

HOW-2 Meet Women The Shy Man's Guide to Relationships

**by
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Introduction

This is for all you shy and lonely guys out there. It's painful enough being alone, but seeing "everyone else" laughing and having a good time with wives and girlfriends, how easy it is to despair of ever gaining these pleasures, to resign yourself to being tortured forever by loneliness, to slip into hopelessness. To give up.

No! You hold in your own hands the power to change your life. If only you could turn the same talent and experience that have brought you success in other pursuits to the challenge of finding, meeting, and creating a relationship with a love mate, what wonders might you yet accomplish? For so many desperate and empty years you have struggled to find a companion, something that seems to come naturally to so many other men, yet you have choked on ashes and bitterness. Nonetheless, it is your very failures that make you worthy of love. You will succeed, you will relate in a rare and meaningful way to a woman, and to a depth that will forever be denied those to whom love comes too easily and who therefore take it for granted. You have remained true to the romantic ideal and have escaped the fate of those cynical burnouts that you envy in moments of weakness. Unlike the professional Romeos, those manipulators and skillful predators who attract women effortlessly, you see a love relationship as the singularly precious thing it is. How very fortunate will be the woman who wins your heart.

**To fear love is to fear life, and those who fear life are already three parts dead.
Bertrand Russell**

First Steps

Hard work and pain lie ahead. This journey of self-discovery and transformation demands all the courage and determination you can muster. Grit your teeth, for there is much learning to be done, and many mountains loom in the distance. Fortunately you need climb only one at a time.

Each painful lesson will leave you, if bloodied, ever more determined to press onward. As hard steel is tempered by heating, then quenching in cold water, so too will your character be strengthened by the hardships you surmount. Growing hurts.

If there is a purpose to life's cruelties and tragedies, it is to make of you a better person. It can be likened to stripping the faded and peeling paint from an antique piece of fine cabinetry to reveal the magnificence of the natural wood grain underneath. This lends credence to the assertion that the only truly strong and quality people are those that have been fire-hardened and polished by adversity.

You will practice patience. You will be patient with yourself. You will be patient with the people you relate with. You will trust that all will work out for the best, and not force matters along. Relationships progress at their own pace, and it is oftentimes a slow one.

You will never, never give up.

Learning From Experience

Life is about making mistakes and collecting bruises, learning from them, becoming transformed by them. There is something universal about making a fool of yourself, falling on your face, being rejected by a woman. It has happened to you. It may well happen again. It happens to everyone.

Who will tell whether one happy moment of love, or the joy of breathing or walking on a bright morning and smelling the fresh air, is not worth all the suffering and effort which life implies?

Erich Fromm

Admit your mistakes. There's no place to hide from them, but don't take them personally. They need not shatter your self-confidence. Be strong (the pain will recede). Stand back and analyze what happened. Take notes. Record your experiences, tell your story. Keep a journal. It will help you pull together the scattered fragments of your life and piece together the deeper meaning of it.

Recognize the dangers of overcorrecting for your aloneness, of prematurely throwing yourself into the "social whirl" to break out of your isolation. You need stability and continuity in your life, and be wary of disrupting familiar routine, lacking adequate preparation. Changing your life is a major undertaking, and it will take time.

Defining Yourself

Before proceeding farther, it is time to define your own individual identity, to get a firm grasp on who and what you are, to figure out what differentiates you from all the other humans running around in the wide world. This is hard work, and will require a considerable investment in time and effort... and thought.

Exercise 1: Compose a 1000-word or longer essay, titled "Who I Am". Tell all about yourself, your interests and your goals, your passions, your hidden desires, your joys and your hurts, your strengths and your weaknesses, your sources of pride and what you are ashamed of. Essentially, you will be describing what you have to offer to the woman who will love you (for you can't come into a relationship empty-handed).

Exercise 2: Write a rather detailed autobiography. Recall as many as you can of the formative influences and people in your life. Remember your achievements and failures, your moments of triumph, and the depths of your pain and despair. Call it "How I Got Here".

Exercise 3: Write a short description of the woman you would like to meet, the one who haunts your dreams, the soulmate who will enter your life one day. Paint a "word picture" of her. What is she like? Is there anything particularly striking about her appearance? Describe her personality. What special appeal does she hold for you? Why will she be attracted to you in particular?

These three essays will form the introduction, the frontispiece and anchor to your journal, the tale of

your journey. Should you lose your way, this is your compass, your guide back to the path you will follow. Here is your first gift to yourself, a sense of direction.

**"We are all of us poets and storytellers, making literature of our lives..."
Kelly Cherry**

Realizations

Having a girlfriend will not solve any problems - it will tend to worsen them, if anything. Bonding with a woman will add to the tension and pressure already on you. You need to fix up your life and your Self to be worthy of a meaningful relationship, to be able to uphold your end of it. Learn to be comfortable with yourself, to use your aloneness creatively, to transform lonely into self-sufficient.

The less you need others, the more they will be attracted to you.

Gain social skills. Communicate with people. Learn how to talk. Becoming at ease in conversation makes it easier to make friends and relate to them. Empathize with and help those around you. Partake of their joys and griefs, their accomplishments and failures. Grow, and share your own experiences with them.

Build on your existing social connections - family, friends, and colleagues at work. Even business relationships of the most impersonal sort help establish your place in the scheme of things and reinforce your inner sense of connectedness. You must break out of your isolation, emerge from your cocoon before you can even entertain the notion of a romantic relationship.

Become a "collector" of people. Enlarge your social circle. This means reaching out to strangers, saying hello to persons unknown, and in general, meeting people and acquiring casual friends and acquaintances. Making new contacts is sometimes difficult and always a little scary, but it pays off in the long run - you never know who will introduce you to your next girlfriend. This is called networking.

Recreate yourself as a more interesting person. Keep up with current events. Read books. Continue your education. Pursue hobbies and interests, cultivate skills. Become proficient in some endeavor, some field. Being looked up to as an expert will gain you respect and admiration. Help others and teach them.

Evolve and develop into a strong, independent individual. Become a helper, a resource. Give support and encouragement to those that need it. Be a pillar of strength to those weaker than you. Volunteer your services to groups that help others. Let the goodness in your heart shine as a beacon to those around you. Know that what you get from life is a return on what you give.

Lonely men seek companionship. Lonely women sit at home and wait. They never meet.

If some of the advice presented appears counterintuitive, it is because shyness bears its own imperatives, and this necessitates viewing "the rules of engagement" of the dating game from an

unusual perspective, through the distorting lens of an outsider. You are already aware that you cannot compete with your more socially adept peers on their own terms, and it follows that extraordinary efforts are required... to even out the playing field and give you at least a fighting chance.

Every technique described from here forward is but a codification of what the socially adept do instinctively. So can you too master these modes of behavior by understanding and practicing them to the point where socializing becomes as natural as breathing.

I can't understand why people are frightened of new ideas.
I'm frightened of the old ones.
John Cage

The following chapters are not, in any sense, intended to be a “paint-by-the-numbers” kit (rigid adherence to any recipe is generally doomed to failure).

Rather, think of them as an all-purpose toolkit, a sort of Swiss army knife, a rough navigation guide. Let these writings serve as an inspiration on your voyage of development and self-discovery, in your apprenticeship to become a fully realized human being. Even if these teachings do not bring you a girlfriend, and they may not, at the very least, you will emerge from this with a better understanding of social interactions and of... yourself.

"Come to the edge," he said.
They said, "We are afraid."
"Come to the edge," he said.
They came, he pushed them...
and they flew.
Guillaume Appolinaire

Chapter 1

Healing

They robbed you of your birthright. Family and peer group ripped from you at an early age the innocent social adeptness of the young. The bullying and being "cut down to size" that passes for socialization scarred your psyche. The fearful result is that you are not just shy, but painfully shy.

There is a place for shy, introspective persons. It is not a comfortable one. These are the creative ones, the ones who develop their minds, the ones who think while others act. They are the ones taken for granted, their worth unrecognized. They are the ones who cannot get dates...

"The consequences of shyness are deeply troubling. People for whom shyness is an ongoing problem don't take advantage of social situations, date less, are less expressive verbally and nonverbally, and show less interest in other people..."

"The Encyclopedia of Mental Health", Henderson and Zimbardo

Remember the time you could not think of anything to say to the woman sitting across from you in that little cafe. There was a painful lump in your throat, and you stammered when she looked your way. She smiled at you sympathetically, but still, there was no way to reach out to her, to touch her... and you lost yet another chance to make contact.

Remember that party, when you were standing off to one side by yourself, and the other people were stealing brief glances at you over their shoulder, laughing quietly, giggling, some of them. You approached several of the women, but quickly they found excuses to move away. Finally you walked out into the bitter cold night air, only then to realize that your fly was open.

Remember leaving that one dance, and ahead of you, walking home, was the woman you had danced with for hours. She met your eyes, momentarily, nearly smiled (you thought), but kept walking. You could not quite summon up the courage to approach her, to ask if you could at least accompany her to the nearest subway stop. She walked away into the night and out of your life.

**...and all the various things that lock our wrists to the past.
Charles Wright**

You Can't Get There From Here, Can You?

A gaping chasm splits off the landscape of the shy and lonely from the rest of humanity. This is the great divide between losers and winners, so we are told. What radical transformation, then, would it require to reshape a shy person into an extroverted, socially adept one? Where would you find the kind savior to rescue you from the prison of your loneliness and tutor you in the social skills needed to escape from the four walls of your own head? Where can you learn to care for, to love another?

Personality change is virtually impossible under ordinary circumstances. Likewise, saviors are in ridiculously short supply (and not so easy to recognize when they are found). What shapes your fate is your own perceptions, your old ingrained habits of fear and failure. Others sense how you feel about yourself and mirror your self-image back at you. Face yourself, know thyself, and take your life into your own hands. Become a stronger person and depend no more on fortuitous happenstance, on wishing and hoping.

**We are all worms. But I do believe I am a glowworm.
Winston Churchill**

Only the bridge of self-acceptance and understanding traverses the abyss isolating us from our fellow humans. We shy people must of necessity become our own rescuers, teachers and saviors. Yet, if the tools for self-transformation exist, they are difficult to use. Social skills can be learned, as a rule slowly and sometimes painfully, but loneliness is a powerful motivator.

**...less than ten percent of communication comes from the words that are said. The majority of the message comes from nonverbal cues, like gestures, facial expressions and tone-of-voice. Individuals who do not understand or use nonverbal communication appropriately are at a disadvantage in social situations.
Marshall Duke**

The useful social skills are but subtle elaborations of what we already know and do, yet of a somewhat higher order. Obvious examples include listening, picking up on nonverbal cues, and having a sense of

the other individual's personal space. Then on to group interactions, such as speaking for an audience (notably the not-so-lowly art of telling jokes). Finally, the high arts - being able to start a conversation with a total stranger, knowing when to wait and when to act (timing is everything), effectively being able to express yourself in person or in writing, and dancing.

The Mythical Man Shortage

If there are too few men to go around, why then haven't hordes of partner-hungry women been camping on your doorstep? Maybe they don't know your address, but more likely it would seem to be a matter of "quality", not quantity. Most women will not settle for just any man, but insist on one who meets their personal minimum standards, and those standards are all too often strongly influenced by pop culture ideals of physical appearance, masculinity, and success. Women mainly seek men who have proven themselves by amassing money, possessions, and... the admiration of other women. Shy, lonely men need not apply.

How, then, do you join the ranks of these "desirable" men?

- Competence in social situations.
- Experience.
- Fearlessness, or at least strong nerves.
- Confidence, gained through...
self-knowledge, and a consistent track record of accomplishment.

Developing Self-confidence

**"...only the weak are sent on paths without perils."
Hermann Hesse, The Glass Bead Game**

Self-confidence flows from the courage to make fundamental choices - choosing to accept risk, to confront failure, and to learn from it. It means testing yourself against adversity, and ultimately defining yourself by your resistance to despair, your defiance of defeat, your endurance in the face of suffering. It means surviving rejection, embarrassment, even total humiliation - finding meaning in them, and coming back stronger than ever. It means building a hard inner core of strength on the network of scar tissue left over from old injuries. It means getting up when you fall and bouncing back from defeat. It means accepting and respecting yourself as you are, with all your flaws and warts.

Self-confidence grows as you discover your strengths and learn to accept your weaknesses. It is not a quality that can be ripped out of the context of personal growth, that can be distilled to a simple formula, that can be indoctrinated by repetition of mantras, that can be applied as a veneer to cover up inner doubts and fears. It radiates from within, as a consequence of clarity of purpose and sheer force of will.

Unlike most people, those who sleepwalk their way through life, the ones to whom self-confidence was spoon-fed as part of the socialization process, you stand out as "weak" and unsure of yourself. Of course, those others are self-confident, they belong to a family, a group, a social circle that nurtures

and reinforces their belief in themselves. But it is not rooted deeply within their own self, and there is no steel beneath the surface. Their character lacks the fire-hardening of adversity, and is all the more vulnerable and fragile for it. It requires only one sharp blow, one misfortune or lurch to disrupt their 'sense of place', their self-confidence, their fundamental identity.

