



Relationships

The Mating Game

When I first set out on my grand world tour, I expected my biggest challenge would be finding ways to enjoy spending long, solitary days in strange surroundings. At age 45, I thought I was slightly over-the-hill to attract much notice from the opposite sex. But I quickly became convinced that there must be something about the sight of a solo female, any female, carrying a guidebook and wearing a perplexed, I-wonder-where-I-am expression that sets male hormones astir.

In Japan, a fellow offered to help me order my dinner if I would help him practice his English. I was delighted with the arrangement until the exercise dwindled to two sentences.

Him: "We buy fruit. Take your room. Practik English."

Me: "We buy fruit. Take walk. Practice English."

While breakfasting at a hotel restaurant in Bangkok, I looked up from my guidebook as another patron passed my table and gave him a nice-day sort of a smile. He took that as a come-on and sat down to chat. Chatting, yes; sharing a berth on the next train to Chiang Mai? No.

By the time I reached Singapore, with a month's worth of roadside experiences under my belt, I was well acquainted with the commonly held notion that "western" women are free and easy with sexual favors. So it wasn't much of a shock when a man, who said his name was Nick, started a conversation with "May I help you find something?" Then soon after first



names had been exchanged, he got right to "Are you one of those go-getter kind of women?"

When I returned this remark with a queer look, Nick, an Indonesian businessman, explained himself by saying "I believe in honesty, and to tell you the truth, I like to chase women when I'm away from home."

I am all for honesty. Truthfully, I admit that I am not immune to a serendipitous fling. Certainly I have no wish to be alone all the time, and what could be more romantic than meeting love on the road? If the circumstances and the chemistry agree, I don't mind if I do. But this guy's quick-draw technique struck me as rude and insulting. I mean, really! What did he take me for anyway? Signaling an end to this mating game, I excused myself curtly and escaped into the handiest shop.

Soon after I left Nick on Orchard Street, circumstances seemed to change for the better when I met a man from Bombay.

It happened this way. I was out looking for a supermarket. As I approached a high-rise shopping mall, I noticed a man stepping out of a car in the adjacent parking lot. Fortyish, with dark hair graying at the temples, a nice trim mustache and horn-rimmed glasses gave him a scholarly air that appealed to my tastes. Passing him by with an appreciative thought, I placed my mind back on luncheon snacks and entered the shopping complex.

Hither and yon I went through various corridors, finding no grocery store. Interestingly, however, the man just mentioned crossed my path rather regularly until it became evident that somebody was following someone, though who was following whom remained a little ambiguous. Arriving at an elevator from opposite directions at precisely the same moment, we took the opportunity to ride up together and find out what else was up.

Well, blow me down, the man from Bombay was looking for a supermarket too, and why yes, a cup of tea on the way would just hit the spot.

The old axiom that two heads are better than one proved untrue in this case. Working together, the man from Bombay and I found neither a supermarket nor a suitable tea shop from which to pursue our mutual intentions. After a fruitless 15 minutes, the man from Bombay declared he had better get on to another appointment, but first he offered to pick me up in the evening with his car at the "Y" where I was staying and we'd have dinner together.

In my rule book, car rides with strangers are a definite no-no. Instead, I suggested meeting at the Meridien hotel, which I could get to easily on my own. I explained its location as best I could before we parted ways.

On schedule, I arrived at the Meridien, but after half an hour's wait and no man from Bombay, I assumed something had gone awry and went alone to dine at McDonald's – a shocking confession, I know – but the fact is, I always fall back on home-style junk food when my ego needs nurturing.

A couple of hours later on returning to my room at the YWCA, I found a telephone message. It read: "I waited at the Miramar. Where were you? Will call again."

Sigh! I waited at the Meridien while he was at the Miramar. Sometimes you just can't win.

The following morning I hurried downstairs, with hopes raised, to take a telephone call, expecting, as promised, the man from Bombay.

A male voice on the line sounded vaguely familiar but not as I remembered the voice of the man from Bombay. "Look," he said. "We're both visitors to Singapore. Let's forget this game playing and just enjoy an afternoon together sightseeing."

Surprise! It was Nick, the Indonesian skirt-chaser. Nick! How had he tracked me down? Apparently, during our brief conversation, I had let it slip that I was staying at the "Y".

The man from Bombay? I neither saw nor heard from him again. Oddly, I cannot remember his name, but I do remember Nick. I guess serendipity likes to play games too.

[*See Going Solo Tips*](#)

Safety Tips

Social Issues, Words for Women