

BolivianExpress

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Magazine





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EDITORIAL

As a Valentine's treat, this month's issue is on love. We explore some of the best and worst places to go for a date in La Paz, as well as where to find love online, though the truth is that we only discover where not to find it. Out of luck, we turn to love charms to see whether magic can help us in the quest to find a partner.

But it's not all cheese and boxed chocolates. We also explore the love for football, as well as the passion for delicious flame-grilled sliced hearts (or **anticuchos**, as we call them around these parts). And with love still on the agenda, we look at how mutually-consented violence can be one of the purest expressions of passion in the Andes, if romantic passion exists at all among the Aymara.

Finally, for the sour-hearted among you, we explore divorce in Bolivia, talk to some private investigators specialising in infidelity, and wallow in a dose of Amartelo, the love sickness. ✖

By Amaru Villanueva Rance

N.B. Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in our glossary

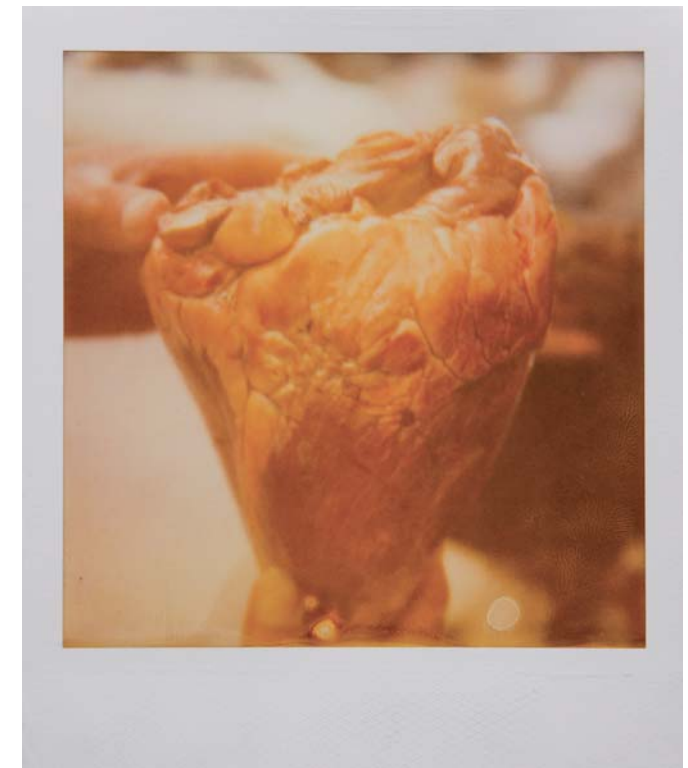


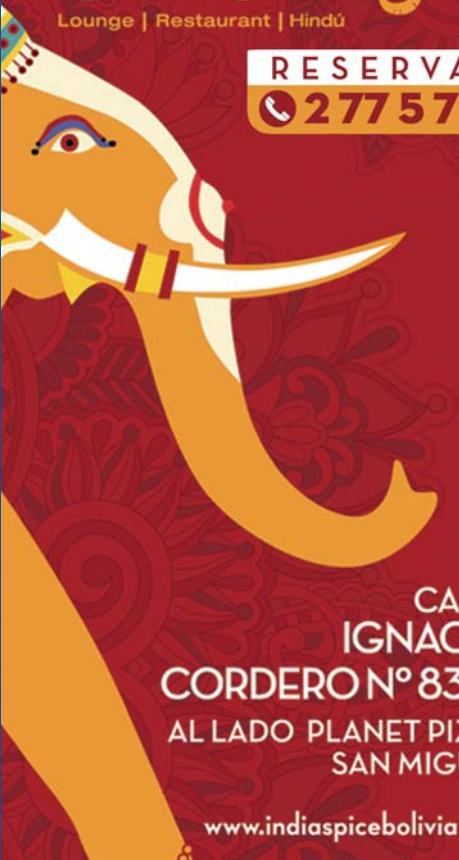
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TRAVEL TIPS

LLAJWA	Spicy Bolivian sauce		
AJÍ	Local term for combination of spices and hot peppers from the Capsicum family. Can be ground dry or prepared in a paste		
ANTICUCHOS	Sliced and skewered beef hearts, a traditional late-night meal in the Andes, typically served with potatoes and a spicy peanut aji		
ANTICUCHERA	An anticuchera cook, typically a woman	FÁCIL	Easy
WAYLLUÑA (AMAR), MUNAÑA (QUERER)	Love: In Spanish, there is a difference between Querer which is 'To want' and the stronger term Amar 'To love'	DINERO	Money
CHUMAY	Aymara word for heart	WAWA	Aymara term for baby or small child
PACEÑO/A	Something that is from La Paz	HUAYÑO	Genre of popular Andean music and dance practiced by a variety of ethnic groups, including the Quechuas and the Aymaras
SERVIRSE	Servirse is a colloquial expression in Spanish which refers to the act of someone helping themselves to something	AJAYU	Soul, Spirits
COPA AMÉRICA	A football tournament held every four years in which 12 national teams from across South America come head to head	FIESTA	Celebration
		GUAPA	Term used to refer to an attractive woman

PHOTO: ANUAR ELIAS



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Tainted Love

PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS OF LA PAZ

Frans Robyns went out to meet some of La Paz's finest private investigators to learn some of the ugly truths about love, many of which are possibly best kept secret.

Pablo, a private investigator we spoke to for this article, can be contacted on 706 54353. The others have asked not to be named.

From the outside it seems like a perfectly happy marriage. The husband makes a good living; he can provide for his family everything they could possibly want. They have two happy and healthy children who they have found good schools for, the wife is cheerful and chatty with her friends; she explains to them how good her husband is with the kids. She cooks family dinners, which they all enjoy together. It is a harmonious household.

Yet she starts to have her suspicions. Her husband is becoming more distant; he doesn't really seem interested in spending time with her anymore. It has been several weeks since they had sex. She starts getting worried. What is going on? Is she growing old and unattractive? Has he just lost interest? Is he depressed? Or maybe, just maybe, is he having an affair? She becomes more worried. She starts becoming paranoid. Every little thing her husband says or does seems to imply to her that he is indeed having an affair. A seed of suspicion has been planted inside her mind. And it's already growing.

She just has to know if it's true or not. It doesn't even matter anymore if he is

having an affair; she just needs to know the truth, and she knows she can't get it from him. She does what hundreds of other desperate individuals in La Paz do: she hires a private investigator.

He is very easy to find; his ad is quite clear in the newspaper. He accepts her request. At first he just follows the husband around, becoming familiar with his daily schedule. He knows where he goes for lunch. He knows what he eats. He knows when he leaves work. He knows his route home. For a few weeks, the private investigator knows his target more intimately than anyone else on the planet. The husband has no idea he's being followed.

For almost three weeks he doesn't notice anything particularly unusual about the husband's behaviour. He seems just like a regular person. That is, until one day he sees him outside his office on his way home from work. Usually at this time, he would simply get in his car before driving home (although stopping off most days at the Pollos Copacabana drive-thru), but today he is greeted by a very young man. So young, in fact, that he must still be at university, if he's at university at all. He definitely isn't

one of his two children, the investigator knows exactly what his children look like. So who is this person?

Quietly, the investigator starts to weave conjectures aided by his trusty pair of binoculars. Eventually he decides, based on a past case, that the boy could be the illegitimate son of an affair he had several years ago. This could be the proof that he needs to show his wife that her spouse was not only unfaithful, but had been so for several years. Yet the investigator knows he needs more evidence before he can make such a bold claim to his client. He begins to follow them. At first there is nothing really incriminating; they both get in his car and drive away. They could be going anywhere. He follows.

After a while they stop outside a motel. This is extremely strange. Why would he be going to a motel with his illegitimate son? They both get out of the car and enter the motel. The investigator watches them through his binoculars from the backseat of his car. He watches them go in and then sees them again after about ten minutes in one of the rooms facing the street. It turns out the boy, the young man, isn't the husband's

son after all. Oh no, he cannot, surely, be looking at the man's lover? The investigator can't quite believe his eyes. After all his years of work in the industry he has never seen anything quite like it. Sure, he has seen years and years of infidelity and debauchery, but never a 45 year-old man sleeping with a 20-something boy behind his wife's back. He takes a couple photos and speeds off to talk to the wife.

She is devastated. She cries for about an hour, inconsolably. He tries to help her, but she is distraught. She doesn't really know how to process the information. She thought she just wanted to know for sure what was going on, but now she wishes she had never known.

