

THE MATING DANCE

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FADE IN:

INT. AIRPORT HILTON - HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Stranded GUESTS linger in this grand, lavishly decorated area. A few stand by the doors and watch the wind and torrential rainstorm outside.

At the reservation desk, a female CLERK (30) assists JAKE ROSEN (45), almost handsome in thick glasses and frumpy suit.

CLERK

Hope you enjoyed your stay Mr.  
Rosen. We'll text you when our  
airport shuttle resumes service.

Behind Jake, several GUESTS wait inside the roped maze.

Next in line, nose in a newspaper and garment bag over her shoulder is MARLA DURAN (42), no makeup, hair pulled back, dressed in no nonsense business attire.

She peeks over her paper, sees Jake sling his garment bag over his shoulder then steps forward as Jake turns to leave.

They bump into each other, their bags somehow snag together. Embarrassed, they attempt to untangle them. They tug, pull, turn, repeat.

People watch the strange dance accompanied by an awkward exchange of nervous laughter.

The bags finally separate, Jake clumsily stumbles a few feet back. Flustered, he smiles then walks away.

Marla hands the Clerk her credit card. Her eyes drift toward Jake's direction. He circles a small SUNDRIES CART.

Jake scans magazines, crosswords and books trying hard not to look over at Marla. A book catches his eye, "THE MATING DANCE - FOR MEN by Dr. Ramesh Kumar".

He looks to make sure no one is watching, grabs the book and a Wall Street Journal then pays the female CASHIER (20).

The Cashier snickers at the book, looks up at Jake.

JAKE

(embarrassed)  
Been out of the game a while.

She shrugs then hands him his change. He quickly walks away.

As Jake searches for a place to sit, Marla approaches the Sundries Cart.

She circles, grabs a pack of gum then spots a book, "THE MATING DANCE - FOR WOMEN by Dr. Padima Sanghi-Kumar".

She looks around, sees Jake enter the Lounge. She grabs the book, pays then hides it inside her newspaper.

As Marla walks away, the Cashier shakes her head.

HOTEL LOUNGE

Marla sits at the only table left, right next to Jake's.

Now directly across from each other, they try to avoid eye contact. Simultaneously they open their books. Jake's hidden behind his magazine, Marla's behind her newspaper.

Jake's eyes scan the first line of the opening statement.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)  
(male with Indian accent)  
There is no such thing as fate.

Marla scans the second line of the same opening statement.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)  
(female with Indian accent)  
You must make things happen. The  
right questions and responses will  
help you see if you're compatible.

Jake reads the first bit of advice.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)  
Eye contact is very important.

Marla's has the same advice. They both glance over their books, make eye contact then nervously look back down.

Marla reads the second part of the advice.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)  
But don't forget to smile.

Marla looks up, Jake is already looking at her with an odd smile. She hesitantly smiles, they both look back down.

Jake's eyes widen as he reads the next line.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)  
Introduce yourself. Compliment her  
appearance.

Nervously he looks up, clears his throat, gets her attention.

JAKE  
Hi. I'm Jake Rosen. I very much  
like your appearance.

MARLA

I ahh. . .I'm Marla Duran and. . .

Marla reads. The advice in her book now differs from Jake's.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)

If he compliments your appearance,  
acknowledge his kind words.

Marla looks up to find Jake staring at her in anticipation.

MARLA

Those are kind words you have.

Hmm. Confused, Jake looks back at his book.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)

Offer to buy her a drink. Coffee  
or maybe a tropical cocktail.

JAKE

Can I buy you a cup of coffee or  
maybe a tropical cocktail?

He points to the house special board: "Cumquat Cosmo". She raises her eyebrows like, "yum" then quickly checks her book.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)

If he offers to buy you a drink,  
accept but I suggest no alcohol at  
the first meeting. He may just be  
looking for a one night stand.

She looks up at him, a spark of distrust in her eyes.

MARLA

I'd love a coffee. Thank you.

As Jake heads to the bar, taking book in magazine with him, Marla quickly rifles through her book and reads.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)

Be careful not to reveal too much  
personal information at the first  
meeting. He may be a stalker.

Alarmed, Marla looks toward the bar. She watches Jake suspiciously as he eats peanuts and reads the next line in his book.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)

Try to find out some personal  
information. If this makes her  
uncomfortable she could be the  
icy cold type. This is very bad.

With a scrutinizing look he glances toward Marla, her eyes glued to her newspaper (book) as she reads.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)

Think of a way to find out if he's married or in a relationship. If he avoids the question he may be hiding something.

(next page)

Ask him to dance. If he says no he could be uptight. If he agrees and moves like a corpse he may have issues in the bedroom.

She bites her nails nervously. At the bar Jake flips to the next page, reads.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)

Any information you offer on past relationships will be evaluated. She may resort to trickery here. Stay on your toes.

(next page)

Absolutely do not dance at the first meeting. Women will analyze your every move.

The BARTENDER (30's) approaches Jake with two coffee cups.

He pays, tucks the magazine under his arm and walks to the tables. Marla sees him coming, quickly closes her newspaper.

He sets a cup down in front of her then returns to his table.

MARLA

Thank you. Your wife is a lucky woman. Would you like to dance?

Surprised, Jake reflects a moment.

JAKE

I'm not. . .I'm ahh. . .  
Is there even music in here?

They pause to listen. Background, music plays very softly.

JAKE (CONT'D)

So, where do you live, how old are you, what kind of work do you do?

MARLA

That's a lot of questions. Are you sure you don't want to dance?

JAKE

Yes. Absolutely. No dancing. Not today. Do personal questions make you uncomfortable?

MARLA

No I just. . .Does your wife like to dance? Maybe we could ask them to turn up the music.

Jake opens his mouth to say something but thinks better of it. Both at a loss they consult their books again.

Simultaneously their phones chime. They check their texts.

MARLA (CONT'D)

My shuttle is ready.

JAKE

Mine too.

Defeated and a little suspicious of each other they gather their belongings and head to the lobby.

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

They walk a fair distance from each other and avoid eye contact. Both covertly throw their books in the garbage.

As they approach the revolving glass doors, Jake graciously allows Marla to go ahead. Still unsure she half smiles.

Outside the rain has stopped and the sun shines.

INT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

Two seats remain, they're forced to sit next to each other.

Awkward.

Jake notices the address on Marla's luggage tag.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You're from Bridgewater?

MARLA

How did you know that? Oh God. You are a stalker.

He points to the tag. She feels silly.

JAKE

I am too. What year did you graduate?

MARLA

Nineteen eighty seven.

JAKE

I was eighty four. My ex wife graduated in eighty seven. Ann Grayson?

MARLA

No way. I couldn't stand her!

JAKE

Me neither.

They laugh. The tension loosens up.

MARLA

I live on Wilson Avenue.

EXT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

The shuttle drives away from the Hotel.

JAKE (O.S.)

I'm on Dumont. Pretty close.

MARLA (O.S.)

Ever go dancing at Club Mars?

JAKE (O.S.)

Yeah. Maybe we could go sometime.

MARLA (O.S.)

I'd like that.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER CREDITS:

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)

Well they really screwed that up.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)

Oh shut up Ramesh. It's because of your ridiculous advice we had to write separate books.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR

Ice princess.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR

Bad dancer.

THE END