

Would You F*ck Rebecca?

by Andrew O. Dugas

“Would you fuck Rebecca?”

The question catches me off guard. One minute Sergio is muttering into his scotch about "that bitch Rebecca" and then this, these four words, spat at me. The bar is noisy but there's no mistaking the question.

This is the first time I've seen Sergio in a while. He's just returned from a month-long trip back to Sao Paulo, a long overdue family visit which included his sister's wedding. We've played in the same Saturday pickup soccer game in Golden Gate Park for five years, but we met through Rebecca and Ginny, my then girlfriend, when the three of us were teaching in the same language school.

Sergio is moody, irritable. I'm a little intimidated; I've seen him go to the ground on the soccer field with little instigation. His brow practically crackles with lightning, and I know why. He and Rebecca are in freefall collapse, a drama to which I've had a front-row seat. She stayed home while Sergio went to Brazil alone.

That's the backdrop against which his four-word question, and potential accusation, blurts out.

I sip my beer to buy time. What exactly could he mean, would I fuck Rebecca?

Sergio is Brazilian and his English has zero inflection, so I don't know how to take this question. The possible meanings are innumerable, some of which are very dangerous, as I well know. It's how I make my living. I teach American accent training to high-level executives from India, Asia, and Europe, people whose mastery of the language is excellent, but lacks nuance and subtlety.

Available online at [«http://fictionaut.com/stories/andrew-o-dugas/would-you-fck-rebecca»](http://fictionaut.com/stories/andrew-o-dugas/would-you-fck-rebecca)

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If Sergio were one of my students, we'd do an exercise in which we each hold a rubber band with our thumbs and STRRREEETCH it as we repeat the sentence, each time emphasizing a different word and examining how the meaning changes.

For example, is Sergio asking: WOULD you fuck Rebecca?

With the emphasis on WOULD, the question lends itself to a hypothetical, and therefore fairly safe, interpretation. That is: Do I find Rebecca sufficiently attractive that, with all other considerations removed (such as the fact that she is the girlfriend of one of my best buddies), I would be willing to perform sexual intercourse with her?

Or is he asking: Would YOU fuck Rebecca?

This inflection emphasizes the AGENT, and unmistakably implies accusation. The real question being asked is: Would I betray him, Sergio? Would I, in another sense, fuck him?

See how sketchy this gets? When you walk in multilingual circles, you need to tread carefully. Many years ago, a man broke my nose in a Munich bar after I'd complimented his sister's boots. Just the memory makes me wince and run my finger over the bump in my nose.

The emphasis on the agent also opens up another interpretation, that is: Would I fuck her AS A FAVOR? For example, Rebecca wants sex and Sergio is too tired and doesn't want to fuck her. Would I fuck Rebecca on his BEHALF?

I'm pretty sure that's not what he means.

Does he want to know, would you FUCK Rebecca?

This emphasis on the ACTION generates the least likely interpretation. I am also reminded of a basic language exercise in which you swap in new words to an established construction. I am WALKING down the street. I am JOGGING down the street. I am RUNNING down the street. Would you SEE Rebecca? Would you TELL Rebecca? Would you FUCK Rebecca?

Of all the possible actions I could perform with Rebecca, would FUCKING be among them?

He isn't asking that either.

The last possibility is the most hopeful. Would you fuck REBECCA?

This interpretation sounds even more hypothetical than the first one, the kind of general question bored teenagers ask each other about the girls in homeroom. Would you fuck... SARA JONES? Would you fuck... JANE SMITH?

During the 2007 Academy Awards, a lot of playful sexual innuendo was directed at the sixty-ish Helen Mirren, inspiring my roommate Lili to ask me that same question with the correct inflection. Would you do it with... HELEN MIRREN? She didn't stop there. Every time the camera did a close up on an aging actress, Lili repeated the question. Would you do it with... GOLDIE HAWN? Would you do it with... SUSAN SARANDON?

Sergio is in the middle of his third Scotch and I wonder how to answer. His eyes are glassy but his jaw and temple tense and shift as if fish are schooling just beneath the surface.

The best thing would be to screw the possible interpretations and play it safe. Just say NO. But it doesn't matter. My answer to every interpretation is the same, and I want to scream it out loud.

YES.

YES.

YES.

YES.

Yes, I would. Yes, I have. Yes, I did. Yes I will again.

Rebecca and I made love while you were in Sao Paulo. We were together the entire time. I've been in love with her ever since I met her, when I was still going with Ginny and they wanted me to meet you. The four of us made dinner together, your place on Sixteenth Street with the big old-fashioned stove and pressed tin walls. Rebecca put marinated artichoke hearts in the salad and I fell in love with her.

And she's in love with me and we don't know how to tell you. Two Sundays ago we spent the rainy morning in my bed, wishing you would decide to stay in Sao Paulo, that you wouldn't come back at all, just a phone call asking us to send your stuff, that it would be that easy.

I pull down the rest of my beer and run my finger over the bump in my nose. I swivel to face Sergio.

"YES."

