

Vinz, Cebu courtship customs do not coincide with those in Manila or most of the civilized world. In a nutshell, you act too nice for the tastes of women of Cebu. But it's not too late for you to change. Keep reading.

**No Courtship, Please, We're Cebuana!** In the rest of the world, people are fairly mobile; if a man meets a girl he likes, he needs to act with a certain vigor and ask her out, or he will never see her again. And girls in Europe and the US tend to be open to this sort of thing, or they wind up without much of a social life. This is what you are accustomed to, Vinz. But that is not how it is in Cebu.

Cebu is a collection of small places, and most people hang around with a fairly limited circle of friends. If a man is interested in a girl, *he doesn't need to do anything, because sooner or later their paths will cross again.*

Both boy and girl can play it cool for an extended period, see each other regularly though not in any intense way, then one day agree that they are "on". Based on anecdotal evidence, it seems that most Cebuano couples agree to go steady without either party (certainly not the man) ever having said "I love you" or anything remotely like it. The kindest way of putting it is that Cebuano courtship rituals are "low-key", and that is apparently all that most Cebuanas can handle.

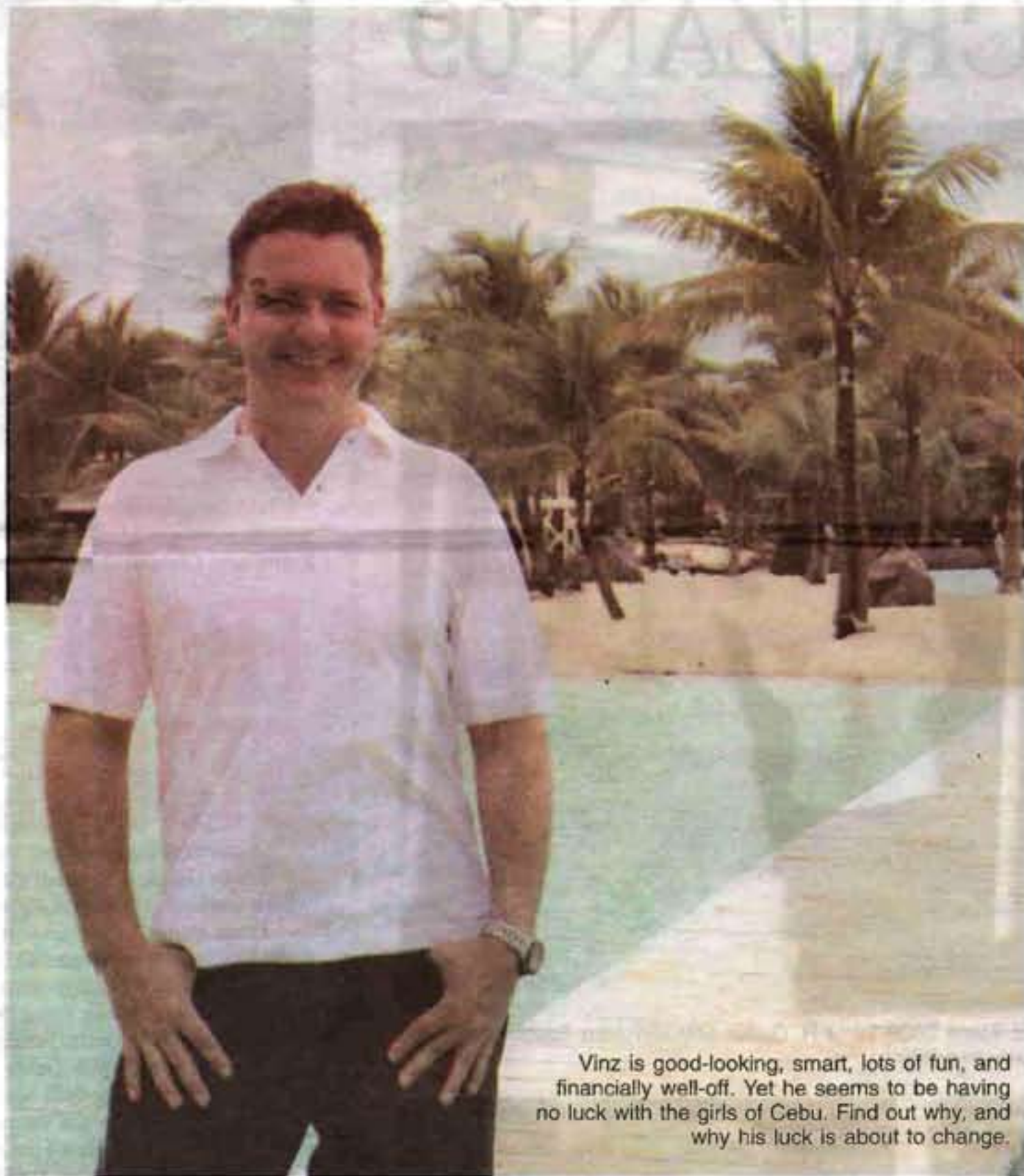
Thus, if a new man (e.g., Vinz) were to exhibit a certain degree of initiative and passion in pursuing a Cebuana, not only would she not be impressed, she would panic and almost certainly turn him down flat (or play hard to get until he gives up), regardless of how attractive he might be objectively.