As I sat in the coffee shop in central La Paz listening to this remarkable tale, completely shocked by what I was hearing, I couldn't help but notice seeing a small glint of pride in the private investigator's eye. He had caught his target. He was successful. The weeks of hard work had paid off for him. 'The woman's reaction was pretty common among my clients. They think they

know what they want, but at the end of the day, does anyone really know what they want?'

This really is the dark side of love. Those corridors of horrors that people seem to readily walk into, before realising their

'The woman's reaction was pretty common among my clients. They think they know what they want, but at the end of the day, does anyone really know what they want?'

grave mistake. He says 'I do my best to be mindful of inflicting psychological damage', yet at the end of the day he is only offering them a service they themselves request. Oftentimes, people will contact him hastily and in a panic. 'People often see giants when they

should be seeing windmills' he tells me, pointing out that a non-trivial proportion of cases turn out to be fruitless and unfounded. 'If, after a few days it becomes apparent nothing unusual is taking place, I have to tell them it's not worth them spending their money, and it's not worth me spending my time on this'.

The private investigators community (if it can be called a community at all; they only seem to know each other by name) is larger in La Paz than one might think. Prices start at \$10 per hour, and at the higher end cost upwards of \$300 per week. At the end of my conversations, I couldn't help feeling slightly rattled. The story I have recounted above is one of the stranger ones, but by no means the strangest that was told to me. I kept wondering how being exposed to so much deceit and duplicity affected the lives of these investigators. I asked one of them whether his line of work ever made him suspicious of partners he's had. After a calm pause he looked up and said 'I know all the tricks there are to know, they would never do them to me. They simply wouldn't work'.

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HOW TO LOVE LIFE ITSELF

FOOTBALL: A GAME OF HEARTS

TEXT: MARTÍN DÍAZ MEAVE

Translated from the Spanish by Caroline Risacher

I don't remember his name, but he spoke with an emotion and a glint in his eyes that I didn't see very often: this exchange student from Thailand, barely 17 years old, had just arrived from Oruro and was planning to stay in my house for the weekend. It wasn't any ordinary weekend; that Sunday, Bolivia was playing the **Copa América** final against Brazil.

He said he chose to come to Bolivia because he knew that the Copa was going to be played there. 'He is a true football fan and he is very excited', my mother told me. Later, the boy took me through a session of 'show and tell', proudly displaying the memorabilia he had brought from his country: photos, curios, and Man-U magazines in Thai. He had encyclopaedic knowledge of formations, sketches, and results that I would have never imagined were possible to memorize. And he recited them with enviable emotion and, it could be said, with love.

Can you love a game? Love reigns over all other feelings. We grow fond of people, animals and material objects. But can we really develop an emotional bond with a recreational activity? Games are one of the few human activities performed for their own sake: we play because we can. In a game we reflect and project who we are. To play is to escape oneself, it brings us entertainment and that's why we enjoy it.

This was the last thing I was thinking

about when, two days later, Ronaldo's Brazil took away 'our' Cup, after beating a Bolivian squad that got us all excited for an instant when they tied the match. That night, I shared the pain of defeat with another 40,000 souls painted green in the mythic Hernando Siles stadium.

How could a game become so important? Maybe it's a special kind of love. We know about brotherly love, paternal love, and romantic love, but it seems that this game stirs a feeling as singular as its very nature. Have you ever seen the face of a fan when a goal is scored against his team? It's a unique gesture of

'Have you ever seen the face of a fan when a goal is scored against his team? It's a unique gesture of disappointment, anger, resignation and winded agony never otherwise seen'

disappointment, anger, resignation and winded agony never otherwise seen. I dare say that only such a singular sport is able to awake such a particular feeling. The joy of a child who goes to bed hugging his football; the frustration of a

fan who learns that a good match won't be broadcast. No, I'm not talking about a match 'your' team plays: Argentina v Germany, Milan v Real Madrid, Boca v River, we hunger to see these games as much as some might yearn to hear Bernstein conduct a Beethoven symphony. Indeed, it is a love that exceeds country or team: a place in our heart in the shape of a regulation-sized football. It's the excitement of watching a play put together by the Iniesta - Xavi - Messi trio, it's that feeling we have when switching channels and suddenly finding a match and thinking: 'Who are they? Who is winning?' And, like all feelings, it's either there or it isn't, you can't force it.

The next day, during lunch, my mother surprised me with a corollary to the story. 'Do you remember the Thai guy? Well, his host family in Oruro didn't give him permission to travel to La Paz, but he came anyway just to watch the game. Even the police were looking for him, and as punishment he must return home immediately. He said he didn't care, he was happy because it was the final of **Copa América**'.

I smiled thinking that this young Thai boy had risked and sacrificed so much, all the way across the world, because he loved this game with such a passion. In part thanks to him, I know that the most beautiful of feelings can be expressed towards the most beautiful of games. ✕

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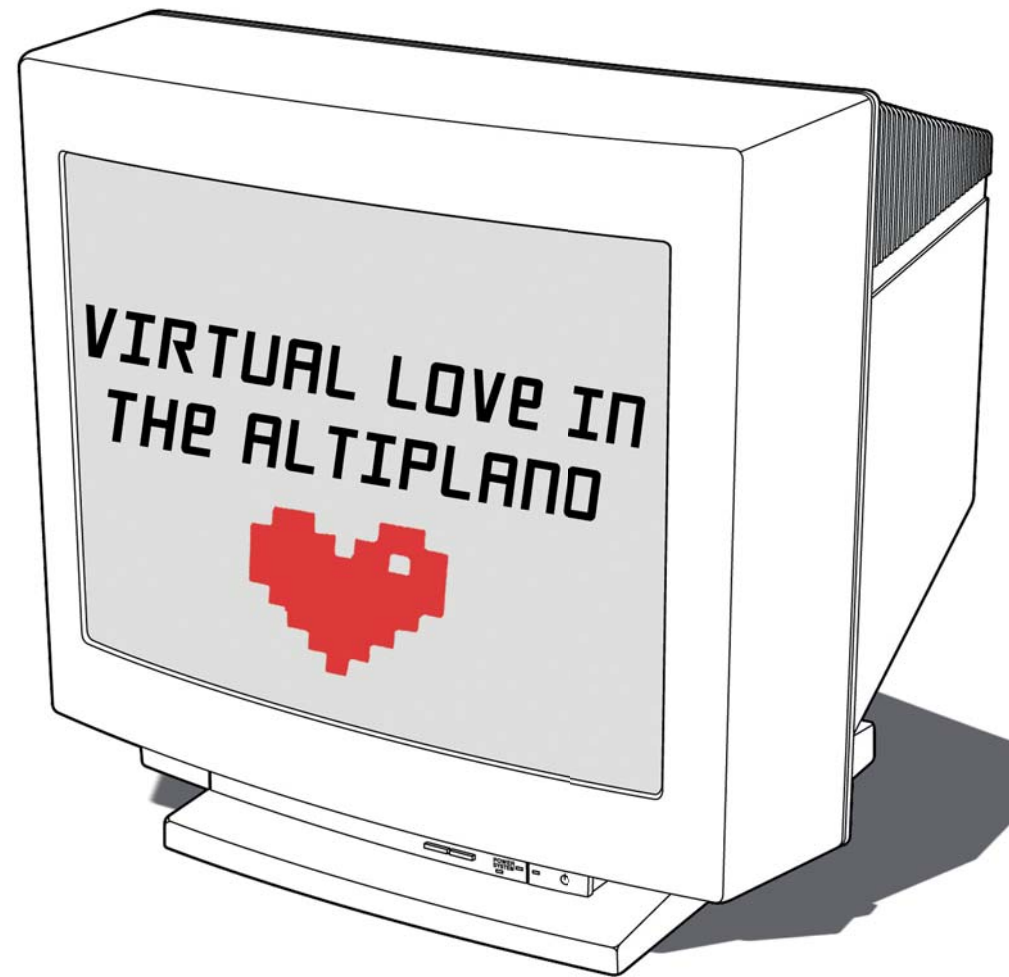
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IT IS 2013, AND ACCORDING TO THE NEW YORK TIMES OVER 80% OF SINGLE AMERICANS HAVE TRIED ONLINE DATING. HAYDEN ALDREDGE JOINED SIX WEBSITES, SOME MORE POPULAR THAN OTHERS, TO SEE IF THIS CRAZE HAS CAUGHT ON IN BOLIVIA. THE RESULTS ARE NOT EXACTLY PROMISING FOR ALL THOSE DIGITALLY MINDED BACHELORS AND BACHELOTTES IN THIS COUNTRY. WELL, TAKE A READ AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF...

