

Janice sipped her coffee, not really knowing what to say as her friend continued to talk. They had met up for their weekly coffee date and Cathy hadn't stopped talking since they got there. It wasn't that Janice didn't want to hear all her woes, it was just that she didn't want to hear them every single time they went anywhere.

Ever since Cathy had split with her husband three years earlier, she had been on what seemed to be a permanent downer. Her husband had left her for a younger model, leaving Cathy with their two sullen, moody -placing the blame on their mother- teenagers. And Cathy blamed herself too. She had put on a few pounds over the years and was convinced that was why Derek had left her, because, of course, she had made him sleep with the girl from the corner shop. She had forced him to get caught with his pants down when she went to pick up a late-night bottle of wine, believing him when he said he would be away on business for the night.

Cathy's self-belief was in the toilet, no matter what Janice did to make her feel better. They had gone on diets together, joined the gym together, bought a whole new wardrobe and still she was miserable. Janice took her role as best friend very seriously but she was at a loss what to do next.

"I don't want a man," Cathy was saying now, "but it would be nice to know that someone could still fancy me, even just a little bit."

Janice nodded her agreement, making little sounds of encouragement as she bit into her low-calorie muffin. It tasted of nothing, not that she expected it to. Diet food was never her favourite.

"You know, just a bit of fun to make me feel better," Cathy continued to muse as she sipped at her latte. "The kids would never accept a boyfriend, and honestly, I couldn't trust anyone else again. But just to know that I'm not past it, that I'm not entirely over the hill. That would be good. You know I've never just had fun, like a one night stand. I'm 40 next month. How sad is that?"

Jan looked at her friend, taking in her words and before she knew what she was doing, she had opened her mouth and blurted out a suggestion. "Let's go out Saturday night."

Cathy shook her head, making a face. "I don't know, I was going to watch X-Factor and order a pizza." But Janice was having none of it, an idea was forming in her head, a plan so cunning that, if it worked, would perk her friend up completely.

"No, no excuses. You are not spending another night at home eating and watching TV. We're going out. You're going to get your hair done, buy a new dress and make an effort. Then we are going to get drunk, pick up men and enjoy ourselves for once."

Janice didn't give her friend a chance to argue, just drained her coffee and stood up. "Saturday night, I'll pick you up at 8. Be ready or I'll drag you out in that ratty bathrobe you keep wearing."

Well, there wasn't much Cathy could say to that.

Cathy huffed at her hair as she attempted yet again to curl it, though she didn't see the point of doing it really. She was too old for all this, too old to squeeze herself into skinny jeans and a sparkly top, to slap on some makeup and prance into a bar filled with people practically the same age as her kids. What was Janice thinking? Seriously, she was sure that her best friend had actually lost her mind.

Janice was pleasantly surprised when she arrived to pick up her friend. Cathy had actually made an effort, or what passed as an effort, her friend wasn't really one for girly primping. Jan was pretty sure that her friend's eyeshadow was left over from before the kids were born, a total 80's throwback. But no matter. The idea of the night was to get her out and having fun, to get her to realise that her life hadn't ended along with her marriage.

Two drinks and some unsuccessful flirting attempts later and Cathy wanted nothing more than to go home, have a hot bath and catch the end of X-Factor. Janice was happily pointing out men

that she thought worthy of her attention, but Cathy didn't like any of them and they sure looked like they didn't like her. They looked at her like she had suddenly spouted a dancing boobs on her head.

Janice kept pushing her to talk to them, saying that she had to take a chance, but all it was doing was making Cathy feel worse.

Cathy sipped her latest drink while her friend excused herself to go to the bathroom. She kept drinking in the hope that the alcohol would help numb the horror that was this night. Janice had dragged her to the dance floor but she had felt like a cumbersome, lumbering whale surrounded by graceful, svelte dolphins. She had tripped over her own feet too many times to count, flailing her arms like a demented windmill. She hated dancing, she had the coordination of a drunk baby giraffe.

"Can I buy you another drink?" A smooth, deep masculine voice rumbled in her ear. Cathy span round in her seat to face him, almost fainting when she saw the face that belonged to the voice. He was perfect. Early forties maybe, his hair with just the tiniest sprinkling of grey hairs in all that dark black, giving him a mature, yet sexy air. His chin was clean shaven, his eyes a twinkling blue with just a hint of laughter lines branching out from the corners. He was smartly dressed yet casual in dark jeans, teamed with a nice shirt that he had left open at the neck and unbuttoned slightly. He looked casual, cool, and way out of her league.

"I'm sorry?" she asked, drinking in the radiance that was him. He had obviously mistaken her for someone else.

He smiled, showing white, even teeth, his smile revealing dimples that she had the unhealthy urge to lick. He would be the answer to her prayers, the perfect confidence boost to help her fragile ego. He would be the perfect antidote to her midlife blues. Not that he'd ever look twice at someone like her.

"I said, can I buy you another drink? Your glass is almost empty. I saw you dancing and thought you might be thirsty"

Cathy felt her cheeks heat in a blush of pure embarrassment. He had seen her dancing like an elephant in ballet shoes. Could it be any worse? She was about to say no, thank you, to push him away so he wouldn't get too close, but forced herself to pause for a moment and think it through.

She was single, and even though it would always kinda feel like she was cheating on her husband, even though he was the one that actually did the deed, she still couldn't imagine taking anyone else into her life, he had hurt her too badly. But she had promised herself that she would try to move on, that she would be brave and try other things, as well as other men. This one here might not be Mr Right, but he could definitely be Mr right now.

She nodded, decision made. "Yes, I'd love a drink, thank you". He introduced himself as Graham as they sipped their drinks, getting to know each other. He was smart, friendly, nice and above all, seemed to like her.

Janice saw the man approaching her friend at the bar and smiled to herself, keeping away so they could talk. Her grin widened as Cathy looked over to her as they both stood up, lifting her eyebrow in a 'What do you think? He's not half bad is he?' kind of way. Janice just nodded back and made little shooing motions with her hands. Her friend nodded and confidently slipped her arm through his, a wide smile on her face.

Janice watched her friend go, noting the spark in her eyes, the way she moved a little more confidently as she sauntered along beside him. Cathy had defiantly got the seductive roll of her hips right.

She checked her phone once she was alone, pulling up the webpage she had used earlier and leaving feedback. Graham was just as perfect in real life as he had been on the page. The perfect height, the perfect age, the perfect body with his muscles showing a distinctive bulge under his sleeves, and the perfect seductive patter. Yes, he would be the perfect remedy to her friends abandoned housewife woes. Looking around the bar at the lads way too young for them and the middle aged balding men that had the look of weekend dad stamped all over them, Janice was glad

she had taken matters into her own hands. She had never thought she would have need for an escort service but sometimes you just had to accept that you got what you paid for.