

One Hundred Seventy Five First Dates

Written by  
Artimis Ott

Logline: What happens when a tight strung man gets stuck in a time loop of a first date he does not want to be on.

CHARACTERS:

JAMES - M, late 20s, An uptight lawyer who is very work, work, work, he's somewhat self-centered and needs to learn how to listen to other people.

STEPHANIE - F, 20s, A bubbly but smart girl with a load of sass and willing to speak up for what she wants.

SETTING: A cafe.

PROPS & FURNITURE:

Watch  
Purse  
Leather Bound Journal

Two Cafe Chairs  
One Small Round Table

SOUNDS:

Soft Jazz  
Buzzer  
Evil Laugh  
Distorted Jazz  
Rumbling Noise

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FIVE FIRST  
DATES

Lights up on a cafe. We are at a speed dating event. Soft jazz plays in the background. At the table sits STEPHANIE who is adjusting her makeup in her phone camera.

A buzzer goes off.

Enter JAMES, a tight strung man who always has his work on his mind. He sits down across from Stephanie, checking his watch.

STEPHANIE

Hello! Nice to meet you, I'm Stephanie!

JAMES

James, pleasure, let's make this quick though I can't stand hearing about another pet story.

STEPHANIE

Have you been hearing a lot of those tonight?

JAMES

It's like the starter small talk, 'Hello, what's your name? What do you do for work? Do you have any pets?'

STEPHANIE

Ugh, I hate small talk too, its the worst part of dating. Let's just skip over all that why don't we?

JAMES

Sounds good. Just, so you know this whole deal wasn't my idea. It was my intern's she thought it'd help me get my mind off of the case for a bit.

STEPHANIE

I know...

JAMES

What?

STEPHANIE

Oh! Just--I can kinda tell, you know, when people aren't really into dating.

JAMES

Okay...

STEPHANIE

Anyways! Case? That's the first time you've mentioned that!

JAMES

Yeah we've said like seven sentences to each other. But, I'm a lawyer. Probably shouldn't discuss details with anyone outside of the case-

STEPHANIE

I can keep a secret!

JAMES

I'm not gonna get into it all I'll say is steer clear of the McDonalds downtown for a bit.

STEPHANIE

What else do you do James? Other than being a lawyer and hating dating.

JAMES

I...dunno, work is kind of my whole life.

STEPHANIE

Really? Usually you come up with at least one hobby-

The buzzer sounds.

STEPHANIE

Shit-

JAMES

You know you're...uh...unique but I don't think that we're-

STEPHANIE

Just gimme one second!

Stephanie rifles through her purse and pulls out an old leather book.

STEPHANIE

Here we are!

JAMES

Ok Stephanie- bye!

James exits.

A buzzer sounds. The music starts again.

James enters, from the same place as before.

JAMES  
Ugh...not again.

STEPHANIE  
Hey, I'm Stephanie!

JAMES  
Lemme guess, you have a cat and some food-stagram page that I just need to follow.

STEPHANIE  
Wow, you're real aggressive this time.

JAMES  
Whatever, I'm just getting tired of this. I feel like I've been here for a million years.

James sits.

STEPHANIE  
Why do you hate pets so much?

JAMES  
What do you mean?

STEPHANIE  
Just- what you said about cats.

JAMES  
Oh it's not the pets. I can't stand pet people.

STEPHANIE  
Well just wait till you meet my cat-

JAMES  
Nope!

James gets up and storms away.

STEPHANIE  
Wait- wait- it was a joke!

Stephanie takes out the book.

The loop begins again.

James enters.

JAMES  
Wait...woah, I just- have I seen you before?

STEPHANIE  
Oh, maybe, I go out a lot I'm-

Stephanie...  
 JAMES

What?  
 STEPHANIE

JAMES  
 That's your name, wait...We've done this before.

STEPHANIE  
 I don't know what you're talking about. Sit down, we don't have a bunch of time--speed-dating you know!

JAMES  
 No, no, don't act normal we've been doing this, hundreds of times.

STEPHANIE  
 James just sit down we can-

JAMES  
 I didn't tell you my name this time. I don't know how--I don't know why--

Stephanie pulls out the book again.

STEPHANIE  
 (reading)  
 Dii speculi revertuntur tempus, incipe iterum donec-

JAMES  
 Shut up! Stop that-

James and Stephanie tug of war with the book.

STEPHANIE  
 recuperavero--quod--ah!

James falls back, getting the book from Stephanie.

STEPHANIE  
 What have you done?!

JAMES  
 You're crazy!

The music distorts, the buzzer sounds, the sound of a mirror shattering, the laugh of a distant god.

The lights shift. It is silent.

JAMES

What the FUCK?

STEPHANIE

Oh you've done it now- If you'd just given me a chance-

JAMES

I'm sorry?? This is *my* fault?! You're blaming me?

STEPHANIE

One hundred and seventy five times- and in all that time you couldn't listen to me for more than five minutes.

JAMES

One hundred seventy five?

