

HOW WE CAME TO BE STANDING HERE TODAY

Date/time	BRB	RY
August 14—the night we met, after we went home		<p>[At the end of an e-mail with bibliographical information about a book I had mentioned on the history of the kiss, I wrote:]</p> <p>I know it's redundant, but I greatly enjoyed our time this evening.</p>
August 15	Good morning, Richard. It looks like another lovely day in the neighborhood. Have you ever been to Shakespeare in the (Edgerton) Park?	
		I am happy to try it, but my experience of such productions is not encouraging (as an actor myself, I may be too demanding--but I yam what I yam). I am largely but not universally game to try new things before I reject them.
	<p>I completely understand your critical eye when it comes to theatrical productions. I have heard, however, that these at Edgerton Park are not too bad, and the ambiance is quite lovely.</p> <p>Last night was truly a pleasurable four hours of beginning to get to know each other.</p>	
		<p>Yes, indeed.</p> <p>I...note that I say things here, about sexuality, that I would not normally dream of saying to someone I knew for 4 hours. But you set the (good) tone, which I appreciated.</p>
	<p>That will not change. Sexuality is one of many topics about which I have always (as an adult, anyway) been completely open.</p> <p>One of my favorite tee shirts says, "Read a banned book", and then on the back lists about twelve books that have been banned in the US school system. I deeply resent taboo subjects, as they usually stifle free expression.</p>	
		I don't like taboos either, but I would have a more tempered view. Of course some taboos are to stifle free expression, and all taboos, by definition, seek to stifle something.
	A society must have some basic ground rules. And one's freedoms, in general, should be tempered by the impact of one's actions on others (the old "crying 'fire' in a crowded theater", for example)	

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		I don't like people who ignore social rules and laws that help maintain a minimal level of decorum (spitting on the sidewalk, punching someone, turning over garbage cans).
	<p>It really stretched my liberal philosophy when I was confronted in my sequestered town of Cheshire (a half a block from the synagogue) by the Klan, some years ago. They came up to the car window when we were stopped at a traffic light. Naturally, they were dressed in full regalia, all in white, hooded. It reminded me of Skokie. I agreed philosophically, in the abstract, with the ACLU's position, and I kept up my membership, but without emotional enthusiasm.</p>	
		This dismissal of some rules for basic social order is what came to make me feel alienated in NYC--the common attitude (and I don't like NY "attitude") that exudes stay-out-of-my-space...which-is-wherever-I-decide.
	<p>That used to drive me crazy, when we lived in Riverdale from 1967-1969 and commuted to Columbia P&S on public transportation. But in retrospect, I have mellowed out (did I tell you about my amygdala theory of mellowing out? I don't think so. Add it to the list.)</p> <p>I assume that when you said that "even if we become friends but do not develop a romantic relationship" it was because of your trust issues, past divorces, et al, not because you were not attracted (my spell-check program rejected "unattracted") to me. That thought occurred to me as I was driving home, or I would have asked you at the time.</p>	
		1. I find you pretty, so that's not an issue. I'm not used to white hair ...

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	That is interesting. I kept mine colored for years, because I got tired of fighting ageism and because it gave me more credibility with teenagers when I taught human sexuality at Hamden Hall. When I was going through chemo for ovarian cancer, my hair started falling out. Impatient, I shaved my head and was startlingly happy with the result.... In fact, when I wasn't wearing wigs, scarves, and hats, I was "in your face" bald at many public occasions.	
	You're cute,	
	Thanks. I appreciate that.	
		and I think that comes in part because you generate great energy that I assume comes from your continuing zest for life.
	Yup - no caffeine or uppers for me; I am naturally upbeat and high energy. Some people are frightened away by that. In fact, a counselor in a private relationship company...suggested I try to tone myself down. I will not do that.... I could not fake my personality through an entire long-term relationship!	
		(Remind me to tell you about the contrary vibes I get from many women on the dating sites.)
	I'd be most interested. And in turn, I shall tell you about some of the men I've met on these sites-- and what some of their outrageous profiles say! Particularly the men who are younger than my son Ricky and who write me passionate love letters.	
		And even though I don't expect to be ready for it anytime soon, I have to confess to...curiosity...about what new sexual vistas may be opened up to me should we eventually decide to go that route....
	Ditto! To be perfectly candid (and I cannot imagine anything else in any relationship that may develop with you), I have not even KISSED anyone since Irwin died.	
		Now that DOES surprise me, though only because you come across as so out there...
	Someone I met at an Elderhostel program over New Years in Carmel, California...seemed to "have the hots" for me.	
		Can you blame him? You're a hot tamale.

