

DATING CURVEBALL

By Les Hunter and Elana Averbach

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DATING CURVEBALL

A One Act Comedy

By Les Hunter and Elana Averbach

SYNOPSIS: Did April and Coach's love for each other really end when they lost the championship game of their softball league? Certainly their love of competition did not! Now, they are rival dating coaches who teach four lovelorn clients to believe in themselves in this fast-paced and unreasonably silly game of curveballs, foul play, stolen bases and stolen hearts.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females, 3 males, 2-4 either, 0-1 extra; gender flexible, doubling possible)

MIMI (f).....	Client who is looking for a commitment from, well, just about anybody. <i>(72 lines)</i>
DAN (m).....	Client, afraid of relationships. <i>(93 lines)</i>
APRIL (f).....	Dating coach with a secret. <i>(78 lines)</i>
COACH (m).....	Disgraced former softball coach. <i>(86 lines)</i>
JEFF (m).....	Nerdy sci-fi client pretending to be normal. <i>(81 lines)</i>
HILLARY (f).....	Hip client, always on the latest trend. <i>(52 lines)</i>
WAITER 1 (m/f).....	Waiter(s) can be played by 1-4 actors. <i>(3 lines)</i>
WAITER 2 (m/f).....	Waiter(s) can be played by 1-4 actors. <i>(8 lines)</i>
WAITER 3 (m/f).....	Waiter(s) can be played by 1-4 actors. <i>(10 lines)</i>
WAITER 4 (m/f).....	Waiter(s) can be played by 1-4 actors. <i>(Non-Speaking)</i>
ANNOUNCER (m/f).....	Offstage speaker. <i>(7 lines)</i>

HOT DOG VENDOR..... May be played by actor playing
WAITER/s. (7 lines)

CAST NOTE: 7-12 actors are possible for this production. WAITERS 1, 2, 3, and 4 may be played by one-four actors. You may also choose to double the WAITER with the HOT DOG VENDOR.

DURATION: 30 minutes.

TIME: The present.

SETTING: A medium sized city.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1 – Five-Star Restaurant

SCENE 2 – Coach’s Office

SCENE 3 – Coffee Shop

SCENE 4 – Five-Star Restaurant

SCENE 5 – Sports Bar

SCENE 6 – Baseball Field

PROPS

- 2 Tables
- Silverware for Two
- 2 Water Glasses
- 3-9 Chairs (can cover for bleachers in scene 6)
- Serving Tray
- Bread and Breadbasket
- Desk (if desired for Coach’s office)
- 2 Coffee Cups
- Stainless Steel Coffee Cup
- United States *Census* or other LARGE BOOK
- Slice of Cake
- Earbuds
- KLINGON DAGGER or dramatic-looking fake Knife
- 2 Plates with Plate Covers

- Dartboard with Darts (for safety, you can tape the end that hits coaches head)
- Earplugs
- Notepad
- Rope
- Plastic Cup
- Vending Tray (optional)
- Hot Dogs
- Cell Phone

COSTUMES

WAITERS 1-4 – Waiter outfits.

HOT DOG VENDOR – Vendor attire.

JEFF – Klingon outfit and face makeup or mask.

COACH – Wears a coach's jersey.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Klingon language used in this play is loosely adapted and edited for timing based on text from Google Translate.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

A staged reading was held at Dobama Theatre as part of the Playwrights Gym in Cleveland, Ohio on Sept. 22nd, 2014 with the cast and crew as follows:

MIMI-----Kiara Kennelly
 DAN-----David Thonnings
 APRIL ----- Rachel Lee Kolis
 COACH----- John Busser
 JEFF-----Brandon Isner*
 HILLARY ----- Lauren Joy Fraley
 WAITER/HOT DOG VENDOR ----- Chris Bizub
 ANNOUNCER/STAGE DIRECTIONS-----Natalie Romano
 DIRECTOR -----Les Hunter
 DRAMATURG-----Catie O'Keefe

*Appeared as a courtesy of Actors Equity

To us: each other's Par'Mach'kai

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *Dinner Date, five-star restaurant; evening. MIMI enters.*

MIMI: Dan? So nice to finally meet you.

