

JUMPY JEWISH FEMALE SEEKS...

Word Count: 3060 words

1. Good Dancer

Let's say you are a Jewish female who measures 5'10" like me and you decide to respond to the handsome man on JDATE even though only the top half of his face is showing, because you like his sense of humor, as he writes, *I wish I had longer arms to take this photo with*. Let's say you respond even though he has a dangling preposition. Know that no matter how beautiful and wise you are, you will need to wear ballet flats on every date since he says he will only date someone at least three inches shorter than his 5' 11" trim/fit self. Trust me, he is no more than 5'8" tall. You can surmise this from the too-short arms, which guarantees too-short legs.

But here's the good news: Zappoes is having a sale on stylish ballet flats, but please do not get the red shiny patent ones as you'll end up looking like a Dorothy-wanna-be, when you should be trying for an artsy writer's slouch to vouch-safe Mr. Short-Arms' fantasy that he is as tall as he claims. If you refuse to stoop to buying flats for the first encounter, then plan to arrive early, stay firmly planted on an agreed-upon park bench, cover your legs with a lovely cape, and do not even suggest a walk, as your floor-to-ceiling legs will surely out-stride his, and this would thus be your first and last date.

And if he comments that you look tall even sitting down, you must resist remarking lightheartedly that you were once even taller prior to the bone loss that whittles down even the fittest of women over fifty, as he would then know you lied about your age to him on that first secure JMail exchange. And that would be a shame, as he is the only guy on JDate whose profile says he regularly ballroom dances.

So remember: no standing or quipping on this first encounter. Unless, of course, he brings his mother or his therapist into the conversation; i.e. he says he will only be staying for nineteen minutes as his therapist told him anything more than twenty minutes in duration for a first meeting will surely make his anxiety attack him. Or: his mother picked you for his first date since according to the JDATE personality test, you have a BLUE temperament, which means your dominant trait is unconditional compassion for the downtrodden. Then, no matter how blue his eyes, no matter how sexy his salsa, you must immediately rise up from the park bench and run, yes, run toward a muscular tree, extend your exceedingly long arms, (arms you daresay your mother used to call upon to reach for the high holiday dishes stored on the top shelf), wrap those arms around that brawny tree-trunk, and begin belting out your best rendition of *Shall We Dance? Shall We Dance? Shall We Dance?*

2. The Moisture Factor

Okay. So admit it. You haven't lied about your age to only one guy. You have lied to "Everyman" in the virtual dating universe. That makes 1021 men in one week you have lied to. You are a woman of integrity, schooled on *Sayings of the Fathers* and truth telling. But the grim truth is this: If you are over fifty, you must *lie downward* about your age because everyman, even men in their sixties and seventies, distinguished silver or dull grey, totally bald or semi-circularly bald, potent-on-his-own or with-the-help-of-his-prescription—wants the moisture factor of the 20-49 year-old gal. So if you are a woman no longer of an age where moisture is part of the vocabulary of your lower parts, before you even go onto JDate, cast your line into *Plenty of Fish*, or, if you went to the right school, dig in to *The Right Stuff*, you had better get yourself to your OB/GYN who is perhaps the only one, other than yourself, who's been visiting your cave of delight for some time.

Your dear Dr. Shoyenberg, the man who has archeologically explored your every Golan hill and valley for over thirty-five years, considers himself a success with every woman who spreads her legs before him if he makes the woman laugh even as

he inserts his bristled broom to scrape the thinning walls of her sanctuary. In return, he will hopefully, in two weeks time, have one of his seven secretaries write a form letter to say something breezy like, *nothing noteworthy down there, so see you in a year*. However, a phone call, instead of a form letter, means: *no laughing matter*.

Today, Dr. Shoyenberg makes you chuckle with this one:

This morning a new patient says to me, 'I would never go to a doctor who cracked jokes while performing an internal exam. To me, that is just not a real doctor.' I answer, 'Well I have good news and bad; the bad news is that I always crack jokes during my exams. The good news is I am not a real doctor.'

Dr. Shoyenberg is the only man allowed to swirl his jellied fingers inside of you while at the same time telling dumb jokes, and yet you realize, with not a small amount of embarrassment, that this dumb-joke technique works brilliantly to open the doors to your locked-down unit without so much as a creak. You would never stand for this practice from a lover. Or maybe you would. So many long-held beliefs now up for grabs.

To make the scene even more surreal, as you are lying there, legs spread, feet straddled in the stirrups, bottom *scooted down* as directed, the young, surely-very-moist-female-first-year medical student stands by, straight-faced, googling one word at a time of your working diagnosis: first *acute*, then *vaginal*, and finally, *atrophy*, which she first types in as *a trophy*.