STEPHANIE

Yes, and all I've learned is that you are actually a miserable person and I don't know why I've been like-romanticizing you in my head.

JAMES

I am not miserable, I am actually very content with my life you know.

STEPHANIE

Oh I'm sure you are. I mean the fact that you're a lawyer now does not surprise me one bit with your attitude.

JAMES

If I'm miserable than you're like a- a psychopath! Doing dark magic to have the same five minute date one hundred and seventy five times! With a man who has zero interest in you no less.

STEPHANIE

No interest? No, you're a misogynist who couldn't listen to me for more than a minute because you couldn't stand to listen to another girl talk about her cat. You're just a bad guy!

JAMES

Then why do all this if I'm such a horrible guy?

STEPHANIE

I- "No man is rich enough to buy back his past."  
(beat)

It's an Oliver Wilde quote. I thought- I dunno- I guess it's hard for you to believe but I did this because I love you.

JAMES

You love me? We met tonight.

STEPHANIE

This version of you met me tonight. I thought surely if I came back here we could start fresh, do things differently, do things right. But now you've broken the mirror and I'm pretty much doomed.

JAMES

You're not making any sense, you know that right?

STEPHANIE

Well knowing this version of you, I don't think you'd believe me if I told you.

JAMES

This version? Just explain what the hell is going on.

STEPHANIE

Well I met you this night, it was like five years ago for me-

JAMES

Are you implying you're from the future?

STEPHANIE

Yeah, keep up.

JAMES

So we were together?

(She nods)

What happened?

STEPHANIE

It just- I figured that I could come back and we could get a fresh start- but I didn't think you'd be this different.

JAMES

What's different about me?

STEPHANIE

Well you're a lawyer this time for starters. And you're a misogynist too.

JAMES

I am not! I think women are great, I love women- dating is just...not my cup of tea.

STEPHANIE

He warned me too, the past is never as you remember it. Oh and he said that things would drastically change if I went back, but hey love makes you do crazy things.

JAMES

Wait is time frozen right now?

STEPHANIE

Guess he's giving me one last shot, maybe to reflect. Like I said you broke the mirror.

JAMES

You keep talking as if I'm already filled in on everything.

STEPHANIE

I just wish everything ended differently.

JAMES

I think that's a black hole.

STEPHANIE

What do you mean?

JAMES

Regret is such a devouring entity.

STEPHANIE

Poetic,

JAMES

Shut up. We could spend eternity going back and forth and asking a million what ifs but I tend to think fate is doomed. Maybe this version of me is horrible to you for a reason? Maybe we're not like...destined to be with each other.

STEPHANIE

But I hate that, I don't want to accept that as an answer.

JAMES

So what, we spend eternity together? Miserable?

STEPHANIE

Yes? No? I dunno...maybe? Do you want that?

JAMES

Jesus, Steph, no. I can't believe you'd even ask that.

STEPHANIE

Sorry...

JAMES

It's fine. Maybe we'll have to do that anyways, unless you can say some magic words and unfreeze time.

STEPHANIE

I dunno, I suppose at some point we'll both be sent back. I'll go back to my time and you'll...go back to yours I guess.

JAMES

That's pretty bleak, in your timeline, did we at least give it a good shot?

STEPHANIE

I think so, it was pretty fun while it lasted. You're just not who I remember.

JAMES

Literally I am not, we're just- not meant to be? What's that saying? "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

STEPHANIE

I cannot believe you just said that.

JAMES

Hey! I'm not a poet or anything, don't expect me to say anything wild or profound.

They both laugh. Then silence.

STEPHANIE

God I've missed you.

JAMES

I'm sorry,

STEPHANIE

Why are you apologizing, I'm the one who trapped you in an eternal speed-dating time loop.

JAMES

It just felt right.  
(beat)  
Well...what now?

STEPHANIE

I...dunno. I guess we just sit. And wait.

JAMES

Tell me about your cat.

STEPHANIE

Really?

JAMES

Yeah why not we have the time.

STEPHANIE

Well she's a black tabby. She's like my comfort animal, I've had her ever since my mom died.

JAMES

Oh, I'm sorry.

STEPHANIE

It's fine. I kind of feel like she's still with me because of the cat. Like a part of her is living on in my cat.

JAMES

That's kind of beautiful.

STEPHANIE

I'm coping. But you know, what else can you really do?

JAMES

Yeah, I think we all just have to find a way to get through it.

There is a rumbling noise. Then  
that same distant laugh.

STEPHANIE

Well James, I wish this version of you the best. And do try and be a little more receptive.

JAMES

Yeah, maybe I was being a bit of a dick-wad.

STEPHANIE

Understatement of the century, hope your case goes well.

JAMES

I hope you find a way to move on.

STEPHANIE

Way to bring down the mood. Say goodbye eternity!

BOTH

Goodbye eternity!

The lights flicker then go dark.

Lights back up as the music  
restarts. The buzzer sounds. This  
time the table is empty. James  
enters. He takes a moment, then  
sits at Stephanie's side of the  
table.

CURTAIN.