

addict is a roller coaster ride of hope, disappointment and grief.'

While your husband has admitted his addiction and is getting help, it won't go away overnight. 'I don't judge his addiction,' says Rupert Smith. 'I've known plenty of addicts who struggle every day and I admire them. What I do

Rupert Smith's latest novel, *Grim*, is now available exclusively on Amazon.

your relationship.

To support your husband, you need to support yourself because you, as well as him, are living with the effects of the addiction. GamAnon (gamanon.org.uk) offers groups for relatives of gamblers. Talking with others who share your experiences will give you hope.

'Whether or not you want to end your marriage depends on his capacity for change and yours for absorbing misery,' says McConnachie. 'I would only advise this – make your judgment based on his reality, as you've experienced it, not on your hopes. And demand full, solo control of the money.'

get one shot at life

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Could you charm your way out of a brown paper bag?

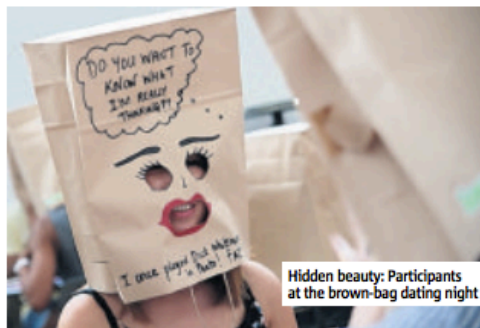
Helen Croydon goes on a speed-dating night where looks are kept under cover

It isn't about looks, right? It's about personality. One dating website is putting that to the test with a matchmaking event that takes appearance out of the equation.

No, it doesn't involve sophisticated psychological profiling or controlled social experiments. They've simply given everyone brown paper bags to wear over their heads.

The event is hosted by Loveflutter, a dating site that claims to be exclusively for interesting people.

When I turn up to its inaugural night at the Science Museum in west London (more nights are planned in London and Manchester in August, then other cities from the autumn) there isn't a man to be seen. They



Hidden beauty: Participants at the brown-bag dating night

arrive via a different entrance and are penned off in another section of the room via a screen. Before the three-minute speed-dating begins, we have an hour to mingle with our own

sex. We girls sip drinks, chat and decorate our paper bags with coloured marker pens. I try to paint big red lips on mine but it ends up looking like a character from the

horror movie *Scream*. Oh well, it's all about personality, isn't it? When we are ready to begin, we place the bags over our heads (there are eye sockets) and half the women move into the men's side of the room and vice-versa.

I chat to 15 brown-bagged heads for three minutes each, which is more exhausting than it sounds.

After each one, we subtly tick one of three boxes – 'yes', 'no' or 'friend.' My first candidate has decorated his bag with pirate skull symbols and I think it's best to tick 'no'. I only tick 'yes' twice, the first because he makes me laugh and the second because, like me, he says he is a cycling enthusiast. Proof that in the absence of looks, the next best thing is humour and shared hobbies.

Loveflutter founder Daigo Smith agrees. 'Humour and wit are definitely among the most important things in attraction,' he says.

'Obviously attraction is based on looks and personality but with conventional dating apps and sites it's always looks first, personality second. We wanted to turn things round, so your first impression is based on character.'

Getting to know someone beneath a paper bag is not without its flaws, however. Not only is it very hot under there but the acoustics aren't great either. With some of my more quietly spoken candidates, most of the 180 seconds is spent saying 'pardon?'

Then there's the fact that even with a paper bag over your head, body type, race and whether they have nice eyes are still visible. What it does disguise is age. One of my mutual 'likes' is, I later discover, 12 years my junior. How very disappointing.

Nights cost £10 and the next events will be listed at loveflutter.com