

A Male's Guide to Sexual Harassment

'Hey, Ma'am,

Is This a Come-On?'

If you get your signals in the office crossed, mister, it could mean real trouble

It was a romantic evening arranged by a successful L.A. real-estate agent (female) for a potential client (male). Lights were low. Wine was chilled. Music was playing. The dinner included a lot of sexually oriented foods: oysters à la aphrodisia, yogurt flambée, peacock sweetbreads under Lucite, etc. Then, when the meal was over, they eyed each other suspiciously. He thinks: "If we *don't* have sex, I wonder if I'll have to give her back the \$280 for the wine,

food and song during the plea bargaining?" After all, what's an enlightened, modern-day male to do? Is this a woman who's after a sale or a male?

Sexual communication has never been easy, but ever since Bendixgate (the popular term for the issue of sexual harassment occasioned by the recent scandal surrounding Bill Agee and Mary Cunningham), the typical L.A. Male might find himself perpetually confused. Sure, he'd still like the L.A. Female to continue initiating sex, but how can he be sure it's sex she's after? And if he doesn't read the signals right, it's not his libido that's at stake but an appearance in front of the grand jury and/or sexual-harassment committee. So, for the thousands of potential victims out there, we've prepared a short guide to the

more popular types of female harassers and the lines they use. Take this along on your very next wine-spritzer outing—the harassment you avoid may be your own.

"I've Always Loved Your Work"

We'll start with L.A.'s own creation, the Talent Freak. She's not interested in clothes; she claims she's concerned with people, not trappings. Whether she works at a network, studio or publishing house, rest assured she's related to someone important. Most commonly, however, she haunts not Rodeo Drive but B. Dalton Pickwick's and/or the Beverly Hills Library in search of her favorite prey—the producer-writer. So, hyphenates, be forewarned. A relationship with you is not what she's after. She yearns for the respect and envy of the other women who also don't shop on Rodeo and tries to obtain it through association with you. She's hard to resist

because she offers you a wonderful evening, and, while the spritzers are flowing, she coos sweet nothings about your work while secretly putting you through her own personal 1-to-10 rating scale. Is this entrapment or genuine interest? Protect your own body by simply asking if she can name the title of *one*. I repeat *one*, of your works. If she can, I guarantee you're in for the best time of your life.

"I'm Ready to Check Out from My Celibacy Number"

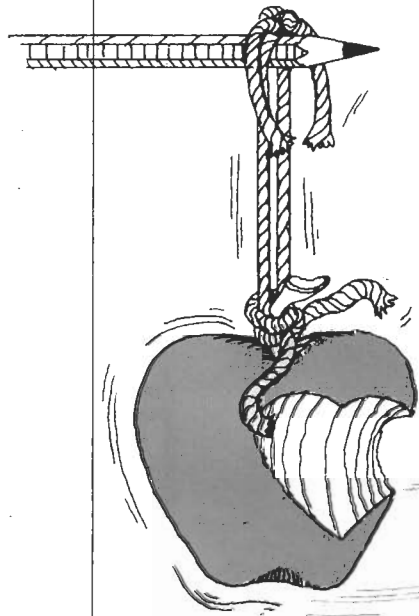
Ms. Temporarily Antimale heads for moderate guys who are nice rather than passionate, more into stocks and real estate than the arts. You'll find her in the Xerox room or the secretarial pool or she may be contemplating joining the executive training program. Her idea of courtship is liberated but predictable: She initiates dates, doesn't mind driving and will pick up the dinner check at least 50 per cent of the time. Sex talk comes at a simmer, not at a rat-tat-tat *whoosh!* And it's all about the last Bastard she was with who treated her like the heroine in *The Story of O*. After being *his* sexual slave, she's not going to take sex lightly. She's in her celibacy period and not going to get involved. When is the initial telltale sign that you're being sexually harassed? The first time she orders *you* to do the driving and informs you that she's ready to put celibacy on self-destruct. My advice is to run, not walk, to the nearest phone and call the Bastard for his side of the story.

