Men, Women, Writing, and Getting Laid

written by Holly
June 25, 2009
By Holly Lisle

Matt has assured me on more than one occasion that the reason men choose to do anything is, first and foremost, because they think doing it will get them laid.

Design the Eiffel Tower? Compose a magnificent concerto? Do a hundred pushups a day? Write a novel?

The man thinks "This will get me laid." And he's right. For a man, the secret to getting laid is to stand apart from other men—to be really good at something valuable, or admirable, or cool, to be competent, to be different than every other man a woman knows. Men don't have to be young or gorgeous, to have great hair or a square jaw or a perfect body to get a woman or women. They have to stand apart.

If you're a woman, on the other hand, breathing will get you laid, and sometimes even that's setting the bar too high.

Doubt me? Think you aren't pretty enough, young enough, whatever enough?

If you're a woman and you'd like to test out this theory, walk with a female friend into any place where men gather to buy manly things (Home Depot, Best Buy, auto parts store). Carry a stopwatch. In an empty aisle, one of you will say, a bit too loudly, "God, I need to get laid. I want to *meet* someone." The other one of you will start the stopwatch. I'm saying this line will bring at least one man into your aisle within thirty seconds. He'll amble in casually, looking at something in your aisle…only not. He's checking you out.

If he looks up at either of you and smiles, you have just met someone. Remember saying you wanted to meet someone? If he's an employee and appears as if from nowhere, and asks if you ladies need help, you probably also have just met someone. (Well… he could just be the one guy working that day who isn't avoiding working and who **wants** the challenge of figuring out what "one of those bendy thingees that go on the inside of the square thingee in the car" is. But what are the odds?)

Ball's in your court.

A smile from a man is usually an invitation to explore possibilities (in public places, to smile back or to say hello), something women learn before puberty. Men smile when they see things they like. Doing so, they're expressing interest.

The automatic female reaction to being smiled at by an unknown man is to look away or to frown. This is so automatic it's almost instinctive, and if women don't realize they're doing it, they end up believing that there are no men in the world who would want them, because they're turning down all sorts of invitations without acknowledging they've even received them.

Clearly, no matter who you are, not every man will test the waters with a smile because all men have different attractiveness filters… but as many men as can do so without getting shot or fired will find an excuse to amble over to the Romantic Comedy section where you're standing to see if what they just heard might translate into something they might want.

The basic (not unbreakable) rule between the sexes is that men put together their best offer, based on their skills, talents, interests, and abilities, and they broadcast the offer—and women select from what's offered. Women get offers by fitting into any given man's classification of "Yeah, I could go for that."

So what does this have to do with writing?

Men can get laid by pursuing writing and doing it well (or at least well enough to impress women.) God knows, it worked on me. I met not one but two future husbands because they wrote.

Women will NOT get laid by pursuing writing. No woman will ever get a man by casually mentioning that she writes novels. This is not a workable female pick-up line. The ONLY workable pick-up line for a woman is some variant on "I might consider sleeping with you," or any action apart from words that would allow a man to think this.

Smiling. Blinking.

Breathing…

> *I need to take a moment to throw in a caveat here. Crossing gender attraction lines, I've noticed that in general, gay men seem to use the same filters for selecting men that straight men use for selecting women—appearance, not accomplishment. And that gay women seem to use the same filters for finding other women that straight women use for selecting men—accomplishment, not appearance. So a lesbian writer might very well attract a mate with the "I'm working on a novel" line.*
>
> *This is an observation at second-hand, so I may be wrong. But I did not want to ignore this part of the discussion, and would be happy to entertain comments across the complement of gender variants in adult human relationships.*

But. WRITING.

When we are sane and not self-destructive, human beings do things because they improve our chances of survival. For men, survival is wired to be broadly procreative, and while the male selection criteria for choosing a mate runs along varying lines of "breathing, healthy, would have sex with me,"

attracting a mate or mates requires accomplishment. “I’m working on my next novel,” is a *good* line, better if you can back it up by presenting something you’ve written that’s really good.

For women, who cannot parent two hundred kids because women’s bodies devour themselves in the making of each one—Angelina Jolie being the exception who proves the rule—survival is genetically wired to being as narrowly procreative as possible—to having the best possible mate we can attract (by being young, pretty and healthy…or at least receptive), and then keeping him around for protection and to take care of food and shelter while making the occasional baby.

So writing does not fulfill the ‘attract a mate’ survival need in women—women don’t need to be accomplished to procreate.

What survival need does writing fulfill for us?

I didn’t start writing as a pursuit of self-actualization, that’s for sure. Or to find my inner self, or to change the world, or to find a mate. I wanted to write because my income mattered to our survival, and I wanted to find a way of making money that would let me stay home with my kids. I’d read that Anne McCaffrey had started writing for the same reason, and I thought, “I could do that.”

Writing for me was not a love-at-first-sight pursuit. I got to know it, and fell in love over time. Like the other relationships in my life that have lasted, there was an initial attraction, followed by a lot of work, with the big payoff (true love) coming only with knowing each other well.

But how representative is my experience to the experiences of other women? To you as a female writer? How valid is what I’ve observed and been told about men to you as a male writer?

I don’t know. But I want to know.

Dig deep. Be honest. What do you hope the end result of your writing will be?

P.S. Why is this on my blog?

Well, I’m working on this novel…

Seriously, though, it’s topical to a part of the book I am working on, and something about which I’d really like to get other views.

Contents © Holly Lisle. https://hollylisle.com All Rights Reserved