

I PUT ON A BLACK MINISKIRT, UNZIPPED THE TOP TWO BUTTONS OF MY BLOUSE AND GAVE MY CAMERA A COME-HITHER LOOK WHILE MY FRIEND TOOK PICTURES. WITHIN TWO MINUTES, THE FLOOD BEGAN: 1,320 MEN RESPONDED.

BEBER GOT A FEW CANS OF BEER FROM THE REFRIGERATOR. A TABLE WITH A RED VELVET CLOTH HELD BOWLS OF NUTS. RED VELVET THROWS WERE STREWN HAPHAZARDLY ON THE COUCHES. THIS BOMB SHELTER WAS THE SEXIEST PLACE I'D EVER SEEN.

◀ platform, our eyes meet. I made a firm decision: If the chemistry was right I'd stay with him and start raising geese.

The trip from Paris to Sauternes, in Bordeaux, took three and a half hours. I'd asked his permission to bring the video camera and he'd consented. Various scenarios ran through my mind: Of course I'll have to sleep there, and what if I'm not attracted to him? Should I say, "Do you have another bed here for me?" or "Where did you plan for me to sleep?" or "Huh? There's no other bed?" In the end, I didn't need to ask.

The train pulled into the station in the late afternoon, and Edward was waiting for me on the platform. We drove for an hour to his home. He lives in the roomy attic of a 16th-century farmhouse. He has a large space, like a loft, with a living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. Fragrant flowering vines surround the house. Below are a stable and a winding path that trails off into the distance. The next farm over is more than two kilometers away. Was I afraid? Nope.

Edward's mother lives on the main floor of the farmhouse. A fire blazed in her living-room fireplace. He told me she had been in charge of the film industry in one of the former French colonies in Africa.

Edward said he'd been on the dating sites for a while and had once flown to Miami to meet a 32-year-old single mother after a long period of Internet and Skype contact. "It was awful," he told me. "When we were corresponding she was terrific, but when I got there she was really rude to me and I was staying with her, it was terrible. So I decided I would never do that again."

"You know what I thought when I got here?" I asked Edward. "I thought, I'm going to someone I don't know, he lives in a small village and it could be dangerous. Maybe he'll hack me to pieces."

"I thought about that," he answered. "Not about hacking you into pieces, of course. But I thought, there's no way to know what will happen. Like what if I acted like a jerk and we had a fight and I refused to drive you to the station?"

In the morning, Edward drove me to the station, and I had to put away my dream of the goose farm.

Bomb shelter bordello

The Internet made me bold. I'm sitting across from a man who is lonely and looking for someone, just like me. We are in pain together. Neither the men nor the women are finding anyone. I read in an article once that only nine percent of singles my age find a mate. I hope to be in that minority, but not at any price. Not at the price of my freedom and independence. I hear that mantra from many women my age.

My second filmed date was with Beber Atlan, from Eilat. He suggested we meet at his apartment, in the city's industrial zone. Sounded nice, better than coffee in a cafe yet again. Beber is 56, divorced and has three children. I packed my video camera and headed south. In the evening I got dressed up and took a taxi from my hotel.

Beber greeted me at the entrance to a public bomb shelter in a white tank top and jeans, studded leather belt and cowboy boots made of textured brown leather. When I saw him I knew that I wanted him. "Follow me," he said, and I followed

Before and after: Nili Tal, in the photo that drew no replies (left), and in the "sensuous" image that yielded more than 1,300 responses. "When I saw the picture I realized I undid one too many buttons, and added the blue square. Almost every man asked who 'censored' it."



him down the stairs. A model of a human skeleton hung on the wall. "Where are we going?" I asked, whispering for some reason. "You'll see in a moment," he replied.

Was I afraid? Nope.

We reached the basement of the shelter. In the center was a canopy bed with a leopard-print bedspread; lamps on the sides gave off a red light. Above the bed was a wall hanging with an image of a green-eyed woman in a burqa. On another wall were posters of his kids and photographs of him with the singer Enrico Macias.

Beber got a few cans of beer from the refrigerator. On a table with a red velvet cloth were bowls of nuts and sunflower seeds. Red velvet throws were strewn haphazardly on the couches. This bomb shelter was the sexiest place I'd ever seen.

Going on a date with a camera is like coming armed and ready for battle. A camera changes the nature of the date and is very hard to ignore. I must think about what I'm saying at all times while filming both of us. Usually I would put down the camera somewhere and go to sit next to "the intended." I had to stay close to "the intended" even if I wasn't too interested in him, in order to ensure that I'd be in the frame, too.

A few more basic conditions had to be met for all this bother to produce a successful result. For example, ideally the microphone would be clipped under the man's shirt. Under the tank top, in Beber's case. It's the sort of contact that always embarrasses me. "Here, just let me undo your belt. Take your shirt off for a moment. Just relax, I'll take it off for you. Now I'm slipping my hand under your shirt. I'll try not to touch you." Or, "Put in your hand and pull out the microphone. Good, I just

have to clip it to the edge of your shirt so you can't see it. OK, now raise your head and let me attach it the right way. Now turn around, I need to find room in your pants for the transmitter and make sure that you can sit down comfortably. (The receiver is on the camera)."

And throughout all of this professional contact/non-contact, our connection is building. Hallelujah. Beber and I have a friendly singles' conversation, the camera sits in its spot and I'm free to drink the beer and taste the nuts.

Beber tells me that he's been divorced for more than 20 years and has been alone all this time. "I'm afraid of getting used to being lonely," he says. "I'm afraid to approach a woman. I don't know whether she's available, or married. I'm afraid. Maybe she has a boyfriend. So I don't approach. If she gives me a signal I'll come over. People think, what's going on here? But nothing's going on here. And every night I sleep alone."

"Every man and woman dreams about having cheap sex, but that doesn't bring me a real partner. If I find a woman, she'll be a queen. A queen. For example, I could come home from work and tell her, 'Yalla, sweetheart, pack a bag, we're taking a trip.' Where? To Tel Aviv, Turkey, Greece, Italy. If I'm happy I'll make her happy. I'm just waiting for her to come already. I've been alone for so many years. I'm afraid I'm getting used to it."

I had thought that loneliness wasn't a problem in Eilat. But it seems that while the female tourists come and go, there aren't a lot of single women living in the city. Beber tells me he was a nightclub singer in the 1970s and '80s, and he shows me his sound system. He put on some music, picked up a microphone and began singing a Hebrew version of a Julio