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	<p>He wanted to bring me home to show off to his two grown sons. We were at opposite ends of the spectrum politically, educationally, socially, every way. I was not attracted to him in any way. But he suddenly grabbed me and kissed me-- on the lips, out of the blue. I am quite comfortable with hugging, but would need to move slowly sexually, in any case. Think about it - a half a century, almost, with only one person. And I am a confirmed monogamist, so there was never anyone else for me during those years. So your reticence to rush forward in this department is absolutely fine with me, at this point. I should add that the reason that I was angry about the kiss is that I felt NOTHING for him. Not to worry-- that is the antithesis of how I look at you!</p>	
		<p>2. I should ask in return whether you find me physically attractive; I know these things are crap shoots, so I'd rather be honest about it from the start.</p>
	<p>Absolutely. First came my being drawn to your smile. Next came my cerebral attraction to you, and picking up the numerous vibes between us. All of that is a requisite for the development of physical attraction, in my book. If we were in a serious relationship, I would tease you into trimming your eyebrows, because I have a thing about that.</p>	
		<p>Not ANOTHER woman to kvetch about my eyebrows! O how I am besieged by intolerant forces!</p>
	<p>I used to urge Irwin to keep his eyebrows trim.</p>	
		<p>3. My reference to friendship v. romance is primarily driven by the fact that I so enjoyed your company, mind, conversation, that I would hope that if romance doesn't evolve, I wouldn't lose those.</p>

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	I would not mind at all if our relationship went in a romantic direction! Funny story: I once asked Irwin, very early in our marriage, who his best friend was. I thought it was almost a rhetorical question and that he would respond that I was his best friend. His answer? "Hmm... Let's see now... I would have to say it is Allie Yaeger" (his childhood friend-- remind me to tell you the Allie Yaeger story).	
		All right, it appears we must start making lists of stories we invite the other to ask about.
	I responded (not exactly a paragon of tact, at that point), "You're MY best friend, Irwin." In later years we looked back on that and were able to joke about it, as it became increasingly clear that we were, in fact, each other's best friends. I cannot imagine a marriage (of which I were a part) in which that would not be the case.... Speaking of marriage, my estate attorney, who fancies me his younger sister (he is in his 80s and is a real sweetheart) has told me that he gives my dating his "seal of approval" and that he would not mind my living with someone, but he does not want me to get married again! He's looking at it from a money/estate/inheritance point of view.	
		5. But yes, I'm scared, not (consciously) ready to settle into a single relationship.... 6. The trust issue is not about multiple marriages but about the [most recent] relationship... The trust issue is (a) how can I know even the most loving, connected woman won't find in 15 years that I'm no longer right for her and (b) how do I trust myself to make a good decision?
	And if you don't? Would it be the end of the world?...	
		What???? It wouldn't be???? How is that possible!!!???? I joke, but it does FEEL that way, regardless of my understanding to the contrary.

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	<p>I have a different outlook when it comes to decision making-- especially with big decisions. I sleep on it, consider it from all the vantage points I can, and then I do what feels right to me-- in my mind AND in my gut. If in later years, in retrospect, it looks as though I made a wrong decision, well so what?</p> <p>I was really impressed last night at how you have been able to work on such emotional issues and on getting to know yourself.... I know very few men who would be willing even to embark on such a journey, much less follow it through!</p>	
		<p>I (self-consciously) confess that I like hearing that.</p> <p>I'm not one to shirk facing up to hard truths about myself and trying to deal with them.</p> <p>And taking a risk--which is mostly about my mistrust of myself--will not be easy. On the other hand, I'm damned if I want to live the next few decades alone.</p>
	Ditto! If I didn't feel that way, believe me, I would not have gone to Match.com and the senior site!	
		I know that on your end, 10 months after losing what seems to have been a wonderful life partner for 47 years (phenomenal!), you must be careful in your own way.
	Yes, but I trust my instincts--even if some of my friends may be shocked that I am meeting people ("so soon after Irwin died")...	
		I wouldn't have thought of it, and I doubt this would be universal, but I understand and admire why you want to find another solid relationship, even if no one can ever replace Irwin.
	Yes, it is based in part on knowing what wonders are possible in a really good relationship, on having developed some insight into how to make and keep it that way...	
		I warned you that I often write long e-mails.

