

## Match dot Comedy, Match dot Tragedy

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*Take thou some new infection to thy eye,  
And the rank poison of the old will die.*  
--*Romeo and Juliet* Act 1, Scene 2

In late October of 2001, I found myself on the wrong end of a long distance relationship. I had invested a lot of emotional energy into it, and it really disappointed me when the inevitable happened.

One of the many differences between men and women is this. After a breakup, many women say they need to take time off from men for a while. For guys, however, the best way to get over a girl is to find a new one.

I had never tried online dating, but wanted to find a date fast, so I decided to give it a try. I paid the \$25, wrote a profile, posted a picture, and started searching for attractive women. I had some brief email conversations with several of them. One woman seemed very interesting until the topic turned to sex. Out of nowhere, she mentioned something that really turns her off. It just so happens that it really turns me on. So I never wrote her back, despite several more emails asking what had become of me.

Online dating can seem a little harsh to the uninitiated. It's possible to search through people's profiles and only select those with a certain hair or eye color, or eliminate everyone over or under a particular age. It seemed to me to be devoid of the magic that makes chance meetings and real life interactions special. Yet, despite that, it has a certain efficiency to it. If that woman and I had invested emotion, time and energy in one another only to later discover that we were sexually incompatible, it would have been a bad experience for both of us. Online, it hadn't progressed beyond email, so I really hadn't formed a very good idea of who she was. Our little quirks make us who we are. Perhaps it's just stating them at the outset that makes online dating seem so mechanical.

Later, I saw a picture of a girl, Linda, that caught my eye. Her self-description was humorous, and she seemed compatible on some other levels, so I sent her an email. "That's the goofiest picture I've ever seen."

She wrote me back, and we hit it off over email. We'd email and sent instant messages from work. She lived in Seattle, about an hour and a half away. One evening, I called her and we talked for a long time. We decided to meet, and I traveled to Seattle after work one Friday.

I got a room at the Ace Hotel in Belltown. We had arranged to meet at Cyclops, a bar downstairs from the hotel. I checked in to my room, got ready, and went downstairs to Cyclops. I ordered a Martini and stood at the end of the crowded bar. Linda walked in with another stunningly beautiful woman and got a table up front by the window.

She walked over towards me and said, “Your name isn’t Brad, is it?”

“No,” I replied.

“Thank God,” she answered and started to walk away

“Actually, it’s me!” I said as she was just turning around.

“You!” she said and hugged me, laughing.

We walked over to her table, and Linda introduced me to her cousin, who was also her roommate. The three of us had a drink and chatted before Linda sent her cousin away, indicating that she felt comfortable going out with me alone.

We walked up the road to a small Italian restaurant I had discovered several years before. After dinner, we stopped off at a couple of places for drinks before going back to the Ace.

I got the room because I knew we would be out late drinking and I didn’t want to have to drive all the way back to Bellingham. It never crossed my mind that she would spend the night with me, despite the fact that we got along really well. In fact, I was totally unprepared for her to do so.

For about a week, I had suffered from a painful bleeding hemorrhoid, my first. I’d been applying prescription cortisone cream to it for days, but it was no help. I found out later from my doctor that it was making matters worse, since I was apparently allergic to the inert cream containing the medicine. The thing bled so profusely that I had to wear a maxi-pad taped to my underwear.

The Greek gods knew a good joke when they saw one. Linda came inside the hotel to check it out, since she had never seen it before. Of course, that was just an excuse to get up to my room.

We got along really well that evening, and were definitely attracted to one another. So we’re in my room—the last thing in the world I wanted that night—making out on the bed. She started taking off most of her clothes. Then she started removing mine. I was in an untenable position: if I slowed her down, she’d be convinced that I was weird or gay, but if I let things proceed she eventually see that I had a maxi-pad in my underwear. Worse, I was terrified that I would bleed all over the sheets and she’d see it. So I managed to slow things down for a while, but eventually she got on top of me. I feigned fatigue, since it was after 4:00am. It was a real close call.

Of course, I could have simply come out and told her that I had a bleeding hemorrhoid, but it just didn’t sound like something that one says to a woman he just met. Maybe I had a fear of seeming less than virile, but for whatever reason I felt I couldn’t tell her about it.