DAN: Yeah, you too. What's your name again?

MIMI: Mimi. My last name can be changed. I have the paperwork with me.

DAN: That's ... weird?

MIMI: This place looks great. Do you want to sit?

DAN: You mean, like, at the same table? Ok. I guess. Can we get something by the door?

They sit. Maybe she moves her chair to his side of the table to try to sit on the same side as him, and he then puts his chair on the opposite side of the table.

MIMI: Have you been here before?

DAN: A couple of times.

MIMI: Oh, you have?

DAN: Is that a problem?

MIMI: No, it's fine...

DAN: Are you sure? It seems like it's a problem.

MIMI: I was just hoping, you know if this works out, that it would be our place. The set of our first date, where we would return year after year for happy anniversaries.

DAN: Wait, what? I should tell you now: I'm seeing other people.

MIMI: You are?

DAN: I mean like, right now. I see them. I see, for instance, that waiter.

WAITER 1 enters.

WAITER 1: You guys gonna get something or what?

DAN: Does the bread come free with the meal?

WAITER 1: You're gonna order something real then right?

DAN: Sure.

WAITER 1 exits.

(To MIMI.) They're forward here.

MIMI: Was that some sort of cruel joke? You're "seeing" people?

DAN: Of course it was a joke! Jeez.

MIMI: Well, that's a relief.

DAN: But really: I am dating other girls too.

MIMI: Oh.

DAN: I don't want to be tied down, metaphorically. I mean, I actually really hate being tied down, literally. Like to chairs, or tables, or any other kind of object. When I was a kid a bully tied me to a bleacher in the gym. I missed lunch. I peed my pants. He said, "You'll never leave now, pimply-face."

MIMI: Uh, maybe we should change the subj—

DAN: —I was deeply scarred. But metaphorically, I also don't like to be tied down. It makes me feel suffocated. Again, metaphorically.

MIMI: I make you feel suffocated? *(Starts to cry.)*

DAN: Listen, I'm sure you're great. You're beautiful. You're sensitive.

MIMI: *(Dries eyes with napkin or shirt sleeve.)* Thanks. I'm glad you can see that. I'm looking forward to spending A LOT of time with you.

DAN: Uh ... do you know where the bathroom is?

MIMI: Maybe it will help if I hold your hand.

DAN: If you squeeze me, that makes me need to go more.

MIMI: I'm not very hungry. Do you want to share something?

DAN: Not really. Can we get separate checks?

MIMI: Look, if this is going to work, I think that we need to be honest with each other. If we're going to build a life together.

DAN: Is it hard to breathe in here?

MIMI: That's what we're doing here, right? Trying to see if we could spend forever together. Grow old in each other's arms, in a country home with rolling hills, surrounded by our seven grandchildren. Or six. I can be flexible. Which would you prefer?

DAN: Uh, I gotta go ... to the dentist. *(Runs for the door.)*

MIMI: You have an eight p.m. appointment?

DAN: Um ... I am a dentist?

MIMI: Your profile said you were a fireman.

DAN: A dentist ... only for firemen. Yes. Emergency appointment.
Someone's molars are burning down.

MIMI: Wait. I have one last question for you.

MIMI chases him. Grabs his arm and pulls him back.

Will you marry me?

DAN: Um ... teeth! (*He runs out.*)

MIMI: I think he likes me. To love!

MIMI exits. WAITER 1 returns, with the bread.

WAITER 1: Did you want this to go?

SCENE 2

COACH'S office.

DAN: I don't know what's wrong with me. It seems like every time I get a date with a nice girl, I want to bolt before we even sit down.

COACH: Sure, uh huh, like you've hit a homerun, but you want to hide in the dugout instead of running the bases.

DAN: Sort of ... do you think that's what it is? That I'm afraid of being seen for who I really am?

