

Analyzing the Meaning in Interaction in Politeness Strategies in *Scent of a Woman*

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Abstract

Discourse analysis is conducted to analyze the "face-threatening acts" (FTA) in some conversations of *Scent of a Woman* (1993), the Best Picture of Oscar in 1993. Brown and Levinson's (1978) framework of positive politeness or negative politeness is adopted to examine how a cynical old colonel talked with a nice junior and a beautiful girl respectively in unconventional ways, which enable them to develop friendship thanks to the (im)politeness strategies used, e.g. bald-on-record or off-record tactic. The "meaning in interaction" in the (im)politeness strategies is explored. The analysis of politeness in action in this film uncovers both the informational and affective dimensions of language use in structuring human relationship and friendship.

Key words: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on-record, off-record, *Scent of a Woman*

Introduction

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Politeness is understood in terms of conflict avoidance (Lakoff 1990; Brown & Levinson 1978). In a pragmatic perspective, Lakoff (1990:34) states that politeness “facilitate(s) interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange”. It is assumed that people follow Cooperative Principle by engaging with each other for meaningful communications in which they act as rational agents (Grice, 1975). According to Brown and Levinson (1978) (B&L here forth), linguistic strategies are employed by speakers to realize politeness, which manifests one’s respect and recognition of another’s face – self-image (Goffman 1959). The choices of such strategies depend on the power and personal relationship between the speaker and hearer, and the degree of negativity of the message. Grice (1975) and B&L (1978) think that the analysis of politeness is to access the actors’ intentions. Speaker strategically manages his/her “face-threatening acts” (FTA) to account for either “positive” or “negative” face. Positive face is the desire to have social approval and acceptance, and negative face is the need to have independence and freedom in action. Hence FTA is performed with redress in positive or negative politeness. In addition, FTA can be performed directly without any redress (bald-on-record) or indirectly with multiple interpretations (off-record) (B & L 1978). Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness is characterized by its interactionist perspectives rooted in social psychology (Engel 2003). Fraser (1990:233) views politeness as the implementation of conversational rights and obligations as speaker and hearer operate under the “terms and conditions of the conversational contract”. Thus politeness is conceptualized as social interaction with the activation of interlocutors’ psychological needs. This paper attempts to apply B& L’s (1978) concepts to investigate some conversations in the film of “Scent of a Woman” (1993) as a socio-pragmatic analysis, probing both speaker meaning and utterance interpretation (Dlali 2001). As the title of Thomas’s book (1995) suggests, the “meaning in interaction” is explored. “Politeness” is often misinterpreted as only referring to the courteous and refined expressions by lay audience. However, the discussion about politeness encompasses both polite and impolite speech acts (Thomas 1995). Thus this paper focuses on both dimensions of politeness. As Holmes (1995: 21) claims, (im)politeness is “always context dependent”. The study of (im)politeness shall involve both (a) the referential function as information transmission, and (b) the affective function as the representation of feelings and relationships (Holmes 1995). Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) found situational

factors, such as social status, familiarity or gender considerably influenced people's politeness strategies. Therefore, this paper examines the politeness strategies in this film in terms of "the linguistic form + the context of utterance + the relationship between the speaker and the hearer" (Thomas 1995:157).

Introducing the Film

Scent of a Woman (1993) was awarded the prize of the Best Picture of Oscar in 1993. Charlie Simms (played by Chris O'Donnell), a poor, intelligent and hardworking 17-year-old on a scholarship at a Boston elite prep school, worked during the Thanksgiving weekend as the caretaker of Lt. Colonel Frank Slade (played by Al Pacino), a disillusioned, blind and lonely veteran. Frank took Charlie to New York, intending to commit suicide after enjoying worldly pleasures. Friendship was developed between the two men. Charlie's "integrity, courage and compassion" touched cynic Frank, who recognized that the "root of his bitterness is not loss of his sight, but regret at his failings" (Hopkins 1993:44). Discourse analysis is conducted on certain conversations (please see Appendix). Ironically, though titled "*Scent of a Woman*", no woman plays leading and supporting roles in the film. It features only two meaningful scenes of women, both are chance encounters (except the presence of Frank's daughter). One scene with the tango dance is examined as it is considered as the "magical moment" in the film (Berardinelli 1993 online). In this paper, PP stands for positive politeness, and NP negative politeness.



