



# Episode 93

## The HPB Guide to Dating

### 1. Fetch de girl

For Hamlet P. Buglaroni, Jr., this is a first.

His first date. With a girl.

He hasn't got a clue what he is supposed to do.

The first issue is whether to meet her there or pick her up at her house. For Buglaroni, the idea of having his father drive them is the deciding factor. It might be more traditional to meet Gloria at her home, to parade himself in front of her parents' condemnatory glare, to wait agape at the bottom of the stairs with a corsage in his hand as his dream date appears on the second-floor landing, goddesslike, glowing in a designer gown... Except of course it is Gloria Fudless, who doesn't necessarily do goddess or glowing or gown, and whose parents are probably Addams family rejects to whom Buglaroni might be considered a step genetic step up. And his date with Gloria is only a stroll through the mall, not the local debutante cotillion.

Oh, yeah. Gloria would make some debutante.

Still, the idea of his father behind the wheel, and Buglaroni-- Where? With Gloria in the back, turning his old man into a Miss Daisy Driver? Or in the front while Gloria is in the back, where he can't even look at her, or else her in the front next to his old man fighting over whether to listen to Wynnona or whatever it is Gloria likes to listen to on the car stereo. What does Gloria like to listen to?

Something really, really alternative, Buglaroni finally decides.

Which means Jewel is out.

Thank goodness.

## **2. Dress appropriately**

They meet at the mall, inside the main entrance. Buglaroni arrives first, but only has to wait a few minutes before Gloria walks through the door. Buglaroni has his favorite red baseball cap stuck tightly on his head -- the hat that says nothing -- and he is wearing a Yankees sweatshirt and baggy jeans and his usual two pairs of socks. As always, Gloria is entirely devoid of color, a walking shroud, including a hint of black lipstick. She walks up to him and kisses him straight on the lips.

A good start. Immediately the fingers of both their hands intertwine and they stare into each other's eyes.

## **3. Have a clear goal (part one)**

"So what do you want to do?" Buglaroni.

"I dunno. What do you want to do?"

"I dunno. You want to eat?"

"I could eat."

"You hungry?"

"Hungry enough."

"You want, like, Burger King?"

"I guess so."

"Or we could do Chinese, you know. Except, like, you know, the Chinese food here sucks. Big time."

"Yeah."

"Or we could, like, have a taco."

"I don't want a taco."

"All right. We'll do Burger King then."

#### 4. Take control

They walk slowly, barely a stroll, the fingers of his right hand and her left hand still braided together. She leans into him as they walk. On the escalator, she puts her arm around him.

Buglaroni really likes that, Gloria's hand softly pressed into his waist while the rest of her leans against them as they rise to the second floor. It's sort of... sexy.

The mall is not crowded on a Tuesday evening like this. This is the hour of turnover, when the women with the strollers and the seniors with the walking shoes are replaced by the adolescents with the attitudes. But in terms of sheer numbers, adolescents, even the ones with juvenile criminal records, tend to stay home on a midweek school night.

"So, like, what do you want?" Buglaroni asks.

"Number 3 meal with a Coke."

"Okay." Buglaroni stares at the menu as if he's never seen it before. The number three is a burger and fries combination that costs \$4.59. What the hell, he'll get the same thing. The problem is, who is going to pay for it? That part of the evening has not yet been ironed out.

Here's the logic. It is a date. But not a date that either one of them started by asking the other one out. They simply agreed to meet at the mall. He didn't call her up and say, like, Hello, this is Buglaroni, you wanna go out? So the date was fait accompli. If it had been him calling her up like some Archie comic or something, he figures he would have to pay for it. But if it's a mutual arrangement, shouldn't they pay their own ways? If she had called him up for a date, shouldn't she pay for it then?

"Jeez," his father had said, shaking his head and handing him two twenty dollar bills when he had dropped him off. "The guy always pays. Don't even think about having the girl pay for anything."

