

How (Not) To Date

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Cover design:

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ISBN:

9789402190021

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It is a morning on a weekday in Amsterdam. The weather is dry and a little sunny. Three girls are in a car driving with loud music playing, the top of the car is down and they are singing along with 'That's what makes you beautiful' by One Direction. The traffic light turns from red to green. They want to drive on, speed up a bit, but suddenly hit the brakes. A woman stands in front of their car with a coffee in her hand, all four of them are shocked.

And that is me, my name is Layla. I am 25 years old, I was born in a small town and now live in Amsterdam. I work as a receptionist for an international company. It is a great job for now, but I have always wanted to be a writer, tell stories.

I run to the end of the street and wait for the next crossing light. There is a handsome man standing next to me, he is wearing simple jeans with a dark green sweater and has short blond hair. I notice he is scanning me, but before I can smile at him, he looks away and is clearly not interested at all. I quickly look in front of me and wait for the crossing light to turn green. I have been without a relationship

for some time now, crazy enough great guys are hard to find... even harder to stick around. I walk on to the office where I work. It is a pretty big light brown stone building with a nice entrance. The entrance has a few steps in front of it, it is tall but not that big. I always like to look up when I am on the stairs, it makes it look so big and beautiful, just like you see in so many movies.

'Morning Sam!' This is Sam, my best friend. We met in high school and have been best friends ever since. We are so lucky we can work together for the same company. That makes this job even better. I greet her, while trying to pretend I am not late at all, but that never works with Sam. She is sitting behind the reception desk, she has half long, light blond hair and brown eyes. She wears a simple but nice long sleeve black dress with black shoes with low heels.

'Morning! You are late again, you know that, right?'

'Yes yes, just a few minutes.'

I quickly walk over to my desks, put down the coffees, take off my coat and put down my bag.

'You know I can't start the day without my coffee!? But I wouldn't be your best friend if I didn't bring you one as well, just how you like it!'

'Well, then you were right on time as far as I'm concerned. Unfortunately, the boss already walked by, so he knows you were late.' Sam tells me.

'No, really?! Damn it!' This is just what I need to start my day! I am having trouble being on time in the morning and this already happened a few times. I really hope I don't get in trouble for it.

A few minutes later my phone rings, I can already see it is my boss. This can't be good!

'Morning Boss!'

'Morning Layla, could you please come by my office when you have the time?'

'Of course, I will be right there.' I don't want to keep him waiting. Better to get this over with. I walk upstairs and knock on his door, my heart is already racing and I am nervous. I hate confrontations.

'Please come in, Layla.'

'Thank you.' I walk in the office and close the door behind me.

'So Layla, you know we are really happy with you working here and you are doing a great job.' he starts.

'Thank you, I really like working here.'

'But, you have been late a few times now and again this morning.'

Okay here it is, I knew this was going to happen. I really don't want to lose this job!

'I am sorry sir, it really won't happen again, I will make sure of it.'

'That is good to hear, because it would be a shame to lose a good employee over this.'

'Absolutely sir, thank you.' There is a moment of silence, but I am hesitating, I can't just walk away.

'Anything else I can do for you, sir?'

'No that was it, Layla.'

I smile and leave the office. I feel like I just dodged a bullet, but I really have to make sure I am not late anymore. The last thing I want is to have to look for a new job!

At the end of the working day me and Sam turn off our computers and leave the office. We go to Sam's house, as we have dinner that night with our friends. Every once in a while we have these dinners. We switch locations but love to get together. Everyone is there with their partners. Sam couldn't get a babysitter so this time it is at her place. I don't mind helping out with diner, so I go with her straight after work. Later that evening the whole group is at Sam's house and we are having drinks before dinner. So this is everyone. Jack is Sam's husband, they have been married for six years and have a little boy, Dean. That little guy is so cute! Then that is Jill, she is together with Chris, I know her through Sam. That is Oliver and he is with

Noah, he used to work for the same company as Sam and me. Dustin is here with Izzy, they haven't gone out that long, but I know him from school. There is also Ryan with Hallie and Ryan is Jack's best friend. Together it's a nice group. Sam and Jack are the first one of our friends to have a baby. But Jill is pregnant, so the group will get bigger in a few months! I am standing by myself looking at everyone, I enjoy watching how happy they look. But in a way it also makes me feel lonely. Before Sam can come over to me we hear on the baby phone that Dean is awake. 'I'll go check up on Dean!' I don't wait for her to say anything and just smile and walk past her. I don't want her to see that I am a little lonely and start talking to me about guys and dating. So this is the perfect way for me not to give her that opportunity.

The next day I go to work and I am on time this time. The day itself was kind of boring, nothing special. I leave from work and at home I am just having a simple diner on my couch. I watch a movie, very typical, I am watching *The Notebook*. I love romantic movies, but for some reason it is hard for me to look at it today. I turn off the tv and see my laptop on the kitchen table. I grab it and open a new window in Word. I want to start writing, but nothing comes out. I just don't

even know where to start. How hard can it be? Just start writing about something and the rest will go by itself. That is what people say, right? Just start, but starting is the biggest problem. I get irritated and put down the laptop. Maybe a different movie is a better idea. I look on Netflix and start with an action movie, the *Bourne Identity*. I have seen this movie multiple times before, but I just like it so much! Matt Damon is amazing! I know I love romantic movies, it's just that I'm not always in the mood for them. Sometimes they just make me feel lonely, thinking about what I am missing out on. I think that is one of the reasons I also like action movies. A great story and often still with a little romance, but not too much.

In the morning I get up and get ready to go back to work again. Work started normally, I am in the middle of an email when my phone makes a noise so I look at it. It is just some advertisement for a new dating app. I want to lay down my phone as I don't care for it, but Sam notices the app on my screen.

'You should really try that app! I heard good stories about it.' She lets me know.

'Well I am not sure, I hate creating a profile.' Of course she heard good stories about it... like I want to date through an app...