

Train Man romances Tokyo's computer geeks

October 13 2005

Impoverished computer geeks are becoming hot commodities in Japan these days, thanks to one blockbusting book that originated on a weblog.

Until two years ago, it was one thing to be Bill Gates, who has never shed his geeky demeanor despite being arguably the richest self-made man in the world. For those in awe of the Microsoft founder, Gates' scruffy hair and rumpled suits make him much more credible as an information-technology tycoon and a symbol of his love for all things IT even though he could easily hire a slew of stylists to look as sharp as any Wall Street executive.

But what about the geeks who have never been able to cash in on their knowledge of computers and instead live in their mothers' basements, staring at blinking computer screens into the wee hours?

Miki Iwamoto, for one, would have never even considered such a man as potential dating material. The 32-year-old office worker said that it would have been downright embarrassing to admit to anyone that her boyfriend is into computers and likes spending his free time at Akihabara, the hot spot in central Tokyo for those into the latest high-tech gadgets and all things computers.

"But now, I even go to Akihabara with him from time to time, and I'm actually a bit proud when he can go on about computer stuff in front of my friends," Iwamoto said.

Japan's love affair with geeks took off with the publication of "Densha

Otoko," or "Train Man," in October 2004. Since then, more than 1 million copies have been sold, and it has even been made into a film and television series. The book, however, has no single author. Instead, it is based on the musings of people who had written in after one blogger wrote about his encounter with a woman on a Tokyo commuter train.

The blogger's name is "Train Man," and he writes in to describe how he had to muster up the courage to stop a drunk, disorderly old man from verbally harassing a young woman on the train. The woman thanks him, they exchange addresses, and so the story begins.

The book, however, is not a novel in the conventional sense. Rather, it is simply the compilation of the blog that allegedly appeared on 2 Channel (www.2ch.net), a Web site that allows bloggers to post whatever they like. As a result, the story evolves as Train Man posts the latest development about the woman he meets, and when he finally asks her out to dinner he quickly turns to his cyberspace friends for advice on where to eat.

The postings then evolve into how he should get his hair cut, where he should shop for new clothes, trendy bars that he ought to try ought in advance, and potential topics for discussion during the numerous dates he keeps chatters abreast with.

In short, it describes how a young man in his early 20s with a low-paying job who lives with his parents in suburban Tokyo and is a self-confessed virgin transforms himself into someone more urbane.

According to many women, part of the appeal of Train Man is that he is so subservient and willing to please, unlike many of the financially successful men who have high-flying jobs with snazzy suits to match.

Moreover, Junko Sakai, a commentator who writes frequently about

romantic relationships, said in an interview with Japanese magazine Aera this week that women in their 30s who are still single will be attracted to geeks if they themselves are more willing to be "more like a patron, who wants to nurture a man to her liking," so long as the geek is willing to be like a white canvas and is prepared to adapt to her wants and needs.

Others, however, worry that public attraction to geeks will be short-lived, like any trend, especially if the computer-obsessed men don't buy into the notion of falling in love in the first place.

"All this relationship stuff is just hard work, and it costs too much for too little return. Computers are so much better that way. They will improve according to the amount of time and money spent on them, unlike women," said one frequenter of Akihabara.

Copyright 2005 by United Press International

Citation: Train Man romances Tokyo's computer geeks (2005, October 13) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-10-romances-tokyo-geeks.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--