COACH: Listen, what you need's a teammate.

DAN: You mean like a girlfriend, Coach?

COACH: You know, someone to see you through a losing slump.

DAN: You mean like in profits? Are you saying I need an accountant?

COACH: Someone who'll tally your losses, but look for big wins.

DAN: Metaphorically, right? Or do you mean a really good financial adviser?

COACH: What are you talking about, Sport? I'm your dating coach.

DAN: Right, so, do you have any insight about dating?

COACH: Insight is not my thing.

DAN: Isn't that what I'm paying you for?

COACH: What you need is someone who'll stand by you when you're down.

DAN: Yeah.

COACH: When you're pitching an important game and it's bases loaded.

DAN: Wait, are you doing the metaphor thing again?

COACH: Someone who won't throw for an amazingly low E.R.A. all season and then choke in the FINAL GAME OF THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

DAN: Wait, what?

COACH: Someone who won't get you in trouble for their lousy performance on the LAST THROW OF THE GAME, AND END YOUR CAREER and break your heart, leaving you alone, alone, with nothing to do but sit in the basement and drink Gatorade all day. Do you know what it's like to buy an entire season's worth of Gatorade and have to drink it by yourself?

DAN: No, I—

COACH: —Alone, thinking about some way to get back in the game.

DAN: Um. Are we talking about me?

COACH: Exactly, always thinking, "why me?" And then, seeing, one day, her. She's opened a new business as a dating coach and you figure, why not me too? Maybe a new game, maybe a little revenge even. Get a few new players. Work on a new pitch.

DAN: Yeah, about that. I think I'm gonna go—

COACH: That's right. You gotta get out there.

DAN: Yeah?

COACH: Yeah. Play the field.

DAN: What?

COACH: Play the whole field.

DAN: I don't think that means what you think it does.

COACH: Do you want some Gatorade? I have some here.

DAN: No. I mean, I've been saying the whole time that's why I'm here. Everyone tells me to settle down, but I can't. I don't know why.

COACH: So you didn't like Mimi?

DAN: She was pretty. And sweet. I mean, I think I would like her but she just seemed really into having a relationship. I get so scared around women. As soon as they start talking I want to bolt for the door.

COACH: She's a team player?

DAN: I guess so.

COACH: I've got two words: YouYou.

DAN: Is that two words?

COACH: YouYou and Mimi. I mean, her, not me, me. Not that I'm taken.

DAN: You look familiar.

COACH: People say that a lot. I'm a coach. I bring people together; tie them in a deep knot of unity. People remember that kind of thing.

DAN: No, I think I've met you before, maybe a long time ago.

COACH: Doesn't hit home for me. Give Mimi another chance at bat.

DAN: I don't know.

COACH: You say you want to take off as soon as a woman starts to talk, right? What if I can *guarantee* that you won't run away if you follow my directions?

DAN: I'm not sure.

COACH: Am I your softball coach?

DAN: No.

COACH: Sorry. Old habit. Am I your dating coach?

DAN: Yeah.

COACH: You won't choke in the bottom of the ninth will you?

DAN: Uh, no.

COACH: Great, invite her to a game this weekend. Leave the rest to me.

DAN: I don't like sports.

COACH: Softball. It's not a sport, it's a religion.

DAN: Isn't softball like a weak form of baseball?

COACH: I'm gonna pretend you didn't say that. Don't worry! I'm gonna be there. Coach you through it like a pro.

DAN: OK.

COACH: Ready? Huddle.

They huddle.

Annnndddd—

DAN and COACH: Go Team!

COACH: That'll be 80 bucks.

SCENE 3

APRIL and MIMI, at a coffee shop.

MIMI: It wasn't until after he left that I realized it didn't go well.

APRIL: Tell me about the date.

MIMI: I said to him, "maybe we should possibly consider going out again."

APRIL: Mm-hm.

MIMI: And he was like, "no way, I'm a player! I can't even commit to our sharing a bread basket."