Exercise #1

Desensitizing yourself to failure.

Recall, and record in minute detail the worst and most humbling failure you can remember. [Dedicate a special section of your journal to this painful task]. Construct a 'timeline' of the incident, and systematically dissect each of your actions and the resulting behavior of the others present. How does one follow from the other? What could you have done differently?

Finally, take pride that you had the resolve to continue living and relating to the persons who witnessed your humiliating pratfall. For all the things you did wrong, there were isolated moments of defiant resistance that ennobled and gave meaning to your abject misery.

Exercise #2

Feeling Good About Yourself

Choose one of the good memories from your past history, the success story you are most proud of. Freeze that scene, the expressions of the people looking on, the feel of your muscles tensing as you realized just what you were up against, your quick assessment of the situation and your decisive action. Now, consider what made this particular experience so empowering for you. Cherish the feelings you had at that singular moment of triumph, and carry an ember of that warm glow with you - always.

Exercise #3

Giving Meaning To Your Life

An insecure, purposeless life needs structure, meaningful pattern, a plan. While a job imposes a structure of sorts on the day, it leaves those long hours of leisure to be disposed of by entertainment and simple time-killing. Is it so surprising then, that insecure people seek approval and reassurance from others, that they lack a sense of personal identity, that they need desperately to fill the terrible void inside them?

What areas in your own life lack structure? Does your daily routine have a purpose, or are you just "running on autopilot"? What changes could you make to give your life more 'solidity', a greater sense of order?

Exercise #4

Helping

Help someone among your family, friends, or acquaintances with a self-confidence problem. Give them emotional support, and help validate them as a worthwhile human being.

SUMMING UP

- **Grow callouses over your tender spots. Learn to withstand emotional pain.**
- **Develop a sort of 'tough optimism', that you "can do", despite possible hardships and reverses.**
- **Don't wager all your self-esteem on a single pursuit, be it work, sports, or relationships. Diversify, develop multiple interests. Become a "Renaissance man", mastering some skills, practicing at others, being at least acquainted with most of the remainder of human experience.**
- **Figure out the rules and strategies in the relationship game, and become adept at playing.**
- **Respect your failures, and learn from them.**

Becoming reconciled to your flaws and weaknesses gives a realistic perspective on life and strengthens you for the challenges ahead. You gradually come to the realization that you are a worthwhile person, that your struggles toughen and ennoble you, that your most painful failures build character. Grow and learn to take your place in the world.

**Of life the mingled wine and brine
I sit and sip pipslipsily.
Anonymous (quoted in an essay of Doug Hofstadter)**

Chapter 2

What Attracts Women?

Humans attract one other for the oddest reasons. Traits one woman finds irritating or even repellent in a man will strike another as cute and endearing. Affection colors perception. The woman who loves you will judge you with loving eyes.

Think of your long nose or jutting ears as barriers to keep the "wrong" women away. Your warts are your very own. Yours. Part of your persona. Even if you were classically handsome, would you truly want women attracted only for that? The traits that are intrinsic to you, that set you apart, that make you unique are what you will be loved for and treasured. Find a woman who will value you for what you are, and she will be worthy of your love.

Learn the lesson here - to look past "skin-deep" appearance. This enlarges the pool of eligible women and improves your odds of finding the one to love... a woman who has likewise learned this.

A man does not insist on physical beauty in a woman who builds up his self-esteem. After a while he realizes that she is beautiful. He just hadn't noticed at first.

What physical traits attract women?

- **Muscles**
- **Slimness**
- **Hair - facial and chest**
- **Cleanliness (deodorant & breath spray?)**
- **Grooming (taking care of yourself)**
- **Clothes (complementing your physique)**
- **Carriage and walk (proud bearing)**
- **Classic facial features**
- **Weather-beaten appearance (scars?)**
- **Coloring (blonde, dark... depends)**
- **All of the above**
- **None of the above**

You might find it effective to cultivate a personal style, to become known by a "trademark". Custom-tailored clothes, boots, colorful accessories, a mustache or beard, and an unusual hairstyle can provide an outlet for your imagination in creating a distinctive "look" and emphasizing your best features. Originality wins extra points, so avoid the commonplace and the fashionable. This might give you an ego boost, get people to notice you, and make a striking first impression. Note that attracting attention could have undesirable side effects. The technique is not without its perils, and may not be appropriate for everyone.

Now we come to the critical question. Just how significant are your looks, when it comes to attracting women?

Physical appearance means little.

How then can we explain the recent phenomenon of women requiring good looks, the masculine equivalent of "beauty", in their partners? Regrettably, even otherwise intelligent women occasionally succumb to the propaganda and blandishments of pop culture and its noxious offshoots. They fall prey to the same fallacy that many men have cherished for so long, that people are little more than commodities, consumables, and that physical beauty must therefore be the primary consideration in the choice of a mate. This fraudulent premise turns such women away from the many fine men with whom they might otherwise find happiness and fulfillment. It is the sad spectacle of the moth drawn toward the flame, spiraling slowly downward toward her doom. The last thing any self-respecting man needs is to be hooked up with one of these tragically deluded creatures.

You are an intelligent person. Recognize this. Wisdom, gleaned from painful experience, builds the judgment to make reasoned decisions. Knowledge and competence set you apart. Talents and skills, carefully nurtured, win respect from your peers... yet you avoid the trap of arrogance. Calm and controlled, exercise common sense, that most noble of virtues. You have attained maturity.

You are an honest person. Your source of inner strength is rock-solid integrity, an iron-clad sense of honor. Practice restraint and do not abuse your authority over others. Have a kind, generous heart and help those less fortunate. Value morality, but show compassion toward the weaknesses of others, and understand your own.

You are a shy person. Yet does not your very shyness set you apart, give you your own particular charm, exalt you? Shyness is your center, your power, your shield and armor. Wear it proudly. Glory in it.

Life is funny, and sometimes bizarre. Laugh at it, and at your own self. People who take themselves too seriously are pompous, and make spectacles of themselves. A sense of humor keeps things in perspective, preserves your sanity, and perchance might even entertain your friends and associates.

Let yourself be a thoughtful and caring person. As an attentive listener, you inspire trust in others, and they freely express their feelings in your presence. Your sensitivity gives you insight into their needs. Express your own feelings in an honest but restrained manner, and do not hide your vulnerability. Give and accept compliments. Help. Give comfort. Be a friend as well as a lover.

...the reason I please and mean so much to you is that I mirror your inner self, and something in me responds to your very being.

Hesse, "Steppenwolf"

Acquire the skill of translating your inner dialog. Share yourself with others. Speak what you mean, no more and no less. Practice writing, be it a whimsical piece of fiction, or a love letter. Expression is the art of communicating to others your thoughts and feelings, it is a tool and a weapon, and is something of a lost art in the modern age.

Cultivate and learn to trust your intuition. Most people can sense "kindred spirits" even across a crowded room filled with strangers. You find a woman in harmony and in tune with your feelings and beliefs at the exact time that she finds you, almost as if by magic. It is indeed a magic of sorts, a poorly understood ability we all share, if it has not been irrevocably damaged by skepticism and ridicule. It is a "wild talent", an ability to feel out, sense, intuit, and know another person before even speaking a word to her. Note that this is separate and distinct from character judgment, an important learned skill that acts as a double-check and brake on intuition.

Confidence has at its foundation a sense of purpose. Calm, but singleminded, pursue your goals while respecting the needs and feelings of others. Firm, but not overbearing, inspire others to share your commitments. Fortright and plain spoken, radiate security.

Willingness to stand up for yourself and your beliefs gives the courage to dare, to take risks, though tempered with the wisdom to know when to step back from the brink. Be willing to speak your mind, but know when to hold your tongue. Overcome adversity, survive setbacks, learn from mistakes. Discipline and self-control give you the inner strength to endure. This is perceived as "character".

Be responsible. Keep your word. Always. Develop a reputation for consistency. Win trust by your reliability. Honor your commitments. Give loyalty when it is earned, and inspire it in others.

Stay open to new ideas. Be spontaneous, but reasoned. Accept challenges... judiciously. Smell the flowers. Appreciate a sunset.

Nurture the "little kid" in you, preserve the "boyishness" (women love this). Better to be a bit naive, than jaded and used up. Do not let life's hardships grind you down, drown you in bitterness and cynicism, and leave you broken and hollow.

Be a happy person, and show it. Communicate your joy in life. Have a smile ready for everyone (it can be a shy smile). Cherish mischief and laughter. Play.

Charisma and its common variants, "chemistry", animal magnetism, and just plain sexiness - those are the mysterious forces that haunt so much of human destiny. In truth, we are all blessed (or damned) with these qualities in various measure, yet in the normal course of events they remain hidden beneath the scars and hurts we wear, smothered by lack of self-confidence, obscured by the memory of past failures, masked by the roles our families and acquaintances force upon us. Learn to become your true self, to awaken to who you are and your role in life, to grow, to liberate the powers within - and discover that you, too, can develop the knack of attracting women.

A Mystery Explained

Why are so many women attracted to married men, obsessed by them? The married man has no need to "play games" or prove himself, thus he tends to be relaxed and confident in his dealings with the opposite sex. He wears the shining armor of his experience and exudes an aura of "forbidden fruit". His married state convincingly demonstrates that at least one woman finds him attractive, and this very fact makes him even more desirable in the eyes of many other women - it confirms their judgment that he is worth pursuing. He is unavailable, and his very inaccessibility makes him highly desirable. Truly a deadly combination.

What can the single guy learn from all this? Act married. You need not "play games" or prove yourself, and thus be relaxed and confident in your dealings with the opposite sex. Do not make yourself too accessible to the opposite sex; let women invest at least a little bit of effort to get near you. Above all, avoid the behavior patterns of being "on the prowl", radiating neediness and desperation. Panting after women, with your tongue literally hanging out, you play the fool. Staying detached, just a bit distant, cool - calm - collected, you project confidence and strength. Wear the shining armor of your very own experience and exude an aura of "forbidden fruit", of being the proud, sensitive, strong, and yes, desirable shy man.

Overcome your own appearance prejudices, stop rejecting possible partners because you judge them too fat, too old, too unattractive... Tolerance and compassion toward the "failings" of the woman you seek will help you find the one who will accept your own imperfections. Mutual acceptance is the key.

Afterthought

Some years back, a personal ad in New York's Village Voice specified "...no walking wounded". Absurd! It is virtually impossible to survive childhood without wounds. Many of us are "walking wounded", but the rest are too badly maimed even to walk. Which category described the woman who placed the ad?

When women love us, they forgive us everything, even our crimes;
when they do not love us, they give us credit for nothing, not even our virtues.
Honoré de Balzac

Chapter 3

Challenging the Conventional Wisdom

Expanding Your Horizons

Popular culture depicts a sleek, long legged, big-breasted nubile blonde as the ideal love partner... just the type of fantasy woman who would turn up her nose at a shy man, and why not, as she could choose from any number of ruggedly handsome socially adept men... These are the beautiful people, a world unto themselves, unapproachable, narcissistic, smug, and far removed from reality. Shy men are well advised to stay clear of this particular crowd.

Consider instead women outside the mainstream. Fellow social outcasts, these are real people, human beings who have had to grapple with life's hardships, to endure pain, to choke on embarrassment, to feel the lash of rejection... just as you have. Struggling with problems, rebounding from failure, learning by necessity to fight - all this develops the personality, forces one to grow, to become fully human, to become capable of loving and worthy of being loved.

Sweets are first tasted by the eye, but flavour is the heart and soul of all confectionery.
John Millar

"Ugly" women glow with a serene inner beauty. Their faces are a study in rococo sculpture, an unfamiliar language of landscape and form, an intricate and convoluted roadmap of life itself. Their bodies hold promise of hidden delights. Their spirits reach out in too-long denied explosive passion. These are uncut gems, their charm not yet set aglow by a lover, their eyes glinting with hidden meanings, their depths undiscovered.

Fat women are round and cuddly. Lush and sensuous, warm and accepting, they radiate love. Their endless flowing curves, impossible to encompass save by caress, express the very essence of femaleness. Soft and yielding, ever so much more squeezable than their sharp-edged bony sisters, they submerge you in their embrace, their embrace, oh, so sweet, the Primeval Ocean, the source of life.

Older women make better lovers, as celebrated in song and folklore. Their life skills uplift shy youthful lovers past barriers of fear and inexperience. Unexcelled as nurturers and teachers, they bestow patience and understanding. They care.

Single mothers make wonderful companions. Children are the great equalizer in the dating game, and classy women who might otherwise not even give you a second glance find you attractive if you are not put off by their children. These are mature women, experienced in the ways of life, insightful, less likely to judge you by superficial appearance and dismiss you because you do not fit the mold of a sociable fun-loving guy. This is an opportunity... and a grave responsibility. If you accept the woman, you must likewise accept her children, as they must accept you.

Handicapped women overflow with boundless love. Forging vast inner resources to cope with physical infirmity, they infuse strength annealed with compassion into a relationship. Having suffered, but not shattered, flamed but not burned, cried but not despaired, they bear hope and healing to the fortunate men who find them.

