

Let's Set a Date

By Cory Bickmore

Recently, a wonderful young lady and I went out for a festive night on the town. Her loveliness dazzled me; my smooth wit left her equally amazed. We laughed, we cried, we told some poor waitress it was my birthday. As we headed to her door at evening's end, my date cheerfully gushed, "I had SO MUCH fun! Let's do it AGAIN!" After quickly performing the obligatory awkward post-date hug I cruised on home, a man well pleased.

Two obvious issues arise: Did I believe her claim of fun and future interest? Yes. Did she ever speak to me again? Absolutely not.

In our enlightened culture, we hapless men are expected to stick out our collective necks to attract women, only to have those necks savagely bitten off by some diminutive hellcat who looks terrific in high heels. Or we get sucked into the dreaded "Define The Relationship" talk, the so-called "DTR" where she informs you she's more comfortable as 'just friends' and longs for your excruciating death at the hands of rabid wolverines. Can anyone blame us men-folk, then, if we occasionally fantasize about turning the tables on our beautiful Mistresses of Rejection? Not I.

From this springs the natural question: What if I wasn't so handsome? And more importantly, what if women, not men, were responsible for all things romantic? Imagine if our female counterparts were expected to do everything from planning dates to paying (!) for the honeymoon. The world would be a different place indeed. Now, I am in no way suggesting that either gender swap their native characteristics. I, for my part, have no desire to see ladies entering contests involving empty beer cans and foreheads, or to witness guys flailing about in that girly "shooing-away-winged-insects" motion when throwing

a baseball. ("Get away, you icky fly! Eeww!") I am talking about a straightforward reversal of this *one* role. Women would pursue men in ways natural to them and men would respond instinctively in our own refreshing — albeit blockheaded — fashion.

The first major challenge would come as girls ask guys out. The woman would probably begin her Anguished Fretting stage several days before the date instead of only just after it — the traditional fretting period under our current system. She would carefully mull over every angle, decide, undecide, waver, adjust the plan, decide again, remember something important, change her mind, change it back, call her sister, worry, gasp aloud over a last neglected nuance, dismiss the nuance, re-agree with the nuance, and settle on an suitably altered plan but only if mother approves — all to determine whether some poor chap qualifies as an acceptable companion for an evening at Chuck E. Cheese. This being the case, a typical date-themed phone call might sound something like this:

SALLY: Hello. Is Dave there?

DAVE: This is Dave.

SALLY: Hi Dave! This is Sally. You busy Friday night?

DAVE: Nope, I'm free.

SALLY: Well, I'm considering asking you on a date, but I'm kind of unsure if I really want to. Interested?

DAVE: I'd love to go.

SALLY: Good! I'll call you back after I decide.

DAVE: Uh, ok.

Should Sally ultimately conclude she would rather date a puddle of rat spittle than Dave, our hero will spend the remainder of the month listening to the sound of the telephone not ringing, staring ahead blankly while softly mumbling "a simple yes or no..." into a glass of flat Mountain Dew.

This sad scenario vividly illustrates that in a world of female-instigated romance, males would, if only to avoid a swift and French-like insanity, have to adopt a "High Noon" rule of thumb. We men rely on unmistakable clues to tell us what's going on, like long, two-foot thick goal lines or the sun going down. The High Noon rule would cater to that need. "*If direct communication from a potential date is not forthcoming by noon on, say, Wednesday, a 'NO' decision will be assumed, allowing me to watch the latest, not-funny David Spade movie that night with my buddies.*"

Admittedly, the High Noon rule is rather arbitrary, but it would help us more or less detect when a woman's thought process has progressed from Regular Incomprehensible Feminine Silence to the more advanced I-Hope-You-Stick-Your-Hand-In-A-Mother-Cobra's-Den-Can't-You-Take-A-Hint Feminine Silence. We would then be at liberty to make other plans, like practicing Jamaican voodoo hexes or burning her life-size effigy, guilt free.

Conversely, men would find themselves in the unfamiliar position of deciding whether to accept or reject a female's romantic interest. Normally, the third or fourth date triggers certain thoughts in most women's minds, like "What are his intentions?" "Could I truly fall for this person?" and "Do I really want my babies to look like HIM?" Guys, on the other hand, are usually thinking, "Dude, she's weird. Am I sitting on my potato chips again?"

So how do we let a persistent girl know her attention is no longer required? Here's my advice: flip a coin. If it comes up Heads, send her dead roses. If it's Tails, send her dead roses. And be sure to brush up on the phrase, "I don't DTR on the first date."