TEXT: HAYDEN ALDREDGE

I have never dabbled in internet dating. I know many people who have, and virtually all reviews have been at least somewhat positive. When I seem skeptical, my friends always point out that it's the year 2013, that maybe ten years ago finding someone you could theoretically spend the rest of your life with online might have been weird, but not now. All of my friends who are making such statements are of course from the United States. I tried asking people that I know in Bolivia about internet dating, whether they had participated or even what their opinions on it were. Not a single Boli-

vian that I spoke to had used an internet dating website. When pressed on the issue, they all seemed to not know much about it, other than that only 'slightly off' or just plain 'weird' people used those sites. This piqued my interest. I decided to join every dating website offering dating services to people in La Paz. I set out to find out just how easy to use they really were, who was using them, and whether I could actually contact and then eventually arrange a date with real people. I thought to myself, if frequenting dating locations and using exotic love charms don't work, maybe this will.



<http://badoo.com>

Google 'la paz bolivia dating websites' and this is the first result to come up. If you like actual people, who actually do probably exist, then this is the site for you. Sure, some of the profiles on this site are off-puttingly real, but after hours of trawling through dating services, it is a nice feeling to actually believe that I could run into the person whose picture I am staring at so intently. Badoo has that going for it. It's also free. The interface is good, possibly the best of all the sites that I looked at. It can be accessed in English and Spanish. But I might be an impartial judge here. In just

two days I received 12 profile views, most on any site for me, and was chatting with two actual La Paz citizens by that time. Of all the sites that I visited, Badoo made me feel the most confident that if I arranged to meet a person at the movies for a date, they would actually show up looking like the person I thought I was supposed to meet.

[mingle²](http://mingle2.com)

<http://mingle2.com>

Mingle2 has the potential. It really does. The interface is very good, it is easy and free to create a profile, and there are no annoying advertisements. The issue for me, and any other Bolivian, is that not a single one of the profiles I looked at was located in this country. In fact, the vast majority lived in the United States. I found one or two people who claimed to live in La Paz, but the profiles were obviously fake. It is a real shame, because Mingle2 could really be something. Instead, it just keeps reminding me by email that women from South Beach, Florida, want to meet me.



<http://www.lavaplace.com/>

This site has an absolutely terrible interface, but when it comes down to it, it might just be in the top three sites I signed up for. The profiles on Lava Place actually have images that won't pop up on google search results for 'hot girls'. Yet, unfortunately for me, very few of the people actually seemed to be in my age range. If fact, the vast majority of the people on the site were in their fifties and seemed to just be getting out of a divorce. And they were looking for a younger man or woman. There were some younger profiles, but I would say that this particular service isn't

exactly geared towards my age group.

[craigslist](http://craigslist.org)

<http://lapaz.craigslist.org/>

Here we go. Perhaps the most interesting 'dating website' that I looked at. Looking for a date on craigslist is like trying to find your dignity by going to Carnival in Oruro. Surprisingly enough there is a section for men seeking women (and vice versa) in La Paz. But that's not where you find the interesting queries that make Craigslist such a special place. The real fun is in the casual encounters section, where women who are patently sex workers advertise openly and with the aid of some very explicit images. My suggestion is to stay away from Craigslist, unless of course you want to dabble with Stop Time (see p. 12). Craigslist certainly has some good features, but in my quest for love, or even just a normal date, it was a dead end.

[Adult Friend Finder](http://adultfriendfinder.com/)

<http://adultfriendfinder.com/>

Adult Friend Finder is a site built specifically for adults to connect with one another and have casual sexual encounters together. This is strictly an over 18 kind of site. Every single picture is extremely explicit, and the information on most profiles goes far beyond suggestive. I was able to join for free, but as soon as I tried to do absolutely anything—like viewing a larger version of someone's profile picture, or read a message I was sent from another user—I was asked to pay money. The most basic package comes in at \$6 a month, while the best account will cost you \$19.99, enough to buy at least twenty anticuchos (see p. 24). Since I already knew this wouldn't exactly help me find a nice reasonable

girl to go on a date with I decided to not pay a single centavo.



<http://www.citasbolivia.com/>

For some reason Citas Bolivia uses a Mexican flag in their logo. That, along with their odd use of chilies, Mexican beer, and sombreros on the homepage, does not stop this site from being one of the very best I signed up for. The interface is attractive and the site on a whole is very easy to use. While many of the users are just a tad too old for me, the profiles on Citas Bolivia are much more balanced, age-wise, than Lava Place. Nine people viewed my profile, and a grand total of four women sent me messages. They all might have been over 40 years old, but that didn't really trouble me. At this point in my search, I had basically given up trying to get an actual date on any of these sites, and was just happy when someone real messaged me.

The difference in attitude on internet dating between the United States and Bolivia could be perfectly explained by a difference in cultural and social values. But after hours of searching through these dating sites, I have come to realize that the real reason lies in the fact that the very best option for Bolivians would rank as very mediocre for anyone in the United States. In the end, trying to find a date online in La Paz is just not very realistic or practical for someone who is looking for a functional relationship. This at least, was the case for me. But who knows, maybe people just really didn't like my profile picture. Despite the plausibility of this, I like to think that the reason I failed to get a date through the internet was because a lack of truly good options, and not because of my facial features.✖

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20 DE OCTUBRE AV. ACROSS AVAROA SQUARE. LOOK FOR THE SHAMROCK
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FORUM



There are some people out there who would like nothing more from a first date than loud music, lots of dancing, heat, body odour, and being squished together with a multitude of drunk and sweaty people. If you also like to be sprayed with silly string and spend way too much money, then Forum is the place for you. Ask the right 15-year-old kid what the best club in the city is, and he will undoubtedly say Forum. Take a quick walk around the inside and you can definitely see why that is. There are groups of teenagers everywhere, holding cocktails in their hands and awkwardly dancing to the music. Judging by their body language, teenage couples don't necessarily come here together, but they certainly end up leaving hand-in-hand (or in some cases, hand-on-breast). By no means is Forum a club just for teenagers, but if you are thinking about taking your date out to a club, I would recommend avoiding this one.

ADDRESS: VICTOR SANJINES 2908, SOPOCACHI

ACHOCALLA



PHOTO: CHRISTIAN EUGENIO

This idyllic location (plus pond) is located just a forty-five-minute minibus ride away from the city centre. After the bumpy ride, which offers beautiful views of the surrounding hills and mountains of La Paz, you arrive at Achocalla. If you want a very special date, take your significant other to Flor De Leche, a brilliant (but pricey) restaurant run by the cheese making company of the same name. It's a beautiful scene for a romantic fondue shared outside under cool shade. A short stroll down the road leads you to the pond, where swan pedal boats can be rented for twelve bolivianos (for fifteen minutes). The lake is tranquil, and, more importantly, it's very private. For a more exciting date, small quad bikes are available for rental on a circular dirt track. I noted multiple couples squished onto these small machines, laughing hysterically as they went onto two wheels around the corner. If that doesn't sound appealing, you can also rent horses to walk around in a very small area. One couple that I talked to, Maria and Carlos, were sitting in their minibus, quietly cuddling. When asked why they came here, they said that it was 'beautiful', and a 'place to fall in love'. It was worth the drive out from La Paz for them, and after spending a day there, I would have to agree with what they said.

FROM PLAZA HUMBOLDT IN ZONA SUR, CATCH ANY MINIBUS WITH THE SIGN ACHOCALLA IN THE WINDSHIELD. THE BUS WILL DROP YOU OFF VERY CLOSE TO THE SMALL POND, WHICH IS A SHORT WALK AWAY.

Last week, I got a girl's number. I waited three days (the requisite amount of time, at least where I'm from) before texting her, asking if she would like to get together. The word 'date' was never explicitly mentioned, but it was certainly implied. Since she is Bolivian and I am just a transient outsider, I left it up to her to decide where and when we would meet up. But she didn't quite understand this, and the next thing I knew it was my job to decide what to do for our first date. As I sat in my room, feverishly thinking of places to go and things to do, I began to think about all of the nervous souls out there who were thinking that same exact thought. And so, with my decision still up in the air, I decided to tackle this problem and learn where people go on dates in this city.



PHOTO: CHARLIE KELLY

MONTICULO

The Montículo, located next to Plaza España in Sopocachi, has one of the best views in the entire city. The lookout point, a must-visit if you are in the neighborhood, boasts a cute church, beautiful trees, and even a statue of Beethoven. And if you go there at sunset, the light hitting the far hills won't be the only thing that catches your attention. On any given day at dusk, you'll easily spot at least ten couples, sitting on benches or the surrounding walls, passionately embracing. While the initial draw to the Montículo is the view at sunset, these couples definitely find something else to entertain them. One Wednesday evening I counted thirteen couples in this small space. Of those, only two were not intensely making out. The couples ranged in age, from teenagers to the kind of adults that can no longer claim to be middle-aged. After multiple visits to this lovers' paradise, I concluded that the Montículo is definitely not a place to go for a first date, but if you want the opportunity to avoid awkward small talk and pursue a slightly more passionate pastime with your significant other, then this is the place for you.