Fig. 1. The poster of Scent of a Woman

[http://www.impawards.com/1992/scent_of_a_woman_ver2.html]

Finding and Discussion

In Charlie's words, as he told Rossi, Frank's daughter, he was "screwed up" in the first encounter with Frank. Such description suggested Frank's impoliteness disturbed Charlie. The following discussion concerns their second meeting when Charlie started his job of care-taking at Frank's home. Charlie gave a light cough when Frank was talking to a telephone operator to check the arrival of his taxi. On the one hand, Frank employed two different strategies in one sentence: (a) Due to the interruption of the telephone conversation, Frank attempted to reduce the size of imposition (Leech 1983) of waiting on the female operator by saying "just a minute"; (b) In addition, by calling the operator "sweetheart", Frank tended to

create intimacy with a casual tone. On the other hand, Frank covered the telephone with one of his hands and responded to the Charlie's sound by saying directly "You are back, huh?". This was followed by several bald-on-record (B& L 1978) imperatives asking Charlie to take out Frank's military uniform in the manner of a Colonel's order to his soldier, leaving no time for the other to answer. Moreover, this order was reinforced by a strong urge with unquestionable authority for instant execution, "A.S.A.P. That means now!". Such authoritative tone was quickly shifted into formulaic polite expression to address the operator, "Sorry to keep you waiting! Sweetheart.". The conversation between Charlie and Frank was characterized by increasing bald-on-record utterances by Frank, to which Charlie responded with diminishing courtesy. Initially, Charlie adopted a cautious and respectful tone by asking whether Frank was going out instead of inquiring the exact location, "Are we going to someplace?", and used the honorific term "Colonel". Frank became blunter as if such question annoyed him by laying blame on Charlie and issuing order again: "What's business that is yours? Don't shrug imbecile. Save your body language in a bimbi. Get my gear out!". When Frank was tidying up his uniform, he used another imperative: "Here, take a look at that.", expecting merely a verbal reminder of any untidiness that he could not see. As Charlie was trimming his uniform, a deliberately offensive remark was made by Frank as a threat, as in military fashion, which was intensified by a vulgar term of curse : "Touch me again, I will kill ya, you little son-of-a-bitch. I touch you. Understand?". Upon knowing that he would accompany Frank to New York, Charlie first tried to minimize the imposition and hinted (B& L 1978) that caretaking during the trip was beyond his job description, "Mr. and Mrs. Rossi didn't say anything to me about going anywhere". Then Charlie asked Frank's permission to contact them, "Shall we call her", which was confront with a off-record rhetorical question from Frank, "You kidding me? Call her?". Finally Charlie resorted to bald-on-record strategy by refusing to be subservient to Frank, who assumed the power as both a superior officer and a client. Charlie said, "Colonel, I can't go to New York city". Charlie's refusal was supplemented by giving his reason (PP) as of taking "too much responsibility", returning to his original hinted argument. Trying to avoid using the pronoun of "you" to refer to Charlie (NP), Frank reassumed his power by linguistically acting as the caretaker of Charlie: "I had a lot of 17-year-olds in my first platoon. I took care of them".

Frank's retained his stance as a military superior before Charlie, which was in sharp contrast to his courteous remarks on the phone. The contextual difference between the two is that the operator didn't know Frank as a disabled retiree. Frank would employ his well-mannered politeness to actualize the role as an educated middle-class client. However, the face-to-face communication between a 17-year-old teenager as a caretaker and a blind pensioner with limited income in need of care would confer symbolic power on Charlie. This is because Charlie would symbolize vital youth and energy and Frank aging debilitation and invalidity. Frank tended to subvert this prescribed pattern by claiming his status as a military superior and his seniority as an experienced person in his bald-on-record bluntness. Such linguistic retrieval of Frank's power would also be evident in subsequent short conversation at the airport. Similar to his threat to "kill" Charlie when Charlie tried to "touch" (support) him, Frank's linguistic edifice was featured by rudeness when Charlie supported him again at the airport. Frank said twice, "Are you blind?" His anger continued with non-minimization (NP) of the face-threat to Charlie, "Then why do you keep grabbing my god-damn arm?", which again was followed by an order, "I take your arm!". Such rudeness was greeted by Charlie's formulaic apology "I am sorry". Linguistically speaking, Charlie's apology is unwarranted. Pragmatically, the impression of a teenager supporting a disabled in public would construct an image of powerless Frank, undermining Frank's dignity. What Frank really cherished would be the love and affection as symbolized by the title "Scent of a Woman", but Frank would find that being constructed as a frail invalid is too hurtful. His question of "Are you blind?!" would be interpreted as his request for Charlie to recognize his pain – are you blind to my pain? Charlie's apology would be understood as being sorry for such neglect. In this way, Frank grabbed Charlie's arm and walked as a senior leading and guiding a junior, repossessing his power. Because Charlie's effort to render assistance was genuine and the offensiveness would hurt Charlie, Frank seemed to redress this imbalance by highlighting his seniority instead of his military rank. So after Charlie's apology, Frank seemed to act in the principle of positive politeness by giving understanding to Charlie (B& L 1978), as he alleviated the tension by posing as a considerate senior who was tolerant of the young's behavior, "Do not be sorry. How would you know, watching MTV all your life?". Pragmatically, it would save Charlie from any guilt and reveal Frank's appreciation of the differences in life experience and generation gap between a teenager and a disabled senior.

