

Minor Mensch

Volume 1, Chapter 27

Qualities of a Future Girlfriend

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Sunday, August 13, 2006 at 3:18 p.m.

Zoë and I just invented a serious piece of culinary magic: cherry bombs. This is the name I gave to our invention of dough (Bisquick, egg whites, and protein powder) wrapped around a pair of mashed-together cherries (which we ran down to the orchard to pick).

They're in the oven at the moment. And in a few more moments, they'll be in my mouth. And in Zoë's too, but I bet a lot more of them will arrive in mine.

Until then (until the cherry bombs arrive in my mouth), I'm thinking about my future girlfriend.

I'm not thinking about the girl herself (or himself if it's Orlando Bloom), as I have no real prospects. Instead, I'm thinking about the qualities I hope my eventual prospect will possess.

This thought was partly inspired by a questionnaire that bolded itself in my inbox this morning. One of its questions was this:

What are the physical and emotional characteristics you look for in a man or a woman?

As far as I know, I'm heterosexual. So if I were to list qualities of a partner-able man, they would be these:

Feminine facial features, a tiny penis, erectile dysfunction.

If it has to go in my mouth, I'd rather it be small and lifeless so I could chew on it like I do spatulas.

If I'm evaluating qualities in a woman, the list gains a bit of detail.

I'm twenty-five now – less than a month until my birthday – so the clock's tick is becoming increasingly audible.

At this point, every time I see a female – it doesn't matter who it is; age twelve to fifty – I look at her appraisingly. I wonder if she could be a mate.

Perhaps not immediately (in the case of the tweens and teens), but should I consider reserving them? Investing as though they're government bonds, waiting to mature? Tuck my savings away and don't expect to touch it for a few years?

Or, if the prospect is already mature, does she become one of those late night infomercials: "buy now!" How much time do I really have here?

If I wait long enough, every woman I know will be married. And each time one of them leaps into that fate, I feel like another candidate has been eliminated from the pool.

So maybe it's time to come up with a spousal rubric. Something to help with my evaluations.

Since I'm writing this to the smell of cherry bombs, and I'm really hungry, I'm thinking about my future girlfriend in terms of groceries. And I thought of a great analogy, which likened an ideal spouse to a really good cheese.... but before I finished the point, every reader would think something like "she's really stinky? She's rotten and smells terrible?" So I decided that I wouldn't even begin the analogy. Instead, I'll just make a list of qualities. All of the qualities I hope to see in a future partner (who is a woman). This is the list (in descending order of importance):

1. Be really, really talented at something. Or kind of good, but determined to be really, really talented and going about it the right way.
2. Be smarter than I am in cultural things (e.g., know a lot of history or speak a bunch of languages... something like that).
3. Giggle a lot because my jokes are fucking hilarious and she recognizes that.
4. Never giggle at the wrong times.
5. Lack the ability to have temper tantrums or rage-based anything.

6. Either already have at least twenty million dollars or have as little care for money as I do.
7. Have better hygiene than I have (this is not hard).
8. Be able to say interesting things when she interrupts me.
9. A mild psychiatric disorder (or two) is okay as long as she doesn't blow kisses at herself in the mirror or practice boxing alone, jabbing and upper-cutting the air.
10. Not have a painfully stupid family (composed of people who think physical humor is funny) that I have to pretend to respect at dinner tables.
11. Not be personally offended by anything I say, like if I say something true about her evangelical (or otherwise ridiculous) family members.
12. Stand at a height that's roughly equal to mine (sometimes my back hurts and I don't want to have to bend over to do things with her).
13. Have no obvious physical handicaps. (This includes having all of the components of a regular human being, but no more than that. A normal amount of limbs and fingers, etc.)
14. Have a sweet ass.

"You haven't said anything about looks!"

Whoa, reader. I wasn't even finished. I was like half done. But I can't keep going now. You've ruined my momentum.

"Well were you going to say anything about looks?"

I already did, didn't I? At the bottom (i.e., the tail end; these are both unfunny puns) of the list. There's a whole entry about having a sweet ass.

"That's not *looks*."

Maybe not completely, but it's a component of looks.

"Were you going to say anything about looks *completely*?"

Probably not.

“I cannot be made to believe that looks aren’t important to you.”

Okay, journal heckler, here’s the thing: the y-chromosomal American Dream (Y-CAD) asks only for the trappings of ludicrous wealth and access to dazzling breeding stock (at least one wife who makes child-bearing hips look gorgeous).

While I’m sure this is appealing to most men, most men also do things like wash their cars. And I’m not interested in either (Y-CAD or carwashes). I’m a Courtney (as I have expressly communicated since entry one). And as a Courtney, I realize that the problem with dazzling is that it would need to be affixed to a good personality. When it isn’t, it comes packaged with outrageous conceit. And that just isn’t attractive to me.