APRIL: Right.

MIMI: So I ordered my own bread and cried all over the focaccia and—

APRIL: —Mimi, dear. Do you think you ever ask too much of people?

MIMI: Me-me?

APRIL: Do you remember what we talked about last week?

MIMI: No?

APRIL: Let me remind you. You went to the ice cream store.

MIMI: I don't recall that.

APRIL: And you got to the front of the line.

MIMI: I don't remember ever eating ice cream.

APRIL: And the fifteen-year-old scrawny kid working behind the counter asked if you'd like to try their mint chocolate chip?

MIMI: What does ice cream even taste like?

APRIL: I'll tell you what it tastes like. It tastes like you asking him how he knew that was your favorite flavor, and him telling you that he remembered you from last time, AND YOU ASKING HIM TO MARRY YOU! That's what it tastes like.

MIMI: I never did that.

WAITER 2 enters.

WAITER 2: Want anything else?

MIMI: Maybe the lemon cake. It's great here.

WAITER 2: That was the last piece. I was gonna eat it.

MIMI: So you love it too?

WAITER 2: Yeah, I guess it's alright.

MIMI: Would you prefer a country home or city apartment?

WAITER 2: What?

MIMI: For our life together.

WAITER 2: I'll, uh, get the cake. And the check.

WAITER 2 exits.

MIMI: (*Low.*) He made me feel special.

APRIL: Well, when you have a person like that—someone really special—you shouldn't ever let them go, no matter what kind of defeats you suffer.

MIMI: What are you talking about?

APRIL: But that doesn't mean you have to marry anyone who passes you a salt shaker. Pinky-swear that the next person you ask to marry will be old enough to drive.

WAITER 2 brings the check.

Or at least picks up the check himself.

MIMI: Pinky-swear.

MIMI and APRIL pinky-swear.

APRIL: Now, I want you to try something.

MIMI: What's that?

APRIL: It will be very hard for you. But you want to find someone don't you?

MIMI: Oh, yes.

APRIL: Be bored.

MIMI: Bored?

APRIL: Yes, I want you to go out with this Donald boy again.

MIMI: Dan? I don't think he would go.

APRIL: Pretend that you're not interested.

MIMI: BUT I AM INTERESTED.

APRIL: That's precisely the point, dear. It's reverse psychology.

MIMI: Ah-wa-what?

APRIL: A technique whereby one exhibits the opposite behavior that one usually demonstrates with the intention of eliciting the reverse effect in others. Is it clear now?

MIMI: No. But you think it will work?

APRIL: Am I your dating coach or not?

MIMI: I'll do it!

WAITER 2: (*Crosses.*) Oh, yeah, I forgot you were here. I'll go get your cake.

MIMI: I am so bored by you!

MIMI exits.

WAITER 2: Yeah. I remember that I was avoiding you.

WAITER 2 goes to exit.

APRIL: Can you get this? I forgot my wallet. Mimi? (*She runs after her.*)

WAITER 2: I cut it in half so that I could have a piece of—

He notices no one is there. WAITER 2 sits down, has his cake, and eats it too.

SCENE 4

HILLARY is in the restaurant from Scene 1; JEFF enters.

JEFF: (*Carrying a copy of the U.S. Census.*) I would like you to know, that I am completely normal.

HILLARY: That's...a relief?

JEFF: You look sufficiently attractive by a mid-sized city's standards.

HILLARY: I made this dress out of a sheet from a thrift store.

JEFF: And definitely by my standards, which are much lower.

HILLARY: Uh, thanks?

JEFF: Would you enjoy a beverage?

HILLARY: OK.

JEFF: Waiter!

WAITER 3 enters, slightly dancing.

WAITER 3: What do you want?

HILLARY: I'll have anything fair trade or local in the stainless steel cup that I brought from home.

JEFF: I will have a name brand soda with a label that makes me feel safe because I have seen it on billboards and in commercials.

WAITER 3: What?

HILLARY: Were you even listening?

