

Zoom Dating

A comedy for online performance

By Jake Lewis

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CAST

DANNY - over-the-top host, young

HELEN - a plain Jane, 30s-40s

LARRY - quickly flips his lid, any age

BRANDON - a bad boy, young

LAYLA - Brandon's girlfriend, younger than him

JACK - Helen's dad, 60s-70s

LUIS - a down-on-his-luck dancer, any age

SETTING

During the coronavirus quarantine

Lights up on:

A Zoom screen. Several men and women are visible, as well as the host, DANNY, who has way too much energy. There is one window that is empty, showing only a blank wall behind where the person would sit. People all look slightly uncomfortable.

DANNY: Good evening, chicos y chicas, and welcome to Zoom dating! Our lawyers wanted to tell you that our name is not to be confused with the teleconferencing software, but just a faster version of speed dating! Get it? Got it! Good! It looks like we're all in da' hizzous, so let me get this mamacita cookin' by given' you the 411 about yours truly. I'm Danny, and I'm your Host with the Most. That means I'll be in charge of keeping things organized, and matching you up with your preferred type from the dating profiles you all filled out prior to this evening! Any questions?

Participants nod or offer mumbled assents.

DANNY: Sa-weet! So in just a momento, you will be split up into a Breakout Room! Oooh! No, no, no, it's not like that game you played in a closet at Carol's 13th birthday party! You'll meet up with another Zoomer there and get two minutes in Heaven, or Hell, to chat-a-roo before you get paired up with another dude...or dudette! Or both, if you know what I'm saying!

Participants show a variety of reactions -- confused, amused, etc.

DANNY: Okey dokey, my little artichokeys, here we go!

Everyone's face disappears except for HELEN.

HELEN: Oh! I guess I'm in that room thing...

Another screen pops up, and we see LARRY. He is a decent-looking man, and HELEN reacts accordingly.

HELEN: Oh, hello there! I'm Helen! How are you doing tonight?

LARRY mouths "Hello, how are you?" but he is not heard.. He continues to smile and look like nothing is wrong.

HELEN: Your microphone is muted!

LARRY's smile begins to break slightly. We see him beginning to look around his screen, trying to figure out what to do.

HELEN: Down in the lower left hand corner!

LARRY looks in the upper right hand corner. He is now entering panic mode.

HELEN: No! Bottom!

LARRY is freaking out.

HELEN: Um, calm down. It's ok!

LARRY looks into the camera, and has clearly blown a fuse. He screams into the camera, and then gets up out of his seat, and begins trashing the room behind him.

HELEN: Larry! Larry!

LARRY goes back to computer, stares into camera, and then smashes it.

HELEN: Well. Ok then.

DANNY (voice-over): Ok, mon amis, your time is now up, and a new match will be rotated in! With any ado, here's Date #2!

BRANDON appears on screen, but he's all pressed up close to the camera, so it's zoomed in very close on his eye or nose.

HELEN: Hi?

BRANDON: (whispering) Hey babe.

HELEN: Well, your mic works at least.

BRANDON: You know it, cutie.

HELEN: It's kind of hard to see you--

BRANDON: Oh, yeah. Sorry about that, sweetheart.

He pulls back but only incrementally.

HELEN: Um, thanks. So, I'm Helen.

BRANDON: Sup? My name is Brandon but you can call me Do.

HELEN: Do? Like the D-O in your name? Never heard that nickname before.

BRANDON: Yeah. Do. Me.

HELEN: Right. Can I ask...why are you whispering?

BRANDON: Oh, yeah, I, uh...have laryngitis. That's why I'm up close to the mic.

HELEN: But most mics aren't up there--

BRANDON: So can I see your body, sexy lady?

HELEN: Excuse me?

BRANDON: Don't worry, no one else will know.

HELEN: What about Danny? He's watching all these chats.

BRANDON: Trust me, you're not his type. C'mon, it'll be our little secret.

From the background, LAYLA's voice is heard.

LAYLA: Do? Where are you?

BRANDON: *(In a normal voice)* Uh, just doing some paperwork, hon!
Nothing fun!

HELEN: Nothing fun? Gee, thanks. *(Beat.)* Do you...do you live with your mom? And I thought you had laryngitis?

Before BRANDON can answer, LAYLA enters.

BRANDON: Hey babe!

They kiss.

HELEN: Definitely not his mom. At least, I hope not.

LAYLA looks at the monitor.

LAYLA: Oh, hi! Didn't see you there! *(To BRANDON.)* Who's she?

BRANDON: That's just *(squints to read her name on the screen)* Helen. From work. We're just about done here.

HELEN: That's the truth.

LAYLA: Hi, Helen! Nice to meet you! I'm Layla! *(To BRANDON.)* Does she want to watch?

BRANDON and LAYLA look at HELEN. After a moment, screen blacks out on them.

DANNY: *(voice-over)* That does it for Date #2! I hope you're hitting it off big-time with your matches!

HELEN: I'd like to hit *you*, big time.

DANNY: But enough of me, here's Date #3! Poetry! If that doesn't set the romantic mood, I don't know what will!