So if I made stipulations about looks, I’d have to make sub-stipulations about personality. And I don’t feel like getting that technical. Plus, it would start to be a pretty exclusive list for a guy who already doesn’t have any prospects, so... that’s why.

But the physical qualities I did mention are important. Starting with height. It’s not a matter of her being attractive or not. Midgets and people with hyperactive pituitary glands can be beautiful, but it’d be hard for me to have a conversation with either. I’d have a hard time talking to a 5’1” girl and not feeling like her pharmacist. Likewise, if she’s too much over six feet, I’d start to feel cheated when our conversations didn’t end with *me* receiving a bottle of pills.

And, while having a sweet ass may be the lowest round on the totem pole, it’s important enough to merit me having learned “you have a sweet ass” in five languages (Japanese, Russian, Czech, Italian, and my native tongue).

Opposite that, at the pole’s highest round¹, is the part about being talented at something. It’s not because I find talent sexually attractive (although I sort of do). I just hate people without hobbies. I’m almost never interested in the hobbies themselves; it’s purely a matter of priorities.

¹ I realize ranking qualities in a numbered column doesn’t really describe the discrepancies of importance. It’s not interval or ratio data here; it’s ordinal. The order matters, but there’s no way of knowing the magnitude of the differences between values. But you should know that this one – the talent thing – is at least twice as important as its runner up. And the bottom half of the list is in a seven-way tie.

People who aren't good at anything don't prioritize anything that highly in their lives. And thus they don't dedicate the requisite hours to the development of any skills.

This leaves them with a lot of free time and nothing to fill it. So they inevitably become a vacuum for my attention. And this is a formula for a timely divorce. More of a recipe than a formula. It's the standard Betty Crocker recipe; totally basic and employed by millions and millions of people.

And I have no intention of Betty Crockerizing myself into a bitter, lonely adulthood.

Furthermore, the thing she's really good at can't be work. That's just being a workaholic. And workaholics cheat on their spouses. All of them do. Or if they don't (they do), they're cheated *on*. Either way, cheating will absolutely take place.

Contrarily, someone who's really good at some sort of non-vocational hobby obviously has an incredible capacity to appreciate things and has endurance enough to make that appreciation last.

With all that enduring appreciation, and no annoying vacuum properties, this is a much more delicate recipe. It's hard to find, but I could easily nibble away on that dish for the rest of my life (the cherry bombs of human intimacy).

Especially if the hobby is something like ballet. It's possible that all I need in life is a ballerina. Someone with perfect grace that I can pretend to be graceful with. She'll be like a female Baryshnikov and I'll be a male Helen Keller, but I'll pretend to be more graceful than that. And all the while, life would be perfect. And we could dance around the living room in the fall as the leaves are turning. And I could say things like "oh I'm sorry!" every time I mess up. And she'll smile.

That might be a perfect life. But for now, I'm just looking for someone with a hobby.

The hobby can't be photography though. Every girl with a MySpace account² thinks of herself as a photographer.

You know what, every girl on MySpace? I've seen your pictures. They're all of yourself on vacation (Vegas, Disneyland, Hawaii, etc.) holding your camera at arm's length.

² Or whatever future site future girls use to list their hobbies to people who don't care.

If I have a good view of your antecubital region, that's not photography.³ And whatever it *is* cannot be counted as a hobby.

The development of MySpace created way too many "photographers" and every single one of them laughs at the wrong times (exclusionary criterion appearing fourth on the list).

When people do this, they're usually trying to appease me, assuming I'm gullible enough to believe it... which is just insulting.

Or, much worse than complimentary laughter, these giggling girls are trying to convince the world that an unrealistically good time is being had (god forbid you're merely have a decent time). This is sad. And I don't want a sad spouse.

I want a charming spouse. Kindness (and its compliments) can be faked. Charm cannot. So don't try to be nice to me with a bunch of deliberate laughing. I'm looking for charm.

And now the oven is beeping, which means... the cherry bombs are ready!

I'm off to eat.

(Criterion 15: I want a wife who will bake cherry bombs with me. And then ingest them to the point of self-loathing.)

³ Unless you can tell me all about focal length and shutter speed and metering and reciprocity and aperture and the f-number ("f-stop" for the trendier class). And you have to know who Ansel Adams is (and Edward Weston and Galen Rowell, etc.). And if you're pretending what you're doing is portraiture, you have to be able to tell me the differences between key lights, fill lights, and accent lights (and maybe snoots, barn doors, and gobos). I know what you're doing isn't photojournalistic (otherwise you'd know who Henri Cartier-Bresson is). You haven't been commissioned as an architectural photographer. And what you're doing definitely isn't forensic. Let's be honest: you know nothing about cameras and what they do. The world would be a better place if you subscribed to the "cameras steal your soul" belief.