



A Husband By Midnight - a funny tale about finding your soulmate in one day

S. Alini

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Betty gets fed up, buys a wedding dress and roams the streets of New York determined to find her soulmate.

Betty Sallas is having a crisis. Her 40th birthday has just snuck up on her. She'd been so busy with the career she hadn't had time to mentally prepare. But as appalling as it is to turn forty, doing so unmarried and single is intolerable. So when an elderly gypsy reveals that today is the day Betty finds her husband, she wonders what if? What if there's something to this psychic hokum? And she dons a wedding dress and sets out to find her soulmate and marry him.

Excerpt:

Chapter 1

The way it had happened is what was particularly unfair. The way it had snuck up on her. There'd been no alarm raised, no bell rung; no warning that hey, this is real.

You are turning forty.

Betty Sallas was seated in the middle of the bed, under a bed sheet. She was in plain pajamas and had her eyes closed. Her hands casually fumbling with a strand of hair, she was pensive. She'd been seated like this for a good while.

She opened her eyes and found that there was enough light to see the drinking glass and the soggy manuscript it sat on. The sun must be rising. Another day dawning.

Was that good or bad? Probably good, she decided. She could argue both.

Better to not. Better to focus on the positive. She couldn't think of anything but she was certain there was something.

She flung the bed sheet away, jumped and managed a sloppy dance around the room.

"Cha cha cha!" she said under her breath. "Ooooh, cha cha cha."

She hurried out and sauntered unsteadily down the hall, into the kitchen. She opened the fridge and took out a large box of chocolates.

"Just one more, cha cha cha."

She opened the box, bit into a piece, turned and was startled to find a man in dark blue overalls standing at the sink staring at her. Well built and scruffy, he held a heavy wrench in gloved hands.

"A man, cha cha cha," Betty said. "In my kitchen, cha cha cha. A stranger, cha cha cha. Intruder – ooooh, cha cha cha."

She grabbed another piece of chocolate.

"Try this, Mr. Intruder."

She held the chocolate to the intruder who gaped at her, puzzled.

"Seriously. You have to try it," Betty said.

She stepped forward and fed him the chocolate. He let her press it into his mouth. Then he proceeded to eat it slowly.

"Okay, now back to your intruder activities," she dismissed him.

She was about to take another bite when her world was struck by a moment of lucidity. Her heart skipped a beat and she found it difficult to breathe.

“Wait, you’re really a person aren’t you?” she asked him. “This is not the mixed drinks, this is real.”

The man nodded. He was real.

“Are you a thief type intruder or you more into... well let’s just say rape for example?”

The man seemed to open his mouth to speak but she quickly continued.

“If you are into rape... let me have another drink first,” she said and stepped back but was halted by the wine rack. “Let me have a drink, and gimme a little bit of time. This is already a difficult night for me. In fact -”

She quickly turned and grabbed a wine bottle and raised it, readying to attack. Footsteps approached from down the hall just then, and her mom Connie strode in. Petit and energetic, she was in a flowery green tunic. A nurse’s tunic.

“Good morning!” Connie said. “Oh hon, you found the chocolate I got you. Do you like it?”

Betty just gaped, aghast that her mom hadn’t acknowledged the intruder in the house. Connie opened the box of chocolates to try some. But there was just one left.

“I was up earlier, mom,” Betty explained, still not taking her eyes off the intruder. “Loved it though – thanks.”

She began to wonder if she might in fact be the only one who saw this man. She tried to count how many drinks she’d had during the night.

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