FROM PLAZA ESPAÑA IN SOPOCACHI, WALK TOWARDS THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF THE SQUARE. FROM THERE, CLIMB THE STEPS TO GET TO THE TOP OF THE MONTICULO.

WHERE IS THE LOVE?

Hayden Aldredge's guide on where to date in La Paz

In the end, none of this helped me. A few days after she told me to make the decision, my mysterious lady texted me once again. She had made an executive decision: Our first date will be a nice dinner at her home—with her parents. We are still in negotiations, and have yet to go on our first date.



PHOTO: THEO HAYNES

STOP TIME

One hour. Fifty-eight Bolivianos. A Jacuzzi, a large bed, a shower, and privacy. Need I say more? Stop Time is just one of many 'motels' located around La Paz, a large number of them just down the road from Forum (see above). These are discreet businesses that provide clean rooms that couples can rent an hour at a time. The most basic room, which has a Jacuzzi, bed, and full bathroom, costs 58 bolivianos per hour. Prices and amenities rise from there, with the most expensive room running 158 bolivianos per hour. And don't worry about missing this place: there are five signs announcing it. And at night, there's a bright red neon sign that hangs above the motel. Not exactly discreet, but it definitely does attract quite a large number of clients. In just ten minutes of waiting in front of the entrance for an interview, I observed no fewer than four couples on their way in and a further two making their way out. According to some qualified experts, this is the place to go after a night out when you just don't have anywhere else to go with that certain someone.

ADDRESS: GO DOWN THE STREET FRANCISCO BEDREGAL, IT WILL BE PRETTY OBVIOUS.



PHOTO: LEONEL FRANSEIZE

MULTICINE

The very first thing I thought of doing was going to the movies. But what exactly does 'going to the movies' mean in La Paz? It turns out that every Wednesday night, something incredible happens at the Multicine on the Avenida Arce (no, it's not pronounced 'Arse', it's more like 'Are-say'), in a large mall with a modern gym, several fast food restaurants (including the ever-popular Pollo Copacabana), a faux Victoria's Secret placed suggestively right next to a mattress store, and eight large movie theatres. The five or so blocks leading to the Multicine were crowded with groups of kids giggling awkwardly, self-segregated by gender, with a few intrepid souls cautiously bridging the small gap to awkwardly stand together. I talked to two couples that night. The first were on their second date. The boy (16), told me that this was the obvious place to go for an event like that. As he said this, his girlfriend (15) just nodded vigorously. I asked the second couple I spoke to—who were in a long-term relationship—what brought them there. 'What else would we do?', snapped the boy. While that might not be a ringing endorsement, if you are looking for a reassuringly mainstream date venue, dinner at Pollo Copacabana and a two-for-one film screening is a good place to start. Pro-tip: there's no way to know what a girl is really like until you see her eat fried chicken with her hands.

ADDRESS: NO. 2631, AV. ARCE

CHARMED

IN HIS QUEST TO FIND LOVE IN LA PAZ, HAYDEN ALDREDGE DISCOVERS HOW LOVE CHARMS, AMULETS, AND THE OCCASIONAL SPELL ARE JUST A PART OF THE NORMAL SEARCH FOR PASSION IN BOLIVIA.

PHOTO: ALEJANDRO LOAYZA

COLOR IT RED

Bolivians go far beyond the average New Year's resolution. Instead of making goals that will be forgotten two weeks later (there go my Spanish language skills), they view the occasion as a chance to profoundly affect what happens to them in the next year. Surprisingly, many of these rites involve underwear. If a person wants to find love they must wear red underwear during New Year's eve. This is just one variant on the underwear belief: yellow brings happiness and money, green brings prosperity, pink for friendship, and white for hope and peace. If you want to get married, then precisely at midnight, sit down and stand up 12 times. Then, tie a red ribbon around a photograph of the person you want to marry and sleep with it under your pillow all night. This is supposed to ensure the person you love will give you his or her love before the next New Year's Eve. Lastly, if all you want in your life is a bit of passion, then just burn red candles throughout New Year's Eve.

ALASITA

Alasitas, the miniature craft fair celebrated every January, is really much more than just a fair. It's an occasion for Bolivians to buy miniature versions that represent all the things they want for the year ahead, courtesy of the Ekeko, the God of Fortune. For women, a miniature cockerel has to be given to them by a friend. White

for marriage, gold for them to find a man with mucho **dinero**, and black to break a bad spell or a tainted love. Men follow a similar process, except they use a hen, or a small figurine of a black woman. Once purchased, the miniature in question must be blessed by a Yatiri, preferably at midday on the first day of Alasitas. Vania Gonzalez, a woman I spoke to, explained the power of these charms:

'A friend once gave me a cockerel. I have always been attracted by this type of thing, and in a way I could say I like to believe magic exists. Believe that a miniature clay cockerel can bring you love? Why not. One or two weeks after I was given this amulet I met my first boyfriend. For the following two years I lived in La Paz I was given miniature cockerels, and wasn't single during this period. It's been four years since I left La Paz and have therefore not received an Alasitas cockerel. I don't want to

sound more superstitious than I probably already seem, but in all this time I've been single. Coincidence? Just in case, I have asked a friend from Bolivia to send me one.'

LOVE POTIONS AND AMULETS

A trip through the Mercado Sagarana is essential for any tourist visiting La Paz. While the llama foetuses and shopkeepers will catch your attention, what should really intrigue you (if you're as interested in finding love as I am), are the amulets and love powders that line the shelves of these shops. I purchased two of these in the hope of finding love. One was a traditional love amulet which consisted of a very small bundle of objects, a couple made out of fake gold, and other small indistinguishable objects. I'm told I'm supposed to keep this in my wallet. The other item I purchased was a small box of powder -smelling

very much like incense and tasting very much like soap- that I'm supposed to surreptitiously sprinkle into someone's drink or food to make them fall in love with me. The box had a man and a woman passionately embracing with the words 'Come to Me' written in Spanish. While it claims to be a new formula, the powder (made in Venezuela) didn't quite work for me. That said, last time I checked, spiking drinks (whether with rohypnol or a suspect love potion) is illegal and, if anything, is an effective recipe to get you on the sex offenders register. But who knows, maybe I just need to use more of it next time.

MUNACHI CHARMS

Perhaps the most inaccessible love charms that I came across were Munachi charms. These are amulets used by both Quechua and Aymara cultures to enact sexual love spells. One translation of 'Munachi' is 'to cause to love'.

The amulets are used in a simple love spell as follows: two pieces of hair, one from each of the lovers, are either wrapped around the lovers' necks, or doubled and threaded through the little hole in the object and secured by making a larks head knot. I did not get the chance to personally use one of these amulets, but was fortunate to talk to the renowned Kallawaya Edgar Pacheco. He informed me that these particular charms are made out of a stone called pachacha. This must be ritually blessed using the smoke of a plant called Myrocarpus Frondosus (sahumerio). In addition, the charm must be created specifically for the person who will use it; it's no use just buying it off the street.

MYSTICS - TAMARA Y SALVADOR

For a less 'generic' approach to love magic, a mystic named Salvador veers away from the use of talismans and amulets. 'Our work is more personal', he explains,

as he describes the seven-hour bonding ritual between couples that takes place in his practice. Unlike other similar services, Salvador's rituals require love to exist between the couple in some form. His aim is to strengthen the bond between two consenting people, using existing feelings as a catalyst, not capture the love of an unsuspecting soul. The waiting area seems neo-modern and could easily be mistaken for a dentist's waiting room, with a mostly red and white colour scheme (plus Xbox). However, his office itself is filled with drawings of Christ, Buddha, and varying spiritual images. 'I am a deeply spiritual person' he tells us, 'we work with spirits in order to achieve union'. Salvador was kind enough to show us the spirit he uses, Tamara, in the form of an intact, human skull he keeps in the cabinet behind his desk. Mysteriously, he also uses a second, more powerful spirit, the name of which he would not release to us, presumably used for more difficult cases. One thing that stands out about Salvador's work is that it doesn't require the faith of his clients, who simply need to have a ritual performed on their union. When asked about his clientele, Salvador insisted he was in no way lacking customers, something we observed during our visit. In less than half an hour six people turned up at his practice and his phone didn't stop ringing. He has but one condition for his customers: 'If you come and it works, you must recommend me'.