Women of different races and cultures blend an aura of the exotic with a tinge of the forbidden. Diversity adds color to a relationship, and a touch of the strange lends spice and excitement to the flowering of intimacy.

Rising within women's eyes
Is the love men must return.
Louise Bogan

You may want a conventionally beautiful woman hanging on your arm, one you could proudly show off to friends and family as a mark of personal achievement, a trophy, a status symbol. What you need is closeness and honesty in an intense, emotionally supportive relationship. Look for a real woman, a woman who, like yourself, has experienced pain and rejection because she does not conform to society's standards of appearance. Look for a woman whose beauty is more than skin-deep.

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies.
Lord Byron

Redefining Roles

Creative self-defense against the system requires stepping outside it. As a shy person, you already have the advantage of being an outsider. The perceptual prison of traditionalism need not bind and limit you, rather, it can be used to your advantage.

You, the shy person, have been assigned a role, a mask to wear, by your social group. Left in the background, pushed aside by your more aggressive peers in competition for mates, treated as a "younger brother" by eligible women, you cannot help seeing yourself as victim. Stop. Take a hand in the writing of the story, not just in the acting.

Graciously accept the role of a safe, non-threatening friend. Be the confidante, the shoulder to cry on, the sympathetic listener. Observe, listen, and learn. Stay aloof from the role playing, the manipulative mating behavior of the other inmates of the asylum. When your time comes, and it will, you'll have grown into the persona of the wise man, the healer, the "elder statesman", the giver of love. And to the giver shall be given.

**Behold the answer to the age-old question, how can I make her love me?
You cannot.**

**She will love you, or she will not.
If she loves you, rejoice.
If she loves you not, find another.**

All You Really Need To Know About Women

Under a hard shell of indifference and standoffishness, beneath all those protests of self-sufficiency, there burns a desperate loneliness, a deep hunger for companionship, for someone to talk with, to share the small delights of everyday life with, for understanding, and yes, for a little tenderness and a caring touch. This is the ultimate source of every woman's vulnerability, so often exploited by predators, and it cries out for compassion... and loving.

**Reason has moons, but moons not hers
Lie mirrored in the sea,**

**Confounding her astronomers
But, oh, delighting me.
Ralph Hodgson**

Special Handling Required

What an enigma is woman. Seldom understood, often abused and reviled, regarded with a mixture of awe and fear, she is dismissed as a distraction from important affairs, yet still revered as the ultimate Mystery. Traditionally forced into the role of the scapegoat, treated with contempt or outright brutality, intimidated, exploited and used, she has suffered much at the hands of her men. Forgotten is that woman has been the keeper of the racial wisdom, the crucible of culture, the preserver of civilization, the nurturer of life, the center of family and clan, the source of creation.

Treat women kindly, and be rewarded. Leave control and mind games to the users and manipulators. You have grown past that. Cherish and respect all women, for is not every woman at the core the image of your mother, your daughter, your lover?

**Without love, intelligence is dangerous
Without intelligence, love is not enough.
Ashley Montagu**

Chapter 4

The Art of Conversation

Words are the voice of the heart.

By far the most terrifying barrier to developing relationships with women is learning to talk with them. Approaching an attractive stranger across the gulf of flickering candlelight at a party, or two tables distant at a coffee house looms as formidably as scaling a sheer icy spire. Making the first contact is as fearful as being born, yet as wondrous as emerging from a cave and seeing bright sunlight for the first time.

Even thinking of approaching her makes you break out in a cold sweat. Muster up your courage, get up from your chair, and propel yourself forward. Smile warmly, or shyly if you prefer, as you draw near. If the woman desires your presence, she will return a smile. You will feel her warmth, though you have yet to touch. Awareness of and sensitivity to subtle visual cues, discreet signals and body language provide the clues that your attentions are welcome (if they are not, proceed no further). Rely on your judgment and perceptions, as well as your intuition, to guide you in this crucial step. It becomes easier with practice, as you gain experience and confidence, and learn to read people.

Everyone risks being laughed at when he approaches a woman. That is always at stake. Take a chance... and if worse comes to worse, let yourself be laughed at.

Hermann Hesse, "Steppenwolf"

Act naturally. Using a "line" comes across as phony, nor is it a particularly effective tactic for shy people in any case. So what to do for an opening gambit?

- "You have such beautiful blue eyes..."
- "You seemed so lonely, standing there by yourself..."
- "Those are very unusual earrings..."
- "What do you think of the weather lately..."
- "What's a nice woman like you doing in a place like..."
- "How about them Redskins..."
- "These snacks taste a little stale, don't you think..."

All of the above chestnuts have been in use since "ancient times", and should be honorably retired.

A more straightforward conversation opener consists of simply introducing yourself. No tricks, fancy footwork, or flimflam necessary. Look the lady in the eyes, smile, and plunge right in.

- "Hello, I'm John Smith."
...a classic move - simple, but devastatingly effective.

- "I'm Richard Jones. May I have the pleasure of your company?"
...taking care not to sound too stiffly formal.
- "I'm delighted to make your acquaintance. Might I have the honor of introducing myself?"
...bowing, heel clicking, hand kissing optional.
- "Do forgive me. I'm not very good at this sort of thing. Please allow me to present myself."
...quite Continental.
- "They call me Bill Green, but my name is really William Green."
...double take.
- "We are not like the others".
(There's something different about you, and I understand.)

...and sally forth from there.

Get past the initial awkwardness in the conversation with smiles, jokes, "small talk", banter, inane observations, or whatever else works at the time. With practice, you will loosen up and become more spontaneous, and the talk will flow from you without effort. This, too, is an acquired skill.

Imagine Gertrude Mollycoddle, the friendly, grey-haired checkout lady at the supermarket, standing opposite you, asking after your health because you look malnourished to her. Visualize her in all her glory, slightly disheveled, bedecked in a stained work apron, fussing over you in her own motherly sort of way. Now, whenever you are tongue-tied, shift into your speaking-with-Mrs.-Mollycoddle mode, and that will take the pressure off you and loosen a veritable flood of words and feelings.

Remember her name. She spoke it when you introduced yourselves. In the excitement of talking to her, of sharing feelings, of comparing life experiences, it is all too easy to forget, to forget her name. Remember it. Use it. Address her by name. "Melissa, a name that flows like honey from the tongue." Indeed. People are in love with their own names, and, oftentimes, it is the key to their heart.

Discreet compliments help lubricate the flow of conversation. Express admiration for her physical and mental attributes, but don't overdo it. "That necklace compliments your hair very nicely", spoken in an offhand manner will likely have more favorable repercussions than "Your eyes are like bottomless pools of obsidian in a shadowed jungle glade". Most women like to hear that they look good, but they can usually detect clumsy attempts at insincere flattery.

A conversational gaffe to avoid at all costs is asking, without preamble, "What do you do?". There seems to be an epidemic of this sort of rudeness in certain metropolitan areas, most notably New York City and environs. Besides labeling you as a fool, this tactless question is pushy and intrusive. Nearly as gauche is to ask her, "What are you thinking?", as she may likewise perceive this as an invasion of privacy. Remember, subtlety and sensitivity are critical at this stage.

It is all right to hold a conversation, but you should let go of it now and then. Richard Armour

With the conversation underway, relax and enjoy yourself. Let the woman talk about herself... ask encouraging, but not intrusive questions. Let her charm you. Show respect and interest. Listen attentively and be responsive. Give her your full attention. Be totally there for her. Try to participate without monopolizing the conversation, and speak of things other than yourself. You need not force the pace, let it flow. Feel under no pressure to "accomplish" anything, and likewise refrain from pressuring the fair lady. Nurture the conversation and cultivate the person.

Things to keep in mind:

- Her comfort level
- Respecting her personal space, i.e., staying "out of her face"
- The verbal and non-verbal cues she is sending you

What you talk about* does not matter as much as how you go about it. Engage her in the realm of feelings. Talk about your feelings. Ask her about her own. Women (mostly) have been socialized to respond more readily to feelings and emotion than to reasoning and logic. Women feel, and talking to them about feelings is the most direct way to get past their defenses and touch them.

*** If you need help here, refer to the list of conversation topics in the following chapter.**

A gossip is one who talks to you about others, a bore is one who talks to you about himself; and a brilliant conversationalist is one who talks to you about yourself.

Lisa Kirk

Then there comes that dreaded moment when the talk stops, when neither of you has anything further to say. Dead silence. Embarrassment, nervousness, a tight knot in the pit of your stomach. Unluckily, there exists no magic formula for restoring the flow of words. Should you be extremely uncomfortable in the lady's presence, consider at this point excusing yourself, "Matilda, I am at a loss for words just now, but it has been wonderful speaking with you. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me." ...If instead, you enjoy her company, you might say, "Silences are valuable, too. Would you mind if we just sit?" Then, stay at her side and be amused by the antics of those other hairless apes at the party, or watch the sun sinking below the horizon in crimson splendor, or feel the cooling afternoon breeze whipping past your face. One or the other of you might get up and leave in good time, and that is perfectly all right, for you may meet again, or not, as fate decrees. Accept the parting of your ways with dignity and grace. There will be other times.

And yet, there are those magic moments when everything clicks and you both know you would like to become better acquainted. As it comes time to say adieu for the evening, the lady will subtly or not so subtly hint that she might like to see you again. Depending on the situation, you might ask for her telephone number, or if that seems too forward, give her your card (you carry professionally printed business cards in anticipation of just such situations). A kiss on the cheek or a hug would certainly be a nice ending to the occasion, but should you be in the least bit unsure that this is what the lady desires, ask (do not under any circumstances force unwanted attentions on her). Kissing the lady's hand is considered somewhat old fashioned, but romantic and very "European", to be sure. A gentle squeeze of the hand works, too.

The outcome of a simple conversation with a woman can thus range from the pleasure of her company for a few brief moments, to a de facto "date", to the beginning of a deep involvement. With that in mind, treat every lady you encounter with the utmost respect, even with reverence. You may be speaking with your future beloved.

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

Oriah Mountain Dreamer, The Invitation

Chapter 5

Telephone Fundamentals

So, you have finally worked up the courage to call the woman you met last night. Why then does your hand tremble when you reach for the phone? Don't clutch that handset any tighter, or it just might shatter. Does the icy grip of the sweat running down your brow weaken your resolve just a bit? Rejoice, my good fellow, this can be a uplifting experience, a fearful delight, an opportunity to begin a exalted relationship, a chance to make a fool of yourself. If, indeed, heaven and hell can coexist in the exact same moment, and they can, it is right here, right now.

There is a rhythm and flow to a good telephone conversation, a rhythm and flow. As in any contact between people, a connection must be made, a rapport established. That terribly difficult first step. It is akin to climbing a perpendicular rock wall, to catching the rising tide and taming the howling winds, to walking barefoot over broken glass. Once the initial resistance, the first shock of pain is overcome, everything goes easier. It flows. Plunge in, immerse yourself and set free your voice, let it express your feelings, let it sing for you, let the telephone wires carry your message, and at some point (perhaps) things will "click". This is the resonance point, the place where everything fits together and destiny is made. The channel will be open, and the words will come, they will come of their own accord, and flow, smoothly they will flow, as though fate itself had written them in fire.

Practice the simple techniques that strip a first call of most of its terrors. Take a blank notebook (this will become your "phone project" book) and begin outlining how you want the conversation to go. What would you talk about? What do you know about the woman -- her life story, her personality, her likes and dislikes, her beliefs and passions? What do you feel comfortable revealing about your own self? What is most important for her to know about you? What can you say that will purposefully lead to finding things you have in common, interests you share, activities you could do together...

Hopefully, you will have by now filled up the first several pages of the project book. At this point, transfer the information to a format that will better suit your purpose. Consider making a wall chart, a more or less elaborate diagram on poster board that will prompt you, guide and direct your conversation, when required. This will function as a sort of "talismán", or lucky charm, to boost your confidence as needed.

Another item in your "tool box" is a set of index cards, that can likewise serve as a reminder and memory aid. This will remedy the "I should have said that" and "if I had only thought of..." syndrome. The cards can be used to take notes while you talk, and, at the very least, they will occupy your your hands and keep you from biting your nails.

Maintain a scrapbook of interesting facts, meticulously gathered and culled out from the newspapers and publications you read. This can help spark the conversation. During those dreadful moments of

awkward silence, when neither of you can think of anything to say, you can discreetly leaf through the scrapbook and -- Aha! "Did you know that...?"

Finally, you might want to try a "dry run", or rehearsal. Enlist a sympathetic family member or a good friend who will not laugh at you, and have this person play the part of the woman you will be speaking to. Practice your varying "opening lines" and responses, and ask for feedback. A little gentle criticism can do wonders for your phone technique. If, on the other hand, there is no one with which you wish to share your little project, you can always do this by yourself, tape recording the session if you like. Repeat the procedure until you are confident you can handle "the real thing".

Make yourself comfortable. Put on some of your favorite music in the background. Soft music, relaxing music with a romantic undertone, if you prefer. Dim the lights (but not so low that you are unable to read your project book, wall chart, or index cards). Have a glass of water within reach. Take a deep breath and punch those numbers.