Mercifully, we fell asleep. The next morning we went to breakfast and then walked up the street to the car so I could drive her home. Things had become even worse, and my hemorrhoid was now so bad that I could barely walk. I was in extreme pain, and was unable to conceal it anymore. I winced as I sat down in the car, and I could see that she was concerned about me.

“Brad, are you OK?” she asked. I was as white as a sheet.

“There’s a lot going on with me at the moment,” I replied, then “I have a terrible hemorrhoid that’s bleeding and extremely painful.”

She laughed and laughed, then I started laughing too and then everything seemed fine. I drove her to her house, and she invited me to come inside and meet her sister. I took one look at the stairs leading up to her house and had to turn her down. They looked like Mt Everest to me in that condition.

Mercifully, I healed that week, and the following weekend I returned to Seattle and we went out again. This time, I stayed at her house. We dated for a month and a half. Every weekend I’d go to Seattle, leaving on Friday and returning early Monday morning. While the match wasn’t perfect, she was a nice girl and we had a lot of fun together.

One evening after we’d been out, we were sitting in her kitchen talking, when she brought up a surprising topic.

“I want you to pee on me,” she said and smiled.

Of course, I’ve heard of people being into urinating as some kind of fetish, but it’s not something that ever occurred to me. It certainly didn’t turn me on, as urinating and sex are totally separate subjects in my mind. I honestly didn’t know what to say, but since we were getting along fairly well, I told her that I’d try to do it for her sometime.

This stayed on my mind for a while, as one can imagine. Does she want me to pee on her in her bed, I wondered? In the bathroom? In the shower?

A few weeks later, she was in the shower one morning and I walked into the bathroom to join her. I had just woken up, and was getting ready to pee before I got in the shower. Or so I thought; Linda spoke to me from behind the shower curtain.

“Wait!” she said, “pee on me in the shower.”

What could I say? I got in the shower and tried to pee on her. It sounds like a simple enough thing to do, but I was surprised at how difficult it was to do, despite the fact that I really had to go. I had to overcome every deeply held instinct and childhood training to be able to do it. Eventually, a little urine dribbled out and onto her leg. She smiled and rubbed it on her body.

I'm open-minded, particularly when it comes to meeting a girlfriend's sexual needs. After all, sex might not be sufficient for a successful relationship, but it is certainly necessary. Nevertheless, I began to view Linda differently, and felt increasingly distant from her.

I had other issues with her as well. She was "in the process of getting a divorce," which is a long-winded term for *married*. Although her soon-to-be ex-husband was in San Francisco, Linda was still married and I'm uncomfortable wasting my time with someone in that situation.

A week later, I was preparing to leave town for Christmas. The night before my flight, I took Linda out for dinner and drinks. We returned to her house about 1:00am and poured ourselves some wine in the kitchen. Then she lit into me with a unexpected and angry tone.

"If you found out I was pregnant, would you be stoked or upset?"

I almost choked on my wine. "*Are* you pregnant?"

"No, but I wonder how you'd feel if I was."

"Well, I wouldn't be stoked if that were the case, I would be upset" I said, while I subconsciously lost all feelings of attraction to her. "We've only known one another a few weeks, you're still married, and it's too soon to even discuss having kids. I think we should slow down."

"The purpose of sex is to make babies," she shot back.

"For some people, maybe" I replied, meaning that I couldn't disagree with her more.

"You bastards always waste my time," she muttered.

At that juncture, I realized that the poor girl was at least learning something. The word *bastards* is plural. Two facts can be inferred from that: she's pulled this sort of stunt before, and she recognized my reaction as being typical and ordinary, indeed predictable.

The discussion ended, and we went to bed. Although she tried to interest me, there was no way I was going to have sex with her. The next morning she apologized on the way to the airport.

But the apology was just tactical. She called me a few days later, very drunk, and went on about how badly she wanted to have kids.

"I'm 35," she said, "if I'm going to have kids I've got to do it now."

