Fairy Godmother's Matrimonial Service, Inc.

The Executive Fairy Godmother looked more like a mid-life fashion model in an attractive blue silk sheath dress, diamond-studded heart-shaped eyeglasses and wind-swept short styled blonde hair. Touches of silver frosting in her hair glinted in the pot light that was strategically placed overhead. The client in front of her was a bespectacled thirty-five year old software engineer who had contacted the company from their ad on the internet. Now, after spending his youth in front of a computer screen, he said that he suddenly realized that he was the only one of his colleagues who still lived at home and did not possess a life mate. It was time for him to quit playing and start thinking of more important things like marriage and, possibly, children.

The Fairy Godmother smiled at him. There was a refreshingly innocent look in his startlingly blue eyes that would be attractive to certain women. "You have just expressed exactly the goals of our service! Too many people are making irrational, false choices in their selection of a mate. Our successful system is based on centuries of experience across all races, religions and cultures. If you agree to follow our methods, we can guarantee a success rate of 95% after five years of marriage. Given today's failure rate of nearly 50% of all marriages, you can't beat that, can you?"

The young man nodded his assent. "Seems great, Miss... I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name... There's just Fairy Godmother on the placard on your desk."

"You can call me either 'Fairy Godmother' or simply 'Godmother'."

"Sorry. That just seems strange. I mean, you know, this is the 21st century and we all know that fairy godmothers only exist in fairy tales. Your ad on the internet seemed pretty together. I thought the godmother business was just a schtick to entice customers. Cute, but kitchy."

"Well, I'm pleased that you appreciate the value of advertising. We fairy godmothers realized that we had to modernize and update our antiquated systems and I can tell you that the internet has been a powerful tool to help us do that. However, we still stick to some of our tried and true ways with a few modern twists to suit the times. Just go with the flow. How does that go down with you?" The Fairy Godmother smiled at him sweetly, hoping that her use of contemporary language was correct.

"All right. Okay. That sounds reasonable."

"This is how we're doing it these days: you have three qualities for your future mate to arrange in whatever percentage of importance to you. We call them the Big Three: wealth, beauty and intelligence. You have already filled out your application. So you're good to go."

The curly- haired engineer looked a little dubious. "That seems a bit limited to me. What if I have a wish outside the Big Three? I mean, can't you grant just any three wishes?"

The fairy godmother sighed. The scientific types were always the most difficult. "Well, in modernizing we've had to...to traverse across centuries... Is that the right word?"

"Leapfrog is what you're looking for..."

"I knew there was a frog in it somewhere! Excuse me, I'm a bit new at this. In any case, we applied the technique of KISS to our mate selection procedures..."

He blurted out the acronym: "Keep it simple, stupid?"

"We don't use the word stupid. We say silly. We put all our past experience into the computer and this is the algorithm it came up with. And combined with the Japanese concept of JITD, or "Just in Time Delivery", selecting a mate has become infinitely easier and quicker. So you can put in a percentage to each quality now, if you already know the numbers. If you need more time, you can come back next week. If you decide that you don't wish to go any further, we just charge you for the consultation."

"What's your success to failure rate? And how does this work exactly?"

"Nothing is 100% but we're pretty close, so far. Better than the old methods, we think. The fairy godmother stories you heard as a kid were only the ones that were successful. There were many failures, but those stories didn't get passed down. You will be as closely paired to your ideal spouse as is possible by human, mechanical and magical means."

The young man seemed perplexed. "A 95% success rate really beats the odds...Can I come back next week? I need some more time to go over the numbers."

"Yes, of course. You have to make some important decisions." The Fairy Godmother rose from behind her desk and escorted the confused young man to the door. "See you next week," she said cheerfully.

Next week after putting the hefty matrimonial fee on his credit card, the engineer was led into a cavernous room where colored lights flashed gaily as a giant computer processed his application against billions of potential candidates.

"In just a few moments," said Fairy Godmother ecstatically, "You will see the face of your ideal mate."

After a few more moments of lights and whirring sounds the moment of truth arrived as a photo was disgorged from the maw of the megalith. Without looking, the Fairy Godmother presented it with a flourish to the astonished engineer. "Voila!" she exclaimed.

"Mother!" he cried in disbelief.

"Oops!" she replied idiomatically. "Guess it's back to the crystal ball."