"Hello, I'm John Smith. No, I'm not peddling insurance, just my own sweet self. This is the fellow who asked you for your phone number last night at the art gallery. Yes, the one whose "yard sale chic" look you so admired (the sports jacket and tie Aunt Millie gave me for my 14th birthday were still at the dry cleaner's). Hello. Hello."

Time to let her talk. Keep enough presence of mind to make the appropriate noises and grunts at the right times to let her know you're still there. Laugh at her funnies. Encourage her. Administer verbal strokes and smiles, as necessary.

Speak in your natural voice... you need not strain. Take care not to dwell overly much on yourself. I, I, I, I... talking about I and me constantly is boring, boring. Ask her about herself, question her gently. Let her talk. Listen. Listen. Let her feel she's being listened to. Respond. Pepper the conversation with humor, genuine good humor. Humor is the saving grace of human discourse.

There is an abundance, a veritable universe to talk about, to share.

- Tell her about the time you almost skidded off the overpass because you were trying to juggle a soft drink and a baloney sandwich in the same hand.
- Share your most embarrassing moments growing up.
- Ask her what was the most adventurous thing she had ever done.
- Ask her who some of her heroes are.
- If her life were a movie, what actress would play the leading role?
- If her life were a novel, who would write it? What would be the plot?
- Explain why the sky gets dark at night (Olber's Paradox).
- Discuss the implications of Chomsky's theory of language acquisition.
- Talk about an accomplishment that made you feel good about yourself.
- Talk about the sense of satisfaction that comes from helping people.
- Consider whether cats make better pets than dogs, or vice versa.
- Ask her what was the most unusual food she had ever eaten.
- Give her your favorite exotic scrambled egg recipe.
- Play her an aria from your favorite opera (or better yet, sing it for her).

Avoid like the plague politics, religion, and conspiracy theories. There will be plenty of time to argue about these later in the relationship. Iffy topics include demonic possession and the occult, UFO's, and

the weather. Subject that tend to arouse strong negative feelings or conversely, that evoke no feelings at all, are best left alone.

When the conversation begins to wind down, when you both run out of things to say - it's time to sign off. Tell her how much you enjoyed speaking with her, that her company, even at a distance, has enlivened your evening. Ask her, gently, if she would care to repeat the experience (assuming it has not been too painful for either of you). Hang the phone up and have a tall, cold orange juice to celebrate.

And what if she calls you? This catches you completely off guard, and you're totally unprepared, just barely able to mumble something unintelligible to her cheery "Hiya, Norbert, how the heck are you?"

Take a moment to catch your breath. "Roxanne! Good to hear from you. I've been trying to work up the courage to call you, but you beat me to it. What a wonderful surprise." (You've practiced several all-purpose replies for those unexpected occasions.)

After the standard greeting ritual, things can roll along pretty much as laid out above. Since she initiated the call, there is a little more pressure on her to make conversation, and a little less on you. Relax, and bask in the glow of her attention.

Chapter 6

In the Arms of my Beloved Writing Love Letters

There you stand helpless, while the woman of your dreams glides across the far side of the room, too far away to touch, unattainable...

There come times when it is difficult or unwise to directly approach the woman you wish to meet. Then there are the situations when the question arises of how to nurture a budding relationship, how to build on that casual encounter at the party last night, how to show your continuing interest to the woman who invited you to lunch last week. Here the power of the written word comes into play, when intimations of feeling and yearning are best expressed in the written mode, by letter, note, or even e-mail.

Consider the three phases of a relationship. The acquaintanceship period is characterized at first by distance, then by mutual courtesy and respect. This ripens into friendship, where warmth and trust unfold. Should the bond reach the point of intimacy, declarations of passion and commitment are in order. Letter writing can substitute for or enhance actual physical presence at any or all these intervals, and is especially well suited for the delicate early stages of a developing pair bond.

Ms. Jones,

You were extremely helpful to me yesterday in resolving the problem with my account. I could not help admiring your professionalism and problem solving skills. Such a combination of talent and common sense makes you a person to be reckoned with. You are a credit to your organization.

Please permit me to express my gratitude for your help by treating you to dinner at the Brown Derby. This is the least I can do to repay your efforts above and beyond the call of duty on my behalf.

Yours sincerely,

John "Johnny" Smith

A written note to someone you have met only briefly requires a delicate touch - indeed subtlety and finesse of the highest order are prescribed. This permits either party to back off without loss of face (the second paragraph above may optionally be omitted to render the note even more deliberately innocuous). Be aware that a note under these circumstances involves considerable risk of rejection, and will likely be effective only when the woman addressed is actively seeking a new relationship.

Ginny,

A fleeting "hello" at a party hardly constitutes an introduction, I'm well aware, but wasn't that a twinkle in your eye when I proposed a toast to "The Year of the Penguin"?

How extraordinarily warm it was for a New Year's eve, and being able to look at the stars on the patio uncoated was as sweet as a stolen kiss. If you could but have joined me there, but ah, we had already parted and gone our separate ways.

Feel under no obligation to reply... you may consider me a fool carried away by the spirit of the season, or just a fool, as you like.

The dark-haired stranger, known to his friends as

Raphael the Mysterious

The getting acquainted phase is the time to be creative, perhaps to take some risks. After all, you do not have a relationship to lose... yet. Making a fool of yourself in the eyes of a stranger is just one more of life's little adventures.

Note very carefully that some women will react unfavorably to having advances made to them by a virtual stranger, and even a very subtle note may offend them. In such cases, cease and desist immediately, with apologies as appropriate.

You are good friends with her, but there is nothing romantic between you... Treasure the friendship! Nurture it. In the larger scheme of things, loyal friends are as rare as lovers (ex-lovers make the best friends, it is said, as truly as ex-friends make the best lovers). In any case, accept the friendship for what it is, enjoy it, and do not let impatience push you into presuming too much or jeopardizing the trust between the two of you.

Melinda,

What a joy it was popping into the art gallery at lunch today. We were a bit hurried/harried, and I'm still recovering from the assault on my senses by all those violent colors. The Pointillists are just a bit much, I think, on a Tuesday afternoon, and that hastily wolfed down sandwich cum bowl of soup did me no good at all.

Lord, what a pleasure it is to ricochet ideas off your wonderful mind! We have something precious here, a tight rapport, a spiritual communion, a sense of oneness rare even in a long-married couple. And to think that we're "just friends". Friends. What an exalted state must friendship be if it brings kindred souls into harmonic vibration.

Your friend, just, but not only,

Roland

Just friendship... or will it ever evolve into something more intimate? Let your words soar lyrically, warm yourself in the reflected light of mutual understanding, and appreciate the riches you have in being "just friends". Let the bond between you deepen, or not, as the weeks and months pass. Be patient, ever patient.

Oh lucky man! You and your lady friend have finally spoken your devotion to each other, and have yes, touched.

**And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?
---Shelley**

Now indeed is the time for poetry, and your notes to your sweetheart will mirror and affirm your embraces. Let the words, rapturous words flow from the heart as the bond between you deepens.

**Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine
---Ben Jonson**

Many are the needs served by a letter expressing profound feelings. Words on paper can kindle a relationship, deepen it, reconcile quarrels, and even... put an end to it.

Four Keys to Effective Writing

Organize your thoughts. Be clear. Use an outline or template, as needed.

Learn from the writings of others.

Master grammar and spelling skills.

Rhythm and imagery give writing impact.

Study the art of the romantic epistle, Sir Knight, in search of the Holy Grail of Love. For all your shyness in her presence, you may nevertheless win the heart of your Fair Domina and touch her very soul in the exalted realm of the written word.

**I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes,
and moreover, I will go with thee to thy uncle's.
---Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing**

Chapter 7

Nothing Personal

Perspective

Men wanted. Hard work. Low pay. Danger. High adventure. Chance of fame and glory.

The Arctic explorer who placed this newspaper ad to recruit participants for his expedition might well have been shocked by the magnitude of the response. Hundreds applied. The language is simple, direct... and compelling. This is marketing at its finest, the art of evoking human hopes and dreams.

Writing a personal ad is something of an adventure in itself. Here is an opportunity to reassess yourself, to focus and clarify your self-image, the chance to recreate (or, at least, rewrite) yourself. You can sculpt the profile you display to the outside world, to the women you wish to meet. This assumes your total involvement in the project. It requires complete dedication to the task and responsibility for the consequences. What you are starting here may have far-reaching effects.

What Personal Ads Can Do (Perhaps)

- ♣ Reenergize your social life, temporarily.**
- ♣ Give fleeting glimpses of what it means not to be alone.**
- ♣ Give you the chance to meet the woman of your dreams.**
- ♣ Enable you to meet women outside your circle of acquaintances.**
- ♣ Give you practice meeting strangers.**
- ♣ Provide a learning experience.**
- ♣ Give you the impetus to change your life.**

What Personal Ads Cannot Do

- ♣ **Reenergize your social life, permanently.**
- ♣ **Cure loneliness.**
- ♣ **Guarantee you will meet the woman of your dreams.**
- ♣ **Guarantee girlfriends.**
- ♣ **Make you at ease meeting strangers.**
- ♣ **Transform shyness into social adeptness.**
- ♣ **Change your life.**

What Personal Ads Are

- ♣ **An option.**
- ♣ **A tool.**
- ♣ **A stepping stone along the way.**

What Personal Ads Are Not

- ♣ **"The Answer".**

Personal ads have a long and venerable, even stodgy tradition. At one time, professional matchmakers and marriage brokers regularly placed ads and announcements for their clients in ethnic and foreign language newspapers. The personals fell into disrepute around midcentury, as a more modern, urbanized generation no longer felt the need to resort to indirect methods of meeting, dating, and mating. Since the 1980's, personal ads have made a comeback, regaining respectability by virtue of their ability to connect people who might otherwise never meet.

Writing

Writing an effective ad requires imagination, sensitivity, and humor. Intermediate level or better communications skills, while not absolutely mandatory, considerably improve your chances for success. Treat this as a creative writing project, lavishing on it the same care you would on a grant proposal or a submission to a publication. This means extensive editing and revisions, not to mention having a working knowledge of the precepts of good writing (Strunk and White's classic, The Elements Of Style, provides an excellent starting point). Note that if you cannot express yourself effectively in writing, now would be a good time to begin your education in this vital survival skill. A poorly written personal ad (or a lame imitation of someone else's) is an exercise in futility.

Given a very limited number of words in which to state your case, perhaps fifty or less, make each one count. Poetry compresses language almost to the bursting point. Imagery and metaphor are wicked, sharp-edged blades. Rhythm compels. Humor and irony are armor-piercing projectiles. A feeling for subtlety and nuance lends elegance to the naked word. Language, in its grandeur, its majesty, its masked violence, plumbs the mysteries of existence, unleashes avalanches of change and has the power to transform all it touches.

**A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover!
Coleridge, "Kubla Khan"**

**Shy guy in need of girlfriend. Lonely. Desperate. Life is empty. Save me from drowning in misery.
From the depths, I cry out.**

Oddly enough, this is hardly the worst of possible ads. It is stark, almost gothic in its intensity, in its ostentatious display of pain, its pale echoes of Oscar Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Gaol*. It might even strike a chord with a woman looking for someone to "save", to rescue and nurture. More realistically, it will either elicit no responses at all, or, worse yet, get an answer from a woman looking for someone to "remodel". On a scale of 1 to 100, this gets a 5.

SWM, NS, ND, tall and handsome, muscular, financially secure. Enjoy long walks on the beach, moonlit nights, and cuddling in front of the fireplace at midwinter.

The generic "white bread" ad. Uninspired, bloodless, and poorly written, it is about as palatable as a heaping bowl of cold oatmeal. The less said about it, the better. On a scale of 1 to 100, this one barely rates a 2.

As an aside, avoid the use of jargon, acronyms, and abbreviations unless you can make up clever ones of your own. "Boilerplate" constructions, while saving on word count, break the flow of words, dilute the flavor of the message, and, in general, make their own unique contribution toward mediocre prose. More to the point, they evoke more snorts of derision than responses. "ND NS SWM seeks SWF" (yawn), "financially secure" (yeah, sure), "long walks in the moonlight" (groan).

Axiom #0: Grab the readers' attention.

**Stray puppy in need of a good home. Cuddly, floppy-eared 35-year old inventor would like to reinvent
YOUR life...**

Axiom #1: Target the writing to the audience you wish to reach.

**Cassiopeia, oh starry-eyed maiden of my dreams, book lover, gourmet, esthete, athlete. Contemplate
an afternoon at the atelier feasting our eyes on the Renaissance masters. Then home, for more
substantial fare.**

Reaching out to marginalized and "socially outcast" groups draws more responses.

Wisdom and maturity signify more than societal standards of beauty. Statuesque fat woman, you burn with an inner passion. Share your warmth with me.

**A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.
Wallace Stevens
"Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"**

Axiom #2: Paint a picture of who you are, what you are about.

Let your true, honest self shine through. Give the reader substance, rather than flash. Descriptive personal details are fine, up to a point, but don't overdo it. Leave something to the imagination, just a bit of mystery... let the woman anticipate what you are really like. Above all, avoid jargon and euphemisms.

