

LIKE WHITE ON RICE

by George Ding

The following is an excerpt from Nikki Aaron's upcoming book about dating in China, *Like White on Rice*.

When I first came to China in 2007, I promised myself I would do two things: keep an open mind about this strange new country, and try to have sex with a Chinese man. When people – i.e. my white friends in England – heard about the latter, they were shocked.

“Why Chinese men?”

“Are you trying to set some kind of record?”

No, I'm just open to finding love wherever it exists. And I happen to be writing a book about dating in Beijing. I mean, we've all heard the stories of white guys and Chinese girls – now it's time to tell the other, less creepy half of the story.

My friends back home – who I'm starting to think are, like, kind of racist – always ask me what I see in Chinese men. They reject out of hand the possibility of dating a Chinese guy, saying they're too skinny, effeminate or Asian to be attractive. And then there's the small penis thing.

But not me.

I find Chinese men to be a breath of fresh air from the kind of guys I used to date. The fact that they will carry your handbag without complaint is reason enough to try one for yourself.

But apart from being great bag carriers, Chinese men have also helped me understand China more deeply. If dating a Jew makes you a Talmudic scholar, then dating a Chinese is like being handed the keys to 5,000 years of culture. I've dated two Chinese men, so that makes me, like, a leading expert.

I know exactly how large of a bribe to give my doctor if I want a surgery to go smoothly; I know how to make every pouty face Chinese girls deploy in selfies; and I have mastered three out of the four tones.

But, as always, problems started to seep into my cross-cultural relationships.

Take my latest boyfriend for example. His mother called

him – a lot. So much so that I wondered if there wasn't some kind of Oedipus thing going on. (I looked into it – there wasn't.) After much soul searching, I realized that China's “Little Emperor” syndrome was to blame. My taste in men has been impeccable, but China's family planning policy has rendered them spoiled and hopelessly filial. It's always China's family planning policy, isn't it, ladies?

I also couldn't stand his manners. Coming from a country so fond of anachronistic rules and stuffy hierarchy, his peasant insouciance grated on me. He would noisily hock up phlegm instead of silently drawing it up into his mouth and swallowing it like a normal person. He would also slurp his noodles loudly instead of eating them the right way, with a soup spoon and noodle fork. It was almost as if he'd grown up with entirely different customs.

Long story short, our relationship fell apart. The cultural differences just proved to be too much. He loved his mother; I loved myself.

I was into peddling Chinese propaganda; he not so much. And then there's the small penis thing.

Some of you might think I'm generalizing but I dated two guys and they were *both* like this.

Most importantly, he didn't appreciate how lucky he was to be with me, a white woman. If you think about it, what are the odds? You're probably more likely to die in an airplane crash. But he didn't seem to realize he'd hit the interracial equivalent of the Lotto.

But even though my love life in China hasn't been all that, my career is taking off. With lots of hard work and a little white privilege, I managed to land an amazing job at Xinhua, which, for those who don't know, is like *Pravda* without the fact-checking. Nowadays, I'm a presenter on a nightly news program that is neck and neck in ratings with the hit reality show, *Paint Drying*.

It just goes to show you: if you put your mind to it, any privileged, attractive white female can make it in this country.

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