



RUN FOR Love

ONLINE EDITOR RHALOU COMBINES HER LOVE OF RUNNING WITH BONA FIDE ROMANCE AND BRAVELY EMBARKS ON A RUNNING DATE

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As all the single ladies out there will attest, dating is a tough game. Particularly once you hit your thirties and your tastes become a touch more discerning. I've been flying solo for a couple of years now and can officially confirm that men really do come from Mars, and singletons need mortal combat training and a steely resolve to survive the dating game in the London jungle.

I've been on a few dating adventures over the past two years, including blind, speed and rave dating, none of which I would recommend as good ways to meet eligible bachelors. Speed dating was the dulllest evening of my life (explaining the origins of my exotic name 20 times in a row to boring city boys is not my idea of fun), so I rejected all forms of organised dating and decided to freestyle.

IT'S A DATE

But meeting losers on sticky dance floors late at night quickly loses its appeal. Locking eyes with hot boys across crowded nightclubs might feel like destiny in the making after a few sambucas, but statistically, if you meet someone under the guise of vast quantities of alcohol, the chances of the gentleman in question being

secretly under 25 or a raving lunatic in the cold light of day is alarmingly high.

Even when I have met interesting people, trying to explain why I'd rather go running than get pissed and watch *The X Factor* to someone who's never been bitten by the running bug is tricky. When extolling the virtues of our favourite pastime, us die-hard runners do sound a bit like crazed drug addicts.

So, what's a single running-obsessed girl to do? Why, go on a run date of course! Thankfully, destiny intervened and before I had a chance to enter the convent, an interesting Twitter friend (we'll call him Ultraboy) asked if I'd like him to pace me for The Bank of Scotland Great Scottish Run. Being naive, I assumed he was being friendly. But it turns out that, in run world, 'Can I pace you?' is the new 'Can I take you out?' I found myself preparing for not only a half marathon, but also a hot date in motion with an ultrarunner.

LOVE ON THE RUN

In some ways, preparing for a running date is easier than conventional dating. You know what you're going to wear and you know exactly what you're going to do. And running next to a prospective partner certainly makes a girl up her game. The tricky part is not hitting the metaphorical wall and maintaining polite conversation without dying.

Aside from the whole red-faced sweating-like-a-sausage aspect, in

many ways running is the perfect environment for romance. You have an instant hobby in common; if he still fancies you with 13.1 miles of sweat on your face you know he must be genuine; and you'll never run out of things to talk about. Oh, and he's considerably more likely to be fit! I was still scared out of my mind, though.

Thankfully, it turned out to be a perfect day out. The sun was shining, the date went really well, my pacer was a total gentleman and I even shaved 13 whole minutes off my PB! It was refreshing to meet someone in a sober environment, surrounded by thousands of happy people who were all willing us to succeed.

So, to all you single ladies looking for love, if you get a chance to go on a running date, do it. It's a great way to meet interesting people and if it doesn't turn out well, you can always run away! It's still early days, so I won't reveal too much about Ultraboy, but I have mysteriously signed up for my first ultramarathon this winter, so watch this space... ▣

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