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My hand rests for a second on the door, clamping and quivering, before I push it open and enter the hall. I've wandered past Dr Masterson's group in a nearby room to reach Dr Jamieson's, meeting inside the wide, open hall. I tread carefully across the tiles, attempting to muffle my footsteps as a shrill voice Aries squeaks in the still room. "That's right dear, come and find yourself a seat ~~there~~" she squeals, her mouth ^{smiled with} ~~covered~~ by a shock of red lipstick, ^{as well as} ~~and~~ one tooth. I continue forwards my heart clasped in the grip of one cold hand, its thumping beats echoed throughout my body. I seat myself in the cluster ~~of~~ of women, the legs of the chairs interlocking ~~and~~ like the loose threads of a knitted blanket. Dr Jamieson waffs around from the centre, a trail of coconut following her. "Ladies, this may only be the first session for some of you, so I

want you to stop me if you feel lost" her eyes crinkle kindly as she fixes me with a stare, before hurriedly swiping the hair from her eyes and continuing. "As we talk about your relationships today, we are going to focus on mainly one thing, one thing only, a question." Her finger taps the air, as she places emphasis on her final word. "Who are you?" Her mouth slides over each word, enunciating them perfectly, yet I find myself distracted by a hair wiggling frantically on her chin. "This question" she continues "is fundamental in determining your relationships. ~~It is a term~~ So today is going to be about self empowerment, providing you with the confidence to foster relationships and effectively communicate. We're going to start this session off by talking to the person beside you, ask them questions ladies and consider this question." The woman beside me turns and fixes me

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with a sincere glance from within her
ashen filled eyes. Two small ears
~~had~~ protrude slightly from the
sides of her face like mushrooms,
complimenting the gentle slope
of her nose. "Um... so" she smiles
quickly "could you tell me about
your family?" I respond quickly, my
words bubbling and tumbling over
each other as I ramble. Finishing
I ask hesitantly "and what do
you do for a living?"

"I've, um, well I've been involved in
nursing for a while, maybe 6 years?
It's been quite challenging for me...
well enjoyable, but yes, challenging"
she continues. The chatter of women
around me is ^{like} a flock of birds, before
~~sitting~~ ~~scree~~ Dr Jamieson interrupts
"I hope that you've answered
honestly ladies, as this is a point
of extreme significance and relevant to
the success of your relationships.
Now I know that many of you
have come here today for help
with confidence particularly in

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your romantic relationships. You wish to ~~na~~ nurture an intimate relationship with someone, you seek ~~ways~~ to establish a positive rapport. Much of this will stem from the way you express yourself ladies, by asking questions to engage others in conversation, by being emotive and hedging.

Much of this will come naturally, and do not be discouraged if your man seeks to dominate the conversation, it's in ~~his~~ his nature!

A series of appreciative smiles ripple throughout the group. Dr Jamieson proceeds to pace around the circle, gazing intently at each participant. The smell of coconut sits with me in the room, tattooed to the insides of my nostrils.

"This is so very important" she stresses, "when communicating, so that you can establish that sense of intimacy you desire. I need you to practise this, not with the person beside you, but out in the world, as you harness what I have told

you and utilise it to foster positive relationships. Take this, take note of this, make a mental note to carry with you, these tips on concerning conversation when engaging with a male. You will speak differently, I find that to be overwhelmingly true, but you need to assert your desire for intimacy.

When fostering relationships I also need you to

I guess that is an important point to recognise when examining relationships. Men and women are different."

A door slams outside and the bubbling chatter of the therapy group next door waves past the doorway. "Men and women are different ladies. I am very different in my approach, to Mr Masterson outside. ^{for instance} You are surely all aware[^] of this fact. That man you have your eye on may talk ~~talk~~ mostly about sports, cars and machinery. He may be quite

Confrontational

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in the way he ^{this is generalised I know} communicates... but do not be discouraged by this difference." She holds her hands out exploringly in front of herself, I consider the truth of this statement, my mind turning it over slowly.

"You can even embrace this difference, just remember the important question of who you are and do not let the dominance of males begin to overwhelm and shape who you are. Just as society should not be conditioning you and moulding your identity. It is your responsibility, ~~for~~ no one else can do it but you, you must hold onto your personal ~~face~~ sense of self. It would be irresponsible of you otherwise!"

Her eyes widen dramatically and gaze intently around the room.

"Today's session has been about providing you with the confidence, self awareness and feminine understanding to confront relationships and attain what

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you desire. How is that all sounding ladies?" A ripple of enthusiastic nods and murmurs move throughout the group ^{in unison}. "These are all significant tips that you should remember and truly take to heart and I hope to see you for another session to reaffirm what we were learning today." Dr Jamieson clasps her hands briskly and nods ~~satisfactorily~~ as though satisfied. I scrape my chair back stretching the muscles ~~at the~~ of my legs, the chaotic thumping of my heart was slowed throughout the session, to be instead replaced by a warmth snaking throughout my body. The intimidation I ~~had~~ felt has retreated leaving only comfort in its place. I smile again at the woman next to me, with her ~~a~~ shock of dark hair "that was good" she nods "that was very very good... pretty sure I'll try to make it next time." I murmur my agreement. I tread back across the

hall and I exit the room with a small
but ^{an} more formed understanding of
~~what~~ the answers to my
questions.

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