

Sugarfilly

I'm in the last throes of carefully reviewing my Match profile, like you're supposed to do with your SAT answers when you finish early. I tone down all the stuff about my kids, making it seem that I love but can do without them. The rephrasing ensures that both kinds of women will want me—those wanting fathers for their kids, and those wanting one to themselves. I eliminate phrases like *soul mate* and *the woman I'll spend my next quarter century with* so I'll appeal both to those wanting love and those just wanting *it* Thursdays during lunch. I check my photos. Me humorously holding plastic flowers. Me petting a camel in the desert. A well-produced headshot.

My finger's on the button that switches my account to "Everyone Can See You," which reveals my profile, exposing me to tens of thousands of women using Match, but I chicken out temporarily, going instead to my Favorites file. These women, I notice, mostly use the opportunity of their profiles to describe, not themselves, but their *gimmes*—what the man for them should look like, be like, think like, dress like, sometimes even smell like. Most seem to want Richard Gere lookalikes into whom Frankenstein's surgeon has transplanted Albert Einstein's

brain, Bill Gates's affinity for making money, Billy Crystal's sense of humor, Fred Astaire's dancing prowess and Valentino's bedside manner.

I linger over a widow, wondering if she'll be less jaded, unlikely to complain about her dearly departed ex, not triggering me doing the same about my live one. Then a beautiful thirty-two-year-old divorcee who describes her desire for children with such biological urgency that each passing second seems to cut as it ticks. I know I'll have to reverse my vasectomy for her, not to mention put up again with little kids.

I notice that the prettier they are, the more willing I am to overlook telltale signs of them being difficult or incompatible with my tastes. Can't write? Can't spell? Thinks the *New York Post* qualifies as reading material? No matter if you're hot. I'm considering a beautiful woman with messed blond hair broadly smiling from atop a rock by a cool mountain lake, although she begins every sentence with some variation of "And you also better be . . . or don't contact me." Heh, maybe she's just recovering from a string of bad dates.

Then I notice a woman I moved to Favorites a few days ago, one calling herself "Sugarfilly" whose pictures show her draped across the Metropolitan Museum's steps, her slinky, high black-leather boots

disappearing into the tiny area that's all that her short red miniskirt leaves to the imagination. She says she's younger than the forty she's checked off. A self-described "former model" returning from "running with horses in Arizona," her "burrs," according to her personal statement, needing some gentle but firm "combing" by "sophisticated, sensitive back-East hands."

It's too much for me. Faster than Angelina Jolie's *first* donned his condom when she gave him the high sign, I click "Everyone Can See You," making myself visible, taking this guy with a blank domino profile out for a spin. Then I wait for my little envelope icon signifying incoming messages to light up like a telethon phone bank.

But nothing happens.

I decide to search for myself to make sure I'm "Visible."

I search as a "Woman Seeking Men" between "53" and "53," between "5'6" and "5'6," within five miles of "06840." *Presto chango*, there's me, plus the competition, a bunch of much more virile-looking guys. I shut the search down, feeling inadequate.

With nothing happening, I decide to take the bull by the horns.

“Hey, Sugarfilly,” I type, but only after deleting, because she doesn’t seem to be the motherly kind, the reference in my profile to my three teenage daughters, and increasing my height, which, in fairness, I compensate for by slightly reducing my age.

“Can’t believe I haven’t run into a beauty like you at The Sanctuary,” I write, referring to Phoenix’s most expensive spa. This hopefully libido-luring sentence is designed to convey that I’ve got good taste, love travel and have the checkbook to support both—a pheromonic trifecta.

The longer my self-described burr-picker-seeker doesn’t answer, the more her image haunts me, her silence becoming an unremitting ache. I seek relief by writing to perhaps more appropriate women closer to my age, around my height, some once married, others presently separated, many with children, even teenagers. I approach those “Active Within 24 Hours,” a sign the Help section says means she’s actively looking, hasn’t given up. The silence continues, the passage of time amplifying pain.

Sugarfilly shocks me with an answer. Her name is Christina. She likes my profile and will contact me in a few days when she arrives in New York. I thank her and tell her to let me know when. On the strength

of all this, I introduce her to relatives and friends, showing them her sexy pictures, her classy web profile, her promising note.

It's been exactly a week since I heard from Sugarfilly. I'm doing everything I can to keep from checking every minute for an email from her, for something announcing her arrival or explaining her silence or delay. To distract myself, I unpack, unwrap, assemble, hang and distribute everything I bought at Bed Bath & Beyond. This self-imposed delay in checking for her email feels like holding off an orgasm.

But every time I break down and check, there's nothing. So much time passes and so much nothing happens that I'm now avoiding embarrassing questions from people I'd assured that Sugarfilly would soon be dangling from my arm.

Worse, I'm tortured by a void she's left. We've already hugged together many nights in my dreams. And her accepting presence has filled my otherwise empty afternoons. No longer able to conjure her up, I'm left with pain far less imaginary than the person who's disappeared.

To break out, I decide to be even more particular, to write earnestly and attentively, and to freely rebrand myself. I parse women's profiles for

their interests that I can say or make believe we share—the same *place* we vacationed, the same *book* we read, the same *profession* we worked in—pretenses for saying they look hot and that I hope we can meet.

I invite the blond-haired, blue-eyed basketball aficionado to a New York Knicks game to which I don't yet have tickets. I expound about current authors I haven't read—Wallace, DeLillo, Foer, Hazzard, Didion—to the beautiful avid reader. With stories of places like Patagonia, where I've never been, I romance the Connecticut headhunter who loves traveling.

I'm Cyrano de Bergerac fronting for myself.