3. Treatment for A-Cute-Trophy-Widow Syndrome

Your reward for undergoing the humiliating visit to Dr. Shoyenberg, in which he has diagnosed you, in his inimitable fashion, with *a-cute-trophy-widow syndrome*, is, that you get to slather very emollient estrogen creams, gels, essences and oils, in, around, over and through, which not only make you feel appreciably younger, but which, in

fact, inspire you to spend several weeks getting reacquainted with the concept, not to mention the kinesthetic memory, of moisture, which makes you want to touch yourself more and more, which you do with gusto, which reminds you of how good it felt to be touched by your beloved, which makes you have to figure out how to keep the pleasurable memory of his hand, his mouth, his member between your legs, without focusing on the absence of his heat, an absence that makes you stop to contemplate exactly what happens to us when we die, i.e. can we still see and hear the earthly ones we left behind and do we judge them? Put another way: does your dead beloved feel helpless when he hears you longing for him? Does he long to hold you as you long to hold him? Does he approve of how you are using your precious time on earth?

Now that you have slathered your inner sanctum with salves that have successfully re-booted your moisture factor, and you have lied about your age so you are five years younger, and you have claimed yourself to be an occasional drinker, (there is no category for Manischewitz on Passover only), all for the purpose of finding a *nice Jewish boy*, what about the fact that the word *widow* still insists itself onto your profile page, and though you are not ashamed of that title, every time you review your page and see the word, *widow*, you think of how your hip bone fit so fine alongside his, or you think of how your hip accidentally bumped into his stiff elbow that stuck out through the metal side bars of the rented hospital bed hours after his breath left his body, how his elbow felt like paper Mache.

On the other hand, you are stunned when someone messages you as if the word *widow* was not there at all, like the latest IM from a guy with stunning green eyes and a full head of dark-dark hair, that reads, *hello there miss*, with not a dot of punctuation. You haven't been a Miss since Gloria Steinem made a hit at your college campus. Yet here you are, ashamed that you feel even a moment of pleasure, as if you were an innocent again. You move the message into the folder marked trash, though you are not ready to press the button on Mr. Green Eyes, and all the other

338 un-matching matches—the button marked *delete forever*. You just couldn't bear one more loss, even if it is only a virtual one.

4. Dogs, Birds, Fish Or Men

You get to thinking maybe it would be easier to go the route of the rescue shelter to find a feline friend. You have recently discovered that hairless cats, though ugly, make the best heating pads, as if their lithe bodies are eternally turned up to *high*. Or even a dog might do, though you have never owned any pet at all, as your Jewish eastern European upbringing taught you: *Jews just don't do pets*. No consumer animals, period. You are sure it would be comforting, if not downright therapeutic, as research has proven, to spend your free time petting a feline or canine, having him heat up your lap, provided he is house-trained, rather than using your time to seek out a man who may or may not be. Plus, you could just leave the furry thing at home when you go alone to the movies, instead of having to negotiate, compromise on the kind of movie (thriller vs. chic flick) and how close or far from the screen you will sit, or whether you want to sit together at all. This could occur if the guy is as claustrophobic as you, and thus would also require an aisle seat.

And maybe a dog or cat is the best option because you are still mini-traumatized by the night you drove almost an hour to the nice Jewish guy's house because you had gotten to know him well enough to trust that this would be safe. His kids were away for the weekend, not a great sign, in your judgment, that they all still live at home even though they are in their twenties, but you tend to be judgmental about these things and have sworn to overcome such judgments. So, there you were, having driven a good sixty minutes because you wanted to show fairness, as he had made the drive to your neck of the woods more than once, and because he had offered to cook a special dinner. He had even asked you beforehand if you liked wine sauces, and you felt free to say that you couldn't have wine sauces, *doctor's orders*, and then he had even proceeded to ask about sautéed-in-butter spinach as the recipe called for it, and you had said you'd rather not, as you simply hate spinach, and you asked

sweetly for the fish to be served just plain, with maybe a few green beans, if he had any around.

But when you got to his house you detected no scent of anything at all wafting from the kitchen and you saw only a three-bite-sized square, not a triangle, of Brie, and some unsalted Carr crackers on the otherwise empty dining table. Also, since the house felt airless and you are claustrophobic, you tried to unobtrusively open a window, but he insisted on opening it himself. You accepted the offer, but realized he had not noted that the storm window behind the sash window was still closed. You said this. He disagreed. Really. He did. Said the storm window couldn't possibly be down because it is July. You realized you might just pass out right there on the dining room floor. Maybe then he would turn on the central air he proudly said he'd been saving for a hotter day.