EDGAR PACHECO KALLAWAYA

Kallawaya Edgar Pacheco is one of the most respected medicine men in Bolivia. Even if you ignore the multitude of awards and diplomas hanging on his wall, his mere presence will tell you that through a long life of practice and experience he has gained a true level of expertise. One ritual he mentioned needs to be carried out by the parents of a couple, who after going to the Kallawayas, ask for one item of clothing from each person, used to call their spirits, or **ajayus**. Once the spirits are invoked, then the couple can join in love. Another ritual involves a more interesting case. If a man is in love with a woman but the love is unrequited, then he might opt not to have a ritual to make her fall for him. Instead, the man may wish to take part in a ritual himself to make him forget her. This particular ritual involves a maceration of white rose and carnation, along with a few other ingredients that the Kallawayas could not disclose. ✕

'AMÉ, FUI AMADO, EL SOL ACARICIÓ MI FAZ.
¡VIDA, NADA ME DEBES! ¡VIDA, ESTAMOS EN PAZ!
AMADO NERVO-EN PAZ





divorced and yet continued to cohabit purely for economic reasons.

Even when infidelity is cited as a reason for divorce, as soon as one scratches beneath the surface it's easy to see the situation is really not what it seems. 'Fraudulent evidence is a constant concern', Paredes told me, explaining that many of the individuals who claim for divorce on grounds of infidelity are simply doing so because that is the evidence 'easiest to fake'. In fact,

to take a divorce, and will in fact do all they can to dissuade them if they think it appropriate. 'While we make it possible for people to attain an easy divorce, we absolutely do not motivate them to do so'.

It's apparent the rise of specialised divorce law firms themselves cannot, on their own, explain the divorce figures. Saying that more people are getting divorced because there are more divorce lawyers is like saying more people are

Away from urban areas the situation is remarkably different. David Mendoza, a sociologist, points out how the separation rate in rural areas of the Altiplano is much lower. While no official figures are available, he estimates they are closer to 20%. 'It's very rare for couples to separate and continue living in the same village'. Edgar Pacheco, an indigenous medicine man (kallawayaya) we spoke to, corroborates this perspective. 'When separation takes place, it tends to have to do with the husband leaving the community to work in a faraway location. It's not unheard of for them to find partners in other villages, even other countries'. He adds that kallawayaya comes from the words for medicine (kolla) and wanderer (waya). 'We are nomadic', he says of his people, 'men don't tend to stay in one place for very long'. Mendoza also tells us how social norms in rural areas are much more sententious, punishing acts such as adultery through harsh condemnations and ultimately expulsion from the community. 'It used to be common for adulterers to ritually kill themselves by going up a cliff called Kakapata'. They would take their clothes off, place a traditional piece of cloth over their eyes and jump. 'Suicide has to be blind'.

With Valentines Day around the corner, couples frolicking together in carnivalesque frenzy, hearts on sale at every street corner and love charms for sale to make your passionate crush fall in love with you (see p. 14), it's hard not to get swept away with love and its associated rites. Even President Evo Morales has declared that the next thousand years herald an era 'of peace and love'. But let's not get carried away in this pheromonic haze just yet, to truly understand love we must look at where it no longer exists; where pop that was once fizzy has now gone flat.

Although no official figures exist, according to the International Anglican Family Network (IAFN), 'a stunning 75% of marriages in Bolivia end in divorce, with 73% of these ending in the first two years of marriage'. The Network has responded to this by offering failing marriages counselling and support through the

church in Bolivia. In fact, Anglicans are not the only ones getting worried about the current situation. On their part, the Bolivian Bible Society are employing their full strength to get into churches and supply pastors with the skills and resources to piece back together marriages that are near collapse.

While there's some discrepancy over the exact divorce rate (at the lower end of the spectrum, the Coordinadora de la Mujer claims roughly half of marriages end in divorce), figures are undoubtedly high by international standards. Even estimates for the US, where the divorce rate is infamously high, don't exceed 60%. The Bolivian situation begs the obvious questions: why are rates so high, and what are the implications?

The IAFN have placed the reason of 'absence of social restraint', as the first cause of increasing divorce rates. In fact, they assert 'divorce is now an option to

be considered, even a normal outcome' for any failing marriage. Another argument that is offered, though not directly by the IAFN, is that the apparent ease of divorce now offered by large-scale law firms is actually contributing to the higher divorce rate, and that the ease of divorce is actually causing more people to get divorces.

I spoke to Rigoberto Paredes, one of the top divorce lawyers in La Paz. We had a conversation at the plush offices of division of his law firm aptly marketed as 'Divorcio Fácil'. It turns out that while it may be true that law firms make it 'simple and easy for the client', the divorce process really is a long, arduous and, most importantly, expensive process. The divorce procedure in Bolivia stands out as one of sheer bureaucracy, trapping unsuspecting victims into a legal battle, which can be as vicious as it is onerous. It can take anywhere from 8 months to 5 years, and at least 5,000 bolivianos for

a divorce to become finalised. This would imply that divorce is almost exclusively the privilege of the wealthy, a fact that seemingly calls into question the IANF divorce statistics.

Indeed, there are other reasons to doubt claims by the Episcopal community, which states that a lack of morality in Bolivian society is responsible for an increase in divorce. While a large number of divorce claims are based on infidelity, it's needful to examine other financial and economic reasons. Some examples I discovered include men being forced to leave their families to search for work in remote places, for example as an offshoot of the burgeoning oil or gas industry. As a result, if the man is absent from the household for two years or longer, the wife is within her rights to divorce her husband without even as much of a requirement as him signing the papers. Furthermore, the law firm had several cases in which a couple got

fraudulent evidence doesn't even stop there. Many times, in order to protect his assets, the husband will ask his boss to fake a certificate of pay to claim that he is being paid substantially less than what he actually makes, thereby meaning he loses less in the divorce process.

In keeping with the times, the Rigoberto Paredes law firm have recognised these social and cultural changes. The web portal for Divorcio Fácil allows clients to follow their cases online, without the need of setting foot in the court. They also have agents on-hand to answer questions via chat, as well as a specialised group of psychologists to help through the process. Cynicism aside, Divorcio Fácil really does seem to make the whole thing as fácil as possible. That said, it was repeatedly stressed to me that the firm has a very strong code of ethics and they will absolutely never try to motivate someone

getting murdered because there are more criminal lawyers. These religious organisations' claims and explanations make little sense, and the figures they use to legitimise their campaigns are largely unfounded.

Referring to the above cited figures, Paredes adds that these religious organisations are only proving that they have a distorted view of the family by claiming that divorce is on the rise due to a denigration of morals and the establishment of specialised divorce law firms. What seems more probable is that couples, traditionally conservative in their outlook, are being swayed by the forces of modernity and globalisation, increasingly understanding the contractual aspect to their relationships as precisely that; a mutually consensual agreement that can be broken when its terms have been violated, or when it's no longer in the mutual interest of both parties. ✕



AMOR SIN PASIÓN

AYMARA CONCEPTION OF LOVE

TEXT: DR. BISMARCK PINTO TAPIA, PH.D. COORDINATOR OF THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA BOLIVIANA SAN PABLO.
Translated from the Spanish by Caroline Risacher

PHOTO: AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE

Love is a social construct created by the smallest social unit: the couple. It can be defined as a way of acknowledging the individuality of the other, of accepting and

supporting their happiness.

The scientific study of love began in the last two decades of the twentieth century from the research of social psychologists.

American psychologist, Robert Sternberg looked into the concept of love and based on factual analysis identified three universal components of love: passion, intimacy and commitment.

Passion refers to the erotic pleasure and the romantic relationship; intimacy refers to the ability of the couple of being empathetic towards each other. Finally, commitment entails a contract, which establishes the rules of the relationship, underlying the principle of emotional and sexual exclusivity.

Prior to my investigation, the concept of love and romantic relationships among the Aymara had been studied from anthropological and historical perspectives. The existing bibliography identifies three key influences for this culture: the Incas, the Hispanic colonial domination, and more recently processes related to globalisation.

Using the methodological parameters of Sternberg, I studied the components of love in a group of 435 Aymara university students of the Unidades Académicas Campesinas in Tiwanaku, Pucarani, Batallas and Carmen Pampa; two thirds of the subjects were female and one third male. The results showed the predominance of commitment and intimacy over passion, thereby defining the Aymara romantic bond as being one of companionship and friendship.

From a historical perspective, it is difficult to establish the forms of love in the pre-Hispanic era. A semantic approach shows that the word used to refer to the affection between couples has changed from **waylluna** to **munaña** (to love), a term which was imposed by Hispanic colonisers and which distorts the original meaning of waylluna, which is closer to 'braiding' or 'uniting', and which has evident erotic connotations. The Spanish wanted the Aymara to understand love as a sublime feeling, which came from the chuyma. This philological analysis suggests that the passionate component of love between the Aymara people has been eradicated, both in its erotic and romantic connotations.

