

THE MATING DANCE

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FADE IN:

INT. AIRPORT HILTON - HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

GUESTS linger in this grand, lavishly decorated area.

INT. AIRPORT HILTON - RESERVATION DESK - DAY

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

The clerk taps furiously on her keyboard.

Restless, Jake glances at the line of people behind him.

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.

Marla peers over her paper, surprised to see Jake staring at her. Caught, he freezes a moment then spins back toward the counter when the Clerk speaks.

CLERK

I apologize for the shuttle delay,  
Mister Rosen. We're working on a  
solution and we'll text you the  
minute one is ready.

Intrigued, Marla watches him over her paper.

JAKE

Thank you.

Jake slings his garment bag over his shoulder.

Marla folds her paper and 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 opens his mouth to say something but can only muster a nervous smile then walks away.

Marla hands the Clerk her credit card. Her eyes periodically drift toward Jake's direction.

INT. HILTON - SUNDRIES STORE - DAY

Jake circles a bookstand, scans magazines and books.

He has a clear shot of Marla, still standing at the reservation desk but tries hard not to look over at her.

A book catches his eye, "THE MATING DANCE - FOR MEN by Dr. Ramesh Kumar".

He picks it up, turns it over. A photo of Dr. Kumar on the back, a grumpy looking man.

Jake checks to make sure no one is watching, grabs the book and a Wall Street Journal then heads to the cash register.

The CASHIER (20) snickers at the book as she rings up his order.

A bit embarrassed, Jake pays, smiles, then quickly walks out and heads to the lounge across the lobby.

INT. HILTON - LOUNGE

As Jake searches for a place to sit, he sees Marla complete her transaction at the reservation desk.

She gathers her things and approaches the Sundries store.

INT. HILTON - SUNDRIES STORE - DAY

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

She turns the book over. A photo of Dr. Sanghi-Kumar on the back, pretty but very serious looking.

Marla looks around, sees Jake sitting over in the Lounge.

She grabs the book and quickly heads to the cash register.

Marla pays for the book, then hides it inside her newspaper.

As Marla walks away, the Cashier shakes her head.

INT. HILTON - LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Marla sits at the only empty table, which happens to be right next to Jake's.

Now directly across from each other, they attempt 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.

Grumpy looking DR. RAMESH KUMAR pops into Jake's head and narrates as he reads.

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

Marla scans the second line of the same opening statement.

Stoic but attractive, DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR pops into Marla's head and narrates as she reads.

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)  
(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 book shows the same advice.

They both slowly glance over their books, make eye contact with each other 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.

Oooops. Marla quickly looks up, Jake is already looking at her with an odd, forced 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 down at his book. Reads.

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".

Marla smiles, raises her eyebrows like, "yum" then quickly consults 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 with a spark of distrust in her eyes.

MARLA

(a tad reserved)  
I'd love a coffee. Thank you.

Jake heads to the bar, takes book hidden in the 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 up, stares at Jake suspiciously as he stands at the bar.

INT. LOUNGE - BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jake eats peanuts as he reads the next line in his book.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)  
Try to find out some personal  
information. If she refuses to  
answer she could be the ice cold  
type. This is bad.

With a scrutinizing look he glances toward Marla.

INT. LOUNGE - MARLA'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Marla's eyes are glued to the book, still hidden behind the newspaper. 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.

She bites her nails nervously as she glances over her book toward Jake who is still at the bar.

INT. LOUNGE - BAR - CONTINUOUS

With an intense look, Jake flips to the next page and reads.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)  
Any information you offer on past  
relationships will be evaluated.  
She may try to trick you here.  
Stay alert.

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

He pays, tucks the magazine under his arm and walks to the tables.

INT. LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Marla sees Jake coming and 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.

Surprised, Jake reflects a moment.

JAKE

Oh, I'm not...ahh...

VOICE ECHOES IN JAKE'S HEAD:

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)

Any information you offer on past relationships will be evaluated. She may try to trick you here.

Flustered, he sips his coffee as he contemplates his next move.

Awkward silence. Marla glances down at her book.

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

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.

Her eyes widen at the last line but she shakes it off and with a look of hope, she looks up and smiles at Jake.

MARLA

Would you like to dance?

Coffee cup to his lips, Jake chokes back a sip.

Confused, he consults his book.

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)

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

He concentrates a moment, listens intently.

JAKE

Is there even music in here?

They both strain to hear the background music which plays very softly.

Whoa. He thinks fast.

JAKE

So. . .where do you live? How old are you? What kind of work do you do?

VOICE ECHOES IN MARLA'S HEAD:

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)  
He could be a stalker. Stalker.  
Stalker.

Trying not to panic, Marla answers calmly.

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. . .

VOICE ECHOES IN MARLA'S HEAD:

DR. PADIMA SANGHI-KUMAR (V.O.)  
If he avoids the question he may be  
hiding something.

Determined...

MARLA  
Does your wife like to dance?

Suddenly she shivers, rubs her arms for warmth.

MARLA  
Oooh...it's chilly in here.

VOICE ECHOES IN JAKE'S HEAD:

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)  
Ice princess. Ice princess. Ice  
princess.

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  
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 on opposite sides of the room from each other and avoid eye contact.

Both look at their books in disgust and covertly throw them in the garbage.

As they approach the glass doors, a DOORMAN holds it open.

Jake graciously allows Marla to go through before him. Still unsure of him, she half smiles.

EXT. AIRPORT HILTON - CONTINUOUS

Jake and Marla stare at a lone taxi cab parked in front of the hotel.

DOORMAN

Our airport shuttle is temporarily  
out of service so the hotel has  
provided cab service for our guests.

The trunk pops open.

MARLA

(to doorman)  
We're sharing?

The Doorman nods yes, smiles and gestures to the cab.

Jake walks to the trunk, puts his bag in then holds out his hand for Marla's.

She passes it to him, he places it inside. He notices the address on Marla's luggage tag.

JAKE

You're from Bridgewater?

MARLA

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

She has a panicked look until he points to the tag on her luggage.

She chuckles, feeling a bit embarrassed.

JAKE  
I'm from Bridgewater too. Small  
world, huh?

Jake closes her door the runs around the to the opposite door  
and gets in.

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

The tension is gone. They smile warmly at each other.

MARLA  
So what high school did you go to?

JAKE  
Central. You?

MARLA  
Me too. Class of 89.

JAKE  
I was 85.

EXT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

The cab drives away from the Hotel.

JAKE (V.O.)  
You ever go dancing at Club Mars?

MARLA (V.O.)  
Yeah. Sometimes. Do you like to  
dance?

JAKE (V.O.)  
I do. I've got some great moves.

Their conversation is drowned out by the sound of traffic and  
as the shuttle moves further down the road.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER CREDITS:

DR. RAMESH KUMAR (V.O.)  
Well they could have handled that a  
lot better.

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