

Lisa Harris

First Date

"I've got it made if she hooks up with him," the red Jimmy Choo slingbacks mused. "I'll be tete-a-tete-ing with Obama's pumps, walking Oscar's red carpet, and ogling this season's creations from New York Fashion Week's front row. I'll be box-pampered. From the precision of his trouser crease I can tell that he's the type of guy who keeps his shoes in cases instead of throwing us helter-skelter into the closet. By his quick steps, I'm sure he's a man with a plan. If she hooks up with him, I'll kick back on this couch while she flips through Vogue, checking out the latest styles. With his Am Ex Platinum handy, she'll speed-dial Marc Jacobs for a little black number that highlights all my best features. One eyeful of my barely-there-straps will open this show. I've got it made, once she hooks up with him."

"Cool chick," the black Cole Haan loafers observed. "If he hooks up with her, I'll see the games from the forty-yard line. She's a league fan for sure by the look of her scarf's signature red, gold, and blue colors. Her team must be one of the new franchises. I don't recognize the 'H' scrawled across it. Four-inch stilettos! She'll catch all the plays from that height. She'll never yank his attention from the field to ask 'What just happened' or 'Why did the ref call it that way?' Let's toss the coin and jumpstart this game. I've got it made, once he hooks up with her."

The woman rearranged herself on the man's couch. As she crossed her legs, one sandal strap slipped from her ankle. She turned her head to one side, smiled at the man, and patted the seat beside her. The man eyed the sandal dangling from her foot, the heel bouncing in a provocative manner. With the woman's hand in mid-pat, he rose from the adjacent overstuffed chair. Settling into the couch's other corner, he shifted his attention away from the sinewy slingback and returned the woman's smile.

"Men are so predictable," the Jimmy Choos pointed out. "One flash of my strap, and bam, he's locked his Navi onto us like rubber treads stick to new asphalt. Another flirty twist of her ankle and he'll practically be in her lap, and I'll be heel-to-toeing with the Haans. Even from two cushions away I can tell those loafers have what it takes to keep time with me. Supple leather. Well groomed. These are shoes that know how to take charge, shoes whose man will look after us. Reeling him in will be easy-peasy lemon-squeezey. The Haans and I'll be sharing a shelf in no time. Jimmy Choo Slingback-Haan has a nice ring to it. Maybe Jimmy Haan. It's simpler, less complicated. No. Sounds like a cheap pair of flats. How about Choo-Haan Slings—CHAS for short—now that's sexy."

"Ah oh, time to huddle," the Cole Haans decided. "Those stilettos are Jimmy Choos. Real Jimmies, not bargain-priced knock-offs. We need an entirely new strategy. If he wants this one he'd better play like he's competing for an MVP title. A Choo-wearing woman knows her stuff. She's up on Fashion Week's latest

as if they had danced a million times before.

"Mmmmm," the Jimmy Choos pondered. "We're in perfect synch. This could go somewhere. Somewhere good."

Guitars chords hummed with a brisk up-down strum. The man's tempo quickened and he swung her around in a mad embrace. His trouser cuffs flowed across the bottom of his shoes, revealing leather tassels. The music ended and the two stared at one another.

"So much for being called CHAS," the Jimmy Choos concluded. "She'll have to dump him now. What would her friends think if she shows up with a guy who wears drapery pullbacks on his shoes? Everyone will say she settled. Everyone knows it's been ages since a man called her twice. I can hear them whispering. They'll question her sensibilities, say she's desperate. No one will invite her anywhere and I'll be stuck in my box forever. I can't let that happen."

Speaking with an urgency of an imminent crisis, the woman asked for the whereabouts of the bathroom. The man pointed down the hallway, past the front door. He sighed as she turned and scurried away, her heels click-clacking on the tongue-and-groove wooden floor.

"Big-time score," the Cole Haans reckoned. "She's the one. Oh man, the way the Choos' uppers fit perfectly with mine. Like we were cut from the same skin. She didn't notice my tassel, not one little bit. What was I thinking? She could care less about appearances. Probably never occurred to her that I'm last year's model. I can see this going somewhere. Somewhere good. Our lonely nights will be like last season, best forgotten. Good times, Baby. Good times."

The woman locked the bathroom door and plunked her bag on the counter. Her scarf drooped from her shoulders like stringy hair long for a salon treatment. She sighed.

"Now she'll have to start over," the Jimmy Choos brooded. "Why is it that well-dressed guys treat her poorly but guys that look after her gotta be thrown back because they're fashion don'ts? Too bad he's such a loser, what with his shoes screaming Discount House Special."

The woman retied the scarf, teasing and tweaking the fabric so that the "H" fell across her shoulder just so. After securing the draping with a gold pin, the woman studied herself. She smiled, content that she looked every bit the exorbitant number of Euros she had paid for the yard of cloth at the designer's boutique, two blocks off the Champs-Elysees. She plucked a lipstick canister from her purse and ran Number 7992, It's All About Me Mauve, across her lips while tapping one toe.

"What are these on the floor anyway?" The Jimmy Choos wondered. "Team decals? Whoever designed these must have been color blind. Even if we did stay, this wouldn't work. Not one little bit. Black and blue just don't go together."

Pulling a tissue from her purse, the woman blotted her lips. She tossed the pink-smearred Kleenex into the trash.

"The Haans could've stepped on my toe-box and jammed against my heel but they didn't. They behaved themselves, stayed a respectful distance away. Friendly, but not overbearing. Maybe it's impossible to find what she wants.

Maybe nice guys just don't care about taste. Maybe she does have to settle."