Biker daddy, Herman Munster lookalike, popcorn addict, soap opera aficionado, seeking a ray of sunlight. Set me on fire, baby.

Potbellied Polish polymath polygrapher, pundit, punster. Poleaxed by polka-dotted polyester Polzynesian Pollyanna. Reply posthaste. Polly want a cracker?

**No, no! Desire both lives and dies
A thousand times a day.
Edmund de Vere**

Axiom #3: Honesty and integrity. There is only one real you.

Axiom #4: Humor. If life is funny, then all the more so this whole business of finding a lover. A little laughter will enliven your ad, and your life.

Axiom #5: Patience. Things must proceed at their own pace. Or they will not.

Axiom #6: Courage. If your ad gets just a few or no responses at all, don't despair. Try again.

Axiom #7: Empathy. Put yourself in the woman's place.

Try to imagine why women respond to a personal ad.

Corollary: Be kind to the women answering your ad. Try to treat each response compassionately, even if the woman is not quite right for you. Remember, you could be on the receiving end next time.

Axiom #8: Read other people's ads, to get ideas and to learn from their mistakes (it is much less painful than learning from your own).

Axiom #9: Check your spelling (or use a spell checker). An ad containing spelling errors makes you look like an idiot.

Axiom #10: Run the prospective ad past a friend, preferably a woman friend, to confirm that it is not complete gibberish. Listen to advice, but trust your own judgment.

Axiom #11 (the Eleventh Commandment): Do not rely on axioms. Not even this one.

Putting it all together, construct your ad using this template:

- attention-grabbing intro [optional, but important]
- short description of you
- short description of her
- closing [optional]

Consider the following sample ad, put together according to these guidelines:

Icy winds tear asunder boiling thunder clouds, deliv'ring sun from Nature's rage. Still I'm a man, strong enough to be gentle, a free thinker, self-educated. At 22, old enough to discern wisdom's shadow, young enough to wonder, innocent in splendid solitude. Please, cultured older woman, show me the ways of life, and love.

Or this one, that breaks the rules...

Are you woman enough? Restless spirit, find high adventure on the uncharted tempest-toss'd seas of romance. Danger! Shipwreck, broken heart possible. Chance of glory, of forging a volcanic, passionate bond enduring until death sunders us. Only the courageous need apply.

Does this ad look just a bit familiar? It's actually our old friend, the arctic explorer ad from the beginning of the chapter, but in disguise. Would lonely women respond to this one as enthusiastically as men did to the original?

Can a well-crafted personal ad (or reply to same) persuade a woman to respond to a man she would otherwise consider unsuitable? Conventional wisdom holds that expressive skill, words alone, can tilt the balance if she is uncertain, but hardly effect a complete transfiguration. This classic assumption needs some cold water thrown on it. Just as Orpheus, to rescue his fair Euridice, charmed the rulers of

Hades with the power of his lyre, so likewise might one charm the heart of a hardened, embittered woman with the power of the pen, with words alone. Consider also how unpredictable we humans are.

Only occasionally do we act rationally, and more often we grope our way blindly through a fever dream of wish and expectation. Our very desires, even our perceptions are in a constant turmoil. Yes, words, powerful words, can change a woman's mind and her heart... and her life. Maybe.

This is but one perspective on ad writing technique. For a somewhat different approach, see the "One-and-only tips on writing ads".

Exercise #1: Write your own ad. Revise it. Show it to a trusted friend, if you like.

Placement

The Village Voice, along with the LA Free Press and Berkeley Barb, can claim credit for pioneering the modern era of personal ads. What was once a solitary voice in the wilderness, or village as it were, has changed since then, and for the worse. The Voice Personals, in common with many other publications carrying personals, have plugged into the 900-number scheme both for responding to and retrieving responses from the ads. While the initial ad is "free", the associated costs may easily run into hundreds of dollars. Moreover, the costs of answering an ad via a 900-number can easily discourage someone who might otherwise respond by the traditional letter/note method. This is the dark underside of technology. It reduces what should be a correspondence by letter, nice and easy, unhurried, safe, to a series of frenzied phone calls. It kills the spirit of romance, not to mention plundering your pocketbook.

This brings up the question of whether it is worth spending hundreds of dollars to place one or more personal ads in what is essentially a gamble. This issue you will need to resolve according to your own judgment and circumstances. Those fortunate few for whom money is no object will have little to lose by placing multiple ads. For everyone else, us working people, there are certainly alternatives to spending hard-earned money on speculation.

The newsgroup alt.personals, after a promising beginning in the early days of the Net, has more or less become a wastland of ads for X-rated spam and other foolishness. This mostly holds true for the entire alt.personals.??? newsgroup hierarchy, unfortunately. It is still worth a look, but might well be a complete waste of time as far as actually posting an ad.

The Classifieds2000 site offers a good testing ground for placing an ad. There is no charge for ad placement on this popular site.

One of the largest free personal ad sites is Excite Relationships. Worth a shot.

The American Non-Profit Dating Service features free personal ads, as do Abracadabra and relationships.com.

Curious Cat Personal Connections offers free personals, as well as an array of information useful to singles.

Yahoo offers free personal ads as a benefit of its free membership. These are certain to reach a wide audience.

"Special needs" resources for personal ads include the **Personal Ads, Size Acceptance, Fat Acceptance** site for fat persons and their admirers and a dating site **for those with herpes**.

Try the **Singles Sites Chat Site Directory** for a list of places on the Net to investigate for posting ads. Find additional sites by querying one of the Web search engines for the key words "personal ads".

Before placing an ad at a particular site, do some preliminary investigation to determine whether it is an appropriate place for you. Check the ratio of men's versus women's ads - it should be roughly equal, but in any case not wildly skewed in either direction. Read some of the women-seeking-men ads, to get a feel for the "demographics" of the site (what mix of women visit there and what types of men they are looking for).

Dean Esmay has written an excellent **Personals FAQ**. This is required reading for those contemplating posting their ad online.

Consider using your own **web site** as a sort of personal "display ad". This alternative mode of advertising yourself holds some promise as a way of transcending the boundaries of the traditional personal ad.

Exercise #2: Prepare a list of ten places to publish your ad. Narrow down the choices to the best three.

Exercise #2a: Actually place an ad in one or more of the places you have selected. Do not become discouraged if you fail to get immediate results, as it may take a month or more for your ad to build up "momentum". Remember, this is a learning experience.

Answering Ads

The odds favor the person placing an ad over one who responds. Far better to have 30 respondents to your own ad to choose among than to be one of 30 responding to someone else's ad. All the same, there come times when you find someone else's ad so captivating that you would never forgive yourself if you did not at least give it a shot.

Consider the options available if you respond. Most likely, you would need to call a toll number, and pay by the minute. Your presentation will, of necessity, be short, attention grabbing, and to the point. You absolutely must distinguish yourself from all the other "candidates" who answer this particular listing.

Take the time you need to develop a "script" for your five-minute one-man show. Pencil and paper are your tools, and a tape recorder and stopwatch useful accessories. Outline what you want to say, then edit and revise, revise, revise. With your final script in hand, rehearse aloud until your playlet rocks and rolls. Put on your favorite music (softly) in the background, pick up the phone and let your voice flow, smooth, effortless, and convincing. Remember - rhythm, pacing, timing, and always leave 'em wanting more.

If you respond via U.S. mail or e-mail, then display your expertise in the classic art of letter writing. As necessary, refer to the pointers given in the previous chapter on writing love letters. Consider that this is not the two of you alone, rather, you are trying to make your voice heard above the crowd. Your epistle will be competing with those of many unseen rivals. A "generic" note will get only a cursory glance, if that. Again, aim to have your response stand out. A neat handwritten letter gets more attention than a typed or computer-printed one. A photocopied letter heads straight for the trash. Write creatively, seek the unusual, listen to inspiration, and revise, revise, revise. Keep file copies of your previous correspondence, and learn from your mistakes.

Dear Kindred Soul,

A bolt out of the blue! Your ad bestirred my dusty heart and aroused in me tender emotions, the likes of which I thought my cranky old soul no longer capable of. Tell me, disturber of my tranquility, what is to become of me now?

<There follow three or four paragraphs specifically addressing the concerns expressed in the ad, and especially why this particular woman absolutely must be the one for you.>

Now, as for myself, I am a 99-year-old single geezer (don't look a day over 80) pursuing a rewarding career in paleoanthropology, after having retired from a lucrative veterinary practice treating Pet Rocks. My interests include bottle-cap collecting, restoring Louis XVI furniture, perpetual motion machines, reverse engineering UFO propulsion systems, searching for the Fountain of Youth, and handcrafting intricate clothes hangers out of rusty barbed wire. I live in a luxurious renovated yurt on a rock-strewn windswept hillside overlooking the exclusive high-rise apartment developments bordering the Gobi desert. Keeping me company are 15 gerbils, 3 yaks, and a platypus, but when the moon is high and the wolves howl, I find myself aching for the sound of a human voice and a woman's touch.

<Several more amusing-but-descriptive paragraphs about yourself.>

Despite society's best efforts to tame my free-roaming spirit, I remain something of a romantic. And yes, I need a good caring woman to share my life.

Yours,

Mortimer J. Hamurabi
(My friends call me Morty)

And if you just have to do something, anything, even though you know you have just one chance in a billion...

Dark Lady of the Sonnets,

Deeply moved by your ad. At a loss as to how to respond, since I am totally unsuitable according to your strict, all-too-strict specifications. Stubbornly unable to admit defeat, and, in any case, find it less painful to engage in this utterly futile enterprise than to lie awake bemoaning the cruel misfortune of having become enraptured by Nature's Fairest Creation, of whom I am no doubt unworthy. Have mercy, and say a little prayer for your devoted admirer, who shall remain forever sundered from you by the vagaries of the harsh fate of being born mortal, alas, merely mortal.

In tears, I am nevertheless yours,

Caleb Caliban

Ah, now that feels better. Expect no reply, but you will have moved her, hard-hearted though she may be.

**Hard is the herte that loveth nought
In May
Chaucer**

Alternatives

The best-kept secret in the business world is that publicity works better than advertising. Calling attention to yourself by getting in the news, becoming well-known by outstanding achievement or a timely "coup" is worth a thousand personal ads. Public personalities and "celebs" have no need to place or answer personal ads. On the contrary, their problem is fending off the advances of female admirers. You should only have such problems.

Going over Niagara Falls in a barrel and similar publicity stunts have their attractions, but the cost generally outweighs the benefits, to put it mildly. Much less hazardous is having yourself crowned emperor* of your own patch of real estate, or, if you are truly ambitious, of the entire continent, complete with coronation ceremony attended by the regional and national press. Short of risking your life or making a complete fool of yourself, you may avail yourself of the many other opportunities for attaining a high profile locally, and possibly on an even larger scale.

Volunteer your services to charitable organizations, or better yet, initiate your own project to help the poor or handicapped, or to teach the educationally disadvantaged to read. Bring artistic and cultural events to your town. Invite the bicycle racing association to schedule an event there. Get the area's artisans together to hold a crafts fair. Bring the carnival to town. Sponsor a "salon" for intellectual discussion. Organize the local painters and sculptors for an exhibition. Start a writers workshop. Even

if your motives are not entirely altruistic, and you wish to obtain a bit of recognition for your efforts, still you will more than likely be forgiven, if you go about it in a good-humored and tactful way.

Other possibilities include becoming an established authority in your field of expertise, a person invited to write newspaper columns and appear on talk shows. Be it only a hobby or leisure time activity, if you are exceptionally talented or can teach it effectively, you can build your reputation on it.

Far better to be a "celeb", if only a local one, than a faceless figure behind a personal ad. However, it requires more imagination, resourcefulness, and truly, much more daring. These are qualities that all human beings, not just shy ones, should cultivate.

* As it happens, in 1859, a certain Joshua Norton of San Francisco did, in fact, declare himself Norton I, Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico. Surely, there was no shortage of womenfolk in his interesting life.

Exercise #3: Brainstorm at least 5 ways to make a name for yourself.

Final Words

"There ain't no cure for the summertime blues", nor is there one for loneliness. Think "tool", rather than "remedy". Placing or answering a personal ad will not necessarily make a fundamental difference in your social life, but it surely can be an interesting ride.

In the personal ad "game", as in chess, the rules are easy to learn, but the strategy is intricate and tricky. Similarly, the results are proportional to the amount and intensity of effort expended, and the level of skill attained is as much a matter of practice as of talent. Like chess, and much of life itself, "playing" the personals should be fun, as well as profitable. If you do it for the prize alone, you are missing the point.

An ad can, at best, only provide the opportunity to meet partners. A woman who answers your ad has made no commitment, beyond a willingness to speak with you once. Taking it from there, actually establishing a relationship is still a matter of personal contact, of the interaction between two isolated human beings. As yet, only words connect you... and words alone cannot bridge the gap, nor can they touch, nor kiss.

Chapter 8

Places

Where Are They?