WAITER 3: Sorry, I was listening to my new dance mix. *(Takes his earbuds out.)* I'll get your drinks.

WAITER 3 exits.

HILLARY: *(To JEFF.)* But you know soda has corn syrup.

JEFF: I, like many average Americans, support the corn industry. *(Flips through Census to find a normal conversation topic.)* Would you like to talk about the weather?

HILLARY: Not really.

JEFF: I noticed that it was sunny this morning, but now it looks overcast.

HILLARY: It's probably pollution. The sky is being pumped full of chemicals from corporate conglomerates. I went to a rally against it.

JEFF: What did your rally accomplish?

HILLARY: We stood up to the man.

JEFF: Did you reduce pollution?

HILLARY: *(Proud.)* I got a t-shirt. *(Bummed.)* It was made in Bangladesh.

WAITER 3 enters.

WAITER 3: Here are your drinks. Two waters.

HILLARY: That's not what I ordered.

WAITER 3: It's what we have. Hey, you two are going to pay right?

JEFF: What do you mean?

WAITER 3: People have been skipping out on paying lately.

HILLARY: I'm insulted by your question.

WAITER 3: Alright, alright. What do you want to eat?

JEFF: I will have the steak with mashed potatoes.

HILLARY: I will have the kale salad with balsamic reduction.

WAITER 3: Neither of those are on the menu.

HILLARY: Think outside the box, man.

WAITER 3: I'll see what I can do, man.

WAITER 3 exits.

HILLARY: Is that a *U.S. Census*?

JEFF: Yes, contained within these pages is a guide to all that is average.

HILLARY: Uh, weird?

JEFF: No. "Normal."

HILLARY: If you have to say you're normal then you're not.

JEFF: Do you enjoy music? I am interested in the harmonious composition of individual notes into an aesthetic whole.

HILLARY: Yeah ... have you heard the New Time Travelers?

JEFF: Is that a comic book?

HILLARY: They're a band. You should check them out.

JEFF: I only listen to top twenty hits on the radio. That and elevator muzak. Sometimes I spend all day in elevators, just humming along. Would you like me to hum something for you? (*Begins humming.*)

HILLARY: (*Over his humming.*) What about Zombie Sunday?

JEFF: I can infer that is a band with a young fan base, as zombies have enjoyed a renaissance in popular culture.

HILLARY: Yeah, I liked them more when they were underground too.

JEFF: Zombies do not live underground. They are animated corpses that are raised from the dead through magical powers. The myth of zombies originated in Haitian folklore, and was popularized in American culture by the 1929 novel *The Magic Island*. Everyone knows that the villain Solomon Grundy was the first zombie character to enter the comic book genre. . . . Wait, my dating coach warned me against talking about science fiction and fantasy.

HILLARY: What?

JEFF: Perhaps you like sports?

HILLARY: Not really. I'm more into indie bands, art galleries, and anti-corporate culture.

JEFF: Noted. Where do you see yourself in five years?

HILLARY: That's an intense question for a first date. I mean, I don't really plan stuff, but I can imagine finding myself in Brooklyn, Toronto, or Berlin. Somewhere with lots of bikes and nightlife. If you can't get *horchata* and decent vegetarian *pho*, it's not a real city.

JEFF: I would like to have a house in a suburb with a white picket fence.

HILLARY: That sounds lame.

JEFF: I will have (*Reading Census.*) 2.5 children, one dog, one cat. My wife will enjoy cooking and gardening, while I enjoy football and red meat. We will argue over who holds the television remote, and we won't be able to stand our in-laws.

HILLARY: You kind of freak me out. Also, is that a knife in your pocket?

JEFF: No. (*Brandishes dagger.*) That's a *d'k tahg*.

HILLARY: A what?

JEFF: A traditional Klingon warrior's dagger.

HILLARY: What, do you speak Klingon or something?

JEFF: Of course I speak Klingon. Did you even read my dating profile?

HILLARY: I thought you were being ironic.

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