In the airplane, Charlie asked for the purpose of the trip in conventionally indirect way (NP) with a honorific term, using “we” to involve both Frank and him into the activity (PP), “Colonel, why we are going to New York?”. Frank’s answer seemingly fits in the PP strategies of asserting speaker’s knowledge and concern for hearer’s wants and making a promise (B & L 1978), again in the military style – “All information will be given on a need-to-know basis”. In the following talk, the construction of Frank’s identity started to shift from a military superior and experienced senior to a friend of Charlie. The appearance of airhostess triggered Frank’s remarks on sex. The fact that sex itself as a topic between them would indicate the narrowing of their social distance. Moreover, Frank’s use of the F word and his over-explicit observation about some fetishized body parts of women may go beyond the politeness tactic of asking several rhetorical questions (off-record) and presupposing common ground (PP). In a rhetorical question, Frank defied the reverence of God by referring to him with F word: “Who made them? God must have been a f—king genius”. In his half self-monologue, half linguistic-performance speech, Frank talked about women’s hair, lips and breast blatantly. Such direct talk with a junior whom he just knew would be face-threatening to Charlie, but it would simultaneously construct Frank’s peer-group identity with Charlie as both men would desire to enjoy the love of women. We would speculate that Frank’s fetishization would find echoes in Charlie’s fantasy dreams when Frank linguistically painted graphic, sensual, and erotic images in metaphorical ways to describe women’s hair (“Have you ever buried your nose in the mountain of curls”), lips (“that first swallow of wine after you just crossed the desert”), and breast (“Big ones, little ones, nipples staring right at ya like secret search lights”), which were followed by more explicit remarks. Frank then asked another rhetorical question, “Are you listening to me?”, which may also be the hint (PP) to solicit Charlie’s agreement. Charlie laughed, replying with a point-of-view distancing strategy and an off-record understatement, “I guess you really like women”. “I guess you...” seems to create a linguistic distance and “really like” would imply “crazy about”. But pragmatically, such reply would shorten their social distance, and the laughter and understatement would at least indicate that Charlie didn’t perceive these remarks as irritating. Frank’s response would be an off-record overstatement – “Oh, above all things. A very, very distant second is a Ferrari”. Up to this point, Frank would linguistically establish a sort of bond with Charlie as an about-to-be-adult. This would be illustrated by Frank’s imperative to invite a

physical gesture, “Charlie. Give me your hand”, and a statement to nominalize (NP) such talk with the hope for the continuation of such friendship (“This is just the start of your education, son”). Off-record ironic reference of “education” is presented here, which would contrast erotic pleasure in sexual fantasy with serious academic achievement in Charlie’s elite school.