Interviews with dozens of Cebuanas confirm that most are in principle opposed to going out with foreigners or guys from Manila, because they are "too aggressive". (Of course, this doesn't apply to movie stars, or foreigners with pensions and limited life-expectancies.)

**Insight #1:** *Most Cebuanas have never experienced "courtship" as the term is understood by most people elsewhere. Even with full-fledged boyfriends, most Cebuanas have never heard the words "I'm crazy about you", and probably not even "I love you". (Except when offered in lieu of foreplay.) They have never received a poem, an unexpected bouquet of flowers, a love letter, or even a love text. This is because thrifty and intelligent Cebuanos do not expend effort when none is needed.*

**The Utilitarian Heritage.** The absence of an *hacendero* class (wealthy plantation owners with a lot of leisure time) or comparable urban counterpart in Cebu means that there is no tradition of putting women on a pedestal or of their having value as chattelaines (ala *Gone With the Wind*).

Indeed, Cebu has always been a fairly hard-nosed, business-oriented place, and the mentality is very much to squeeze out every last drop of benefit in any deal. Hence it is natural that women, like most other resources, tend to be viewed in terms of their utility. Typical uses of women include sex, showing off to other men, and bringing in a cash income or the prospect of an



Vinz is good-looking, smart, lots of fun, and financially well-off. Yet he seems to be having no luck with the girls of Cebu. Find out why, and why his luck is about to change.

## The Problem with Cebuanas: ADVICE TO MY FRIEND VINZ

Serious Humor by A Half-Cebuano

By MANNY GONZALEZ

inheritance. Typical uses do not include romance, conversation, judgment, or creative thinking. Or any thinking.

Hence, as a typical Cebuana grows up, she learns from observation that men tell women what to do and what to think. The higher a man's status (and therefore the more appealing he is as a potential mate), the more options with women he has, and therefore the more he can afford to treat any one woman like his property (including, eventually, his girl-friends and his wives).

"Treated like property" does not necessarily mean regular whippings. But it certainly includes: controlling behavior; belittling language and regular put-downs; and financial as well as emotional mean-ness (*kuripot na sa kuwarta, kuripot pa gyud sa gugma*).

Individual cases vary, but for example there is hardly a Cebuana who would object to her boyfriend inspecting her cell-phone daily or hourly, as proof of her fidelity. Anywhere else in the world, even Manila, this would be considered ridiculous and barbaric, right up there with female circumcision.

**Insight #2:** *Cebuanas expect to be treated like property by a boyfriend or potential boyfriend, because they associate poor treatment with desirability in a man. The worse*

*a man treats her, in her subconscious mind she thinks "the more desirable he must be". Contrarily, if a man is nice, kind, loving, considerate, etc., (in brief, like you, Vinz) Cebuanas think there must be something wrong with him.*

**The Boy-Girl Imbalance.** There is no hard data on this subject, but the general impression is that there are more girls than boys in Cebu. Maybe it is the corn. Maybe it is the fact that after getting a degree, more boys move away. Anyway, as the oil market shows, even a 5 percent supply/demand imbalance can greatly affect market value.

