



THE POP STAR AND HER BILLIONAIRE BOYFRIEND

"Beautiful, mysterious girl seeks good-looking, wise and rich guy. Must love solving riddles."

This was the 13-word personal advertisement that sparked the romance between billionaire Roy Solomon and pop star Sheba.

It appeared last month in the "lonely hearts" section of The Biblical Times newspaper, where men and women hoping to meet the love of their life pay for advertisements describing themselves and their perfect mate.

Solomon was flipping through it when this one caught his eye. So he rang the telephone number listed and arranged a blind date.

And what a date it was. Both, of course, were celebrities in their own right.

Solomon, the head of a business empire, is known for his intelligence and wisdom, with governments, companies and ordinary people seeking his advice on a wide range of issues.

The most famous case was a complicated custody battle in which two women claimed to be the mother of a baby. Solomon suggested they settle it by cutting the baby in half, at which point one said she would give up her claim rather than see the baby hurt. This was something only the real mother would do, said Solomon, and gave the baby to her.

Sheba, on the other hand, has always been something of a mystery. A pop singer with chart-topping hits such as Sheba From The Block, she also acts and has her own perfume and clothing line, although little is known of her past.

When the two met, Sheba knew it would take more than money and good looks to impress her.

"I want to see if he's got brains," she told close friends.

So date after date, she pelted him with questions, brain-teasers and riddles. Each time, he came up with the right answer. He even gave her a few business ideas including one which prompted her to start a line of hair-removal products.

The gossip magazines loved them. Photos of the couple out and about were splashed across the front pages, as were details of their lavish gifts — gold, precious stones and sports cars — to each other.

The press even gave them a name: "Solomon."

But like many modern fairy tales, it had to end. The pair split up when Sheba decided to move back home. A year later, it was revealed that she had given birth to a baby boy. While she has never said who the father is, many in her hometown insist it is Solomon.

BACKGROUND

Christian, Muslim and Jewish holy texts all mention the Queen of Sheba.

For centuries, she stirred the imaginations of artists, writers and poets, who each put their own spin on the story.

Some legends tell of her fondness for riddles, while others credit her with inventing hair-removal products after she once accidentally lifted up her skirt and flashed her hairy legs at Solomon, the king famous for his wisdom.

Muslim texts call her Bilqis, while in Ethiopian myths she is known as Makeda — the mother of the north African nation. Ethiopian folklore says that after she left Solomon, she returned home and gave birth to his son, whose descendants founded the country.

But experts are not sure who the real Sheba was or where she came from. Some think it was Saba, a kingdom in what is now Yemen in the Middle East, and that her trip could have been a trade mission to buy and sell goods.

The mystery, however, just seems to make her more popular.

FAB VOCAB

MYSTERIOUS

With a strange, secret nature or quality

LONELY HEARTS

People who look for friends or mates by placing notices (called personal advertisements) in newspapers or on the Internet

BLIND DATE

An appointment with a stranger which could lead to romance

CELEBRITIES

Famous people

WISDOM

Knowledge and insight

CUSTODY BATTLE

When parents who disagree over who gets to live with and take care of a child take their quarrel to the courts

IMPRESS

To fill someone with admiration

BRAIN-TEASERS

Difficult problems

LAVISH

Very generous or expensive, perhaps too much so

INSIST

To say something is true, usually quite forcefully

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Save Queen Of Sheba

By Louise Moer

The Search For Lost Worlds: An Exploration Of The Lands Of Myth And Legend, Including Atlantis, Sheba, And Avalon

By James Howard Wellard

The Flower Of Sheba

By Doris Orgel