In the film, Frank and Charlie gradually consolidated their friendship. Frank displayed graciousness to Charlie in contrast to his initial rudeness. In the latter part of the film, “I am eternally grateful” was said by Frank to Charlie instead of “thank you” to maximize the force of his gratitude. In contrast to his anger at Charlie’s arm-grabbing to support him, Frank said “Give me you arm” to Frank when he got off a test-driven Ferrari and augmented with “I am OK”. Again Frank said “Give me you arm” when Charlie helped him to stand up after his fall to the ground amid his anti-social behavior to piss in downtown New York street. Such gestures of affection reached a climax when the moment of farewell was coming as Frank uttered “Give me, son” when he touched every feature of Charlie’s face. Actually, their friendship was significantly cemented when Charlie willingly put his own life at risk to prevent Frank from committing suicide, which forced Frank to abandon his attempt. After this incident, the topic of woman was picked up again by Frank. Abandoning the honorific “Colonel”, Charlie used in-group identity marker (PP) “boy” to address old Frank in a metaphorical manner (off-record), “Boy, you have only one track in your mind”. Later Charlie complimented (PP) Frank, assuring and encouraging Frank to take a positive faith in his life and to marry a woman: “You’re a good-looking guy, and you’re fun to be with, and you are a great travel companion, sensitive, compassionate.” Replied in a literally bald-on-record way with smile, Frank said, “Charlie, are you f—king with me?”, which actually contains no offensive meaning and could be read as “do you really mean that?” and “do you really like me?” only between intimate friends. In the farewell, Frank promised (PP) to be the reference and mentor for Charlie - “If you ever need some references, Charlie, I’m your man”. Similarly, as a strategy of assuming reciprocity (PP), Frank expected another meeting to entertain Charlie - “Come back before you go home for Christmas. If you like, do stay for dinner.”

In one of only two meaningful representations of women in the film, Frank tried to assume the identity of a refined and attractive gentleman in social interaction. In a high-profile restaurant, Frank and Charlie noticed a beautiful girl (Donna, played by Gabrielle Anwar), who was sitting alone. Moving to Donna’s

table, Frank started his dialogue with the girl following conventional indirectness (NP), “Excuse me, Senorita, do you mind if we join you?”. This request-making with conventionalization is further softened by the adoption of an in-group address form (PP), “Senorita”. Calling an unknown girl “Senorita” tends to suggest Frank’s stature as a seasoned man with experience of befriending girls. Meanwhile, it seems to reveal Frank’s Hispanic heritage as “Senorita” denotes the Hispanic style. Frank would prefer to further narrow their social distance by noticing and attending to Donna’s needs (PP), as he said, “I am feeling you are being neglected”. Feeling a little surprised at the sudden appearance of Frank and Charlie, a hedge - “well” (PP) was uttered by Donna, which was followed by her answer to avoid disagreement (PP) - “I am expecting somebody”. The word “expecting” would imply that Frank’s appearance was unexpected, and “somebody” would engender a literally vague (off-record) and pragmatically transparent indication - Donna’s boyfriend. This social-distance-maintaining answer met with Frank’s rhetorical overstatement (off-record), “Instantly?”. Then again Donna produced a disagreement-avoiding reply (PP), but defending herself with a similar overstatement - “but any minute”. Frank didn’t withdraw himself, generating an ambiguous statement in the style of tautology (off-record), “Any minute. Some people live a lifetime in a minute”. This could be interpreted as Frank’s expression of fondness of Donna and his desire to communicate with her just for a while. Or it could be understood as an ironic reminder of war-inflicted deaths and casualties in the battlefield as a Colonel could envision, which would make the request to talk to a girl a not-a-big-deal and fair matter. Again with conventional indirectness, Frank politely demanded, “Would you mind if we waited with you”, which was followed by a hedge “just” and an imposition-minimizing (NP) and simultaneously ironic (off-record) reason “to keep the womanizers from bothering you”. Donna’s conventional “No, I don’t mind” would entail vagueness (off-record) as it could be interpreted in its literal meaning and pragmatic connotation - “I don’t mind if you act like a womanizer”.

Frank and Charlie took their seats, which would enable Frank to kick-start a talk between adults of different sexes after his exchanges with Donna as strangers. Frank began with “You know” as a booster to intensify the force of this new relationship (Holmes 1995:76). He declares, “I detect a fragrance in the air”, which functioned as presupposition (off-record) suggesting it was released by Donna, and specified the soap-brand (“Ogilvie Sister”). This would reinforce their affective