Women are everywhere. You encounter them at work, at the supermarket, on the street. She is the person in the apartment down the hall, your sister's best friend, the clerk at the convenience store, the

one you bump into at the laundromat. Why then is it so difficult to connect? On the one hand, these women may not even be aware of your existence, and making yourself known to them - leaping the hurdle of the introduction and acquaintance period is, as yet, too daunting for your fledgling social skills. Conversely, perhaps you are already acquainted, familiar, all too familiar, commonplace, taken for granted and ignored.

Distance is the key concept here. An element of strangeness, the unknown, the exotic, all this hints at the intriguing possibilities of romance. It helps to be recognizable, yet not so well known that familiarity trivializes the budding relationship, and yes, breeds contempt.

The course of love is rocky, by custom, tradition, and myth. Romantic love thrives on adversity, on challenge, on resistance, on hindrances, on barriers to be overcome, on prohibitions, on taboos to be broken, on tension, on crises, on anguish, on despair, on secret meetings, on stolen kisses, on forbidden touches, on disapproving parents, on broken-glass topped walls that keep lovers apart. If matters proceed too easily, too smoothly, then the excitement gradually leaks out of the relationship, the tension dissipates, and matters slowly coast downhill toward the dreaded pronouncement of "let's just be friends".

At Work

The workplace would seem the most logical place to find a lover. What could be more natural than to befriend, and to form close bonds with your colleagues? Working side by side, being on the same team, sharing responsibilities, basking in triumph and bouncing back from failure together, all this forges camaraderie. This can be the prelude to close friendship, even an intimate relationship or two.

At work, you see the same women, day after day. This situation favors a measured approach to enlarging your circle of female acquaintances. If you are a bit leery of asking to be introduced to someone you wish to meet, you can always practice a bit of subtlety. Smile at her one day. See if she returns your smile. If so, make a routine of exchanging smiles every morning and evening. Begin to wave 'hello' to her. Finally, you might get to the point where you actually exchange a few words... and things may progress from there. The advantage of this strategy is that either of you can stop, or even retreat at any point in the process without undue embarrassment or trauma.

A workplace romance with a subordinate, or, worse yet, with a supervisor, can be risky. It may interfere with the performance of your duties and jeopardize your advancement or even continued tenure on the job. Making an advance toward a fellow employee (or having one made toward you) could destabilize or upset the delicate relationships in your working group. Exercise caution, or, at the very least, discretion.

Where To Look

People close to home

Neighbors
Friends
Friends of friends
People you grew up with
Sisters of childhood friends

Introductions by family members and relatives

Matchmaking maiden aunts have been subjected to ridicule for generations, but they have helped many a lonely man find the woman who finally brought him happiness.

Religious services and functions

Sharing a common religious heritage and spiritual experience creates powerful bonds between people.

School (continuing education, alternative education, night school)

Classes where there would likely be a high proportion of women:

Gourmet cookery
Foreign language instruction
Literature
Creative writing
Music and fine arts
Philosophy
Sewing, embroidery, weaving
Crafts instruction (pottery, silversmithing, stained glass)
Medical technology and nutrition
New Age / spirituality (astrology, tarot, I Ching)

Activities and hobbies

Reading clubs and literary circles
Poetry readings
Writers workshops
Discussion groups
Amateur entertainment nights (singing / playing instruments)

Cultural events
Museums
Concerts
Street fairs
Flea markets
Folk, square, and country dancing

Volunteer work & charity

Literacy programs
Homeless shelters
Soup kitchens
Nursing homes
Visiting the sick at local hospitals

Community organizations, meetings

Political organizations and activities
(Join your local Democratic or Republican club)

Block or neighborhood association
School board

Sports

Bowling
Tennis
Badminton
Volleyball
Softball
Skiing
Swimming
Bicycling
Sailing
Archery
Miniature golf

Gaming Clubs

Board Games

Your local Scrabble [TM] club,
a great place to meet women and, incidentally, enjoy yourself.

Chess clubs are attracting an increasing number of women.

Bridge

If you can't play, learn...

A "fourth" for bridge is always in demand.

Backgammon

Hiking

The premier hiking organization remains American Youth Hostels (AYH). Despite its name, there is no age limit for membership, and people of all ages participate in its day trips, bike/hike outings, and other activities. With its annual membership fee still at about \$20 for adults, this is a great bargain.

Based on one person's experience of day hikes with the New York City chapter some years back, there always seemed to be a sufficiency of single women in the 20 - 60 year age group participating, certainly enough to keep things interesting. As the word got around that this was a good way for women to meet eligible men, the proportion of women to men on the trips increased from an average 1:3 to as high as 2:1.

AYH

733 15th Street, NW

Suite 840

Washington, DC 20005

(202) 783-6161

(202) 783-6171 Fax

hiayhserv@hiayh.org

<http://www.hiayh.org>

Supermarket shopping

Become a "regular" at your neighborhood store. Plan your shopping trips for the same days and times every week, and you will soon be greeted by name by the cashiers and the other shoppers, mostly women, will get to know you.

If you have eight cans of single-serving spaghetti in your cart, that is a dead giveaway to every woman in sight that you live alone.

A slightly "mussed" look, and a shirt with a button or two missing contributes to the impression that you are not being cared for, and in need of mothering. Expect to be approached.

"Singles" organizations

At the bottom of the list, deliberately.

This is a last resort option.

For the desperate.

**The man who follows the crowd will usually get no further than the crowd.
The man who walks alone is likely to find himself in places no one has ever been.
Alan Ashley-Pitt**

Chapter 9

Party Time

The Party Vegetable

**Is it a party in a parlour?
Crammed just as they on earth were crammed,--
Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
But, as you by their faces see,
All silent and all damned.
Wordsworth**

Being shy, you probably regard an invitation to a party with about as much enthusiasm as the prospect of attending your own execution. Just think, you could be standing there in the shadows by the back wall, surrounded by clusters of babbling strangers, feeling everyone's eyes on you (is your fly open?), in one hand a slowly leaking warm soft drink that has long since gone flat, in the other a limp stalk of celery oozing what is allegedly cheddar cheese dip. Your feet ache, your stomach is painfully knotted and spasming, and rivulets of sweat have long since dried on your forehead. This just might not be your idea of a fun time.

A strong case can be made for avoiding parties altogether. For the shy person, parties may be the worst of all possible places for meeting people and making friends, much less connecting with women. Parties have a justifiably bad reputation for stale food, rowdy and drunken behavior, and mind numbing stupidity on a massive scale. Calling them a monumental waste of time and energy would be something of an understatement. All the same, before dismissing parties altogether as an option, consider them... as an opportunity to practice and flex your newly developed social skills, to use your imagination, to stretch and extend your confidence muscles. Parties are a challenge, a test of your resourcefulness and ingenuity, an exercise in risk taking in the social arena, a leap into the unknown, a roll of the dice in the grand game of people.

Shy man, you are certainly no one's idea of a "party animal". Party vegetable comes closer to the mark. So be it. "Grow" into the role, if you can, if you dare, for good things come at the oddest of times and in the unlikeliest of places, even, heaven forbid, at social gatherings.

After all, what is your hosts' purpose in having a party?
Surely not for you to enjoy yourself; if that were their sole
purpose, they'd have simply sent champagne and women over to
your place by taxi.
P.J. O'Rourke

Tactics

Preparedness is everything. Do your research before stepping through the door at that party. Find out who will be attending. If possible, meet and get to know a few of the people beforehand. Perhaps you can arrange to accompany one or more of them.

It's the day of the big party, and it looks like you'll be going alone. Call the host. Ask if he/she needs help with setting up the tables, with food preparation, with decorations. In any case, arrive early so that you can meet and have a few minutes alone with the host and at least a couple of the guests. Stay away from alcoholic beverages and do not overindulge in the indigestible snacks. "Work the room" if you are able to, if you dare. Do not linger if it threatens to turn into an unproductive evening, and time your exit.

Man who arrives at party two hours late
will find he has been beaten to the punch.

You might well call attention to yourself by virtue of your costume, especially where everyone else attends in normal party attire, or in everyday wear. Rent a costume. Come as D'Artagnan (of the Three Musketeers), or as Cyrano. A neck ruff and tight fitting pantaloons will do wonders for your appearance. The saber at your side will also command respect, and more than a little astonishment. Act the part - swashbuckle. If you'll be making a fool of yourself, do it in grand style, and with panache.

In a pinch, the local thrift store or your aunt's attic can supply outmoded clothes, perhaps a Nehru jacket from the '60's or a snap brim fedora that was last fashionable in the Truman era. Ancient "claw hammer" tuxedo jackets still turn up on occasion. Matched or mismatched, you can provide an amusing counterpoint to all the stuffy, business-suited party goers.

Be part of the entertainment. If you play an instrument, be it a harmonica, a pennywhistle, or a lowly kazoo, so much the better. Strap on a guitar and belt out the first few notes of a ballad, and listeners will gather round. Juggle a few balls in the air and gaping onlookers will jostle each other for a closer look. An impromptu magic show is sure to draw an audience. Practicing the ancient lore of storytelling attracts those who have not yet lost the ability to exercise their imagination. Sketching funny caricatures of selected persons present, especially of women you'd like to know better, creates a crowd of curious rubbernecks. Even the prosaic art of telling jokes sets you apart from the other attendees.

For every girl of eighteen who can be broken down
by feats of muscle power on the football field
there are ten who will swoon into your arms at the
sound of a Chopin waltz or mazurka.
F. Hoyle

Doing It Yourself

Discouraged by all the bad times you've had at other people's parties? Well then, throw your own.

Keep it small, inviting only a few of your closer friends. Keep it simple, preparing a bare minimum of snacks and refreshments. Lay in a generous supply of juices and soft drinks, and show your good judgment (and courage) by avoiding alcoholic beverages altogether. Plan well ahead, and pay attention to small details. Get advice from others who have thrown parties.

Be sure to introduce the guests to each other, if they are not previously acquainted. On to fun and laughter-inducing games, such as 'charades', to encourage mingling, and, eventual pairing off by the singles. Then, dim the lights and put on slow music, suitable for close dancing. You, as the party facilitator, will find yourself free of any pressure to get close to any one particular woman, and for just that reason, it may happen of its own accord.

Any excuse will do. Your own birthday deserves a party, as do those of your friends, family members, and colleagues. There are major and minor holidays aplenty. Even a Groundhog Day party can be a memorable occasion.

The Entertaining and Party Planning Tips site gives some useful pointers, at least in the matter of preparing hors d'oeuvres and snacks. Likewise, the local library may have a few books on the topic of party planning. Your best resource, however, would be a friend or relative who has hosted a party or two of her own.

Why

Parties are one of life's obscure and enigmatic gifts*. As with anything guarded by a minefield, enshrouded in barbed wire, or buried in a manure heap, there must be a secret place... where there gleams something resembling treasure, or at a minimum a "meaningful experience". If the entrance fee is a just bit stiff, the prize beckoning from within may be worth it. Perhaps.

Parties are one of those social institutions designed to preserve and enforce the gap between the socially adept and the rest of us, the "losers". If, as previously stated, "For the shy person, parties may be the worst of all possible places...", what then is the point of this exercise? If a party is a microcosm of human folly, it is likewise an opportunity to sharpen your powers of observation, to learn to differentiate personality types by their behavior in social situations. It is a stage where you can act out your own secret pretensions. It is a defiant piece of theater, a dare accepted, a demonstration that even under the most unfavorable of circumstances, in a room full of semi-intoxicated, faceless, anonymous persons, the shy man can match his more socially adept colleagues in the art of mingling, of getting acquainted with strangers. It is a matter of experience, technique, self-confidence, and... principle.

Witness that even this pernicious ritual, the social gathering, can be subverted to the advantage of a sufficiently motivated shy person.

If a stanza of programming code can be analyzed, disassembled, and "hacked", then why not a social gathering? Can group dynamics really be all that much more complex than a convoluted subroutine?

Is this, then, a "call to arms" for you as a shy man, an imperative that you absolutely must attend partis? On the contrary, it is a personal decision, a "judgment call", based on your needs, comfort level, readiness, and temperament. You will do perfectly well socially even if you never attend another party. Only be aware that you could, should you wish to.

- **The literal translation of Gift from the German is venom, or poison.**

Chapter 10

The First Date

At long last, you have reached the point in your blossoming relationship where you will be going out on a date. Your first date, a milestone, yet a bottomless pit of uncertainty. It's like being on a roller coaster, with the alternating surges of soaring giddiness and fright, the conflicting emotions of "can't wait" and "not yet". While overjoyed that you will be going out with *her*, there is still the gnawing anxiety that you will somehow blow it. Not to worry. It will certainly be something of an adventure, an event to reminisce and laugh about (Oh, no! Not another learning experience!), and you would not miss it for the world.

If possible, get plenty of sleep the night before, or at least take a short nap during the day. Shower and put on fresh clothes. Brush your teeth and shave, as necessary. Cologne and mouthwash are optional. Rely on those comforting little rituals that affirm your identity, and this will launch you on your journey, well rested, relaxed, clean, and feeling reasonably confident.

Be on time. You promised to be there at a certain time. Call ahead if circumstances will keep you from showing up as arranged. The trust between the two of you is still very new and fragile, and arriving late on a first date creates uncertainty and strains that trust.

