

Anata wa Taihen Kawaii desu!

(You are very cute!)

Well hello again everybody! As you can tell, this letter also starts out as a form letter... but you will find a very personalized letter for you at the end. Now you may ask why you are getting a form letter when i said that if you wrote personally that i would answer personally... that promise is still true... but there was a common theme to several of the letters... so i decided to answer in great detail to everyone who had written. But like i said, if you patiently read through, i will have personally answered *your* letter.

Now the general query concerned my social life. The first statement that i can make is that Japan is not Pittsburgh. As many of you know, Pittsburgh was not my favorite place to meet women, but there were some notable exceptions (Jenni! / Karen / MiCh). i have found so far that in general, i like the women of Japan and Osaka very much. i know that is a wimpy statement but you'll get the details in a minute. The average woman on the street dresses fairly nicely and i consider them to be fairly cute.

Being an American in Japan has its distinct advantages. Although most people have seen Americans in the movies and occasionally see them around town... it is still pretty rare for them to see a gaijin (foreigner)... especially with blonde hair and a tail. i get stared at a lot, and the girls giggle and point, but it is a definite plus (they say) for a women to have gone out with a gaijin... so they are fairly aggressive at introducing themselves and trying to talk to me. Don't worry, this is not going to my head, the Japanese ladies do this with any Americans (including us plain

looking ones) so it is not my charm and dashing good looks that is impressing them. But i must say... it is a nice feeling to be wanted (no matter what the reason).

Now around the company, i have been talking to several of the ladies who work around me. They also fall it the category of desiring to go out with gaijin... so the conversations can get kind of interesting. Some speak fairly good english... others very little... but they all try very hard to speak English when the gaijin are around. One of the first things that must be taught in any language school is the phrase, "i want to exchange cultural information with you", since every single one of them says it. Now this may sound like a fairly innocent and academic statement... but in the Japanese manner of not always saying what they mean... and the implicitly enforced shyness of women... that statement translates to: "i want to have your babies, or at least go out with you", or something in-between.

This brings up the point of shyness. The *Party Line* states that Japanese women are supposed to be shy. Most written analyseseseses of Japan also include that same statement. So while most Americans are lead to believe that Asian women are shy, which is true in a sense, like any country, the women still have a way of letting you know exactly what they want... even if the communication is not verbal. When coworkers or the boss is around, the women, and to some extent many of the men, take on a type of "shyness" by such nervous habits as hiding their face with their hand when the speak or speaking very softly. However, if you are "alone" in a train or restaurant

with them, they really open up. So... don't believe everything you read.

Oh BTW, this shyness issue reminds me of something interesting that has happened a couple of times on the train. Some of you may be aware of a situation on the trains where middle aged men get "friendly" with young girls. The "chikan" usually come out when the trains are really crowded in order to benefit form the already close proximity. Anyways, they also have an undocumented counterpart... and i have not developed a name for such a female yet. Their general tactic is to wait until it is almost time to get off the bus or train, and then they start looking for their bus or train pass. Now, i admire their determination to find their bus pass early and not hold up the line... but i can promise you (and them), that no matter how long they search, they are not going to find their train pass in some of the places i have felt their hands. At first i thought i was being paranoid, but when i explained the situation to my male Japanese friends, they say that it never happens to them. So i don't know... but this has happened a few times from high school girls to middle aged women. Oh well... life in a foreign country. Perhaps i'll call them chick-kan.

Anyways... i have strayed from my original topic... i was telling you about my social life (i don't consider the chick-kan to be part of my *social* life). i actually met the girl i am going out with in March. During my final interview in Japan, she was assigned to take us to lunch on the last day. We had various conversations and small talk through out the afternoon... nothing too special... but for some unknown reason... i was particularly impressed by her. She told me that she had spent some time in Australia and her English was pretty good. Although i tried very hard to remember her name (which i almost immediately forgot) i remembered her face and style. i considered our meeting a one-time chance and never expected to see her again.

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Well, i showed up in Japan at the beginning of September to start work. When i was taken to the group i was going to work in, lo and behold, there she is. She was the *Office Lady* for our department. Our assistant manager supposedly introduced us, but i said that we had already met and made a small remark about her living in Australia. (i was later told by her, that this point of remembering that she had been in Australia was one of the deciding factors... so there's a tip for you shy guys).

Now this is the point in my experience where the difficulties began. i was very interested in her, but i had promised to myself before i came to Japan that i would not go out with ladies who worked in the company or at least the same building. She was in the same *department*... so i had a potential moral dilemma. The first few weeks, i would talk to her occasionally about company business. Then one day she tells me that she would like to exchange some cultural information with me if i had any extra time (Now where have i heard that before?) i told her i would think about it... because i was still questioning having any social dealings with any company ladies. Well, a few days later, on a tuesday it was, i told her that i was interested in exchanging cultural information and we would talk about the details on thursday when a number of people in our group were going out to dinner.

During the same time, i had began to become good friends with a Japanese guy who worked in the AI lab named Yamamura-san. i had been discussing how to go out with Japanese ladies with him. In the course of our conversations i mentioned that i was kind of interested in a "person" at the company but that i was worried about pursuing her since she worked "near" me. Well, he figured out who she was (he was good friends with her) and agreed he would tell no one (my paranoia again). He also agreed that he would arrange a dinner in which he would invite both of us so that we could talk and get to know each other better in the Japanese style.

Thursday had arrived and i was worried that she was going to mention our potential cultural exchange to people at dinner. Fortunately she did

not. The dinner and dessert afterward was enjoyable... we sat next to each other both times (by accident of course!) After dessert, the group was deciding if we should go out drinking more or just go home. i was lucky in convincing the other American (who lives next to meet and i generally do not get along with) to go out drinking and that the lady and i would be going home. It just so happened that i knew she also lived near me... so i was hoping to get some private conversation in while on the train.

When we got on the train, each of us was a little nervous. i started out the conversation by saying that i was glad that she had not mentioned anything about our possible cultural exchange. She said that she wouldn't have mentioned it in front of the other department members since she was also worried about what people would say. We chatted for a while, while each of us was giving hints that we might be interested in cultural exchange in more than an academic sense. We agreed that it would be difficult to keep it a secret from everyone at work... but we agreed to try. We came up with a system of passing notes to each other by pretending to use the company mail envelopes since she was responsible for picking up and delivering the mail in the department.

One thing lead to another, a couple of dinners, some sight seeing trips, etc... and now we are "seeing" each other. It was kind of funny when Yamamura-san finally arranged the dinner for us about a month after we had started seeing each other... we had to pretend that we didn't know anything about each other! We still have not told Yamamura-san that we

are going out since we are still pretty paranoid. It is still very difficult to hide it from the company and her parents but we are making do. (her parents aren't fond of her going to America and leaving them.)



Her name is Eiko. She's 25. and here's a picture of her in her kimono.

We are not sure what the future will bring... but we are happy together now.

Now that's the story of my social life in Japan so far. So now on to your personal reply... it looks like i have run out of room.. so please see next page!

