

## Back on Top

Then, every time he kissed her, he would murmur, “Yum. Juuuust Yummmm.”

“Every time?” I asked.

“Yep.”

“Was he trying to be funny? Cute? Strange?” I asked.

“Well,” Mimi said, thinking, “he would say it in what I guess he thought was a sexy voice. I know he meant it as a compliment, but all I could think was, *How do I respond to that?* It just gave me the creeps.”

After a few more dates, Mimi stopped going out with him. And yes, she’s happy.

## The Art of Saying No

Then there was the first date I had from Match.com. On his profile he listed his skills as: martial arts instructor, scuba-certified, gourmet cook, mountain climber, water-skier, ballroom dancer—well, you get the idea. I wanted a date for a formal dance in a couple of weeks, so after we chatted online a bit I asked if he’d like to go. He said yes.

He showed up in a tuxedo . . . sort of. No tie, no cummerbund, and his shirt was stained and wrinkled. He told me this was his “chorus uniform” and he hadn’t had time since their last performance to get it dry-cleaned. From the scent of the jacket, I was thinking the last performance must have been on a horse farm. At least he said he could dance, I thought.

Sure enough, Robert walked me to the dance floor right away, and as the music started it was all I could do to hang on. He

## We Screen for Marrieds and Felons

was spinning me, multiple times in a row, then flinging me in an outward arc so I had to catch my balance on the other side of the dance floor. I felt like I was on a *Punk'd* version of *So You Think You Can Dance*?

I tried dancing separately from him but he would grab my hands and give me another whirl. We were bumping into people left and right, and I was wondering if I could break off the heel of my very expensive shoe just to get the hell off the dance floor. That's when it happened. He suddenly put one hand behind my neck, the other hand below my waist, and dipped me—very deep, without any warning.

We fell. We crashed, actually, ending up in a small heap right in the middle of the dance floor. When I finally got up and limped to our table, I told him I thought I would just sit the rest of the night out. In hindsight, dancing might have been better than enduring his tall tales for the next two hours. He talked on and on about scuba trips with barracudas and rock climbing with frozen hands and Brazilian combat fighting with malaria. *I really should have come alone*, I thought. *Instead I brought a schizophrenic Indiana Jones*. How had I missed this through my IM screening process?

I did learn something extremely valuable that night. I learned what I call the Art of Saying No—politely, firmly, and quickly, at the end of the first date. If there are forty million men online, it's best to cut your losses and try again.

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In my Art of Saying No, I typically start off by saying, “Thank you so much for the date tonight. But I really don’t think we’re a match. I wish you the best in your search.” There, nicely done.

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That’s the greatest thing about Match.com—it’s given us a whole new vocabulary for rejection. Instead of saying, “I think you are a [fill-in-the-blank: dork/weirdo/womanizing bastard],” we can simply say, “We’re not a match.” Much more ladylike.

However, most of my dates have not read the memo about how to receive the Art of Saying No. Don’t they realize how much courage and grace I have to channel from Audrey Hepburn to pull this off? I would much rather do the cowardly “I’ll talk to you soon” thing and then move out of the country.

Instead, some of my dates would challenge me. “How can you tell after just one date?”

“I just can, really, thank you.”

“I don’t think you gave it a chance,” some would say. “I think you’re making a mistake,” said others.

Now, to be honest, some of my dates were very relieved to hear my Art of Saying No, since I had simply beaten them to the punch. Some dates didn’t even wait for my little speech *or* use their own version of the Art of Saying No. They’d just say “Gotta go—I’ll call you sometime” in a way I knew they wouldn’t.

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But for those who would not take a polite decline, I would pull out the ringer—the one-liner I had developed because it felt honest and true, and it was irrefutable.

I'd say, "Just because *we* don't click, please don't let my preferences define you."

I actually mean this, and I've said it to more than one date. It's not about who *he* is but about what *I'm* looking for. In fact, it's true about every guy I've ever dissed in this book. It's not him, it's me.

And you know what? I have to remind myself of that one-liner every time a guy doesn't call, doesn't write, and doesn't want to go out on a second date with *me*.