On the way there, pick or buy a small bouquet of colorful wildflowers. It will not deplete your finances much, and will show how much you cherish her company. Flowers from your hand to hers... that happy little gasp of surprise, the warm flood of her smile, her smile for you alone.

The "classic", or generic date, not to be confused with the unconventional creative / inventive date, consists of entertainment, followed by a meal, then a walk under the stars, and finally the leave taking. The entertainment usually defaults to a movie, though a live performance, a play or a concert, makes

for a richer experience. There is no need to spend big bucks in an expensive restaurant. A simple meal in an atmospheric neighborhood cafe, the scarred wooden table covered by a stained, checkered cloth, with a guttering candle in a dusty wax bespattered wine bottle between the two of you as you scoop up forkfuls of pungently spiced, chewy spaghetti, occasionally catching shy glimpses of each other's eyes... all this will do just fine. Then the walk home, the time for quiet reflection and expressing feelings by glances and occasional words, this tops off a satisfying evening.

As you walk with her, by her side, matching your step to hers, in cadence, in harmony, she has the opportunity to take your hand... if she is so moved. Holding hands comes naturally, if it comes at all. Do not force unwanted attentions on the woman! "Making a move" on her is neither required of you, nor desirable. She will touch you if she has been touched by your presence. If she wants to be touched, she will touch you.

Time for parting. "Goodbye. I enjoyed the evening and the pleasure of your company." You may take her hand, if she is amenable, for a goodbye hand squeeze. If she offers her cheek, you may kiss it, likewise her lips... if she offers. Respond, rather than initiate. Physical closeness is her gift to you, given if and when the time is right, and a first date is rather soon. "It was a wonderful evening. May I see you again?" It is the end of an evening... and perhaps a beginning.

Chapter 11

Deepening the Relationship

You have been dating a nice woman, and the two of you seem comfortable with each other and enjoy being together. It feels right being with her, but you have yet to touch, to hold hands, to exchange more than a hug and a nominal kiss or two. Where do you go from here?

 **Talk.** Set up lines of communication. Establish a rapport.

- Share your past, your pain and disappointments as well as your triumphs and joys.
- Laugh together, cry together. Humor is healing, and tears are sacred.
- Slowly and reverently peel back the layers of mystery in each other.

Every revealed nuance, every secret desire, every confession of weakness, every exploration of hope and admission of paralyzing fear strengthens the bond between the two of you, helps you connect with her as one human being to another, flawed but worthy of acceptance as a trusted and intimate companion.

 **Show her how much you cherish her.**

- Express appreciation of her beauty, her personal attributes, of those endearing traits and wondrous endowments that set her apart from the common run of humanity.
- Send her flowers and give her little gifts.
- Write her funny, but endearing notes.
- Make her feel special.

Share interests, activities, and hobbies.

- Play games you both enjoy, board games, lawn games, tennis, handball, croquet.
- Prepare home cooked meals for her, and volunteer to wash the dishes when she cooks for you. Don't forget to praise her spaghetti sauce (made from an old family recipe, no doubt).
- Sing to her. Make up silly rhymes to tunes you know.
- Teach her computer lore. Surf the Net together.
- Take long walks together (hold her hand and hug her every once in a while).
- Tell her stories, true stories from your life and made up stories from your imagination.
- Write poems especially for her. They don't have to rhyme.
- Read aloud favorite plays, each of you taking a part ("Romeo and Juliet" comes to mind).
- Hug often.
- Learn French together.
- Write a novel as a team. Each of you do an alternating chapter.
- Make longterm plans. Look at houses for sale. Talk about your philosophy of raising kids.
- Hold each other tightly, and listen to her heartbeat.

Develop customs and "traditions" unique to yourselves as a couple.

- Celebrate the monthly anniversaries of your first meeting with a small party.
- Give her little, inexpensive presents (stuffed animals, key chain trinkets, bath soaps). The personal touch counts.
- Call each other by pet names.
- Remember "special" dates, not just her birthday.
- Create a shared "history".

Build trust.

- Be reliable.
- Act honorably.
- Treat her with respect.
- Keep your word. Always.

Learn how to disagree.

- Establish the 'rules of engagement', the ground rules for arguing. There is a line you may not cross without causing permanent injury. Remember, words are like bullets. Once loosed, they cannot be recalled.
- Listen to her and respect her opinions, even if you have to grit your teeth.
- Be willing to compromise your differences (as distinct from your principles). Making up after a fight can bring you closer than you were before.

Get to know her family, and introduce her to your own.

- Bring flowers for her mother and small presents for her kid brothers and sisters.
- Talk about family lore, about stories passed down the generations in her family and yours.
- Find out her father's interests and hobbies, then educate yourself about them. Now you can hold intelligent discussions with him and win his respect.
- If invited to dinner, offer to help with the cleanup.

- Family background gives important clues to a person's character.
- A long-term relationship is a bond between families, not just the two persons involved. When you marry a woman, you marry her family as well.

There comes that magic moment when you finally touch, when she fiercely grasps your hand of her own free will, when you start to give her the usual goodnight peck on the cheek and she turns her face to catch the kiss full on her lips (and, oh, how soft and yielding and warm they are!). This is a healing touch, an affirmative, giving touch. It is a pledge, a promise, a commitment, a seed cast upon the waters of tomorrow.

**Women are meant to be loved, not to be understood.
Oscar Wilde**

Consider the process, the dynamic of how two people become one, a couple. The two of you gradually grow closer, begin to have deep feelings for one another, and to bond. Past a certain threshold, you cease to think of the woman as someone you have been dating, instead she becomes the other half of us. This is the point where commitment enters the picture, commitment to the relationship and to the happiness and well being of your partner. This is the moment when you decide you don't want to live apart from her.

Cautions

Since you are somewhat inexperienced in the realm of man-woman relationships, you will blunder at first, learning by trial and error, making painful mistakes. You force the pace, letting anxiety and impatience race ahead of what she is ready for, and bruise the fragile trust between you. You let personal insecurity drive you to acts of jealousy. You try to change, or "remodel" her. Your clever stratagems to pull her closer, to take possession of her -- drive her away. Sometimes, it seems as if all your efforts are self-defeating...

Be prepared for the possibility that the relationship may never 'kindle'. If such be the case, consider it 'training' for your next one. Get on with your life. Meet new people. Explore new relationships.

Finally, recognize that even a close relationship may go sour. Danger signs in a failing relationship include lack of respect between partners, constant bickering, and, most telling of all, power and domination dramas. If the two of you can no longer make each other laugh, give each other comfort by a touch, and share intimate moments, then there is little hope left. If your partner disparages and makes fun of you, there is not much remaining to hold on to. You can no longer evade hard choices, and the time has come to consider a graceful exit.

**Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing...
Shakespeare, Sonnet 87**

Questions

I took a woman out for the first time, and we had an enjoyable evening together. We said our goodnights and kissed, but left it at that. Where do I go from here?

Assuming she gave you her telephone number, a follow-up call in the next day or two would be in order. As an alternative, consider sending her a note, accompanied by flowers.

I have no trouble meeting women and making friends with them, but as the relationship progresses, they inevitably lose interest in me. What am I doing wrong?

You come on strong at the initial meeting, making a striking first impression. You have built up her expectations at this point. Then, as she gets to know you better, she finds out that there is not all that much beneath the impressive looking exterior. You promise much more than you deliver.

When first meeting a women, hold back in reserve something of yourself. If "that's all there is", of course you will disappoint her later. Even more important, develop yourself as a multifaceted human being. Cultivate some interests and become a deeper person. Keep growing and renewing yourself.

How will I know that she is the one for me?

"Love at first sight" is a verifiable phenomenon, but don't count on it happening to you. More commonly, it will gradually dawn on the both of you, during the course of the relationship, that you have a special bond, and perhaps, just perhaps are meant for each other.

What does she think of when she's with me?

Most likely she has the usual culturally imposed anxieties. "Does he like me? Have I done something wrong? Do I look good?" Getting past that, to the point where you can create ties of friendship and trust, where you can relax in each other's company - this is what will make or break your relationship.

How can I be sure she loves me?

You can't.

How can I test her love?

Relationships are based on trust. "Testing" her love violates that trust and demeans both of you.

I thought I had a good relationship with my girlfriend, but she seems to be losing interest in me. We had something beautiful, but it's slipping away. What can I do?

The question is, at what point a relationship is still worth fighting for. Can it be salvaged? Is it even worth saving?

If either of the following holds true, then you have something worth reclaiming.

- You have both made a meaningful commitment to each other.
- She returns your affections.

Just the fact that you have a huge emotional investment in the relationship is not in itself sufficient... if she does not share your level of commitment. If she does not have strong feelings for you by now, then the odds that she will ever commit to you, much less come to love you, are abysmally low. It's time to think seriously about cutting loose.

I'm very inexperienced in the ways of life and love. What will I do when it actually comes time to be intimate with a woman?

Making love to a woman, and doing so well and truly, requires only patience, sensitivity to her needs, and imagination. It is less a matter of talent than of devotion to the woman's comfort and pleasure. Becoming an accomplished lover is a process of learning and transformation, the work of a lifetime.

"To lovers I [bequeath] their imaginary world, with whatever they may need, as the stars of the sky, the red, red roses by the wall, the snow of the hawthorn, the sweet strains of music, or aught else they may desire to figure to each other the lastingness and beauty of their love."

Last will and testament of Charles Lounsbury (1897)

Chapter 12

Traps and Pitfalls

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!"
Lewis Carroll, Through The Looking Glass

Meeting and dating women may be hazardous to your health, and in particular, to your emotional well-being. Risks include making a fool of yourself, subjecting yourself to humiliation and ridicule, being exploited, and, of course, heartbreak. Worse yet, you may be done in by your very success and end up in a bad relationship. As a shy man, you are particularly vulnerable, due both to your very lack of experience in the dating arena and your romantic nature. Proceed with caution.

"Here there be tygers."

Predators stalk the shadows. Here lurk "users" and "players", schemers who would take advantage of you, who would betray your trust, who would profit from your painful loneliness and desperate need for affection, who would turn your deepest longings against you, who would manipulate you for their own purposes. Women, even sweet gentle women, alas, bear within them the same demons, the same depths of rage, the same capacity for corruption and depravity... as you and I.

Character Weaknesses

- Cruelty, viciousness, as expressed in mockery and putdowns.
- Immaturity, as expressed in "games playing", blame laying, whining.
- Superficiality, as expressed in vanity, flightiness (short attention span), pettiness.
- Lacking in intelligence.
- Lacking in wisdom and common sense.
- Lacking in integrity and basic honesty.
- Lacking in compassion and generosity.
- Lacking in inner strength (courage).

A woman displaying one or more of these traits has a flawed personality, and should be considered a high-risk partner, even for a short-term relationship.

Becoming involved with the wrong person is a certain prescription for unhappiness. The adage that "it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" is scant comfort to the man courting a woman who does not return his affections. This is the dreaded "one-way love" scenario*. Nearly as nerve wracking to deal with is the woman who is not quite sure that she loves you, who plays up to you when you start to distance yourself, yet pulls away when you want closeness. Every variety of games playing, every deviation from honesty and integrity undermines a relationship at its very foundations and diminishes both people involved.

* In the mirror-image situation, should you not wish to pursue a relationship with a woman who is attracted to you, be kind to her. Show her compassion, remembering all the times you were in her place. By all means, be honest about your intentions, but respect her feelings, and let her down easy. While you do not owe her your company, at least treat her with respect.

When one is in love, one always begins by deceiving oneself,
and one always ends by deceiving others.
That is what the world calls a romance.
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Avoid entanglements with married women, for very commonsense reasons. Not only might you be undermining a family relationship, perhaps hurting children in the process, but you run the risk of encountering an angry, and possibly armed husband. While adultery is no longer a punishable offense in most jurisdictions, it remains immoral, unethical, and certainly dangerous conduct.

A woman on the rebound from a failed relationship presents a ticklish problem. True enough, she is needy of affection, of healing, and will be grateful for your presence, your solace. Still, her feelings for you will be flickering and tenuous, her moods changeable, her attachment to you shaky. She will alternately cling and push you away. She will sweeten your existence... and bring you misery. You will constantly be asking yourself whether it is worth it.

In all your loneliness, take care in awarding your affections. You will find your partner and mate, your intended... in time, and likely after weathering disappointments and collecting a few bruises. Beware of imposters.

**The things ye do, by two and two
You must pay for, one by one.
Kipling**

It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time

**Judgment comes from experience,
and experience comes from bad judgment.
Simon Bolivar**

Social pressure can deny you the choice of a mate. They say she's too young, too old, too poor, too rich, or otherwise "wrong for you". Don't let the people around you drag you down and hold you back from a relationship (as in the movie, Marty). Strangely enough, in the company of women, friends provide emotional support and sensible advice (usually), while among men, the opposite seems to hold true. Your good buddies may not want you to have a girlfriend, for reasons of envy or simple fear that you may leave them behind. You might have to choose between your friends... and your happiness.