Result? In this town, a girl generally expects to have to work hard to get a man. Not just any man, of course; she wants a cool, hip Cebuano who shows mild disdain for her, not some klutz of an outsider who — horrors! — might actually like her. And when she does find one, she hangs on tight, no matter how pitiful a specimen he is, or how outrageously he might treat her.

**Insight #3:** *In Cebu, women are trained to think that their man is the last lifeboat off the Titanic. This is a tough treadmill to get off, because they keep saying to themselves "I've got to make this work", and of course the longer they try, the more time and tears they invest, and the more reluctant they are to cut*

*their losses.*

What does all this bring us to? What is the bottom line?

Well, it doesn't lead to a lot of "going steady" happiness, much less marital happiness. You can't allow a man to trample all over you, and then expect him to change philosophy just because you let him pop your cherry, or had his baby. *Au contraire, ma vieille.* You just proved that he does own you.

**Survey your friends who have been "going steady" with a Cebuano for more than 3 months, or married more than 2 years. Don't listen to what they say; look at their eyes and see if there's a happy twinkle, or just resignation and a dogged determination to "make it work".** If you think a majority are happy, then you and I disagree, and you have wasted your time reading this far. You may stop reading now.

Personally, it seems to me that, after you eliminate those guys who cheat, those who lead separate lives, those who are tightwads with their affection and their money, those who habitually belittle and control their woman, and those who would rather be with the boys, their golf, or their businesses, there is hardly anyone left. (But sincere apologies to those who are happy anyway — I'm not talking about you. Don't get riled.)

This is truly sad, but you

Cebuanas (many of you, anyway) have only yourselves to blame. You keep letting your men get away with murder, when what many of them need is to get terminated for failing to meet basic standards of respect, love, and devotion. You tolerate insult after insult to your dignity and yet expect things to magically change — someday. You meet nice people like Vinz, and run the other way.

And you Cebuanos, you, too, are cheating yourselves (many of you, anyway). You could have the affection of a good woman, but instead you delight in talking down to her and making her feel inadequate. You could enjoy the pleasure of a happy family, but instead you'd rather spend night after night drinking with the boys, or seeing other women on the side, not because they're nicer, or better in bed than your wife, but just because you can.

What a waste.

For you, Vinz, on your birthday, I offer the following advice. International notions of gentlemanliness and niceness will get you nowhere in Cebu. If you want to be successful with Cebuanas you must:

1. Stop asking girls for their number. Wait for them to ask for yours. Then make them work for it. Never call a woman unless she has called you twice, and maintain this ratio forever after.

2. Stop opening doors and pulling chairs for women, or at least don't do it for anyone you haven't slept with. In Cebu this is "trying too hard". Stop offering to cook. In the US and Europe, this is considered by women the #1 most-romantic kind of date. Here in Cebu it is unheard-of, and therefore considered pathetic.

3. Never ask for a date. Wait for the girl to ask you. When you do go out on a date, cut it short at a time when she isn't expecting it, and act as if you have someone else to see. This drives Cebuanas nuts, and gives you high status/sex appeal.

4. Delete the phrases "I like/love you", "You're nice/beautiful/etc.", and "Please" from your vocabulary. In Cebu, only wimps use these words. If you ever do have occasion to express satisfaction with a woman, follow with a put-down. (For example: "That was pretty good; you're finally starting to improve.")

5. Get in the habit of telling women to their face that they're not too bright, or explaining the various ways in which they're deficient. Cebuanas equate this kind of behavior with high-status men, and it really turns them on. Each time a girl does something that bugs you, threaten to drop her at the next street corner, and do so unless she gets on her knees.

Follow these rules, Vinz, and you will make it to the hit parade with Cebu women.

(And, a closing warning to all you Cebuanos and Cebuanas who are outraged and feel personally insulted by this article, and might in your provincial simple-mindedness wish me harm: I have seriously good connects with the Lord of Karma. Of the last 10 parties who messed with me, 7 died in freak accidents or of untimely ailments, including a famous law-enforcement figure. #8 is not actually a person, but a company; its name is AIG (I kid you not). And, oh yes: #s 9 and 10 married Cebuanos.)



