

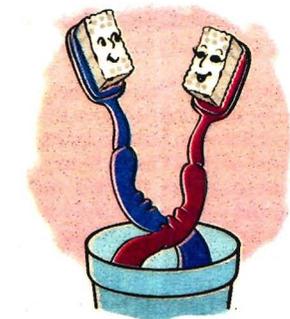
THE HOT SPOT

I'LL show you mine if you show me yours," was part of a conversation I overheard while standing at a bar pretending not to listen. Ah, another man and woman playing the mating game, I thought. I expected him to say something like, "Only if you wear your nurse's outfit", or her to say, "Will you whip me?", when I noticed their earnest expressions and realised they were referring to one another's Aids test results.

The mating game. It's not a game. And there is often no mating.

I met a man. On our first horizontal encounter I climbed into bed fully dressed. He thought I was being kinky until he realised it was my penetration-preventative measure. He called me quaint. He said I was old-fashioned. I was just playing it safe.

When men come up to me in public places with lecherous fingers and hungry eyes, I am tempted to say, "Don't touch me, I don't know where you've been." Instead, I learnt a manoeuvre from a friend which deserves practice. A Rastaman was passing by her table as she sat at a sidewalk café. There was mutual recognition. He shot forward. His dreads dan-



THE MATING GAME: The symbolic act of intimacy

gled and his bangles jangled. She stood up. He thrust his body towards her for an embrace. She leaped back, held her head high and swung her hand up like a stop sign between their chests. "No bro," she said, extending her hand. "Shake."

My grandmother found out I've been seeing someone. She asked me: "Are you romancing?" I think she was referring to sex.

In her day couples courted. They held hands, batted eyelids at each other and, if daring, held hands in public and batted eyelids in broad daylight.

She doesn't understand that I am terrified of STDs, HIV, Aids.

I'm tempted to introduce every man I meet to my psychologist, gynaecologist, oral hygienist and numerologist before taking it any further. You never know.

So my seeing this man all started the day he invited me up to his place.

"Wanna come up and check out my DVD collection?" he asked. Sounded serious. He had previously suggested coffee, which was out of bounds as I was on homeopathic remedies for emotionally related relationship issues.

The next time we met I was already asking to burn his CDs. Soon after that he got permission to plug his Motorola charger into my double adaptor.

Just the other night I made a serious commitment to this man. I offered to give him a little head. His eyes lit up. I showed him how to attach the little toothbrush head — a spare one — to the body of my electric toothbrush.

"One body, two heads, it all seems very symbolic doesn't it," he said, then applied a blob of toothpaste to his new toy and pressed the "on" button. I couldn't think of anything more intimate than sharing the body

of my electric toothbrush.

Sharing is caring. At least in Barney's world.

I have always refused to buy into the His/Hers fluffy white towel with scarlet embroidery affair. You know, the my-house-is-your-house saga. The make-yourself-at-home gig. No! Hands off my remote control. Don't plunge my Bodum. And don't even think of logging on to my iMac.

What we own is priceless. And I don't mean material objects.

So you can well imagine what it is like getting up and seeing his little head greeting me at eye level on the shelf beside the bathroom mirror. And I think: you may believe you've conquered my country and landed on my moon but, really, all you've done is annex my electric toothbrush. And all I'd need to do to cut off the intimacy is let the battery run out. So you see, it all comes down to basics.

I'll know for certain that we are seriously involved when I'm walking down the aisle, the music's playing and he turns to me as I reach for the Aquafresh and says: "Sweetheart, don't you know I'm a Colgate kind of guy." And I say: "I do." — *Shani Raviv*