

Rejection

By Stephanie Mark

He was handsome, for men on the website at least: tanned, ash-blond, late forties. He shared my interests in French cuisine, urban fantasy literature, and Steven Soderbergh films. We quibbled about what wine to pair with *salade niçoise*, whether the book or show of *The Magicians* was superior, and the quality of the *Ocean's Eleven* sequels.

He lavished praise on my photos. He complimented my ass, which I prize, my collarbones, which I ignore, and my face, which

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I loathe. He said nothing about the size of my aquiline nose and only positive things about my smile, whose slightly crooked teeth I thought pronounced in even my best picture.

I hesitated before responding to this praise. I worried why a man of this caliber would message me instead of the prettier girls. Men who have been on the site know that women with bigger tits, smaller noses, and straighter teeth will get drinks with them and still charge a price they can afford.

Despite this pervasive and obvious competition, he was eager to meet me. He was earlier than most men in suggesting a restaurant, and even earlier in accepting the price I provided. Thus, right before he asked for my confirmation before making the reservation, I copied and pasted the message I had to send before he sat across from me, drinking his first glass of Chablis.

His first response was more visceral than informative. "Oh." I imagined this spoken by a midwestern parent, stretched to three syllables, the last dropping all the disapproval onto the recipient, which of course followed in the next message. "I didn't know that." He had no way of knowing, except for reading past the third sentence in my profile, which he claimed to find "charming" and "actually witty for a change." Whether as compliment for me or justification for him, he added "I never

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would've guessed." When this last comment reached me, saying I
wasn't what he wanted, I was reading messages from other men.

One such man did read my profile, because he began our
conversation with "damn girl, I'd love to see what that dick
looks like in a pair of panties" with the addendum that "I'm sure
I could fit it all in my mouth."

Here was the man that other girls tell me to avoid. Here was
the man on the lowest rung, beneath not only their interests but
also their time. I'd heard about the panty-sniffers demanding
pictures of my underwear, the neckbeards asking about my sex
toys, the octogenarians hoping I'd type some bawdy poetry.

The short, busty blondes making five figures warned me about
these men. Of course, girls like this I regarded as mortals did
Greek gods: they were paradigms of a form I couldn't attain,
removed from my trifling considerations, able to smite me merely
by showing their true image. But other mortals also warned me.
Girls with large noses and chalky skin and slight busts even said
I shouldn't respond to men like this. They would never respond to
men like this. Even if they would spend months sleeping with cave
trolls, at least those monstrosities paid them before clothes
came off bodies. "I never have to deign to message the
panty-sniffers," one of them told me.

And so, I ignored this man. Those girls said that failure wasn't uncommon, after all.

Soon after I received a message, not from a cave troll or a panty-sniffer, but one of those sophisticated thinkers, a man of letters who wanted every detail about a woman's personality, who with his discriminating palate would send pithy epigrams, which in this case was:

"How big is your dick?"

Although it was hardly the prose of Shakespeare or even Grossman, I preferred blunt fetishism to coy anxiety.

"It's about eight inches." It was close to seven, but he wasn't going to measure.

"And you are able to come?"

"Are you asking if I can orgasm or if I can ejaculate? Because in either case, the answer is yes."

"Do you like women?"

"Yes. With penises and otherwise."

"Well, my wife isn't that exotic, but she's also curious."

"Really?"

"Yeah, I showed her the picture of you. Well, she saw it when I was browsing, and she said you were totally to her taste." This shocked me. Men's taste in women was regularly poor and

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often strange. Women's taste in women, when they even had them,
was exacting. Trying to appease them was like trying to translate
Latin for a teacher who smacked a ruler against their desktop for
every wrong use of the ablative case.

"She's just interested in the physical, so it's not like you
two would do a lot of chatting. But she said you were very
pretty. And then when I told her you were trans, she actually
said 'but she's gorgeous' and also 'I had no idea.'"

"Thanks." Accepting the backhanded compliment was more
effective than recommending literature about transgender
feminism. And besides, after he sent me an image of his short,
slender wife with perky tits and a voluptuous ass, I wanted to
accept any compliment she might provide.

"Is Tuesday night good for us to get drinks, then?" He
delayed after I send the message. This was common for
coordinating plans. Plans require details that one must confirm
rather than preferences one must affirm. After hours passed, I
realized the delay was longer than anticipated. And then came a
response that began with an apology. He apologized, then
apologized for his wife, and then apologized again. "After she
thought about it," he wrote, "she wasn't all right with the trans
thing. The penis is just too weird for her. For a girl I mean.

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So, we won't be able to get drinks. But good luck finding someone
else."

I sighed as I closed the message, pulled down my pants, and
took a picture of what's beneath.

I have to deign to message the panty-sniffer.