastly, there was Tommy who still lived with his parents.

Yvette explained that night to her friends as such a disaster until she went to the café later that night. The café was packed. It was poetry night and all couples were there. It made her feel lonely and sick for a moment. She started to think of her past relationships. How they never worked out. Either the guy was intimidated by her success or she just could never find the balance between work and a relationship but she knew that she was willing to put forth the effort even more now. Who wants to be lonely?

As she sat alone, a guy named Russell asked if he could join her. He was one of the finest men that she had ever met. Hair cut with deep waves. Trimmed

up facial hair. There were clean cuticles and no ring on his left hand. She could not resist saying yes. As she explained his humor and kindness to her friends, all they could do was look at each other and smile. As if they were speed dating, Yvette and Russell went through all of the basic questions: What is your name? How old are you? What types of music do you listen to? It was ironic that they were both at a café but neither really cared for coffee.

As the big hand on the clock got closer to twelve, Yvette knew that she needed to get home. As she continued to describe how her and Russell exchanged numbers before she left, her friends pounced on her with questions of why she did not stay longer and talk to him. As always, she needed her beauty sleep for work the next day.

Her friends were quite happy to hear her say that the next morning she woke up feeling optimistic. She had met a great guy and now she was just waiting for him to call. She told them that he didn't call for three days but when he did it was to ask her out to an Italian restaurant. Yvette was more than surprised to know that he listened and retained their short conversation to remember that was her favorite type of food. Her friends questioned why she didn't just call and Yvette told them that she wanted to try to play hard to get. She wanted to stick with the role of the woman not being the first to call.

Earlier in the day, before her and Russell went on their first date, Yvette decided to make a change to her appearance. That night, a skirt or suit was not an option for her. She wanted to be open and show this man a sexy side of her rather

than the businesswoman that he had met. She opted for a black strapless dress and a pair of the highest heels she had in her closet. The look was sexy but not too risqué.

Yvette's friends were gloating as they looked at the glow on her face as she talked about this man. Yvette went on about how he was such a gentleman. He knocked on the door instead of honking the horn. When they arrived to the restaurant he opened her door. When they got into the restaurant, he pulled out her chair. When it came to dinner, he let her order first. The whole night Yvette just sat there thinking of how she would have missed out on this man if her friends did not set her up which led her to the café.

After explaining their first date, Yvette's friends wanted more. They were yearning for more detail and whether or not she and Russell had been on another date or were going to go on another date. They felt hopeful for their friend. She informed them that two weeks later, she met his mom. Her friends thought of it as maybe an action that happened too soon but no one questioned it. She exclaimed how dinner and small talk was nice with his mother and sister until his mom said that she ran out of drinks and insisted that Russell go out to get some more. He ran to the store and the grilling began. It was as if his mom and sister were the lawyers and prosecutors in the room and Yvette was on trial. They wanted to know what Yvette's intentions were. They questioned where she met Russell, how her other relationships ended, and so much more.

After seeing how contempt she was while giving them exactly what they wanted to hear, his mom and sister began to see why Russell had taken an interest in Yvette. By the time he had gotten back from the store, they were all laughing on the couch over his baby pictures. It felt good for her to be accepted by a man and his family again. It was nice to experience a new set of people outside of work that she could feel at home with. While looking across the table at her friends, all she could do was smile back at them and ponder about her future with Russell.