relationship as it would render Frank linguistic access into Donna's private and intimate moments of bathing of skin and related sensual satisfaction. Donna reacted with a booster, "Ah" and an exaggeration with approval (PP), "that is amazing". A similar booster "Oh" was uttered by Frank, who then contextualized his fondness in a common-ground-raising (PP) and vague (off-record) announcement – "I'm in the amazing business" with the repetition of "amazing". This conversation would also be regarded as mutual compliments between men and women (Holmes 1995). Donna gladly admitted her use of the soap, and Frank humorously captured Donna's appreciation in his introduction of Charlie. Then Frank used the booster "So Donna" and asked directly "do you tango?". This would reflect their closeness, which renders conventionalization redundant. The connotation of tango would symbolize active seeking of enjoyment and excitement with friends of different sex as well as aesthetic pleasure. Asserting a common ground with Frank (PP), Donna pointed out her intention to tango was thwarted by his boyfriend, deliberately leaving the answer incomplete (off-record) ("No, I wanted to learn once, but Michael doesn't want to"). Here Donna's boyfriend was nominalized by Frank by point-of-view distancing, "Michael, the one you are waiting for." (NP), which would linguistically move Frank and Donna closer. "Michael thinks tango is hysterical" was explained as the reason (PP) by Donna, who also kept a linguistic distance with his boyfriend. Here Frank made a linguistically offensive comment with a booster and tautology (off-record), "I think Michael is hysterical". Pragmatically, Frank would recognize the legitimacy and reasonableness of Donna's affective and aesthetic pursuits by blaming Michael. Charlie attempted to deflect the unsociable effect of Frank's linguistic disrespect by making an implicit apology (NP), "Don't pay attention on him. Did I already say that?". Donna chose to say nothing, releasing a sweet laugh, which was complimented by Frank - "What a beautiful laugh" in exaggeration with approval (PP). Frank's motive of appreciating Donna as a sexy and charming woman could be discerned in his hint-dropping (off-record) of "beautiful". Such compliment tended to solidify their mutual appreciation when Donna replied with "Thank you, Frank".



Fig. 2 The scene of tango dancing

[<http://alpacino.4mg.com/image/scent2.jpg>]

Frank then initiated a conventionally indirect request-making (NP), “Would you like to learn to tango?” and supplemented it by a sincere offer (PP), “I am offering you my service, free of charge”. Frank’s emphasis on his tango tutoring as “free” would signal his intention to free Donna from any responsibility of reciprocation. Moreover, Frank chose conventionalization to minimize imposition on Donna as learning to tango in the open area of this restaurant would not only risk having some embarrassing accidental mishaps in public, but put Donna’s dancing with a male stranger under the scrutinizing gaze of incoming Michael. As expected, Donna’s incompleteness (off-record) in her “I think I ‘d be a little afraid” would reveal such worry. Upon Frank’s interrogative questioning “Of what?” comes Donna’s forced mention of “Afraid of making a mistake”. Here “mistake” could be understood as the reference to mishaps in tango dancing, but

metaphorically (off-record), it could also be conceptualized as Donna's anxiety that further development of relationships with Frank would entail undesirable consequences. Frank assured her like this: "No mistake in the tango. Donna, not like life. It is simple. That makes the tango so great. If you make a mistake, get all tangled up, just tango on. Why don't you try? Will you try it?" Here, efforts were made to intensify interest (PP) and overstate (off-record) to Donna by idealizing tango into perfect artistic delights, and to presuppose common ground by claiming mutual understanding of the ups and downs of life (PP). Optimistic mood (off-record) is created to cheer Donna up and the inclusion of both speaker and hearer (PP) is employed to symbolize anticipated co-exploration and struggle by them. In addition, contradiction is indicated by simultaneously characterizing tango as both mistake-free and mistake-occurring (off-record), metaphorically presenting the dilemmas everybody is confronted with in his/her life. The dilemma is metaphorically (off-record) resolved by "get all tangled up, just tango on", which also hints Frank's encouragement and support on the way. Such strategy did work when Donna agreed to dance with Frank, "All right, I'll give it a try". They tangoed with the tender music played by a live band in the restaurant. After the dance, Donna complimented Frank twice, both with affective dimensions. The first was made just on the completion of dance without the presence of Michael. Still holding Frank's hands, Donna directly articulated her admiration towards Frank and her delight in exaggeration with approval (PP), "Oh, Frank, you are one incredible dancer". The second was indirectly made in the presence of Michael. Holding Michael's hand, Donna conveyed his gratitude and affectionateness mainly to Frank in off-record style – "These two gentlemen entertained me, and time flew". Calling Frank as a gentleman in contrast with "womanizer" would reveal Donna's perception and fondness of Frank as a considerate and attractive man. Also, it tends to remind Michael of Frank's decent propriety and good manners. The word "entertain" would indicate Donna's appreciation of Frank's effort to engage the attention of her agreeably and amuse her. "Time flew" would metaphorically denote the pleasure and gratification of Donna's freedom from her self-imposed restriction, and illustrate the romantic allure of Frank.

