

## Blind Date 2

‘No, never, not again, not ever! And this time I won’t let you talk me round.’ Petra stuck out her jaw and put on what she hoped was a final answer, face.

Stella shrugged. ‘Oh, come on Petra. I know there were a few teething troubles but...’

‘Teething troubles?’ Petra was aghast. ‘It was a disaster. I still can’t get those wine stains out of my best dress and I can never go into that restaurant again. I’m having nightmares about it.’

Stella made sympathetic noises. ‘I know,’ she soothed. ‘But let’s not be too hasty. You could be onto a good thing here. He’s desperate to make it up to you.’

Petra began to waver. ‘*IF* I were to agree, there will be no restaurants, no best clothes, no wine and definitely no audience.’

Stella cheered silently. ‘This time, it will all be perfect. Trust me.’

Petra cursed as she turned the key in the ignition for the umpteenth time. The engine made a short whirring noise, then went quiet. *Battery’s dead now, It had to happen today of all days.*

Spots of rain appeared on the windscreen, heavy rain was forecast. *Typical, just typical.*

The rain was teaming down by the time the rescue services reached her. They had promised to be there in thirty minutes, but had taken well over an hour.

Petra watched the mechanic as he worked on the engine, anxiety increasing with every tut, or shake of his blond head. Eventually he came out from under the bonnet. ‘Electrics have gone,’ he announced.

‘That sounds expensive,’ Petra said quietly.

‘Can be,’ he replied evenly. ‘It depends where the fault lies. It could just be a bad earth.’

Forty minutes later Petra was back home, her broken-down car parked outside on the road. She checked the wall clock. *Christ, he’ll be here in thirty minutes.*

Petra ran upstairs, undressed quickly, and had a shower. After a rubdown with the towel, she slipped into her dressing gown and plugged in her styling wand. *Soft curls tonight, nothing formal.*

She had managed to do one side of her head and half of the front when the power cut struck. Seconds later, there was a knock at the door.

Petra pushed her hair back from her eyes, grimaced and opened the door just as Martin was about to knock again. ‘Hi Martin, sorry, err, I’m a bit behind.’ The attempted smile froze on her lips as a mass of hair flopped in front of her eyes. ‘Bad hair day,’ she quipped.

Petra led Martin through to the kitchen. ‘I can’t even offer you coffee,’ she complained. ‘We’re in the middle of a power cut and I’m all electric.’

‘Look on the bright side,’ said Martin. ‘The power might be on again by the time we get back from the theatre. Your hair looks, err, will look, nice,’ he ended lamely.

Petra headed for the stairs. ‘Back in a few minutes, Martin. I just need to do something about this. Make yourself at home.’

Petra hurried to the bathroom, soaked her hair in the tepid water, then rubbed it vigorously with a towel. She looked at the results in the mirror. *Soaking wet, but at least it hangs evenly, now.*

Wrapping the towel around her head, she walked through to her bedroom, opened the wardrobe, and studied its contents.

She settled on a calf length, black lace dress with a short red jacket. After applying the minimum of makeup and patching up her nails, she felt more or less ready to take on the public. Her hair was still damp, so she pulled on a woollen crocheted hat. In the end, she was pleasantly surprised with the results.

Martin was standing where she had left him. ‘Ready at last,’ she said. ‘Sorry about the delay.’

Martin walked her to the front door and stood gallantly aside to allow her through, then stepped out himself and pulled it shut.

‘Bugger, I’ve left my bag in the kitchen,’ said Petra.

‘Is it such a disaster?’ Martin asked.

Petra sighed. ‘My house keys are in it.’

Just then, the power came back on and the burglar alarm went off.

One broken rear window pane later, Petra and Martin were once again sat in the kitchen. Petra made coffee while Martin cut a piece of board to temporarily fix the window square he had just smashed.

‘I think the fates are against us, Martin,’ said Petra.

Martin nodded sadly. ‘We haven’t had the easiest of starts, have we? Do you still want to go? We still have time to get there.’

Petra thought for a while, then nodded. ‘Okay, let’s see what else the fates can throw our way. It’s beginning to look like a quest from a Sinbad movie.’

Martin laughed and led her down the drive to his car. ‘Our luck must turn soon,’ he said. He looked up to the leaden skies in mock prayer. ‘I wish this rain would stop. It’s been coming down all afternoon.’

He opened the passenger door and Petra climbed hurriedly into the car. The rain became heavier. Martin slammed the door quickly, leaving two feet of lace dress hanging out of it. Oblivious, he scampered round to the driver’s side and threw himself into his seat. Thirty seconds later, the car pulled away from the kerb, dragging the bottom of Petra’s lace dress along the puddle strewn road.