The life cycle of the Aymara couple establishes that romantic relations are secondary to the working needs of the family, and even today there are rural communities where parents arrange marriages for their children. The Aymara consider the process of falling in love as a nuisance; insofar as it involves attraction and desire.

Sexual pleasure has been repressed and is avoided as a part of married life in both rural and urban areas.

Marital status is crucial in Aymara society, because people are only recognized as such when they are married. The process of 'becoming a person' (jaqi) follows a complex system of rituals. Four different stages have been identified by Albó: Sart'asiña [proposal]; irpaq'a [engagement announcement]; sirw i skiwa

'The Aymara consider the process of falling in love as a nuisance; insofar as it involves attraction and desire. Sexual pleasure has been repressed and is avoided as a part of married life in both rural and urban areas'

[pre-marital state, which comes from the Spanish servir]; kasarasiña [to get married]. To these four I have added the wayllusiña [to fall in love], which starts the marital life cycle.

An analysis of the life cycle of the Aymara couple necessarily derives from an examination over the situation of the woman subjected to her husband, to her own family and her political family. To create a mature love unit, a childhood history of emotional stability is required. This search of protection and comfort is termed the 'attachment system'. A safe attachment implies seeking refuge with the adult caregiver in response to threats. An insecure attachment causes the need to escape from the person who should be caring for the child, or them developing intense feelings of anxiety regarding separation.

The Aymara way of parenting produces a form of insecure attachment. Considering how the attachment is closely connected to the way loving bonds are established, it is likely that this type of attachment found in Aymara children leads to a fearful attachment in the couple, bringing about distrust and fear of dependency.

Thus, the configuration of the 'companionship' model of love among the Aymara may be a result of the following three factors:

A) Insecure attachment: Raising chil-

dren in the Aymara culture, either in the countryside or in the city, is structured around repressing the mother's affection and tenderness towards her child, compounded by the frequent use of physical punishment.

B) Repression of sexual pleasure: Both the psycholinguistic analysis of the words used to express marital love, and the study of the rites during the life cycle of the couple, demonstrate how little pleasure is valued generally, and sexual pleasure is valued particularly.

C) Aymara Machismo: The levels of passion are lower in women than in men, and they insist less on commitment, which may be associated with the fear of male violence that these women often develop.

Aymara women are victims of abuse perpetrated not only by their spouse, but also by his family. The sirwiñaku is a custom to test the strength of the woman; mother and sisters-in-law seemingly make every effort to make her life impossible, treating her as a maid serving the family. One reason for the migration of young Aymara women into the cities is to escape from the sirwiñaku. As well as this, it's a rejection of the way formal romantic relationships are structured and what this implies: the restriction of freedom.

Aymara society has survived the domination of the Incas, the ignorance and racism of the Spanish conquistadores, the infamous subjugation and discrimination of the imperialist ideology in the 20th Century. Although none of the above managed to destroy the Aymara, in order to overcome them, they had to renounce pleasure and remain stoical. The meaning of life was traditionally focused on the welfare of the community at the expense of the individual; working the fields gave refuge to woes and offered a way of achieving something immediately, in order not to have to face the uncertainty of tomorrow. Aymara pride has remained firm through keeping the past alive, maintaining admiration for their ancestors and respecting nature. However, sensuality was diminished, sexuality became limited to reproduction, romance was censored and amorous passion repressed.

LOVE IN THE ANDES

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE RITES IN THE ALTIPLANO

TEXT: CAROLINE RISACHER
PHOTO: WOLFGANG SCHÜLER

Within the Andean conception of life, getting married follows a higher purpose than simply finding a companion for life. The idea of dating for weeks or years with a series of different partners until you find the right one is not a familiar idea around these parts. The marriage ceremony for indigenous people of the Altiplano is a social ritual in which the whole community takes part. After this rite of passage, the individual is afforded a different status which affects their affairs, on a social and practical level. The Aymara word for marriage, Jaqichasiña, literally means 'the making of a person'. That is to say, personhood is only fully achieved with marriage.

COME TOGETHER

But how do couples find each other in the first place? Large celebrations are organised at key points during the year, in line with the agricultural cycle.

'In rural areas, courtship rites are suffused with humour and even involve occasional acts of mutually consented violence, all part of the game, of course'

These **fiestas** can bring several neighbouring communities together, and revelers spend up to three days dancing, playing music, giving offerings to the Pachamama and, no less importantly, pairing up.

Carnival (celebrated in February) and Todos Santos (All Saints, held in November) are two such occasions in which bachelors and bachelorettes wear their finest clothes, and come together amidst alcohol and ceremonially-sanctioned euphoria. Dr. Henry Stobart recounts how an evening of

'singing and dancing from house to house during All Saints later transformed into a sexual frenzy on the hillsides'. Similar accounts are proffered by sociologist David Mendoza and anthropologist Dr. Eveline Sigl in *Eroticism, Sexuality and Dances in the Altiplano*, where they argue that up to 70% of unions are created during festivities.

Courtship in the Andes may lack passion and romance, as they are commonly understood, yet this doesn't mean it's lacking in eroticism or humour. Ritually speaking, dancing is a way to celebrate and summon the fertility of the earth during the sowing of the field and the harvest. It's no coincidence the reproductive cycle is related to the agricultural cycle, as sexual activity is punctuated by celebrations which mark the planting of the first seeds, and the first harvest months later. In their article, Sigl-

Mendoza document the belief that the singing, dancing and enjoyment of the young couples boost the productivity of the crops. Mendoza tells me that, even empirically, 'there is a marked upsurge of births in November – that is 9 months after Carnival. When people ask who is the father of the baby, some will answer, 'the wawa was brought by the pepino'; a common way of explaining the baby is a carnival lovechild.

EVOLVING INDIGENITIES

The last thirty years saw a change in

the love practices and rituals of the Altiplano, and while arranged marriages can still happen, they are no longer the norm. Neither is the kachua, a rite of passage involving teenagers meeting for their first sexual encounters at Munaypata (a name to denote the 'place of love' in many rural communities, usually a hill. It is also the name of a neighbourhood in La Paz where couples met in decades past). On their part, urban areas which have received an influx of rural migrants have progressively adopted a more Western approach to dating, and limit themselves to re-enacting traditional dances without necessarily taking part in the corresponding rituals associated with courtship and the harvest.

In rural areas however, these courtship rites are suffused with humour and even involve occasional acts of mutually consented violence, all part of the game, of course. They are, perhaps, personified by the figure of Pepino, an Andean version of Arlequin/Pierrot, and emblematic of Carnival in general. Another figure is the 'Cholero', who dances with two women and satirizes adulterous behaviours, as well as the kidnapping of a bride. The characters are lascivious; the Pepino, for example, follows women with his 'chorizo' stick and creates an abundantly sexual, albeit jocular, atmosphere.

PRAGMATISM AND POTATOES

The eroticism of the dances is further expressed in the dance costumes, though not in the way we might imagine. In contrast with Westernised conceptions of sexuality, the showing of flesh is neither common nor eroticized. Sigl-Mendoza believe the attractiveness and desirability of a woman is in no small part based on the quantity and quality of the pollera skirts she is

wearing. The multiple layers represent fertility, and the quality of the patterning of the dresses (presumably made by the woman herself) signal attention to detail and, ultimately, the ability to be a good wife. Again, attraction and compatibility are not based on passion, but on a more pragmatic rationale which has as its core value a spouse's ability to work. As Dr. Canessa puts it: 'There's no point in finding a **guapa** that can't work'. This heightened sexuality surrounding the dances augurs fertility for crops and villagers alike.

Potatoes are central to the economy and metaphysics of communities in the Altiplano – they represent fecundity and sustenance. Mendoza explains that, like potatoes, women are meant to reproduce abundantly. P'itikilla potatoes, famous for their manifold 'eyes', are furthermore used in some villages to test the dexterity and attention to detail of a bride-to-be. It takes considerable skill to peel them without them losing their shape, and doing so with skill is desirable (among other reasons) because it indicates a waste-not attitude. Further parallels can be found between women and potatoes in the Andes: 'some potatoes, which grow into the shape of a woman, are blessed during the first harvest and put back into the ground', Mendoza tells me. Interestingly, while it is men who plough the fields and open up the earth, it is the women who are in charge of planting the seed. That is to say, in this apparent inversion of roles, women are imbued with seminal properties, whereas men prepare the space within which life will germinate.