Conclusion

Brown and Levinson's (1978) framework of positive or negative politeness is

adopted to examine the “face-threatening acts” (FTA) in some conversations of *Scent of a Woman* (1993), where a sarcastic old man talked with a nice junior and a beautiful girl respectively in unconventional ways. Interestingly, these unconventional dialogues enable them to become friends thanks to the (im)politeness strategies used. Such analysis also enable us to appreciate how the relationship between the two main male characters in the film developed from unfamiliar strangers to intimate friends and how a blind senior managed to touch a beautiful girl within several minutes. In the conversations with Charlie, Frank employed some bald-on-record offensive statements and made blatant observations about women. Charlie responded to them with non-face-threatening politeness strategies and accepted Frank as a man who is cynical, but not hypocritical. Finally, such acceptance turned into genuine friendship with both utilizing positive politeness to express gratitude to each other. In contrast to his rudeness and bluntness with Charlie, Frank largely adopted a courteous tone by following social conventions. Moreover, Frank used positive politeness to recognize Donna’s need, appreciate Donna’s beauty and personality and find common ground. In addition, some off-record remarks together with a humorously offensive comment were also made by Frank to ask for increasingly intimate contact from Donna. Initially, Donna used positive politeness to maintain social distance. Then she let Frank effectively narrow their social distance. After the dance, Donna expressed her thanks and admiration to Frank twice in direct and indirect ways respectively. The analysis of politeness in action in this film uncovers both the informational and affective dimensions of language use in structuring human relationship and friendship. In this film, that weekend significantly changed lives of the three characters. As an “epic and classic drama”, this film offers us “a stunning and insightful experience” (Robertson 2000 online), perhaps it is also true for (im)politeness.

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Appendix

Transcript: (selected from) Scent of a Woman (1993)

Scene: Frank's room.

Charlie met Frank for the second time. He started his part-time work as a caretaker of Frank.

F: (*on the phone*) Just a minute, sweetheart. (to Charlie) You are back, huh? Tenacious! Get out my dress blues. They 're in a garment bag in the closet. Check the top dress drawer. Take out my shoulder boards and affix them, shoulders right and left, A.S.A.P. That means now! (*on the phone*): Sorry to keep you waiting! Sweetheart.

C: Are we going to someplace, Colonel?

F: What's business that is yours? Don't shrug imbecile. Save your body language in a bimbi. Get my gear out! All right! Let's get to work.

F: Here, let me take a look at that. (*Charlie grabbed Frank's arm*) Touch me again, I will kill ya, you little son-of-a-bitch. I touch you. Understand?

C: Colonel, where are we going?

F: Where are we going? Freak Show Central.

C: Where is that?

F: New York city. That is in New York, son. New York state.

C: Mr. and Mrs. Rossi didn't say anything to me about going anywhere.

F: She forgot.

C: Shall we call her 'cause I ...

F: You kidding me? Call her? By the time they get to Albany in that "hupmobile" he drives. It'll be opening day at Saratoga!

C: Colonel, I can't go to New York city.

F: Why not?

C: New York is too much responsibility.

F: Ah, responsibility! I had a lot of 17-year-olds in my first platoon. I took care of them. All set!

Scene: at the airport.

F: Which way is the door? (*Charlie grabbed Frank's arm*) Are you blind? Are you blind?

C: Of course not.

F: Then why do you keep grabbing my god-damn arm? I take your arm!

C: I am sorry.

F: Do not be sorry. How would you know, watching MTV all your life?

Scene: in the airplane.

C: So, Colonel, why we are going to New York?

F: All information will be given on a need-to-know basis.

.....

F: Where is Daphne (air hostess)? Let us get her down here.

C: (*turning back to look*) She is in the back.

F: A tail's in the tail. Hah! Oh, but I still smell her (*sniffing*). Women! What can you say? Who made them? God must have been a f—king genius. The hair. They say the hair is everything, you know. Have you ever buried your nose in the mountain of curls, and just want to go to sleep forever? Or, lips, and when they touched, yours were like that first swallow of wine after you just crossed the desert... Are you listening to me, son? I am giving you pearls here.