## The Problem with Cebuanas: Advice to My Friend Vinz

*Serious Humor by A Half-Cebuano*

(You don't need to know who Vinz is. He is just another confused guy who can't understand why Cebuanas won't take him seriously as a suitor, even though he is good-looking, has a great job, and is by and large a nice enough man.) Vinz, Cebu courtship customs do not coincide with those in Manila or most of the civilized world. Though obviously there are exceptions, relationships in Cebu follow a predictable and unique pattern.

**Small-town Connectivity.** Cebu is a collection of small places and most people grow up with the same fairly limited circle of friends, from grade school all the way to adulthood. If a man likes a woman, it is safe for him to snub her and show absolutely no interest in her, *because sooner or later their paths will cross again*. And if paths don't cross naturally, it is easy enough to engineer group or family gatherings that will allow "chance" meetings.

If two people like each other, they can both "play it cool" for an extended period, see each other regularly though not in any intense way, then one day agree that they are "on". Based on anecdotal evidence, it seems that most Cebuano couples agree to go steady without either party (certainly not the man) ever having said "I love you" or anything remotely like it in word or deed.

In the rest of the world, though, people are fairly mobile; if you come in contact with a girl you like, you need to step up to the plate and ask her out, or you will never see her again. So it is perfectly the norm after relatively short acquaintance (e.g., a conversation at a party) for a man (if he is interested) to come right out and suggest coffee, a date, or something. But the average Cebuana has never been asked out on a date except by men she has known for years; so when a relatively strange man asks her for a date, her initial reaction is panic, immediately followed by a judgment that he is "aggressive" or "creepy".

*Insight #1: Most Cebuanas have never been "courted" in the Western sense, and have no idea how to react when it happens. Assuming the guy is decent, the average European or American woman responds favorably to the feeling that a guy is actively interested in courting her. The average Cebuana does not. Even with full-fledged boyfriends, most Cebuanas have never heard the words "I'm crazy about you", and probably not even "I love you" (except during foreplay), and have never received a love letter, a poem, or an unexpected bouquet of flowers. This is because thrifty and intelligent Cebuanos do not expend effort when none is needed.*

**The Macho Heritage.** Cebuano men are a pretty macho lot, given the heavy Chinese and Spanish influences, in both of which women are considered more or less as property, or at best as simple-minded junior partners. In Cebu, the absence of a hacendero class (wealthy plantation owners with a lot of leisure time) or similar urban counterpart means that there is no tradition of putting women on a pedestal or of their having value as chatelaines (ala *Gone With the Wind*).

As a typical Cebuana grows up, she learns from observation that men tell women what to do and what to think, and in general treat them as second-class humans (when they are not just ignoring them). The higher a man's status (and therefore the more appealing he is as a potential mate), the more options

with women he has, and therefore the more he can afford to treat any one women poorly (including, eventually, his girl-friends and his wives).

*Insight #2: Cebuanas expect to be treated poorly by a boyfriend or suitor, because they associate poor treatment with desirability in a man. The worse a man treats her, in her subconscious mind she thinks "the more desirable he must be". Indeed, Cebuanas are considerably desensitized to mistreatment, and by and large don't even realize it when they are being mistreated. Tolerance levels vary, but for example there is hardly a Cebuana who would object to her boyfriend inspecting her cell-phone daily or hourly, as proof of her fidelity. In Manila or anywhere else in the world this would be considered ridiculous and barbaric, right up there with female circumcision. "Poor treatment" does not necessarily mean non-stop beatings. But it certainly includes: controlling behavior; belittling and demeaning language; outright neglect; and financial as well as emotional mean-ness (kuripot na sa kuwarta, kuripot pa gyud sa gugma).*

**The Boy-Girl Imbalance.** There is no hard data on this subject, but the general impression is that there are more girls than boys in Cebu. Maybe it is the corn. Maybe it is the fact that fewer boys get into college, and then after getting a degree more boys become OFWs or move to Manila. As we have learned from the price of oil, even a 5% supply/demand imbalance can greatly affect market value. At any rate, in this town a girl generally expects to have to work hard to get a man (not just any man, of course; she wants a cool, hip Cebuano who shows only mild interest in her). And when they do find one, they hang on tight, no matter how pitiful a specimen he is.

You can see how this effectively rules out any people who are not embedded in Cebu society. First, most Cebuanas are perpetually "going steady" with someone or another, with minimum gaps in between. Cebuanas view themselves as commercial real estate, and abhor vacancies.

