

At rise: MR. LOVEWORTH is found seated behind his desk, scribbling notes in a book. Presently, there is a knock at the door. Upon opening it he discovers LESLIE.

MR. LOVEWORTH

You must be Leslie.

LESLIE

Yes. And you must be Mr. Loveworth.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Right again.

LESLIE

Sorry?

MR. LOVEWORTH

Do come in.

LESLIE

Thank you.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Firstly, let me say welcome to the Happy Endings Dating Agency – where love isn't just a dream, it's a calculated decision.

LESLIE

Thank you.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Do take a seat.

LESLIE

Thanks again.

They sit.

LESLIE

You're a little different than I imagined.

MR. LOVEWORTH

How so?

LESLIE

I don't know. Something about your voice – I imagined you taller.

MR. LOVEWORTH

I have a tall voice?

LESLIE

Well, no, I...

MR. LOVEWORTH

So, what brings you to our humble, and some might say, old fashioned little establishment?

LESLIE

Well, I admit I did try a few of the online agencies first, but it all felt so anonymous and...well, cold, really.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Yes.

LESLIE

I tried placing a few classifieds, too, but that was worse. Some of the people out there, I mean...really.

MR. LOVEWORTH

You don't have to explain to me, Leslie. We here at Happy Endings are quite aware that when it comes to love, there's no substitute for the personal touch.

LESLIE

In fact, I wasn't even sure I wanted to start dating again, because the way things are going nowadays, I began to think, you know...why bother?

MR. LOVEWORTH

What things?

LESLIE

Everything.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Everything?

LESLIE

Yes...absolutely everything.

MR. LOVEWORTH

But that's rather a broad canvas. Could you be a little more specific?

LESLIE

Well...melting glaciers, rising sea levels, wars, jihads, famine, swine flu, the ozone, the Middle East, Paris Hilton, Somali pirates, identity theft, huge deficits, Darfur ...it's endless. And after a while you start to wonder what the point is in trying to make a connection with anyone if it's all going to hell anyway.

MR. LOVEWORTH

What's going to hell?

LESLIE

This. All of it. All of us. It's all going in one direction and it's definitely not up.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Don't you think you're being rather...pessimistic?

LESLIE

It's overwhelming.

MR. LOVEWORTH

But look around – life carries on...just as it always has.

LESLIE

Of course it does...on the surface. It's all a matter of perception. It's all we have.

MR. LOVEWORTH

But if it's all we have, then why worry? If what we perceive is okay, then everything's...okay, yes?

LESLIE

No.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Why not?

LESLIE

Because it's only our *perception* of reality – not reality.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Some would argue perception is everything.

LESLIE

Oh, if only it were.

MR. LOVEWORTH

So why did you?

LESLIE

Why did I what?

MR. LOVEWORTH

Decide to date again.

LESLIE

Oh.

(beat)

I don't know, really. I think I just became bored with my reality.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Or your perception of it.

LESLIE

Yes, exactly.

MR. LOVEWORTH

So you're looking for someone else to fill the void inside you.

LESLIE

What void? I never mentioned any void.

MR. LOVEWORTH

No, but to say that you'd become bored with your reality does suggest a certain sense of emptiness – of something missing in your life – wouldn't you agree?

LESLIE

No, it just means I was bored.

MR. LOVEWORTH

I see.

LESLIE

That didn't sound very good, did it?

MR. LOVEWORTH

Frankly, no it didn't.

LESLIE

I'm sorry.

MR. LOVEWORTH

This could potentially be the beginning of an entirely new chapter in your life, Leslie – a journey that could transform and re-imagine your entire concept of what it means to be a human being on planet earth in the twenty-first century. Entering into a new realm of possibilities simply because you were bored may not be the healthiest approach one would wish for.

LESLIE

As I said, I'm sorry. Perhaps stagnant is a better way of putting it. I feel like I've been stagnating recently.

MR. LOVEWORTH

I'm not sure that's much better. Quite possibly worse. Personally, I'd suggest avoiding such terminology when meeting potential suitors.

LESLIE

Why? It's how I feel. I'm just being honest.

MR. LOVEWORTH

But honest isn't always good.

LESLIE

Of course it is. Everyone loves honesty.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Everyone loves honesty when it's saying what they want to hear.

LESLIE

Well I wouldn't be interested in dating anyone who didn't respect honesty.

MR. LOVEWORTH

It's not a question of respecting honesty; it's a matter of respecting you.

LESLIE

But you're saying I should be dishonest. What's to respect in that?

MR. LOVEWORTH

I'm not suggesting anything of the kind. I'm simply pointing out that sometimes the truth can benefit from a little...translation.

LESLIE

Into what? I only know English.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Into something more appealing to the recipient of your truth.

LESLIE

Dress it up?

MR. LOVEWORTH

Enhance it.

LESLIE

Lie?

MR. LOVEWORTH

Reinvent.

LESLIE

But the truth is the truth. Once you start messing with it, it ceases to be the truth.

MR. LOVEWORTH

No it doesn't, it simply becomes an updated and improved version of the original – and who doesn't like that?

LESLIE

Look, I am who I am, and people are just going to have to take it or leave it.

MR. LOVEWORTH

Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong. That is *exactly* the wrong way to go about this. That way of thinking is always and without fail going to prevent you from moving from stage one to stage two.

LESLIE

What's stage one and stage two?

MR. LOVEWORTH

Stage one is the first date, where you discover if the chemistry's there. Stage two is everything else.