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	...here it is 9pm, and I have again forgotten to eat-- one of the downsides of living alone.... With an electronic hug, Barbara (aka BRB)	
		A hug in return.
August 16, 12:06am	What's a three-letter abbreviation for an/the organizer of "many a sit-in" (#10 down in today's <i>NY Times</i> crossword puzzle)?	
12:26am		12:26am SDS?
10:16am		10:16am What I most miss in my otherwise lovely, compact apt. is doing laundry in it. I have to go outside a short distance. The woes of renting.
	When calculating what you would give up financially, were you to move in with someone, be sure to add in the cost of laundry.	
August 16 10:58 PM		Perhaps we need to schedule a meeting just to review our e-mail exchanges and add comments
<i>Snippets from the next several days.</i>		
August 17 10:59 AM	Good morning. I am sitting in the airport awaiting my flight to Chicago (and then on to Portland) and reading the NY Times. Be sure to read the front-page article on the Taliban mullahs flexing their muscles and acting inhumanly, ostensibly in the name of Islamic law. It has snapped me out of a mellow mood and has made my blood boil....	
		Haven't read this--don't have the paper--but I have gotten the idea from headlines. Arghh. Also going to make it seem more reasonable not to get out of Afghanistan. I hate this behavior that encourages anti-Muslim fervor in the West.
August 19 9:41 PM		<i>[I sent a catch-up e-mail with 36 itemized comments, all short. You can guess what happened to that message in the coming days...}</i>
August 24 3:07 AM	Brief music history course: [a short discourse on this subject follows]	
August 25 1:15 AM	Guess what weekend workshop I once took with Betty Dodson??? If you ask me nicely, I shall tell you all about it someday.	
August 27 12:04 PM		I haven't received an e-mail from you in over 5 minutes! I guess the magic is over.

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7:32 PM	A biological comment I feel compelled to make (based on what I've figured out and put together over the years), even though I imagine it is after the fact: Fruit is protected to some extent from rotting by the skin/peel. <i>[A few similar sentences follow.]</i> At this point, you're probably tempted to hit "delete" and stop reading!	
		OK. You made me laugh. And all the foregoing makes sense. Of course, I had never thought about it. I did think you were about to tell me that my fruit salad which I've promised you was irredeemably compromised.
	Anyway, you're probably thinking that some fruits can rot even if their peel is not cut <i>[and a few more sentences]</i>	
August 28 3:54 PM	Guess what came in the mail today?? Yup - you must be clairvoyant - season tickets to Long Wharf, including complimentary tickets for a guest of my choice to not one but two plays. So if you play your cards right... Also got Yale Rep tickets in the mail today - what a coincidence, huh?	
		Let's not plan too far ahead yet (tempting as it is), but I would love to go to as many shows as we can while we remain interested in each other.
	I shall assume that your question about what makes the "flesh" of the fruit ripen, even if the fruit is uncut" is not a rhetorical question, and I shall respond based on what I've figured out over the years (the Beitch hypothesis of the adaptiveness of fruit ripening). Fruits such as apples and peaches are selected for because they attract predators... <i>[and so on for a few sentences]</i>	
		So the fruit is not rotting but ripening to allow reproduction.

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	<p>The most fascinating question, to me, is <i>[and several more sentences]</i></p> <p>Stick with me, baby, and you'll learn more than you ever wanted to know about botany and other fascinating biological wonderments. <i>[Several more sentences on fruit and rotting.]</i></p> <p>How come you don't ever tell me cool things about sixteenth century literature and ideas??? Huh???</p>	
		<p>Have you asked??? Huh???</p> <p>Be careful what you wish for. I could go on at lennnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnngth about my specialized knowledge, but I never expect anyone to be interested.</p> <p>Did you tell me you hate plus signs?</p>
	No, I didn't tell you that I hate plus signs, PLUS (capitalized to emphasize what I hate) what I meant was that I hate conjunctification of prepositions.	
	See what I mean?	Don't you mean conjunctivositynessification?
		Actually, no.
	We destroy some of the versatility of the language when we stop distinguishing between different parts of speech.	
		<i>[Looking at the JP:]</i> Back to you.