C: (laugh) I guess you really like women.

F: Oh, above all things. A very, very distant second is a Ferrari. Charlie. Give me your hand. This is just the start of your education, son.

Scene: in a high-profile restaurant of New York.

F: Who are we drinking with? I am getting a nice soap-and-water feeling from down there.

(*Charlie turned right and found a girl sitting down there.*)

C: Ah, female.

F: Female? You are calling her female. It must mean you like her or you wouldn't be so casual.

C: er....

F: Is she alone?

C: Yes, she is alone.

F: Things are heating up. Chestnut hair?

C: Brown, light brown.

F: Twenty-two?

C: Wh..What am I, a guy at a carnival?

F: The day we stop looking, Charlie, is the day we die. Move. (*Frank stood up and walked towards the lower part of the café*)

C: Where?

F: You know where, son. Don't be coy, Charlie. That woman is made for you, I can feel it. God-damn beautiful, isn't she?

C: She's not bad.

F: Whoo-binggo! The boy's alive. Come on,

Frank and Charlie stood at the girl's (Donna) table.

F: Excuse me, Senorita, do you mind if we join you. I am feeling you are being neglected.

D: Well, I am expecting somebody.

F: Instantly?

D: No, but any minute, now.

F: Any minute. Some people live a lifetime in a minute. What are you doing right now?

D: I am waiting for him.

F: Would you mind if we waited with you, just to keep the womanizers from bothering you.

D: No, I don't mind.

F: Thank you.

Frank and Charlie sit at the table.

F: You know, I detect a fragrance in the air. Don't tell me what it is. Ogilvie Sister Soap.

D: Ah, that is amazing.

F: Oh, I'm in the amazing business.

D: It is Ogilvie Sister Soap. My grandmother gave me three bars for Christmas.

F: Oh, I'm crazy about your grandmother. She'd have liked Charlie, too.

C: Do not pay attention to him.

F: What's your name?

D: Donna.

F: Donna? I am Frank. This here is--

D: This is Charlie.

F: Yes, she likes you. Charlie is having a difficult weekend. He's going through a crisis. How does he look like he's holding up?

D: He looks fine to me.

F: (to Charlie) She does like you, Charlie.

F: So Donna, ah... do you tango?

D: No, I wanted to learn once, but,

F: But?

D: But Michael doesn't want to.

F: Michael, the one you are waiting for.

D: Michael thinks tango is hysterical.

F: Well, I think Michael is hysterical.

C: Don't pay attention on him. Did I already say that?

D: (laugh).

F: What a beautiful laugh.

D: Thank you, Frank.

F: Would you like to learn to tango, Donna.

D: Right now?

F: I am offering you my service, free of charge. What do you say?

D: Ah..I think I 'd be a little afraid.

F: Of what?

D: Afraid of making a mistake.

F: No mistake in the tango. Donna, not like life. It is simple. That makes the tango so great. If you make a mistake, get all tangled up, just tango on. Why don't you try? Will you try it?

D: All right, I'll give it a try.

After a brilliant dance of tango, Donna and Frank were going back to their table.

D: Oh, Frank, you are one incredible dancer.

F: Wait'll you see Charlie dance.

C: He is a lair. I don't dance.

F: Isn't he a charmer, though?. Truth is, not only can he dance, but he'll sing you a hell of a tune. He can do bird calls and imitate Bela Lugos.

Michael, Donna's boyfriend, was coming to Donna.

M; Hi, honey,

D: Hey, Michael, this is Frank, and this is Charlie.

M: Hi, Frank. Hi. Charlie. *(turning to Donna)*. I am sorry I am late.

D: Oh, that's OK. These two gentlemen entertained me, and time flew.

F: Your girl is a hell of a tango dancer.

M: You found someone to tango with. That's terrific! Let me shake your hand *(Michael only shook Charlie's hand)*.

D: No, no, it was Frank.

M: Hell, I'll shake both your hands. (*turning to Donna*) Honey, this looks like the place. But we gotta go. We got a date with Darryl and Caroline the village. (*Mike was fumbling in his pocket, preparing to pay Donna's bill. He turned to Donna.*) Do you have a check?

F: Michael, please. My pleasure.

M: No, no, I got this.

F: Mike, get your hand out of your pocket. I will take it. Really. Allow me.

M: Why, thank you. Bye, guys.

D: Bye.