



## Episode 80

### **Is This How Roy Met Sigfried?**

For the first time in his life, Hamlet P. Buglaroni is successfully dealing with a real live girl. Not just some dumb classmate that he has to do a science project with or some harpie getting on his case like Camelia and Jasmine Maru or the bespectacled, braced-teeth offspring of one of Grandma Buglaroni's endless stream of cronies from the Old Country who Grandma promises will grow up into another Cindy Crawford, you mark-a my words, I know what I'm-a talkin' about, Hammy, because according to Grandma the beautiful ones always start out as orangutans. No, this is a girl who, in Buglaroni's mind, "is, like, beyond cool." And he seems to be connecting with her.

He does not recognize himself.

The magic of relationships is that they *are* magical. They make leaps that cannot be tracked by science, nor predicted by even the most practiced of social analysts. If an attempt were made to plot who would romantically gravitate to whom, it would totally fail. Shouldn't the smart theoretically be attracted to the smart? Shouldn't the good-looking inevitably find each other in the haunted jungle of plug-uglies? Shouldn't the cool cling to the cool and the bozos stick to the bozos like troll magnets to a refrigerator door? Shouldn't the logic of preserving the gene pool, which would have to be the evolutionary control of romance, determine within reasonably determinably predictably limits who finds whom?

Of course it should. And of course it doesn't. Which is where the magic comes on.

There are, inevitably, some like-to-like relationships. The captain of the football team and the queen of the cheerleaders do find each other once in a while and get elected the best-looking couple in the yearbook before going on within the next five years to become trailer-park trash with three kids, two rusted pickup trucks and one welfare check between them (or at least that's what their footballing and cheerleading rivals hope behind their backs, isn't it?). The ugly guy with no nose and the ugly girl with no teeth do once in

a while go to the movies together and touch fingers while trying to grab up the lion's share of the giant-sized "buttery-flavored" ("buttery-flavored" being a registered trademark of the Dow Chemical Corporation) popcorn that goes directly into maintaining their miserable ever-erupting complexions. But these are exceptions. More often than not, when crossing the gender lines, people break the rules and do not fulfill the expectations. The shmendricks have just as much chance of ensnaring the mensches as their menschish counterparts. Why? Because of the magic. And what does the magic do? It makes what appear to some as obvious character flaws disappear in the eyes of others. And how does the magic work? No one knows. That's why it's magic.

It has occasionally been theorized that males are incapable of seeing in females certain aspects of their characters that are hideously obvious to other females, and vice versa. But this is not true. If a guy is a goofball, and every other guy knows it, most girls will know it too. And besides, that is not the point, that all members of the opposite sex have to be blinded to the real character of their opposite gender numbers. The magic only works one couple at a time. It only takes one seemingly incredible female to be blinded to the deficient character of one obviously credible male -- or again, vice versa -- to prove that the magic exists, and that it works. Love *is* blind. The reason this sort of cliché is called a truism is because it is, in fact, true. Otherwise it would be a falsism.

Why is it true? It's the magic, as simple as that.

"Walt Disney is, like, the antichrist," Buglaroni is saying.

And Gloria Fudless is nodding as he says it. "I can make three, maybe four," she replies.

"Let's go for eight," Buglaroni says. "We can make eight." He turns to Disney Davidson. "You guys are going five, right."

Disney nods, a pained expression on his face. He has spoken barely a word since they started playing Spades. Buglaroni can't imagine why, as Disney talked up a blue streak on the way down on the train.

"Let's set them," Buglaroni says to Gloria.

"I'll do my best," she replies.

"So the thing is," Buglaroni goes back to the subject at hand, "like, Walt Disney is like this, like, FBI spy, right? He goes around informing on everyone in Hollywood, saying that they're all like Communists and out to overthrow the government."

"I never heard of that," Gloria says.

"It's true. Really. Right?"

He looks at Binko, who is regarding his cards through hooded eyes, an unlighted cigarette stuck in the corner of his mouth. "Walt Disney is the antichrist. Definitely. You're never going to set us."

"Watch and learn." Buglaroni takes the first trick. "So Disney is, like, Herbert Hoover's number one spy, and--"

"J. Edgar Hoover," Disney -- our Disney -- interjects.

"Whatever. Anyhow, he's, like, a Hoover spy, and he puts these incredible right-wing Nazi messages in all of his cartoons. Mickey Mouse is, like, Hitler."

"And Donald Duck is Goering, and Bambi is Goebbels?" Binko asks.

"All right, maybe Mickey Mouse isn't Hitler. But look at the world Disney builds. The perfect Main Street American town, no dirt, no crime, no poverty, no immigrants, no minorities. And he populates the place with these Nazi clones, blond Aryan teenagers with lockjaw smiles wearing grendel skirts, taking--"

"Dirndl skirts," Gloria corrects him.

"Whatever. Those are, like, the ticket takers, and they only allow white people to go there."

"They don't only allow white people to go there," Binko says. "We need to make one more, partner. It's up to you."

"I don't know..." Disney says.

"We're going to set them," Buglaroni says. "Okay, it's not that they only allow white people, but they make it so that only white people want to go. Like, I mean, the Nazis, I don't think a lot of Jews took their vacations at Auschwitz."

"I don't think anybody took their vacation at Auschwitz," Binko says. "It wasn't exactly the German answer to Niagra Falls."