The woman unclasped the gold pin and the scarf tumbled from her neck. Pursing her lips together so that she further faded the lipstick, the woman carefully folded the scarf and slid it into her bag. She stowed her purse on the table next to the front door.

"I think she's onto something. That lip color is a dead ringer for Number 639, Totally Committed Taupe. But if we're sticking around, the team motif is history."

"What's taking Ms. Choolicious so long?" the Cole Haans pondered. "What is she doing in there? How can brushing hair or dabbing lipstick on be so time consuming?"

The man leaned against the hallway wall, his eyes set on the bathroom door. One foot rested on the floor, the other against the wainscoting.

"Maybe we did something wrong and she's calling a friend to pick her up. What goofy thing was it? Maybe it was my tassel. Maybe she knows my circumstances. She couldn't have ducked out the door already? Could she have?"

The man's foot slid from the wall onto the floor. He crossed his arms.

"No, we've been watching the hall like a quarterback eyeballs defense before the snap. There is no way we would have missed her."

Waving his hands as if flinging something aside, the man straightened.

"This is so lame. If she came out now, she'd see us hanging around. Like we've nothing better to do."

Turning, the man briskly walked in the opposite direction, barely missing the coffee table as he crossed the room.

"Good game plan: look busy."

Counting to ten after hearing her click-clack return, he backed through the kitchen's swinging door into the living room clutching a tray with both hands so as to still the feeling of being at sixes and sevens. He placed the platter, typically reserved for company, on the coffee table and brushed his hands over the Ritz crackers and Velveeta cheese, suggesting she have a snack. Peeking through the tidbits were splashes of navy-blue, silver, white, and red, arranged in the shape of a football helmet and chin guard.

"Not immediately upping the room's temp when she was freezing to death was bad enough," the Jimmy Choos declared. "But processed cheese? Too much."

Settling into the couch, the woman tucked her shoes under her, a red toe poking from the dress' hem. She picked up the knife, preparing to cut a slice, but the brick was still in its plastic wrap. Smiling at the man, she tilted her head toward the tray.

The man first looked at the woman and then following the direction of her nod stared at the food. It took him four head turns before he understood what had happened and held out his palm for the knife.

"Hand off! Here's his chance to pound down the field," the Cole Haans asserted. "He can prove how invaluable he is and eat at the same time. Sweet!"

Dropping into the chair, the man attacked the packaging, sawing the edge but the wrap wouldn't give. Planting his shoes square on the floor, he tried to break the factory-seal. With each pass, the tassels of his shoes jerked from side to

side like the strut of a runway model.

“On a closer look, his doo-dad side-stitching is fashion forward,” the Jimmy Choos reflected. “But tassels are definitely retro. How avant-garde—imaginative and classic all at once.”

The heat from the man’s hand, as well as his determined grip, turned the once refrigerator-firm cheese to mush. Circles of perspiration grew under each armpit from his attempts to unwrap his offering. He raised the blade into the air and thrust it into the taut wrapping. The force of the blow punctured the plastic with a pressure-releasing pistol-shot pop, startling the woman. Her feet jerked forward and smacked the tray, flinging the crackers into the air. Right behind the Ritz disks, a spray of pummeled Velveeta-ooze flew in a perfect arc over the side of the coffee table, landing on the man’s loafers with a precision rarely seen even in Super Bowl overtime passes. The loafers’ side-stitching and tassels disappeared under Ritz-Velveeta goo.

Shaking his shoes as slightly as possible so as to not attract too much attention, the man smiled meekly. The woman rose. The man’s shoulders slouched as he cast his eyes away and studied the mess on his feet. Congealing Velveeta with cracker and leather bits poking here and there rippled in lavalike folds across his loafers. She moved with mincing steps between the coffee table and the couch. Once clear of the furniture, she made a beeline for the door. Continuing to gaze at the jumble, the man gnawed on his bottom lip.

“Jeeze, what a fumble,” the Cole Haans concluded. “This has gone south. He’ll be riding the pine for a long time. May never invite a babe over again.”

She snatched her bag from the side-table next to the door. Opening the clasp, her fingers rummaged through a Kleenex package, a hairbrush, Jackie O sunglasses, a cell phone, eyebrow pencils, a tube of Totally Committed Taupe, a monogrammed pen, and a coin purse.

“She’s escaped,” the Jimmy Choos cheered. “She’s no candidate for domestic diva. Wouldn’t know how to clean up the muck if it bit her on the behind.”

The woman retraced her steps, clattering across the floor. Her gait slowed as she approached the chair. She lightly brushed against the man’s cotton shirt with manicured nails. At her touch, the man turned towards her. Nestled in her outstretched hand was the scarf.

In the exclusive country club’s ballroom, with a view of sailboats bobbing in the marina, a group of revelers watched The Game on a well-positioned widescreen. The couple sat in the middle of the pack, dressed in matching colors. Behind them tuxedoed waiters passed hors d’oeuvres: delicately sliced Velveeta on Ritz crackers. As pigskin flew through the goal post, the woman stamped her four-inch stilettos, whooping all the while, and the man raised his champagne flute, saluting both the win and the couple’s ten-year anniversary.

Still Here

The VLP Magazine

2014

University of South Dakota

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The Vermillion Literary Project (VLP) is an award-winning student literary organization of the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota. The VLP publishes this annual literary journal and hosts literary events throughout the academic year. These include the annual Short Story Contest, annual Sorcerer's Apprentice Creative Writing Camp for high school students (in collaboration with the Dakota Writing project), annual Poetry Festival, monthly VLP Reading & Poetry SLAM, and many other events.

For more information about the VLP, visit <http://sites.usd.edu/projlit>

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