

From the Lonely Hearts Club: Now With Extra Murder!

By Don Zolidis

MAXIMILLIAN, the rich host of the party
VONDA, his wife

MAXIMILLIAN

Hello everyone and welcome to The Lonely Hearts Club!

(The assistants cue up a sound effect of some kind. Perhaps tinkling bells.)

I'm Maximillian Von Huffnagel and I want to thank you all for coming today. Give yourselves a round of applause. Do it. You are special people.

(tepid applause from everyone except THE OCCURRENCE, who whoops and cheers for himself.)

It's so tough out there today as a single person. Wherever you look you see happy couples like me and my wife.

(VONDA smiles and waves)

That's right, baby. And you're thinking, "where is my soulmate? Where is him or her or they or whatever gender pronoun they want to use?" Well, friends, they might be in this room.

(VONDA takes the microphone)

VONDA

Thanks, honey.

(MAXIMILLIAN takes the microphone back)

MAXIMILLIAN

It's not your turn yet. I'm not done.

VONDA

Whoops!

MAXIMILLIAN

That's okay, baby. Everybody makes mistakes.

VONDA

Sure do!

MAXIMILLIAN

When I started this speed dating program -

VONDA

Lots of people make mistakes. I've made mistakes. Big ones.

MAXIMILLIAN

I'm still talking, sweetheart.

VONDA

Oh!

MAXIMILLIAN

Thank you. Wives, am I right, guys? Sometimes they don't shut up. Where was I? I don't remember. My train of thought has crashed. Go ahead, honey.

(VONDA takes the microphone)

VONDA

Thanks, sweetie!

MAXIMILLIAN *(taking the microphone back)*

Oh I was saying I believe in love. And that's why I'm married to my lovely wife, Vonda.

VONDA

That's right, honey.

MAXIMILLIAN

After I faked my death to collect on my own insurance money, I could've left her. But I didn't. Because she's got a hold of me. A grip, you might say. Like a noose around my neck. She will not let go.

VONDA

Ha ha ha ha! I want to thank everyone for coming out to the Von Huffnagel mansion today. I know the weather is horrible – but you all made it.

MAXIMILLIAN *(taking the microphone)*

And you will be glad you did. Our first part of the evening will be the speed date. You will have one minute to talk to your partner, but when I ring this bell – you must move on. Don't worry. If you find love, you will have a chance to speak to that person again.

VONDA

Later. In our second round. Do you guys watch the Bachelor? It is literally the only thing I watch. That and the Bachelorette. I watch them both. But this will be just like that.

MAXIMILLIAN

It's not exactly like that.

VONDA

He contradicts me. My husband contradicts me. Isn't that great? Isn't that great when he undermines me in public?

MAXIMILLIAN

I didn't undermine you, honey –

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VONDA

Now he's denying he undermined me. Anyone here see Gaslight? Anyone here? Raise your hands. My marriage is just like that.

(A few people raise their hands.)

MAXIMILLIAN

All right. You have one minute to talk to your partner so you can find a lasting love just like me and my wife, Vonda.

VONDA

Absolutely. Our marriage is sooo special. No problems at all. Right, honey?