

Why, how & when to Flirt

Flirting has a bad name. Too often, it seems a supreme form of duplicity,

调情，听起来不是个好词。它总是被当成一种最娴熟的欺骗，

a sly attempt to excite another person and derive gratification from their interest, without any corresponding wish to go to bed with them.

一种通过刺激他人来博得对方好感，心里却不愿意和对方共赴云雨的狡猾手段。

It looks like a manipulative promise of sexual affection, that, at the last moment, leaves its targets confused and humiliated.

它像是一种充满玩弄意味的性爱许诺，在最后让被调情者既困惑又受辱。

In our sadness, back home alone after the nightclub or the party, we may rail against the flirt for 'only' flirting,

当我们伤心地从俱乐部或派对上离开自返回家中时，我们可能对这种无穷无尽的

when it appeared there would be so much more. But this kind of pattern represents only one,

只为调情而调情的行为心生反感。但这种情形仅仅代表

unedifying and regrettable possibility around flirting. At its best, flirting can be a vital social process

调情的一种令人感到厌恶和遗憾的可能性。最好的情况是，调情可以成为一个重要的社交过程，

that generously lends us reassurance and freely redistributes confidence and self-esteem.

可以让我们感到充足的自信，并尽情地与他人展示我们的自信和自尊。

The task is not to stop flirting, but to learn how better to practice its most honorable versions.

我们要做的不是停止调情，而是学会如何更好地践行调情的最高尚的形式。

Good flirting is, in essence, an attempt driven by kindness and imaginative excitement

美好的调情，从本质上讲，是由善意和浮想联翩的激动促使的，

to inspire another person to believe more firmly in their own likeability, psychological, as much as physical.

为了激发他人对自己心灵和躯体的魅力的加倍自信的一次尝试。

It is a gift offered not in order to manipulate, but out of a pleasure of perceiving what's most attractive in another.

这件礼物不是为了玩弄别人而送出的，而是因为自己从对方身上感受到的魅力而愉快地送出的。

Along the way, the good flirt must carefully convince us of three apparently contradictory things:

于此同时，美好的调情必须小心翼翼地让我们相信三件显然矛盾的事情：

that they would love to sleep with us, that they won't sleep with us;

他们想要和我上床，他们不会和我上床，

and that the reason why has nothing to do with any deficiency on our part. Good flirting exploits, with no evil intent,

还有这其中的原因和我们自己的缺陷毫无关系。美好的调情毫无恶意地

an important truth about sex. That is what often most enjoyable about sex is not the physical process itself,

利用了一个关于性的重要事实：性活动最令人愉悦的部分不是它的物理过程，

so much as the idea of acceptance that underpins the act. The notion that another person likes us enough to accept us

而是知道对方接受了我们。接受是我们之间性活动的基础。另外一个人喜欢我们到可以接受

in our most raw and vulnerable state, and is, in our name,

我们最原始和脆弱的状态，愿意放弃自己

willing to lose control and surrender aspects of everyday dignity. It is this concept, far more than the deft touching of skin,

平日里对尊严各方面的控制。这样的观念才是我们欢愉的主要来源，

that is what contributes the dominant share of our pleasure. As we undress someone for the first time, 而不是肌肤的温柔触感。我们第一次解下别人的衣衫，

or heed their requests to call them the very rudest words we know. The good flirt knows this, and is therefore spared the guilty sense

或遵从他们的请求用我们所知的最粗鲁的语言称呼他们。正确的调情预见到这些，从而消除了他们

that they might not be in the position to offer their lover anything valuable. They are wisely convinced that it is eminently possible,

不能为自己的爱人提供有价值的东西的负罪感。他们明智地确信，他们十之八九可以

simply over a dinner table, in the kitchen at work, to give the person just about the most wondrous aspect of sex itself,

在餐桌上或在厨房里，简单地通过语言的媒介，就可以给对方

simply through the medium of language. The good flirt is an expert, too,

带来性方面的最无与伦比的一面。正确的调情也擅长于

in how correctly to frame the fact that there won't be sex. By a deeply entrenched quirk of a human mind, 框定不会进一步发生性行为的现实。人类大脑根深蒂固的思维定势，

it's generally hard for us to hear such news without at once reaching one overwhelming and crushing conclusion:

让我们很难在听闻此讯时不会立马得出一个令人难以承受的结论：

that it is because the seducer has suddenly found us deeply and pervasively repulsive. The good flirt loosens us from such punitivenarratives.