Second, if a guy from Manila or elsewhere met a girl on a business trip and asked her out on his next visit, she would panic, see this as low-status or arrogant behavior, and almost certainly say no, regardless of how attractive he might be objectively. Unless he had a plausible excuse to keep seeing her at work or with friends, that would be the end of the story. (Of course, this doesn't apply to movie stars or billionaires, or foreigners with pensions.)

Since outsiders are to a fair degree excluded by both of these mechanisms, the imbalance is preserved. (It is true that some Cebuanas marry foreigners and some of them are happy. But most are not here in Cebu to pass on their values and their happy stories, so the status quo is unaffected. And the foreign men who do stay here with Cebuana wives quickly become more Cebuano than the Cebuanos.)

*Insight #3: In Cebu, women are trained to think that their man (should they have one) is the last lifeboat off the Titanic. This is a tough treadmill to get off of, because they keep saying to themselves "I've got to make this work", and of course the longer they try, the more time and tears they have invested, and the more reluctant they are to cut their losses.*

What does all this bring us to? What is the bottom line?

Well, it doesn't lead to a lot of relationship or marital happiness. You can't allow men to trample all over you while you are single, and then expect them to change their philosophy just because you had their

baby. *Au contraire*. Do a mental survey of the Cebuano couples you know who have been married more than five years. If you think a majority are happy with their marriages, then you and I disagree, and you have wasted your time reading this far. You may stop reading now.

Personally, it seems to me that, after you eliminate those husbands who cheat, those who lead separate lives, those who would rather be with the boys six nights a week than with their families, those who would rather be with the boys, period, those who habitually demean their wives, and those who are tightwads with their love and money, there is hardly anyone left.

This is truly sad, but you Cebuanas have only yourselves to blame. You keep teaching your men that they are the moon and the stars when what most of them need is to get shown the door for failing to meet basic standards of respect, love, and devotion. How will they learn, if you let them get away with murder? While you are still single, you tolerate insult after insult to your dignity and yet expect things to magically change once you are married. You meet nice people like Vinz, and run the other way.

And you Cebuanos, you, too, are cheating yourself. You could have the affection of a good woman, but instead you take pleasure in browbeating her. You could enjoy the company of a happy family, but instead you'd rather spend every night with the boys, getting drunk or making a fool of yourself trying to amuse GROs and buy them drinks in exchange for a few gropes.

What a waste.

For you, Vinz, on your birthday, I offer the following advice. International norms of gentlemanliness and niceness do not apply in Cebu. If you want to be successful with Cebuanas you must:

1. Stop asking girls for their number. Wait for them to ask for yours. Then make them work for it. Never call a woman unless she has called you twice, and maintain this ratio forever after. Never linger on the phone; always act as if you have lots of better things to do than chat with her.
2. Stop opening doors or pulling chairs for women, or at least don't do it for anyone you haven't slept with. In Cebu this is perceived as "trying too hard". Stop offering to cook. Abroad this is considered by women the #1 most-desired kind of date. Here in Cebu it is considered pathetic.
3. Never ask for a date. Wait for the girl to ask you. When you do go out on a date, cut it short at a time when she isn't expecting it, and act as if you have someone else to see. This drives Cebuanas nuts, and gives you high status/sex appeal.
4. Delete the phrases "I like/love you", "You're nice/beautiful/etc.", and "Please" from your vocabulary. In Cebu, only wimps use these words. If you ever do have occasion to express satisfaction with a woman, follow with a put-down. (For example: "That was pretty good; you're starting to learn.")
5. Get in the habit of telling a woman to her face that she's not too bright, and explaining why she may not be good enough for you. Cebuanas equate this kind of behavior with high-status men, and it really turns them on. But never raise your voice or show even minor annoyance. Your attitude should be one of faint boredom: no mere girl could possibly affect you much one way

or the other. Each time a girl does something that bugs you, threaten to drop her at the next street corner, and do so unless she gets on her knees.

Follow these rules, Vinz, and you will make it to the hit parade with Cebu women.

*(And, a closing note to all you Cebuanos and Cebuanas who are outraged by this article. I have seriously good connects with the Lord of Karma. 5 of the last 7 people who messed with me died in freak accidents or of mysterious ailments. Another 2 got married to Cebuanos.)*