

Clitter, Clatter or The Online Date that Went a Little too Well

(about 650 words, about 5 minutes)

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I met Maxie on *Match.com* in 2003. After weeks of e-mailing, we agreed to meet at a bar downtown. I waited forty-five minutes. No Maxie.

Back at home, I checked my answering machine.

"Message one: 'Where the hell are you? You better not have stood me up. Christ, this always happens to me. Bartender. Bartender!'"

"Message two: 'I just drove by your house and the lights are off. You better call with a damn good excuse.'"

Maybe I should have been put off by Maxie's outbursts. But her e-mails had always been a little testy and when it comes to women, I've always had a problem telling passion from pathology. Worse still, I was suffering through a drought and hadn't touched a woman in months. Against my better judgment, I called.

"Guess who?" I asked.

"Where the hell are you?"

"I'm home. What happened to you?"

"I was at the Meridien for thirty frickin' minutes."

Our date had been arranged online and we'd never spoken before. I found her language both titillating and terrifying. I considered hanging up, but worried that I might one day find a dead cat nailed to my door. Then I remembered her photo: auburn hair, black running tights. I pressed on.

"Weren't we supposed to meet at the Tavern on the Charles?" I asked.

Maxie sniffled and paused.

"Are you OK?" I asked, feeling guilty for something I couldn't identify.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "It's been a bad week. Do you want to come by for a beer?"

Maxie opened her door wearing an oversized man's t-shirt that hung from an exposed collarbone to her mid-thighs. She swirled a huge glass of red wine and directed me to the couch. I watched her walk to the kitchen; everything about her was long and toned as advertised. I felt my face flush.

She returned with a beer. As I sipped, she spoke about her ex-husband and her demeanor softened. He had died a year ago, and she was now raising two kids and working full time. She advanced across the cushions, asked why I wasn't married, and brandished a tin of Altoids.

When I hesitated, she asked in a little-girl voice, "Don't you like me?"

"Yeah, you seem like a nice person," I said, retreating to the far corner of the sofa. She advanced some more and leaned in for a kiss. Against my better judgment, I puckered up. Then she bit me on the lip. As I felt the sting of her teeth, the image of a

hooked marlin flashed through my head. A moment later, I had her pinned against the throw pillows.

I looked down at her breasts as they rustled in her t-shirt. Droplets of sweat had collected around her navel. I felt my body flush. I thought about marlins. I thought about dead cats. Then marlins again.

She rubbed me through my pants and flicked my zipper. “Let’s go to my room.”

Maxie shooed two beagles off her bed, relocated an armful of stuffed animals, and pulled back the duvet. We grappled for several minutes and until our legs tangled in the sheets. We jettisoned our clothes until we were down to underwear.

“Wait a minute,” she said.

Maxie rooted around under her pillow and handed me a humming, plastic oval. I hummed around her slick belly and over her hips. I traced my name across the crotch of her panties. Her stomach clenched and relaxed and clenched again. I tugged the elastic to the side and rested my face on her smooth-shaven skin. She smelled like lavender. Her breath deepened, she started to groan, and then I heard the clitter-clatter of beagle feet as the dogs scurried from the room.

They say that animals can sense a coming disaster. They also say that the only safe sex is no sex. Come to think of it, they say a lot of things.

Randy Ross is a writer and story-teller based in Boston.