Blind dates must surely be the greatest boon to humankind since the invention of the guillotine. A friend or family member thinks they are giving you a break by "setting you up" with a woman just right for you. Of course, you and your date have absolutely nothing in common, and it invariably turns out to be a waste of an evening and \$30 or so, at best. At worst, it will be a total catastrophe, and that oh-so-helpful matchmaker might just be having a good laugh at your expense.

A singles bar can be a chamber of horrors for a shy person. Such locales have long since been the domain of aggressive males, the predatory "jock" crowd, the cowboy wannabes, who quickly show their resentment of "nerds" intruding on their hunting grounds. The women there, jaded pseudosophisticates, case-hardened veterans of the fast living booze-and-cocaine set, and other such burnouts, are hardly what you are looking for, in any case.

**At the narrow pass, there is no brother, no friend.
Arab proverb**

The on-line "singles bars" - the chat rooms and the newsgroups in the soc.singles hierarchy likewise present a bleak landscape. Male predators abound here, too, at times even masquerading as women. Cynicism is the rule. Shyness and sensitivity attract ridicule and gratuitous nastiness. Sneering vitriol is the coin of the realm here. Newcomers and outsiders are fresh meat for the regulars, and might just as well wear a "kick me" sign. These are the preferred haunts of emotional amputees and losers.

**A cheap shot is a terrible thing to waste.
Jo Haemer**

Loving Too Much

**"Affection is a coal that must be cool'd;
Else, suffer'd, it will set the heart on fire..."
Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis**

Love, the heady wine of true love, puts a bounce in your step, bloom in your cheeks, sparkle in your eyes. It makes the blood smoke through your veins, turbocharges your spirits, and ignites your enthusiasm for living. For all that, love is quicksand. It is shark-infested waters. It is an avalanche, a riptide, a firestorm. The deeper the passion, the greater the capacity for hurt. Burning passion blinds the senses, particularly common sense. Lover's passion is a mania, a deadly form of temporary insanity, a virulent disease, a treacherous pit, the hangman's trapdoor.

**"Love is like the measles; we all have to go through it."
Jerome K. Jerome**

A mature relationship is not so much about jumping into bed and making passionate love, as it is about companionship. It is about being there when your mate needs you, about giving comfort when she hurts, about caring for her... and being cared for. It is about working side by side and solving problems together. It is about the commonplace. It is about figuring out how to pay the mortgage when money is tight. It is about washing the dishes and changing soiled diapers. It is about taking out the trash on a bitter cold evening. It is about kissing her even when she has been getting on your nerves all day. It is about making up after fights. It is about caring even when you are angry at her. It is respect and affection and comfort and security, and even a bit of passion when the time and place are right. It is about getting accustomed to each other to the point that you fit together like a hand in an old, familiar glove. It is about being together.

**"...you don't spend a marriage sleeping with a person but waking with her."
Herman Wouk, "Marjorie Morningstar"**

Loving Too Soon

**"Will you still love me tomorrow?"
The Shirelles**

Becoming physically intimate too soon can be fatal to a relationship. It can shatter the slowly developing friendship and trust between the two of you. It magnifies and distorts feelings, clouds judgment, and superimposes cruel reality on hopes and dreams ("Is that all there is?"). It narrows options and introduces tensions and pressures into what was a joyous and carefree acquaintanceship. It damns you for lack of respect for the woman, and for lack of discipline on your part. It is begging for trouble.

Getting to know a woman, touching her is critically important in a relationship. Physical contact at the wrong time can intrude, hinder real understanding, block communication. You learn more about each other by joining your voices in song, by becoming one in music and lyrics and poetry, than by sleeping together. You get a deeper sense of communion by sharing a meal than by sharing a bed. Just holding hands or a gentle kiss can be more explosively effective in linking the two of you than "going all the way".

Physical intimacy implies commitment, responsibility, a sense of permanence. It is a promise, a contract. The two of you should be fully committed to each other before you seal the bond with lovemaking. Sex should never be undertaken lightly, without a full understanding of its implications... and consequences.

Wrong Time, Wrong Place

A man and a woman exchange glances, perhaps smile at each other wistfully. He would like to talk with her. Unfortunately, they are seated in a New York subway car, and strangers just don't approach one another in that setting. An opportunity irrevocably lost.*

You get along extraordinarily well with a woman. You can talk with her, laugh with her, and she confides in you. When you touch, accidentally, a spark jumps from her hand to yours. Unfortunately, she is already involved with someone. If only you had met a couple of years back...

We loved each other and were ignorant.

Yeats

There is a woman you absolutely worship. She shines with an unearthly light from within. You hang on her every word. You look up to her. She owns your heart and your soul. She is the only one in the world who understands you, sympathizes with you, loves you. Unfortunately, you are still in the fourth grade, and she is your teacher...

The circumstances for meeting are not quite right. You are not yet ready for her. She is not yet ready for you. Bad timing. You are waiting for her, but she is not there. She is waiting for you, but you are not there. Missed connections. She is flirting with you, but you are unsure if she is serious. You are flirting with her, but she is unsure whether to take you seriously. Misunderstandings. Different maturity levels. Age difference. Mismatched socks. Wrong phase of the moon. The sun got in your eyes. Bad luck.

* Lost, but perhaps not irretrievably. If you just happened to be wearing a T-shirt with your e-mail address colorfully emblazoned on it, you might find an interesting message from her waiting on your computer. A pullover or even a dress shirt with the e-mail address tastefully embroidered over the breast pocket works, too, though it would not be as easily visible. This is an example of how even a seemingly hopeless situation can sometimes be salvaged by ingenuity and foresight.

Frauds and Distractions

"Ninety percent of anything is crap"

Sturgeon's Law

The success of commercial dating services demonstrates that truly "there's a sucker born every minute", as that great sage Phineas Taylor Barnum once noted. The dating service is the modern day successor to the matchmaker of bygone days, but minus the personal touch and service. Dating services are, by most accounts, both expensive and surprisingly ineffective at matching up lonely people, in no small part due to the imbalance of men to women who sign up. Moreover, consider how undignified, even humiliating it is, needing to pay a third party for the privilege of getting dates. Save your money. Save your self-respect. Avoid these outfits.

Nightclubs, dance studios, and popular "hangouts" have become a mainstay of the entertainment industry. These are frequented by a young, affluent, and socially active crowd. Shy people generally feel out of place and uncomfortable, even unwelcome at these locales. With a bit of imagination, you can find better places to entertain your date, and if you lack a date, you can think of more productive uses for your time.

Singles weekends, Club Zed, and Caribbean "love boat" cruises may be grand fun for the socially endowed, but for the shy man searching for companionship they are an expensive waste of time. If you are absolutely dead set on going on a cruise, become a tennis pro or renowned musician and get hired as staff.

Pheromones are subtle scents emitted by animals in mating season. Capitalizing on this, cosmetic manufacturers have begun marketing expensive colognes and preparations containing these exotic derivatives, touting them as the secret to attracting the opposite sex. Here is a perfect example of techno-scam, of huckstering dubious "science" to the gullible and desperate. As anyone experienced in such matters knows, physical attraction takes place more in the mind than in the glands. Save your money.

Now even the medical establishment has discovered the cash potential of shyness. A certain pharmaceutical conglomerate is seeking FDA approval for its proprietary mood-altering drug as a treatment of "acute social phobia", an extreme form of shyness. Social dis-ease has become disease, a malady that can simply be medicated away. Save your money.

Then there are the so-called date rape drugs, GHB, ketamine, and rohypnol ("roofies", "rophies", or "roaches"). When slipped into the alcoholic drink of an unsuspecting victim, these drugs cause disorientation, partial amnesia, and sometimes unconsciousness. Forcing one's self on a woman rendered insensible by a drug, deprived of her free will - this is not an act of love, nor even by any stretch of the imagination an expression of passion, but an act of brutal violence, and a very serious criminal offense punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment.

Dirty Little Secrets

**"Women trade sex for love, men trade love for sex."
Old saying, often found scrawled on lavatory walls**

Some self-styled "playboys", the modern day successors to libertines and rakes, boast that "coming on" to every woman they meet yields them a fair number of seductions, just by the "law of averages". If but one in a hundred women submits to their blandishments and crude enticements, then they should do rather well in the long run. This flawed logic fails because these amateur lotharios rapidly manage to make themselves quite unpopular. They broadcast their unsolicited and usually unwelcome message to every woman within listening distance (this is somewhat analogous to "spamming" on the Internet, and even more annoying). They acquire a reputation as seducers and sleazeballs, and find themselves shunned by decent people.

The more subtle practitioners of the seduction art, the "smooth operators", more skilled at stealth and less obviously aggressive, often manage to make quite a nuisance of themselves before being neutralized. Frauds, swindlers, counterfeiters of affection, heartless, spineless, irresponsible and cruel,

they victimize the women they use and subsequently abandon. These men style themselves lovers, but beneath the masque is emptiness.

Like a malignant cancer, poisoning the reputation of the entire male sex, there are those men who use fear as a tool to control the women in their lives. The threat of violence, and yes, the allure of it, plays on the helplessness and vulnerability of all too many women, generally with tragic consequences.

"My way or the highway." The lore of violence and abuse has been handed down from generation to generation, from father to son, from brother to brother, from friend to friend, in locker rooms, in trash literature, in the mass media. The popular culture has traditionally accepted, even glorified predatory methods for acquiring and holding on to women. Quite recently, in a somewhat belated fit of enlightenment, society has come to consider this pattern of behavior pathological, and it is punishable by law, as well it should be.

"All larger organisms, including ourselves, are living testimonies to the fact that destructive practices do not work in the long run. In the end, the aggressors always destroy themselves, making way for others who know how to cooperate and get along. Life is much less a competitive struggle for survival than a triumph of cooperation and creativity." Fritjof Capra, "The Web Of Life"

"When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro..."
Hunter S. Thompson

The author of HOW-2 Meet Women considers himself a card-carrying nerd, even to the extent of wearing a pocket protector. He is, among other things, a programmer, software developer, and technical writer* (author of two HOWTOs for the Linux Documentation Project and a past contributor to Electronic Design magazine and the Linux Gazette). Although happily married for over a decade, he will never forget his origins, his long lonely bachelor years.

If HMW has something of the flavor of a technical "howto", this is hardly accidental. It approaches the topic from the standpoint of an engineer, stressing algorithms (methods) that facilitate getting the job done. The book is based on the premise that a functional relationship with a woman is as intricate and awe-inspiring a structure as a well-designed suspension bridge or an elegant digital logic circuit. From that point of view, human interaction becomes, in a sense, an elaborate exercise in problem solving, and moreover something that can be codified and taught in bite-sized chunks. A touch of subjectivity and humor flavor the brew, but without diluting its emphasis on the practical. The intended audience is primarily shy single men, but much of the content is gender neutral, and the author has received favorable comment on it from women.

In a bygone era, hard-won wisdom gained from lore and accumulated experience passed from father to son, or from master to apprentice. Guilds and secretive elites jealously guarded specialized knowledge. Keeping the masses ignorant circumscribed their lives and preserved the status quo. The invention of the printing press, and, in our own time, the personal computer changed all that and gave access to virtually unlimited information to any sufficiently motivated literate person. On balance, this seems a favorable development, but it has drastically accelerated the pace of social change and let loose the demon of unbridled technology. It has made possible the publication of information that can cause unintended consequences.

**The major advances in civilization are processes that all but wreck the societies in which they occur.
Alfred North Whitehead**

There were ethical issues to consider before releasing HOW-2 Meet Women upon an unsuspecting public. Certain of the techniques contained therein could potentially be used by unscrupulous men to seduce and exploit women. Yet, it must be assumed that predators and manipulators already have the requisite knowledge for plying their sinister trade, as indeed they have been with such devastating effect for all of recorded history and beyond. And the need is there, it is painfully obvious, to put shy men on something of an equal footing with their more socially adept fellows. In a sense, this is part of the evolutionary "arms race" between predators and decent people, and any step taken toward equalizing matters is a blow for civilization.

The question naturally arises whether the author is holding anything back, if important revelations and secrets have been omitted from this book. The short answer is a simple yes. Some topics are too inflammatory, ethically ambiguous, or perhaps just a bit too "advanced" to appear in what is essentially a primer on acquiring the social graces and establishing relationships. Moreover, some things are better left undiscussed, remaining to be discovered by those blessed (or damned) few who are capable of coupling bitter experience with rare flashes of insight. The readers of this book, and most of the rest of the human race for that matter, will likely be none the poorer for remaining ignorant of this dangerous higher wisdom.

So, where do we go from here? The author will continue to put words on paper, or, as it were, onto his Web site. You, the reader, will continue your quest, somewhat wiser hopefully, to realize your human potential. Men will continue to seek women, and women men... and the world will go on with business as usual.

The author wishes to bestow his admittedly limited blessings on the readers of HMW. You deserve your shot at happiness. May you have passionate and fulfilling relationships.

**Never eat at a place called Mom's.
Never play cards with a man named Doc.
And never lie down with a woman
who's got more troubles than you.
--Nelson Algren
"What Every Young Man Should Know"**