A new screen pops up with JACK appearing.

HELEN: *(does a double-take)* Dad?!?

JACK: Hey, honey!

HELEN: What--how--?

JACK: Isn't this funny?

HELEN: No, not at all!

JACK: Technology these days! For all the good it can do, every once in awhile there are these little glitches! Wait until I tell your mother!

HELEN: Mom's been dead for 5 years!

JACK: I know *that*, but I still talk to her everyday!

HELEN: Piece of advice -- Don't say that to any women on here. (*Beat.*) And anyway, what're you doing on here to begin with?!?

JACK: What do you expect? I'm horny!

HELEN: Please! Stop! I don't want to hear that!

JACK: And so are you, apparently, if you're resorting to this to get a date!

HELEN: I am not horny!

JACK gives a "Yeah right" look.

HELEN: I'm not having this conversation with *my father!*

JACK: Well, we have a little more time to kill until the next date starts.

HELEN: (*Resignedly.*) How is it going for you so far?

JACK: I'm on fire! Want to hear my opening line?

HELEN: Probably not.

JACK: "Hey, got any Polish in ya? No? Want some?"

HELEN: Those poor women.

JACK: Your mother and I were like bunny rabbits, and now with her gone, and all the women my age dying off, a guy needs a little affection.

HELEN: Strange, how you can both make me want to puke and pity you. To And anyway, for your information, Dad, I'm here because...well, I'm lonely, dammit! And that's not the same as what you are! I just can't seem to meet the right guy in real life! Well, back when there was real life. It's not easier in quarantine!

JACK: Well, for what it's worth, I always thought you were perfect.

HELEN: Thanks.

JACK: You're smart, funny, and beautiful.

HELEN: Stop. I'm not.

JACK: Hotter than your mom was at your age and she was a looker.

HELEN: Jesus Christ, dad. Maybe you should run for president.

JACK: My point is, any guy would be lucky to bed you. Your mother thought so too!

HELEN: I think I'm just going to log off and throw up.

DANNY: (voice-over) Parting is such sweet sorrow.

HELEN: You can say that again.

DANNY: But thus ends Date the third.

JACK: Give me a call sometime, honey!

JACK's screen blacks out.

DANNY: Are you ready for your fourth and final date of the night?

HELEN: God, no.

DANNY: Let's get ready to rumble!

A window pops up, and LUIS is seen. You can only see his head.

HELEN: Thank God, you're not my brother.

LUIS: Bad experiences so far?

HELEN: That's putting it mildly.

LUIS: I'm with you. The last woman I matched with spent more time talking to her cats than to me. She kept asking them what they thought of me.

HELEN: And what did the cats say?

LUIS: They didn't approve.

HELEN: Well, so far you look...normal. Although I can only see your head.

LUIS: Oh, yeah, sorry about that.

He adjusts the camera and he's naked except for his tights. He is not in good shape.

HELEN: What the hell! Too much! Pull up! Danger, Will Robinson!

He readjusts the camera to a safe view. He looks very sad.

LUIS: This...this wasn't easy for me.

HELEN: Huh?

LUIS: My therapist said to take a risk.

HELEN: I don't think this is what she meant.

LUIS: I've never been confident in my body.

HELEN: Well, I understand that bit, and I'm sorry, but--

LUIS: And so I thought maybe you might not react like everyone else has. I felt some connection when you first popped on. "This is it," I told myself. "She's different. She's going to give me a chance."

HELEN: Well, shit, Luis, now I feel bad.

LUIS: Let me dance for you then.

HELEN: Pardon?

LUIS: I've always wanted to be a dancer. I think that's why everyone tonight has freaked out on me.

HELEN: No, I don't think that's it.

LUIS: Let me dance for you.

HELEN: Umm...

LUIS: It would mean so much to me. Restore my faith in women.

HELEN: But it's not my job to--

LUIS: After you saying I'm ugly.

HELEN: What? I never said you were ugly. I was just surprised is all.

LUIS gives a puppy dog look.

HELEN: Oh, fine! Let's see what you got!

Music starts, the kind you'd more likely find in a strip club. LUIS begins to rise from his seat, a very intense look on his face, small gyrations commencing.

Just as LUIS is about to break into his move, DANNY pops up on screen right over LUIS.

DANNY: Aaaaaand, scene!

HELEN: Oh, thank God.

DANNY: Well madames e monsieurs, our Zoom dating is now as done as my laundry for the night. I hope you had a great time!

HELEN: Nope. Not even close.

DANNY: And if ya' did, tell all your friends about us!

HELEN: Absolutely not.

DANNY: Did you know we also do Zoom Dating for elderly couples too? So tell your older family members to get in on the fun!

HELEN: You hear that, Dad?!

DANNY: Our goal was that you found the man or woman of your dreams tonight! But, if not, come on back again for the sequel!

HELEN: Not if my life depended on it.

All screens black out except HELEN. After a moment, she smiles.

HELEN: Maybe quarantine isn't so bad after all.

She ends the session. Screen goes black.

END OF PLAY