After the storm and stress over the window, (he did eventually open the storm), you were given a grand tour of the place; you entered each grown child's bedroom with their faded rumpled pink or blue blankets, and finally, the bedroom he had shared with his wife who left him with the beds and the kids and the dirty towels and the swimming lessons to pay for. And you realized maybe he was hoping you'd say what the movie starlet of the 1950's would say, *Oh yes, dessert before dinner*, or maybe *dessert instead of dinner*.

But you were really hungry, for real food, having not eaten since breakfast, so as to stay svelte as a sixteen-year-old, instead of the sixty-year-old you have somehow become. So even though dozens of ant-killer tins lined the kitchen counters, (in fact he had bought you a package for your house as well, hearing that you shared this problem), when he offered to defrost the two burger patties, though they were not organic, and though they were so very skinny, you assented.

To be fair, the guy was willing to engage in a *processing conversation* by phone a week later, in which you asked what the deal had been that night, why he had failed

to prepare dinner before you arrived. You don't even mention how weird it was that he had offered to open the family-sized package of raw chicken, even though he told you he had bought those items for the next night's July 4th dinner he would be hosting with his kids for his ex-wife and his mother. After a long silence he answered that he supposed he had wanted you to want the special dinner with the expensive wine-sauce and braised spinach, just as the recipe had called for, and since you didn't want that, he felt maybe *disappointed* or more accurately, *mad*, and this was his way of acting when he was mad or disappointed and couldn't say so. And though this was laudable, his willingness to consider his own feelings and actions, you decided it is preferable (you can't believe you are thinking this) if a man doesn't reveal his feelings, at least if they are in any way negative ones. That way you are free to imagine, to project onto him feelings and thoughts that you would prefer him to have. You once bought yourself a greeting card with cover that shows a young woman sitting across from an old gypsy who is looking into a crystal ball. The gypsy says, *at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning all the women in the world will ask all the men in the world what they are feeling.* When you open the card and the gypsy continues: *And at 8:35 a.m. on that same Tuesday morning, all the women in the world will be sorry they asked.*

And on that same storm-window, ant-killer night, you had decided that despite the dinner debacle, since you had traveled such a long way and didn't want to drive back home without some pleasure under your belt, that you would finish the night off with a movie called *The Beginners*, ostensibly about an older gay guy who comes out to his son. So you go, the two of you, in separate cars, since the movie is on your way back home, and you pay your own way, so as not to have him mistake it for a date, in other words, so as not to be expected to pay in other ways. Even at sixty, you can still taste the tasteless expressions that boys used in high school about girls who didn't or did *put out*. Either way, the girl was metaphorically screwed.

So there you are, sitting in the middle of a row that is located very close to the screen. First, you can't believe you are not having a panic attack from this. Second,

this makes you think of how your dead beloved had trained you to sit very far back from the screen (you never asked why), on a row with an aisle seat available for him, and preferably an empty seat in front of each of you, so that both of you would have an unobstructed view. And to guarantee this, you would put your coats on the seats in front of you to keep them forever vacant. But this is not your dead beloved sitting next to you, just as this not a movie about a gay guy coming out. It is a movie about a sixty-something-year old man, who happens to look very much like your dead beloved, who happens to also have found true love, and who happens to be dying. You see the very tall (like your dead beloved), grey-haired, (you guessed it), protagonist look on, as his rented hospital bed gets wheeled into his living room, and in your mind you hear the ready wry comment that your darling had made when he returned from the hospital and saw the new bed in your living room and two lazy-boys in the bedroom for future nurses: *Wow. Amazing. You've succeeded in making the house look like a furniture store.*

Then you watch the protagonist don his oxygen mask and you become not only breathless, but incredibly jumpy; so you say to your male friend, *I gotta get outa here*, and you scuttle across six sets of knees to get out of the row, out of the theater and you start sobbing. Your friend runs after you, even though, since you have come in separate cars, he could have stayed, but not really.

He follows you out through the heavy glass doors into the night air and down the street and asks if you wanted to sit on a bench, and you say *okay*, and he asks if he can kiss you, and you *no, not at all*. You can't believe that he can't see grief entering your body as if through a full-time-feeding-tube. And you understand you have to go home right away to rework your JDATE profile: *Beginner widow seeks companionable male, definitely unready for intimacy, assuredly undaunted by the question: 'how you are using your precious time on earth?' Must love to ballroom dance, for now, via Skype.*