

this july girl, travelling pens an quick memo to Fate

A proponent of long-term singlehood and low-maintenance relationships, **Helen Croydon** shares her monthly extract from her **Diary of a Commitment-Phobe**.

Dear Fate,

I am writing to complain about your unreliable service and your increasingly irrational policy-making. I have been a life-long subscriber to your ethos but to my knowledge, I have yet to be shown any priority treatment. Several times, my life requests have not been enacted and, more worryingly, there have been countless examples where I have duly carried out a seemingly logical chain of events, only to find that the exact opposite to what I was trying to achieve unexpectedly materialised. Moreover, despite the injustice, I have received no explanation on your strategy.

I am CC-ing my readers of the *Erotic Review*, Fate, because each month I share highlights from my diary and as such they have a vested interest to know that the body responsible for shaping the entertainment value of those entries is carrying out its duties responsibly and without prejudice.



Of late, Fate, evidence has implied the contrary. I have grounds to suspect that you have carved out my fortune so that forever more I will always bump into bumbling, salivating, aesthetically challenged boys, at the moments when I am perfectly groomed and in my best dress and matching heels, unarmed with an excuse to worm out of any unwelcome attention. However, when it is the case that there is a handsome, agreeable, exciting, witty male specimen to whom I have taken a shine, you seem to arrange cruelly close missed encounters. Or you cast a spell of shame on me whereby said hunks

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appear at ill-fortuned moments, such as when I am spilling the contents of my handbag – tampons included – all over the pavement; or when I have lipstick on my teeth; or the only day in my entire life when I'm walking to the Tube in bright red flip flops because my *real* shoes are tucked in their Louis Vuitton protective case in my handbag.

I have discussed the issue with many of my neurotic female friends, who have all been told they have unusually intense analytical skills when it comes to males, and they agree that these incidents do not

seem to be the fault of my own actions, but is the warped workings of you, Fate. I shall cite a few recent examples to highlight my case:

Last month, I told readers of the *Erotic Review* that I met a handsome French sommelier in one of London's finest restaurants. The ingredients were there, Fate – a nationality synonymous with romance, a tall toned physique that made my lower abdomen flutter, a limitless take-away wine tab (though Sommelier said something about it being linked to a letter from HR) and a long summer evening to ourselves in my garden. But Fate, you managed to deal me the planet's only bad French lover. After three hours of pretending to understand the difference between the 2003 Montrachet which came from grapes on top of a hill, and the 2005 Montrachet, which came from grapes on the side of a hill, I ushered

Sommelier into my cave and well, Fate, I had rather he had left his clothes on.

The volume of sweat he produced was fairly much in proportion to the volume of wine we had drunk. And then, Fate, after you let me endure this unpleasantly for a good twenty minutes, leading me to believe that this is a small damp price to pay for a dalliance of memorable magnitude, you let anxiety strike him down – literally. Just when the fruits of my dating rituals were about to cash in. It was exactly like the time when you allowed me to cook the perfect duck comfit, unaided – five hours of preparation and three bowls of washing up – and then you made me slip and fall *just* as I took it out of the oven in front of five hungry dinner guests. You thought I'd forgotten about that, Fate, didn't you? The sommelier tried to rectify his anxiety issue; he made all sorts of strange hand gestures; he flung himself on top of me; He moved me around but the *petit problème* would not go away, Fate. Or rather the *petit problème* would not arise.

No sooner had I put the idea to bed that you, Fate, had any involvement in such a chance misfortune, that I found myself in another infelicitous situation. I went to a garden party of a friend whose German husband just turned 40. The German detail may at first seem irrelevant, but I feel that it was a noteworthy co-incidence, Fate, that you gave me reason to write about a German party when this month's issue is The German Issue. If I didn't know better, I would suspect that you had for once provided me with something fortuitous.

There were marquees and everything at this German party. I only knew two people – a bright, fair, dashing young (ish) thing whom I have had a semi-forgotten-about crush on since the first and last time we met (the 39th birthday). And then, a virtually mute German who is about 5'2" with eyes which turn to saucers whenever he sees a female, whom I have had a semi-paranoid fear of since the first and last time we met (the 38th birthday).

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When I arrived, Fate, who did you place right in the entrance? Yes, Mute German. It was exhausting, Fate, because you also made the lady with the champagne trays miss us out. So I had to formulate sober conversation, while at the same time thinking of new ways to direct his gaze away from my chest.

Meanwhile, Fate, you positioned Bright Dashing Hunk in the furthest possible marquee. I spotted his head bobbing up and down in delight as he giggled with some voluptuous Brunette in a shorter dress than I.

When I did escape Mute German, I had to clamour through several thoughtless obstacles which you had put in the way, Fate – a slippery piece of bald lawn, which sent me skidding into a 62-year-old drunk man who then didn't let go of me for a very inappropriate 45 seconds. Oh yes, and then there was your very funny idea to hand me a misshaped canapé which was too big to eat in one mouthful. You left me with the choice of biting it in half and sending vol-au-vent sauce all down my chin, or popping it into my mouth in one go, temporarily imitating a wide mouthed frog. I opted for the latter. And that, Fate, was the exact moment at which Bright Hunk left Voluptuous Brunette and swaggered his sexy bottom across the lawn to me? I tried to say hello but obviously the bulk of pastry filling every crevice of my mouth meant I emitted a sound akin to having been kidnapped and gagged. You didn't give me a good look, Fate. Just as I swallowed, ready to return a delayed greeting to Bright Hunk, you sent over a vivacious red-head in a lime green Versace dress. Believing that Bright Hunk was in between conversations, she tapped him on the shoulder and usurped my conversation. So then, Fate – let me just clarify the now-confused scene – I was left, having crossed the entire length of all three marquees, with no target to talk to.

I do acknowledge one favourable act by you, however. In fairness, you did promptly provide me with another German who approached and opened a conversation, graciously scooping me out of the embarrassing position of hovering awkwardly behind Bright Hunk and Glamorous Green Dress. It was a thoughtful gesture, Fate, even though the German was as interesting as a

tortoise on Valium.

And finally, Fate, you threw in another character, right around my sixth plastic flute of Prosecco. I must say he took my fancy in a grand way. I went to the trouble of flirting and learning his name and pretending to take an interest in what he does. And then Fate, just as I had thrashed out a believable excuse to exchange emails, you walloped a wedding ring on his finger. Now where was that in my line of vision for the first five minutes, hey?

I hope, given the range of scenes I have brought to your attention above, that you will reassess my treatment as long-term believer in you, Fate. I do not wish to trouble you by asking for a detailed breakdown of your hidden agenda, as I have some sort of vague understanding that this may be damaging to my life interests on a higher level. But I do hope you can make my journey to my unknown destination (which I trust it is somewhere very high-up and important) a whole lot faster and more exciting and pleasurable. And if you could throw in some consequence-less guilty pleasures along the way, that would also be most appreciated.

Yours sometimes unfaithfully,

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CC: *Erotic Review*,
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