

# my date with steve martin

by joyce maynard

I've never been one of those women who complains that there aren't any good men around. I believe there are many, and over the seven years I've been single again I've had relationships with a few such men. But at the point I reached my 42nd birthday, not long ago, the man who combined all the qualities I value had yet to cross my path. And so, rather than continuing in my pattern of the last few years in which I've hung around places like my sons' little league games and the supermarket, waiting for some hero to discover me, I hit on an alternative plan. I'd decide who I wanted. Then go find him.

I decided he should be nice looking, in good shape, smart, financially secure, old enough to be a grown up, but young enough to still have energy for me. He should have interesting work, and the freedom not to be working all the time too. Less essential qualities, but ones I hoped he'd possess, included dancing ability and a strong feeling for music or art. He should love the movies. One more thing: I wanted this man to be funny.

I thought about who, of all the men in the world, might best fit this description. One name came instantly to mind. Steve Martin.

Steve Martin lives in Los Angeles. At the time I arrived at this conclusion I was living in New Hampshire. Steve Martin is a rich and wildly famous movie star. I am a writer and mother of three who drives a used Jeep and cleans her own bathroom.

I chose not to view these differences between Steve Martin and myself as a liability. Steve could have his pick of gorgeous twenty-five year old starlets, of course, but it's got to get old, watching the endless parade of perfect female bodies and unlined faces. Perhaps at this very moment Steve Martin might actually be sitting by his pool, out in Hollywood, wondering why it is he never bumps into a forty-two year old single mom from New Hampshire who bakes a great apple pie.

Then something surprising happened -- an event that only confirmed for me the idea that Steve Martin and I were fated to meet. At the one and only party I'd attended in New York City in as long as a decade, I met an astonishingly kind and friendly playwright who had recently written something about Steve Martin on the occasion of the opening of a play he'd written. Afterwards, they'd become friends. "Lucky you," I said. "I'd love to meet him."

"Fine," she said, just like that. "I'm giving a party for Steve in a couple of weeks. I'll invite you." And sure enough, shortly after my return from New York the invitation did, in fact, arrive.

The day of the party found me eagerly heading south from New Hampshire, into Vermont, through Massachusetts and Connecticut, and into Manhattan. I had my most

**flattering** red dress **on**. I **had taken pains to set up** a couple of **business appointments** in the city -- thereby **allowing me to** tell my hostess that I would be in town **on business anyway**. But I knew the truth. The only **pressing business** I had in New York City that day was **meeting** the man I had **by now** decided represented my dream date on all the planet.

My invitation **said** five o'clock, but (**having driven** four and a half hours to **get** here) I certainly didn't want to appear **over-eager**. So I stopped in a dress shop on my way to the party, where I studied a couple of beaded evening gowns of the sort **a person** might wear to the Oscars, say. I'm just **guessing**, but I'd say there were more silver beads on one little number I **tried on** than **might be found** in the entire city **of** Keene, New Hampshire.

**At** six-o-four, I **headed over to** the party. **Rode the elevator** to the top floor. **Stepped off** into the hallway, **knocked at** the door. When it opened, Steve Martin was standing there. **On** his way out.

The same talents that **made** our hostess such a **fine** playwright -- **namely**, her extraordinary sensitivity to the human condition -- were evident **at** this moment. "Oh, Steve," she said, catching his arm. "Let me introduce you to my friend Joyce...."

I **have tried my best to** analyze and stretch out every nuance **of what** happened over the course of the next seven seconds, representing, as it does, my one and only **exchange with** Steve Martin that evening, and, **very probably**, in my lifetime.

"Hello," he said. Perhaps he cast his eyes momentarily on the very slightly daring décolletage of my red dress. **More likely** he **was eyeing** the elevator door, which was just then opening. Somebody was holding the door for him. And perhaps, if the elevator door **had closed**, and left without Steve Martin, my **whole** story **from this point on** would be **different**.

I **like to think** that I detected a flicker of interest on the face of this man I'd already **pictured**, playing catch with my sons (**not to mention**, lowering me into a fabulous dip on some starlit dance floor, where I am of course wearing a beaded gown). "**What was he like?**" my children (big Steve Martin fans, **in their own right**) have asked me.

"He seemed a little shy," I speculate. "Vaguely depressed." **Just because** a person's Steve Martin **doesn't mean** his life is easy.

**As for me**, after Steve Martin left I **ended up having a good time at** the party. The next day I had my business meetings. **Lined up** some interesting work, went to a museum, sat for two hours in a coffee shop with **a good old friend I hadn't made the time to see in** a couple of years. My friend is a theatrical designer. And **it turned out** the show he had worked on was none other than the play written by Steve Martin.

"Steve Martin?" I said. "And **what's he like?**"

"A little depressed **at the moment**," he said. "I think he **broke up with** his girlfriend."

I **left it at that**.