LOVE CAN BE HARD

As part of the celebration and enjoyment, there is a 'violent' component to the dances, albeit one of a playful nature, which can be understood as a game symbolizing attraction and

desire between the partners. It goes something like this: the man steals a garment from the woman he is interested in, such as a hat or a scarf. If the girl is interested, she can then go and retrieve it reciprocating the attraction. Whatever happens next, happens. They may even run off, disappearing for a couple of days. The man has 'stolen' the woman away.

Upon their return, heads hanging low, they must confront the girl's parents who wait indignantly at her house. The reception involves a combina-



tion of anger, shame, and even physical chastisement of the young man, who must take it as his due. 'It is the role of the bride's parents to beat the young man for taking away their daughter, although the blows may be hard enough, there is no anger behind them', writes sociologist Dr. Andrew Canessa in his book *Intimate Indigenities, Race, Sex, and History in the Small Spaces of Andean Life*. During our interview he adds: 'it's all a bit of a drama, but no-one's acting it out. Everyone knows it's going to happen and no-one is surprised when it does'. It is more of a symbolic gesture meant to establish the balance of power within the family.

However, Mendoza explains how a woman's violent gestures towards a man become part of their sexual repertoire, emphasising the erotic nature of these displays.

LOVE WITHOUT LOVE

These encounters are not romantic nor do they involve passion in the way we are accustomed to. Dr. Canessa provides an account which explains this dynamic: 'Nobody talks about falling in love, there is no discourse of falling in love'. When asked how they met, couples often give a response which can be summarised as: 'He came to me and asked me if I wanted to be with him. And so we were together'. Kissing and physical affection are not common between partners, nor is it present in their accounts of their relationship history. Dr. Canessa also points out that the average age of first sexual intercourse is 4-5 years higher in the Andes than it is in tropical regions, an important and telling difference. In general terms (and although accounts vary in some measure depending on the village), the Andes is not a region which places a high importance on sexuality, nor is it a place where it's openly explored. Referring to his experience in the village of Wila Kjarka, Dr. Canessa explains that 'sex is not a big thing there, certainly not in this community. Of course they do it and they enjoy it, but they don't talk about it at all'. This doesn't exactly

mean they are prudish. Although it's not talked about, 'no-one is embarrassed by the fact it happens. People live in the same room so you'll grow up listening to people having sex, your parents for example. They're quite quiet and happen under the cover. People don't take off their clothes to have sex'.

It's important to understand that the apparent absence of romantic passion doesn't denote a lack of love. Yet, insofar as it can be understood as such, it is a love based on a different, more pragmatic vision of life. The Andean conception of life ultimately values the ability to create a family and work the land. ✕

GETTING TO THE *Heart* OF IT

ANTICUCHOS, THE TRUE HEART OF LA PAZ

TEXT: HAYDEN ALDREDGE
PHOTO: CARLOS SANCHEZ NAVAS

It was late one evening, possibly early in the morning, and I had one single mission: to find some sustenance in order to make bearable the walk to our next destination. As I made my way slowly across Plaza San Pedro, staring up at the daunting façade of the infamous prison, I spotted a flame shooting up on the far corner of the plaza. Moments later, the wind shifted and the telltale fragrance of **anticuchos** wafted around us. The smell, just as much of a part of La Paz at night as orange-tinted street lamps and lonely taxis prowling for fares, was intoxicating. Compelled by the aroma and the sight of the slow-burning charcoal and well-marinated meat, I was instantly drawn towards the flame that I had glimpsed moments earlier. The next thing I knew I was holding up my peanut-sauce-covered finger to ask for one more plate of sliced and skewered cow heart, even before I had finished my first portion. As I shoveled yet another plate of **anticuchos** into my mouth, I began to marvel at the simplicity of this tiny establishment—just one elderly woman, a grill, a small stack of plates, and a bucket full of

‘As I shoveled yet another plate of anticuchos into my mouth, I began to marvel at the simplicity of this tiny establishment—just one elderly woman, a grill, a small stack of plates, and a bucket full of glistening red, thinly sliced cow hearts’

glistening red, thinly sliced cow hearts. I also marvelled at how anticuchos are still as popular today as they have been in their 500-year history. I realized then that there is more of a connection between anticuchos and love than just the literal ‘heart equals love’ relationship that exists in much of the world. There is the love for the anticuchos themselves, a love that virtually all Bolivians will admit exists somewhere in their

own hearts. But even more, theirs is a love for what this dish represents. It is uniquely Andean, and for many people, they are an integral **paceño** tradition.

Anticuchos have been a popular Andean dish since the sixteenth century, in both Peru and Bolivia. They are made up of thinly sliced pieces of cow heart, which are grilled on skewers, and served with potatoes along with a spicy peanut sauce with **ají**. A short walk around La

Paz at night reveals the dish’s enduring popularity—lone women sitting behind grills, on just a few square feet of the sidewalk, set up when the sun goes down, enticing drinkers and late-night revelers with their sizzling and fragrant combination of meat and potatoes. While there are myriad of street-food alternatives throughout the city, anticuchos are brimming with history and cultural significance. Some historians believe the origin of the word ‘anticucho’ comes from the quechua ‘anti-kuchu’ (where ‘anti’ means Andes and ‘kuchu’ means cut, or alternatively ‘uchu’, which means hot paste). It is said

that this dish was brought over from Africa by slaves during the colonial period, and was combined with local and imported ingredients, such as garlic which was brought from Europe by the Spanish conquistadors. The dish responds to the necessity of using unpopular cuts which are otherwise unpalatable or hard to eat, such as the heart. As I started to learn at El Alto Market, it’s telling this dish comes from a culture where nothing goes to waste.

The best anticucho that I tasted came from that **anticuchera** near Plaza San Pedro. She consistently produced the highest-quality anticuchos I could find—moist, succulent meat, cooked perfectly, tender and topped with a hearty amount of peanut **ají**. I returned frequently throughout the following week, and each time I found myself eating more than I thought I would. The meat was perfectly chewy, delicious but not overpowering. The potatoes, always perfectly cooked, warm and soft—and never too small—soaked up the meat juice and the all-important peanut **ají**.

make this dish are true experts of their craft. Possibly the only thing better than actually eating anticuchos is watching how they are made: the anticucheras deftly maneuver the thin slices of meat around, simultaneously making sure the potatoes don’t burn and the fire keeps going. And don’t attempt these at home, readers. By all local accounts, there is no such thing as a good homemade anticucho. They say the secret is in the sauce, which no anticuchera was prepared to share with me.

But while the anticucheras normally

their platters, they depend on the drunkenness of their customers, who might not notice if the meat is overcooked or a little off (I’m looking at you, anticuchera who sets up in front of the club Forum in Sopocachi).

Anticuchos are less of an actual meal and more of an experience: the smell that is instantly recognizable a block away, the quiet expertise of the anticucheras, the sizzle of the meat as the flames gently wrap around them. In the end, it is this experience that



Anticuchos normally cost around six bolivianos per serving—less than a US dollar. With such cheap prices, one might think that the typical **anticuchera** is an unskilled laborer. But the women who

present a great night-time meal, not all anticucheras are equal. Because they are often part and parcel of a drunken night out, some anticucheras don’t depend on skill to sell

outweighs everything. Standing in the dim light of La Paz at night, eating off a plastic-wrapped plate and licking your fingers for extra peanut sauce—it’s all as important as the actual food. ✕

BLIND LOVE

Is blind love truly blind? Selene Pinto sets out to investigate the role physical attractiveness plays in relationships among members of the blind community of La Paz.

Translated From the Spanish
By Caroline Risacher

PHOTO: AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE

‘When the sun shines, he comes close to me and he can see the sparkle in my eyes’, says Fernanda while embracing Franklin.

They are both gradually losing their sight and are almost completely blind. He is 28 years old, works as a civil servant at the Identifications Office. She is 23 years old and intends to study psychology. They met on a Thursday, April 19th 2012 to be precise. On the 22nd of the same month, they already had decided to be in a committed relationship. Since they started going out, Franklin would say jokingly: ‘Marry me! Marry me!’ One day, she mischievously replied with an unexpected ‘yes’. This left her boyfriend silent. Shortly after he went to ask for her hand and they set about planning the wedding which was to take place on December 22nd, 2012, at the Maria Reina Church in Alto Sopocachi.

Everyone told him that Fernanda was pretty and that she had lovely eyes. She was told that Franco, as she affectionately calls him, had the handsome face of a doll. For this blind couple, physical attractiveness has been important in their



relationship, in a similar way it is for the sighted, despite the fact that experts point out that among blind people, falling in love transcends physical attraction. ‘It’s amazing, in this institute people can’t see but they know everything’, says Franklin, telling me how he found out about the physical appearance of his then girlfriend and now wife.