Buglaroni had taken the money. "Things have, like, changed since you were dating," he said.

Ham Senior had rolled his eyes. "They'll never change that much."

"Gloria is, like, really modern. Maybe even postmodern."

"You want to go out with this girl more than once?"

"Sure."

"Then trust your old man. Pick up the tab."

Now, standing at the cashier, Buglaroni boldly orders two number threes with Cokes, and proceeds to pay for both.

"I'll pay for mine," Gloria says.

"No," Buglaroni says. "I'll pay."

"That's stupid. I can buy my own."

"I gotta pay."

"What do you mean, you gotta pay? I'm the one that's going to eat it."

"My father says the guy should pay. He gave me, like, forty bucks."

"Forty bucks?" Her eyes widen. "Hell. In that case, you can pay."

### **5. Have a clear goal (part two)**

"So you wanna go to a movie?" Buglaroni asks. They have finished their burgers and they are now strolling the wide corridors of the Veblen mall.

"I dunno."

"Let's see what's playing."

When they reach the cineplex, they examine the listings.

"There's nothing really all that good," Gloria says. "Except maybe that one." She points to a poster of a film with critics' blurbs that refer to it as one of the top films of the year.

Buglaroni immediately identifies the film in question as a chick flick. It stars three women who have won Academy Awards, but none within the last decade. The film is based on a novel that was featured on Oprah Winfrey. As a clincher, the rating is PG. Like any red-blooded American teen age male, Buglaroni would be forced to commit seppuku if he were to actually see this sort of movie in a theater. It is bad enough that he has had to watch them as videos with his grandmother: No torture is as great as a Shirley Maclaine movie.

Also playing is a film for which Buglaroni is easily identifiable as the target market. It stars an actor who can barely speak English (despite -- or perhaps because of -- being born in Bayonne, New Jersey), everyone pictured on the poster is carrying a weapon and has bulging muscles, including the female lead (whose name rings no bells but whose figure both rings the bell and wins a cigar), the rating is R, and there is a number at the end of the film title, indicating that this is the third installment in a series.

"How about that?" Buglaroni asks, indicating his choice.

He and Gloria stand staring at their date's choice of an evening's entertainment, then look back on their own selection.

"Let's walk," Gloria says.

"Yeah. Let's walk."

## **6. Do not worry about the past. Concentrate on the future.**

"Gloria!"

The voice, coming from behind, stops her in her tracks.

Buglaroni turns around. A tall, fairly nasty looking character with long dark hair pulled into a pony tail is standing next to a baseball card kiosk, calling out to them.

"Gloria!"

"Who's that?" Buglaroni asks.

"I thought this was his night off."

"Who is it?"

"My old boyfriend."

"Oh." Buglaroni looks back at the guy at the kiosk. He is wearing a black tee shirt that clearly shows off some serious biceps. He is also wearing black jeans and motorcycle boots. Buglaroni has to admit to himself that he is not surprised that this was the sort of guy Gloria might once have gone out with.

They have no alternative but to work their way over to him.

"Hi, Gloria."

"Hi, Bark."

The old boyfriend gives Buglaroni the once-over. Buglaroni looks away.

"Who's your friend?" Bark asks.

"Hamlet."

Bark snorts. "Hiya, Hamlet." He narrows his eyes and looks back at Gloria. "So whatcha doin'?"

"Nothing."

"You want to go out after I close up?"

Gloria shakes her head.

"I'm shutting down at eight. We could take Hamlet here home and do something."

She shakes her head again, a quick little no. "I don't think so."

Bark stares at Buglaroni. "You go to Bisonette?"

Buglaroni shakes his head. "Nighten Day."

"You got a last name?"

"Buglaroni."

"Bugarooni, huh. Hamlet Bugarooni." He looks at Gloria. "Are you desperate, or what?"

"Come on, Ham," she says, pulling Buglaroni's arm. "We're leaving."

