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A dispatch from the dating game

By ERIC WILLIAMS

Love, or at least cologne, is in the air.

Singles have gathered under the Bourne Bridge, at Quintal's Restaurant, for an 8minuteDating event, a whirlwind meet 'n' greet where men and women rotate through brief, meaningful powwows.



Eric Williams

The drinks flow, understandably. It's a bit nerve-wracking to wear your "single-and-looking" status on a name tag. And to make small talk with strangers you might end up smooching.

Most folks appear to be in the 35-to-45 age range. They are stationed around the restaurant, ready for the mini-dates to begin. And surprisingly, they don't mind chatting with a snoopy reporter about the pursuit of happiness.

"It's really tough to fool women," said Stefan, 47, of Plymouth. "If you're serious about meeting somebody, it's just not the way to go. The first thing they're going to look at is to see if there's a tan line on your ring finger."

"It's really tough to fool women," I say moments later to Susan from Sagamore Beach. "A guy told me that."

"Can you show me your press credentials?" she asks.

"I'm not just some creep!" I protest.

"You never know," she says.

I pull the press card from my "Hello Kitty" wallet.

"Voila!" I say, handing it over. "Press."

"My nephew could do that with his computer," says Susan. "A woman has to be careful."

"O my poor suspicious Susan," I say. "So this is what the world of dating has done to you."

Julie, 38, and Paulette, 39, have driven in all the way from Taunton.

Is it hard getting dates?

"Yes!" they answer in unison. "Men our age haven't gotten divorced yet," says Paulette. "They're still in that 'married' stage. There should be a law against it."

Julie says they're looking for "cute and funny" guys.

"The funny part will make them cuter," says Paulette. "And a few drinks will make them cuter still."

Over by the bar, a distinguished older gent is taking it all in. John, 77, isn't on the prowl. He's helping out his daughter, who organized the event.

He smiles at the intense mingling. "I went to an all-boys school all through college," says John. "Women were like strange creatures."

At Table 4, "Caroline" from the Cape is thinking men are the strange ones. A guy just presented her with a refrigerator magnet in the shape of a pancreas.

"I have no clue why," she says. "No wonder I'm single."

At Table 3, "Anneta" issues a policy statement.

"I love animals and animals are my thing," she says. "I have nine animals. I'm in the animal industry."

"What, do you make sausage?" I ask.

"I'm a vet tech," she says. "I'm a very softy animal type. And I can tell right off the bat, if a guy doesn't like animals, then he's out, because I have a lot of animals and that's my life."

"I have two dogs, five cats, a guinea pig and a rabbit," says Anneta. "The guinea pig's name is Lenore."

And so the strange night goes. Love flits through the woody roadhouse, but does it light? We'll never know for sure, though later we receive reports of several singles closing the bar, then heading out together into a blurry morning, perhaps besotted.

The next 8minuteDating event will be held at Quintal's Restaurant on July 29. For more information, visit www.8minuteDating.com

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