

When two writers make a wrong

The columnist she met on JDate says the right things, but his hands show he doesn't get it.

By Erin Auerbach

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We sit in the bar at the Palomar Hotel in Westwood. He keeps reaching for my hand. His fingers are smaller than mine. His touch a d v e r t doesn't exactly revile me, but it doesn't arouse me, either.

I don't want to hurt his feelings. I tell him that I wish to take things slowly, and that's the truth. The more he tries to lace his sweaty digits through mine, the more irritated I become.

We met on JDate. We exchanged a few emails and chatted several times on the phone. I liked what he had to say. In his first email, he wrote, "If we click, I would send your father some goats and lambs in exchange for your dowry, with Dijon mustard instead of regular depending on the size of the dowry. I know, all the guys say that to you, but what man would not trade his daughter for the finest quality cold cuts?"

Maybe he tries too hard, but I dig his sense of humor. He suggests we meet for a drink at a swanky joint with a great bar. So despite unpredictable traffic and the 405 in a perpetual state of construction, I schlep from my place in Studio City, allowing an hour to get to the Palomar. I pay the \$11 to valet my car.

I send him a text to announce my early arrival. Then I sit in the lobby, sucking in my thick stomach every time the door opens. When he shows up eight minutes late, he strides up to me and gives me a hug.

We head over to the bar, where he orders a Diet Coke. Why did he request to meet for cocktails if he doesn't drink, I wonder?

Technically, he says all the right things, such as, "I like your curves. You're easy on the eyes and the ears."

His words are meant to reassure me. After years of seeing the look of utter disappointment on my dates' faces — my pudgy physique not matching the promise of my pretty face in profile pictures — I finally filled my dating page with full-body photos. I practically dared the men on JDate to find me attractive.

I can tell this date is sincere. And I wish his words would get me excited. Instead, I find myself drawn to the men who declare that my wit and love of "South Park" are my most endearing qualities. They never say anything nice about my looks, and frankly, I prefer it that way.

My date mistakes my reaction to the sulfates in my Pinot Noir for blushing. "You're such a nice girl," he says four times in the course of an hour.

"Thanks," I reply. I don't tell him that I've slept with people for less than that. In fact, the last man I bedded had never taken me on a date. We met at a mutual hangout in Arcadia and dispensed with the anxiety of preparation. We had several wham, bam encounters.

But I want more than that. And here sits a decent-looking, well-educated man who seems willing to offer the affectionate relationship I seek.

So why am I not into him?

Surely it isn't the fact that he's a conservative columnist. I actually find it quite refreshing to meet someone else in Los Angeles who isn't a complete tree-hugging, earthworm-saving, organic-juicing weenie. I read several of his articles before our date, and while I don't agree with many of his opinions, as a fellow writer, I approve of his technique.

"Since you're such a good girl, I'll let you take the lead," he says. "I won't push you to get physical with me."

That's why I agree to go back to his condo nearby. He guarantees an amazing view. I make it clear that nothing will happen, not even a kiss. He promises to behave.

Back at his high-rise off Wilshire Boulevard, I try to be a good sport when he takes my hand in the elevator. Between the marine layer and the fencing and mesh surrounding the rooftop tennis court, it's impossible to see the amazing skyline he has touted.

"Let me take you in my arms," he says, reaching for me.

Aha! So that's why he wanted to meet for a drink even though he doesn't imbibe. He hopes an evening date — one with no obligation to pay for my meal, or his own parking, since he walked to the hotel — will score him some sex.

I expect more creativity from a writer. And I have never been so anxious to get back on the 405 and head north to my haven in the Valley.

"Well, thanks for the wine," I say, taking a step back.

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