"I'm talking to you," Bark says as they move away. "I said I'm talking to you!"

They keep walking.

"GLORIA!"

"That's your old boyfriend?" Buglaroni asks as they go back down the escalator.

"Yeah."

"When did you break up with him."

Gloria turns away. "I didn't. Not yet."

They step off the bottom of the escalator. Buglaroni looks back up, expecting Bark Santorelli to appear, raging, coming at them with the first available blunt object.

Bark is nowhere in sight.

"You ever going to tell him?" Buglaroni asks.

"I guess."

"You do want to break up with him, don't you?"

"I don't want to go out with him. I just don't want to tell him that I don't want to go out with him."

"Like the old song, 'Breaking Up is Hard to Do.'" Buglaroni is still keeping a watchful eye on the escalator. "Especially when your old boyfriend looks like he's spent the last six years at Attica," he adds, under his breath.

## **7. Enjoy some time alone**

They are standing next to a one-hour photo developer. An endless string of snapshots is rolling out of a large processing machine, automatically being cut into single pictures at the end of the line.

"I could watch this forever," Buglaroni says. "Look at this batch. Disney World."

Your average American family in varying combinations of the kids, Mom and the kids, Mom and Dad, Dad and the kids, some of the kids and Dad and Mom, et cetera, mixed and matched with Mickey Mouse, Winnie the Pooh, Mulan, Mulan and Winnie the Pooh, Mulan and the kids, Spaceship Earth, the Tower of Terror, et cetera.

"I hate Disney World," Gloria says. "It is so... gross."

Buglaroni shrugs. "I don't know. It's cool, I think."

"The Great American Nightmare. Look at that batch."

"Whoa!"

"Shades of Victoria's Secret."

"Na'ah. Only the first two. That one must be the grandmother. They, like, censor the snapshots, you know? If you have, like, naked stuff or anything, they pull 'em out and they don't give 'em to you."

"No."

"Sure. I know somebody who worked at one of these places. They, like, kept all the sexy pictures themselves and hung them up in the back room."

"That's not true."

"It is. You ever see any sexy pictures come out of one of these things? I mean, like, really sexy?"

"I guess not."

"Exactly." He looks at his watch. "My old man's coming to pick me up at eight thirty,"

"Mine's coming at eight."

"That doesn't give us much time left."

"Not much."

"What do you want to do?"

She moves in closer to him. "I wouldn't mind, you know, making out a little bit."

"In the mall?"

"Why not?" She raises her head and starts kissing him.

Hmmmm.

He starts kissing back.

"You're not in your living room here, you two."

They pull apart. A security guard is standing next to them, a walkie-talkie in his hand.

"If you're not shopping, you're leaving," he tells them.

"We're shopping," Gloria says angrily. She takes Buglaroni's hand and they walk away.

But it is the mall.

And there is nowhere to go. At least, nowhere to go to be alone.

### **8. Plan your next date now**

"So when will I see you again?" Gloria asks.

They are standing inside the main door. Her father's car has just pulled up.

"I gotta go to that audition thing Friday. How about Saturday?"

"Okay. What do you want to do?"



"I don't know. Hang out."

"You can come to my house. My parents won't be home."

Her house? Her parents out? Mes étoiles!

"See you," she says, grabbing one last, long, wet kiss that almost chokes the life out of him.

"See you," he responds a minute later, as she turns and flies out the doorway.

Oh yeah. Her house. Her parents out.

Mes étoiles.

**What will Gloria and Buglaroni do at Gloria's house with her parents not at home?**

**What will Bark do to Buglaroni after whatever it is Gloria and Buglaroni do at Gloria's house with her parents not at home?**

**How is Buglaroni's accidental injury insurance?**

**When will Gloria ever tell Bark that he's up a tree?**

**Will Christmas ever get here?**

**Who knows what evil lurks in the minds of our next episode: "Verboten: German word that follows a nounoten."**