对方突然发现我们本性上如此令人深恶痛绝。好的调情让我们免于这种痛苦的境地。

They powerfully appeal to some of the many genuine reasons why two people might not have sex

它们为下面这个问题提供了很多有力的真实的理由：两个人可能不会发生性行为的原因

that have nothing to do with one person finding the other disgusting: for example, because one or both party already has partner,

和一人发现另外一人令人厌恶没有关系。比如，因为某一方或双方都已有伴侣，

because there is an excessive age gap, gendering compatibility, an office that would disapprove, a difficult family situation,

因为有过大的年龄差距，或性向不合，或办公室政策不允许，或糟糕的家庭境遇，

or more simply, a lack of time. Freed from the rigid and blunt opposition

或更加简单的：没时间。相比于死板生硬地认为

that flirting has to be the prelude to actual sex, the good flirt can artfully imply how different things might have been

调情必然诱发实质性活动，好的调情能艺术地暗示全然不同的结果，

if the world had been more ideally arranged. And the recipient of the flirt can, with equal grace, ascent to the story,

如果这世界能变得更加理想的话。而调情的接收方，也可以同样优雅地接受故事的走向，

without a need to twist it through self-hatred. We all stand in need of reminders of what is tolerable and exciting about us.

而不用经历自我冤弃。我们都需要提醒者提醒我们身上马马虎虎和令人兴奋的部分。

It's a desperate foreshortening of possibilities to insist that such reawakening

坚持认为这样的重新觉醒只能通过性交来证明，

could only be justified by actual intercourse. Understood properly, flirting can beneficially occur

是可能性的绝望投影。如果能正确地理解调情，调情有助于

across the largest gulfs: gulfs of political belief, of social, economical, marital status,

弥补各种鸿沟：政治信仰上的，社会层面的，经济层面的，军事状态层面的，

of sexual inclination, and (with obvious caveats) of age. The 26-year-old corporate lawyer and 52-year-old man

性取向上的，以及（明显受警告的）年龄上的。一位26岁的公司律师和

behind the counter of the corner shop can flirt; and so may the cleaner and the CEO.

一位52岁的小卖部男售货员可以调情；清洁工和CEO也可以。

It is all the more moving when they do so, because it signals our willingness to use the imagination

他们这样做的时候只会显得更加动人，因为这标志着我们愿意用我们的想象力

to locate what is most attractive about another person, who lies really very far from one's own points of reference.

来定位另外一个人身上最有吸引力的部分，哪怕他/她和生活圈离得十万八千里。

The question of what, if I considered someone, anyone sexually, I would find charming is one of the most intimate,

关于我觉得什么地方迷人的问题，如果我用品性的目光打量某人或任何一个人，

interesting and necessary questions one can ask. Flirting matters,

是一个人所能提问的最亲密、有趣和必要的问题。调情意义重大，

because of how rarely most of us get to experience ourselves as desirable. We generally learn, through a rich sequence of rebuffs,

因为我们中的大多数是多么得难能体会到自己的令人愉悦。我们通常通过一系列的回绝

and via intelligent modesty, to see ourselves as far from ideal. This picture is not inaccurate, but it isn't entirely true, either.

和聪明的谦虚，认识到我们离理想形象的距离。这个形象既不是不准确，也不是全然的正确。

So the good flirt carries out an important psychological mission: to restore balance to our view of ourselves.

所以好的调情执行了一项重要的心理学使命：重塑我们平衡的自我观感。

They remind us that, for all our failings of character and bodily liabilities, we are in fact, in certain ways, properly appealing,

他们提醒我们，尽管我们有性格上的缺陷和身体上的负担，我们实际上在很多方面都是相当有吸引力的，

and in a better situation than the one we find ourselves in, a truly interesting person to want to spend a night with.

比我们自己认为的要好多了，是一个真正有趣的值得共度良宵的人。

The flirt supplies an antidote to a characteristic sickness of maturity: an excessively negative view of ourselves.

调情提供了一种性格成熟疾病的抗体：一种过度的自我否定视角。

A good flirt is doing crucially important social work. They understand that being recognized as erotically appealing is hugely beneficial,

一次好的调情，承担着至关重要的社交功能。他们理解被认为具有性吸引力有巨大的好处，

and a key to rendering us more patient, more generous, more energetic, and more content.

也是让我们变得更有耐心，更慷慨，更有能量，以及更满足的关键。

It is a quiet tragedy that this widely consequential need should so often be expected to pass through the desperately narrow gate of sex.

这是一个安静的策略，这有各种结果的需求居然如此频繁地被期待着通过性那极端U 窄的门。

The good flirt is wisely and literally trying to give erotic endorsement (with all the benefits this brings) a larger opportunity in life.

好的调情本质是聪明地给能够带来各种好处的性背书在生活中更多的机会。

Liberating it from the tiny difficult window of opportunity, offered by an actual requirement to make love.

把它从U 小的机会窗口中解放出来，真正地被要求做爱，

The good flirt is a pioneer in a crucial democratic science: they are attempting to correctly identify attractiveness

好的调情是一个至关重要的民主科学里的先驱：它们尝试正确地识别吸引力，

in a way that will serve the many, rather than a few. We should not only be grateful to good flirts.

以一种能够服务大众，而不是个别人的方式。我们不单单应该感激于好的调情。

We should try to become good flirts ourselves.

我们应该尝试让自己成为好的调情者。

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