‘It’s fairly common to hear that blind people exchange information and rumours about the physical appearance of others. They care about this, even more than sighted people do’, explains Tito Peñarrieta, a blind singer. He adds that rumours on the beauty of those who are part of blindness support groups spread easily, and can be determining

in whether couples stay together or not.

Psychologist Natalie Guillén explains that physical attraction always matters, even among the blind. The way one perceives oneself —clothes, tidiness, grooming— are elements that communicate your personality traits and have an impact in your daily life, not only in love.

‘Looking good goes beyond visual perception, it is a biologic, social and psychological aspect’, but superficial judgments also exist regarding physical expectations, even for the blind.

According to Carmiña Andrade, coordinator of the Louis Braille Rehabilitation Centre, many blind people opt to



Estanislao ‘El Chatito’ Lazarte Y Lucia Limachi
A Blind Couple Of Musicians In The Prado

form relationships with visually impaired couples, or some other form of disability in order to feel they are understood and not looked down on. Subjects

trigger a deep depression which comes out of the neglect and lack of affection they face, says Carmiña Andrade. ‘You should take into account that it is common for sighted persons to leave their

‘Looking good goes beyond visual perception, it involves biological, social and psychological aspects, yet superficial judgments also exist regarding physical expectations, even for the blind’

I interviewed tell me that the sighted often treat them disrespectfully, hiding them or making them feel worthless. For example, Fernanda said that she’s never had a sighted boyfriend fearing that he would get bored and not want to care for her.

A similar case is the story of the regional director of the Bolivian Institute for Blindness, Edwin Ilaya, who has been married for five years with Marlene, also visually impaired: ‘I was ashamed to be with girls who could see me bump, drop things, make mistakes’. Ultimately, what bothered him the most was the feeling of dependency; sighted people made him feel helpless and were constantly being attentive to him, which he did not like. Marlene genuinely cares: ‘In my life, very few people have cared for me. She did not care about my blindness like other people’.

There are sighted persons like Edwin who can regain control of their lives, but not everybody can; the loss of sight can

can only imagine. Andrade says that they look for a partner based on what they perceive of the other: the voice, demeanour, charisma, etc. Franklin supports this idea by referring to Fernanda saying ‘I love how bubbly she is, the way she talks, how she treats me. If she were pretty and pedantic, I would have told her no...’

In the process of falling in love, other attributes are valued, explains Dr. Bismarck Pinto, Doctor in Psychology and Health. Beyond physical appearance, for blind couples there is a need to feel, to touch the other, draw with the hands on the other’s face. In blindness, the strength of the partner is valued over and above sympathy and pity, which are rejected.

Before Fernanda, Franklin had a relationship with a sighted person. He remembers, with discomfort, that when they argued in the street, she would leave him alone in places he wasn’t familiar with. She would then feel sorry and return to him, but he systematically rejected the support and went where he had to go alone to show her his strength. With Fernanda, the situation is very different: ‘She wouldn’t leave me somewhere, we would both just stand there. If she goes, she would get lost... of course, that’s not in her interest’, he says mockingly.

However, Franklin believes that there is something essential that separates love between the blind and the sighted: the pain of losing their sight. ‘We have both moved forward, we wouldn’t argue and fight over small things as the sighted often do. We’ve been through worse, these things won’t get in the way of us being together. This unites blind couples more strongly’. He adds: ‘plus, we value physical contact more highly because when you hug the one you love, you feel like you’ve known that person all your life.’

In the end, there is a common reality among sighted and blind persons when it comes to love, explains Dr. Pinto: ‘Don’t fall in love with anyone, you fall for the person that you like and that makes you feel good’. He points out that love is a construction between two people who, by deciding on common goals, form a bond for life. It’s a process of discovery, encounters, missed connections and farewells. He adds, ‘a person in love is blind, even if he can see. The one in love is stupid, irrational, crazy’. ✕

AMARTELO

The Love Sickness

TEXT: LUCIANA MOLINA

Whether we've been heart-broken or experienced deep suffering at the loss of a loved one, most of us have been lovesick at some point in our lives. In the Andes we have a name for this malady: amartelo. Amartelo is a state of melancholy that may lead to graver consequences if not dealt with appropriately. I still remember my grandmother telling me stories about children that died of amartelo when one or both parents died or abandoned them for long periods of time. One of her solutions to avoid amartelo was to tie a red lace on one of my wrists so I would not suffer when my parents traveled for long periods of time. Amartelo is a chronic sadness that invades our soul, channeling itself into a feeling of emptiness within the chest. It can keep us from getting up in the mornings yet it perversely keeps us awake at night.

We feel amartelo when someone we love leaves us and we fear or know that they won't be back. We also feel amartelo when we leave, or left behind by our family, friends or land. We may even feel amartelo for the sea (that many Bolivians will never get to see), or remembering idyllic times during our past that may never come back. It presents itself as an interruption of our happiness in our daily lives, and it leaves us with a profound longing. We experience amartelo as an absence which is ever present.

Not long ago, I read an online forum that discussed intercultural medicine in Spain where a case related to amartelo came up. One of the doctors shared their particular experience with a three-year-old child that was sick. The

child, the doctor said, was the son of a South American immigrant and was left behind by his mother for two years until they could be reunited in Spain again. When the child got to Spain, he was sick. He did not want to eat, he did not feel like playing or going to school, and he cried often. The doctor explained that the mother had boiled her own clothes in water, which she later gave to the child to drink, as if by doing so, the child would reunite spiritually with the mother and create the bonding lost after a long absence in the child's life. The doctor explained that the child actually did get better.

Anthropological studies show that amartelo features among the causes of death in accounts from indigenous people of the Altiplano, in both rural and urban areas of Bolivia. In some regions, Khasgo Nanay and Pecho Nanay are names for the types of amartelo that are directly related to sentimental frustrations that lead to chest

'We experience amartelo as an absence which is ever present'

pain, sighs, and lack of air. It is quite common among teenagers. Children are especially vulnerable to amartelo. That is why parents put clothespins or bracelets on their babies, most of which use a seed called Huayruro to protect their young from the love sickness.

Huayruros are seeds that can be found in jewelry or small bottles. My mother used to say that if you leave two Huayruro seeds inside a little box filled with cotton, a little huayrurito would be born shortly after. One female hua-



yuro, red in colour, needs to be placed with a male huayruro, which are both red and black. Put on some music, leave them in privacy and wait a few days to see what happens. 'Una wawa huayrurito!' they will exclaim. Watching this happen makes it easy to believe that this seed has magical and curative powers. For Andean people, huayruros not only represent love and fertility, but also amulets to scare away bad energies in general.

Amartelo may be triggered by many factors. It is the absence of a very deep love that was experienced and somehow vanished, leaving us with the love inside, yet without our loved ones. We can hear amartelo in some wind instruments from the Andes and in popular huayños, a music closely iden-

tified with love maladies. Amartelo is contained in the sound of many sighs, if you listen closely, as well as in the words of Jaime Saenz, in ancient textiles, and many other Andean cultural forms. What's most curious is that expressions of Amartelo can be at once nostalgic and blissful in their approach to life and the spiritual world. Amartelo may begin as an emotional rupture but later break out from our soul, finding its expression in our bodies. One thing is certain: while amartelo is initially experienced as a period of grief, it is said to be followed by a powerful period of rebirth. ✕

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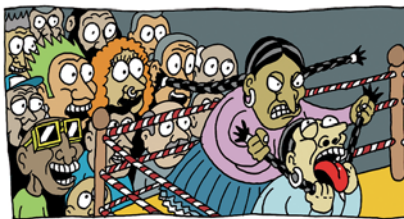
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LET'S JUMP

Translated from the Spanish by Caroline Risacher

The 'Puente de las Americas' (Bridge of the Americas, goes from Plaza Isabel La Católica to Miraflores) is at once a place of suicides and weddings, of love and death. This is the context in which the play 'Let's jump' was presented as a paradox about life, the bridge itself, and especially love. A place charged with emotions, memories, and things forgotten; nostalgia and nightmares, sadness and joy. It's a place of mysteries, of toasts, wedding dresses, tears, contemplation, traffic, Bible verses, of hearts made of stone, kisses, tears and embraces.

Hopes and despairs come together as you walk across the bridge; there is

a sort of tension, mystery, gravity and surprise when it is mentioned. On the puente: two trampolines, next to each other, keeping each other company, evoking love, complicity, irony, contradiction, sleep and pain. Symbolic space, magic space, made of situations, moments, that don't need explanation for **paceños** or description because we understand it, but mainly because we feel it. The work is showed as a moment, an emotion, a fantasy that refers to the appropriate space, to the city as our space, invaded meanings. x

*Juan Fabri
Artist and Anthropology graduate



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