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Cupid's Casualties

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Depressed after spending Valentine’s Day alone? Things could have been worse. Just ask the people in these dating horror stories.

You’ve been waiting for this night all week. You finally worked up the nerve to ask your lab partner out to dinner, and, wonder of wonders, you weren’t met with an immediate rejection. You’re so excited that you even washed a shirt and did your hair in preparation. But then you start to think, What if my car breaks down? What if the waiter is my ex and pours salsa all over my freshly cleaned shirt? And, what if, while you’re adjusting your hair, you and your date accidentally walk out in front of a speeding Cy-Ride bus and are both struck and ... ! But then the doorbell rings and the only thing you can think is—I’m going on a date!

Unfortunately for the Iowa State students in the following stories, the person on the other side of the door was not the dream date they were hoping for. In fact, these dates were so hapless we’ve changed their names to protect them from your wrath. These are the times when a phone call from a telemarketer in the middle of dinner or an emergency trip to the hospital is welcomed. Enjoy.

STORY BY: Abby Penning
PHOTOS BY: Matt Obbink
It wasn't just harmless nibbling or kissing. My hand down to my knuckles was in his mouth.
Kate Lueck had been on three dates with Mike without incident. So when he asked her out to see a play, she happily obliged. Mike was just getting over a breakup with his long-time girlfriend, Chrissy. Kate was happy to help him recover.

The date began in their local middle school auditorium, where the play was taking place. As the couple entered the theater, Mike noticed Kate's parents in the audience and steered his date the other way, to some seats about four rows in front of the stage. This made them easily viewable by most of the theater patrons that night.

About half an hour into the play, Mike put Kate's arm around his shoulders. She thought this a sweet gesture—until he began sucking on her fingers. "It wasn't just harmless nibbling or kissing," Kate says. "My hand down to my knuckles was in his mouth."

Uncomfortable and distracted, Kate shot Mike a what-are-you-doing look and tried to pull her hand away. But Mike had other ideas. He did his best to assure her she would enjoy the experience, then he proceeded to suck away with renewed conviction for the next 15 minutes. Kate was so distracted she didn't notice it was time for intermission until the house lights came up, revealing her friend's parents across the aisle. They were staring at her and her finger-licking date. Kate withdrew her arm in horror.

She managed to make it through the rest of the production by keeping her hands to herself and was ready to be done with Mike when he suggested they go look at the lights across the bay. Flattered by his romantic tenacity, Kate soon found herself kissing Mike in 20-degree March weather atop a thin blanket covering the frozen ground. Caught in the make-out moment, the two started rolling around and Mike took the opportunity to lie on top of Kate and ask, "Do you feel that?"

"I, honestly, could not. I had a winter jacket, thick jeans, et cetera, on and couldn't feel my toes, let alone Mike Junior," Kate says.

After trying to dodge the question, Kate gave in and said yes. He responded with "That's all because of you, Chrissy—I mean, Kate."

At that point, Kate decided the night should probably come to a close. Her parents expected her home in a half hour, she lied, and wiggled out from under Mike. Needless to say, the ride home was a quiet one. And despite him calling her to "hang out and stuff," that was the end of their gropings.

Kari Carlson was walking out of class when she got the call. It was Joe, her boyfriend of three weeks. And he wanted her to drive to the tattoo parlor where he was already waiting. This couldn't be good news.

Kari arrived at the strip mall where the parlor was located and nervously approached the front door. Inside, her green eyes scanned the large, open room: lots of drawings on the walls, a few chairs, and one scruffy-looking dude covered in tattoos hunched over needling someone's chest. Joe's chest.

Joe sat shirtless, a proud grin on his face, as the haggard artiste poked away. Kari approached, not sure what exactly was going on. She could make out a bizarre, colored blob smeared on the center of his lanky torso. It was when Kari was finally standing over Joe that she was able to make out the blood-red heart that had just been permanently inked into his flesh. Printed neatly over the heart was a banner with "Kari" etched boldly in cursive lettering. Joe smiled. Kari shuddered.

"I was horrified, of course, because I knew the relationship wouldn't last two months," says Kari, freshman in sociology.

But that wasn't the case. After the tattoo incident, Joe used his new symbol of love to guilt trip Kari into maintaining the relationship, saying she would have to stay with him because, even if she could just forget about him, he would have the tattoo on his chest the rest of his life. Partly out of guilt, partly pity, Kari stayed with Joe for eight months before finally calling it quits. A few months later, Kari heard from a friend that Joe had the banner filled in and the Chinese symbol for "crazy" tattooed above it. Indeed.
Let's Make a Deal

Nothing says romance like a huge smoldering joint.

Megan Staker was tired of getting hit on by dirty old men at Sam Goody, where she was working over the summer. So when an attractive young man with cornrows—a regular customer named Robbie she’d noticed before—asked her for her phone number, she wrote it down on the back of his receipt. Robbie called that night, and the couple made plans to have lunch later in the week. A few days later Robbie showed up at Megan’s in his black SUV, and the couple headed off to lunch. Or so Megan thought.

Before they could get some food, Robbie had a few errands to run. First, he told her, they had to stop by a friend’s house. When they got there, his friend, a pudgy fellow in a sweat suit and with shiny gold teeth, got into the car and handed Robbie a wad of money, telling him it was the $1,500 for the “Skittles.” In exchange, Robbie handed his buddy a small black bag. “At that point I’m thinking, Holy shit, he took me on a drug deal on our first date,” said Megan, junior in fashion merchandising.

When Megan and Robbie were back on the road, she asked him what “Skittles” were. Ecstasy, he told her. He then asked her to sort the $1,500 into tens and twenties because they had to drop off some cash for his brother. Confused but afraid to ask questions, Megan kept quiet.

That side errand also completed, Megan finally had lunch with her drug dealer date, paid for, of course, with the drug money. Uncomfortable and ready to put the whole experience behind her, she was relieved to finally be on the car ride home—until Robbie asked her to roll a joint for him while he drove. “I don’t think so!” Megan said. Robbie laughed at her then rolled it himself while steering the SUV down the interstate with his knees. Megan stared out the window while Robbie puffed away, then bolted from the car the moment he rolled in front of her house.

When he called Megan two days later to line up a second date, Robbie was confused that she turned him down, saying he never gets turned down. He ceased to be one of her regulars after that.
The dance wasn't fun at all. I kept thinking, Man, I am hungry. You would think that I felt bad for not giving Sandra my undivided attention, but she got her way. You would feel bad for me, I can remember it just like it was yesterday. It still haunts me to this day.

My friends and I met at the elementary school playground after dropping off our dates and, man, did they have a good laugh at my expense. After they poked fun at me for a while, I had a revelation: If I can't pronounce it or I don't know what it is, I am not going to eat it. Period.

If I had to do it all over again, I would have ordered a hamburger.

—as told to Ward Phillips