"You know what I mean. The thing is, if you make a place white, even subtly, it stays white. People don't go where they're not wanted."

"And that makes Walt Disney the antichrist?" Gloria asks.

"If that doesn't, I don't know what does."

"You don't have any more spades?" Binko asks his partner.

Disney shakes his head. "I'm not taking any more tricks. No way."

"Either am I. Damn!"

Buglaroni holds out the cards in his hand. All winners. "We set 'em, partner."

Gloria's blackened lips curl into a smile. "I'm learning," she says.

"Like a pro," Buglaroni tells her.

"LD Quarters!" The announcement comes from the cafeteria doorway. Since only eight people are left in the LD division, and they know who they are, the only mystery is who is debating whom. So there is not the usual stampede, and only the participants move quickly to find out who they're up against. Everyone else in the room, if they're interested in LD, is either a judge or a spectator, and the former sidle up to the schematics distributors as if they're about to read their death sentences, while the latter take their time like any audience in a buyer's market. Disney, a possible judge, goes over to retrieve a schematic.

"I'm judging," he says as he returns, tossing the xeroxed page onto the table. Binko grabs it.

"I'm going to watch Griot," he says. "Room 323." He turns to Gloria. "You coming?"

She hesitates.

"You want to sit this one out?" Buglaroni asks her.

Slowly, she nods. "Yeah."

"Okay." Binko walks off. Disney remains standing there, staring open-mouthed at Buglaroni, who looks up at him sheepishly and smiles. Disney spins around and stalks off.

"Want to get a soda or something?" Buglaroni asks. "Or we can go outside for a walk?"

"Yeah," Gloria says. "I'd like that."

Gloria Fudless and Hamlet P. Buglaroni? Is there any doubt that there is magic -- and blindness -- in relationships?

## **Dazed and Confused**

Gloria Fudless does not understand this.

Gloria Fudless does not understand a lot of things.

First, she blew off her boyfriend to come to the Vaganza. Bark Santorelli was already having trouble registering Gloria's interest in debating, but coming to a tournament on a Sunday, a weekend, left him completely clueless. Especially when she could have been with him instead.

Second, one of the attractions of coming today was not only to learn more about the forensics world, which she knows is sucking her in despite any resistance she might offer, but to hang out with Disney Davidson. They had chatted on-line; she thought that they might have a thing going. But in person he hasn't said three words to her all day. How could she have mistaken his interest in her? She knows he spent almost all of last week's NDL watching her out of the corner of his eye. No girl ever doesn't see something like that, as compared to boys, who if they see it -- and it happens -- never believe it. She was sort of intrigued by him, being in college and obviously being an industrial-strength vegan and sort of cute too. Why has he ignored her all day? She has no idea.

And then there's Hamlet P. Buglaroni.

Buglaroni.

Hamlet.

Hammy.

Where did he come from? He's almost sort of cute too, in a wierd sort of way. He wears two pairs of socks -- what is that all about? -- and he could use a pair of pants that reaches to his ankles, and he's about as cool as saddle shoes at a rap concert, but there's something about him that appeals to her. Maybe it's her maternal instinct, she thinks. Her nascent maternal instinct. She wants to mother him.

Gloria Fudless wants to mother a boy. Gloria Fudless, who's never owned a dog, cat, turtle, tetra, gerbil, ferret or any other infant substitute, suddenly is into straightening out people who obviously need straightening out.

Unbelievable. But true.

As they walk the streets outside the Lodestone building, Buglaroni does most of the talking. He's still going on about Walt Disney, as if he were some sort of personal

enemy. Gloria only half-listens. She finds him funny, but her mind is now occupied with trying to figure out why.

There are too many things today that she doesn't understand.

"Want a Surge?" Buglaroni asks her.

Stop thinking of him as Buglaroni, she tells herself. He's Hamlet. Hammy.

"Yeah. Sure."

They turn into a delicatessen, and pull two green bottles of Surge out of the refrigerator and put them down in front of the cash register. As Gloria begins to pull out her wallet, Buglaroni -- Hammy -- puts his hand on her arm.

"I'll get this," he says.

She tilts her head. "Thanks." She's like a high school princess on a first date.

She hates high school princesses.

She hates first dates.

"We should go back," Hammy says. "We should be there for the semifinal round. It should be soon." They are standing in front of the deli, each of them holding a soda.

"I guess so."

There is a moment where nothing happens, but Gloria knows full well what is going to happen. She can detect the neurons flashing in Hammy's brain as they send their message down his neck, down his right arm, down to his fingers.

He reaches out his hand, and takes hers in his.

The look on his face is a combination of terror, exhilaration and total confusion.

His fingers entwine around hers.

She lets it happen. Her fingers respond, and entwine around his.

He bends down slightly. She raises her head.

They kiss, not much more than a simple brush of the lips.

Finally, something Gloria Fudless understands.

"We should go back," she says, looking into his eyes.

"I guess so."

They stand there, staring at each other.

It is the beginning -- maybe -- of a beautiful friendship.

**Are Gloria and Hammy an item for the long term?**

**Will Disney ever find the right girl for him?**

**Will Bark Santorelli give up Gloria without a fight?**

**Was there a reason to watch the All-Star Game?**

**How much longer till school's back again?**

**You'll kick yourself and your nearest and dearest if you attempt to find the answer in our next episode: "Hermeneutics: The analysis of analysis, or the founder of the Hermits?"**