"My Husband Is Impotent"

Your basic Happily Married Coworker likes her cars extremely sensible. A Cal Worthington one-tone with no extras is perfectly good enough for her. Her greatest high is not cocaine but Chevron unleaded. Be wary that very first time she

By Rubin Carson

stops by your desk and asks if you would mind dropping her off at her mechanic. Of course, when you do, her Winnebago's not ready, so why not stop by the bar next door for a drinky-winky? Now batten down the hatches for the harassment. There's a brief, "Well, shucks, here goes nuthin' . . ." pause, and then the laying on of the sexual horror story that could be the subplot for any *As the Stomach Turns* episode. All the problems of hubby's drinking, how the couple lead totally separate lives and how he's been impotent with her, the baby sitter and the neighbor's baby sitter ever since their child's first Pampers rash. What



are the best antiharassment techniques? Head for the open freeway. You'll avoid not only joining a bowling league but something far worse—a long-suffering husband toting a very potent six-pack of Mace.

"Let's Take a Phone Call"

Before you meet her at the office party, the Congenital Romantic has been to bed with Marlon Brando, James Caan, Sabu, Harvey Korman and half the members of the Screen Actors Guild. She hates her job and is writing a novel, planning to get into Cambodian relief, studying for a degree in marriage counseling and intending to trade in her Jaguar for a Lynx as soon as her ex-husband puts together his next condo conversion. She knows everyone and has done

everything and then—*voilà!—it happens!* What happens? She finds out that you miraculously like the same well-done end tip of Spencer steak; or that you both hate movies with the word *umbrella* in the title; or that you're so innocent and/or authentic that you think Argentina is one of the minor characters in *Evita*. Suddenly she disappears . . . but she phones, phones, phones. She calls you in the middle of a meeting the next day just to tell you about this sexy dream she had about you. Every night afterward, you get passionate calls, collect, about how she's never been this close to any man before and, "Isn't getting there more fun than the trip itself?" Finally, after about 5 million message units, you realize that you are merely her fantasy person and that it's all foreplay. The answer: an unlisted number, unless you want to be a thinly disguised character in that book she's writing.

"Let's Do a Project Together"

The Lady Mogul likes her office to be large and feminine, with a used-brick fireplace flanked by delicate Jacobean settees in subtle flame prints. But forget it. You, the dupe, will never get to see her office. When you call her to hawk your résumé, second-trust-deed mortgages or tax-shelter grazing land, she will only do the first meeting over dinner—free of interruptions, *n'est-ce pas?* Then, when you do meet, it's always at some expensive place where she has an established ongoing relationship with the maître d' so she can get the most inconspicuous table. She never spends more than *two*, count 'em, *two* minutes discussing your proposal, and then only to assure you that she'll buy sometime in the future. Afterward, her hands are all over you as she purrs about needing a supportive male who loves strong women. How do you tell if it's harassment? Ask her to sign the order for whatever you're trying to sell *prior* to the first course. I guarantee, the only thing she'll order is the maître d' to bring her the check.

"All I Want to Do Is Live in the Now"

And now, please meet a charter member of the walking wounded of Los Angeles: Ms. Recently Divorced. Her favorite stalking ground is either the patio of the Café Swiss at dusk for the early wine spritzer or the Casa Vega bar at 10 for the later one (after the baby sitter comes). The buildup for harassment is as predictable as a student-body left play at SC. *Phase I* is spent flicking the dust off your lapel and telling you how much closer she is to her children now that her husband is out of the house. *Phase II* deals primarily with more lapel flicking and how much better she relates to her new-found network of single female friends than she ever did to those boring married couples. In *Phase III* you feel some terminal knee bumping and then a brace of Me Generation innuendoes about her need "to live in the now." Now for the legal issue you'll have to contend with: Was all this a true harassment or a recorded outtake from *The Women's Room*?

"I Don't Believe in Monogamous Relationships"

The Cradle Robber is a classic Los Angeles staple and always looks older than she is. And like

any seasoned tarantula, she usually has a web, a superficial advantage that draws younger men to her and entraps them. When she's not working in an office, you're apt to find the Cradle Robber when you send in your novel (she's a literary agent); when you're an activist or on a retreat (she's a politician or guru) or you're a model (she's a painter or photographer). But what is her greatest lure? The moment she takes you out and starts her spinning, she tells you she doesn't believe in committed relationships—as do the women of your own age. My advice for all you younger types who flock to the older women for this pause that refreshes? *Desist!* The first morning you wake up with her, it's not hot breakfast she'll be serving; it'll be a very cool request to register your china pattern.