I found that to be very sad, because it's the truth. And it's stacked against her. Any man

worthy of fatherhood is going to want to date a woman for quite a while to make sure it's a good match. At the very least, I think it would take a year to really know how things are going to work out. Yet Linda didn't have a year, she needed to get pregnant right away in order to meet her life's goals. The more she pushed the issue, the more guys she scared away.

When I got back to town, she picked me up at the airport and took me straight to her house where she was hosting a birthday party for her twin sisters. Her mother had come up from California to visit. Tactfully, I didn't break up with her then, instead opting to try to have as much fun as I could. Just to be safe, I made sure to drink to the point of impotence..

The next morning, I left as fast as I could, muttering something about being late for coffee with my friend Carl.

At Carl's house, we drank coffee and talked in front of his fireplace. I told him about Linda wanting me to pee on her and have kids right away. Any one of those would have been enough to doom the relationship, but together there was no salvaging anything.

"Should I go back over there and explain it to her or just go on home" I asked.

Carl sipped some coffee, pointed out the window and said, "There's the freeway."

I went home. She called later asking if I wanted to go out on New Year's Eve. I said that I didn't.

"Don't you want to hang out with me?"

"I'm sorry, I don't want to be your boyfriend," I answered with cold-blooded finality. There was nothing else to discuss.

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I went back to match.com and corresponded with a few other women. Another Seattle woman seemed attractive to me, so I set a date.

I drove down and got a window table in the restaurant. After some time had passed, I noticed a woman walking up the sidewalk past my table. She smiled at me, and my heart sank. It was Stephanie, and I knew instantly that I would never find her to be attractive. She wasn't ugly, and there's no single feature that comes to mind about her. I simply did not find her attractive, and there was nothing I could do about it.

We ate dinner, and I hoped that I was able to mask my disappointment. After dinner, we went out to a bar down the street. I didn't want to be rude and end the date immediately, because it would make her feel terrible about herself. So we stayed out for a couple of hours, then I dropped her off at her apartment and drove back to Bellingham.

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My last match.com date was much closer to home. I got an email one afternoon from a woman who had noticed my posting.

There's a traditional notion that men should always make the first move. While I'm as shy as anyone, I've found that I am not attracted to women who make moves on me. There is a very simple explanation for this: if I am attracted to a woman, I will approach her. If I'm not attracted to her, I won't. While I can fantasize about a situation where a beautiful hottie right out of my dreams jumps on me from out of nowhere, real life isn't like that. So what that means is that the pool of women that approach me is made up entirely of women I'm not interested in.

From the very start, Joanne's emails were pushy and therefore not very feminine. Women should make themselves available to men that they like, and that's flattering. Too much forwardness, however, is a complete turn-off.

So, after exchanging a few emails, she asked me to meet her. She didn't have a place in mind, so I suggested we meet at 5:00 at the 3B Tavern, a smoke filled punk rock dive. My intention was to get the meeting over with in the least appealing time, place, and manner I could think of: Happy Hour in a dive bar with \$2 pints.

Unfortunately, when she walked in she knew 3 or 4 other people who were there; it was just her kind of environment. We had a beer and talked. Or, more accurately, she talked. She went on about a variety of mercifully forgotten topics.

After a while, she wanted to go to dinner. I demurred, wanting nothing more than to go home and be done with the evening. But she insisted, and even offered to drive. So I went along with her. She drove a Honda Accord like a teenage boy trying to impress his friends: I have never seen a grown woman drive so dangerously in my life. She played the stereo so loud that it was impossible to have a conversation. On reflection perhaps this was a good thing. We had dinner and she continued talking. I couldn't wait to go home.

I found out later that we had a mutual acquaintance, Jamie. Jamie told me that Joanne didn't want me to know that she had a teen-aged daughter. That confirmed my view of her.

What kind of woman hides the fact that she has a child from someone? I don't care to find out.

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My encounters with Linda, Stephanie, and Joanne would have turned out exactly the same had we first met at, say, the bookstore or through friends. Having said that, I believe that online dating encourages unrealistically high expectations, if only because computers

are literally personal. My computer sits on my desk and does things precisely, in an even, predictable way. Human beings are different, yet when the first impression of a person consists of words on your computer screen, the temptation is to view that person as the product of a perfect calculation. And no one can compete with a fantasy.