

## Throw Him Back

This was going to be my first attempt at online dating. After a week of back and forth emailing, I decided to meet Zack Wellings at a local Italian eatery. I remember feeling elated when I heard his voice for the first time on the phone. It was a deep and semi-raspy voice, it oozed masculinity. He would say things like "I want to make you the happiest girl ever" and "you need someone like me to take care of you."

"Such a charmer" was my only comeback to his sweet sentiments. Is this normal for people who have met online?

Zack's profile on littlefishbigpond.com said he was an engineer, had a Computer Science Degree, was a Taurus and Baptist. This Ryan Gosling look alike appeared to be a great catch, I remember thinking. He liked to cook, spend time at his family's ranch and work.

Zack called me 'hun', 'darling', 'babe' and 'sweetheart' before we even met. It was great for my self-esteem. He talked about what he wanted to do, how much he wanted to be a father and his future on his family's ranch. Zack would ask how my day was and talk about tutoring an 11 year old boy in English. English was only his first language; he also spoke French and Russian.

I nervously slid into the booth across from Zack Wellings. "He's cute!" I remember thinking. He looked like his picture, what a relief! I didn't know what to expect, after all, this was my first time meeting someone in person that I had originally met online. He really did seem like the whole package: educated, cultured, good looking, religious, a pure southern gentleman.

We made small talk till the waiter came and took our drink orders. I ordered a glass of Riesling, thinking it would be good with the pasta.

"What the hell is Riesling?" Zack questioned the waiter in a thick southern drawl. As the waiter, probably a college kid, attempted to explain Riesling to him, he waved his hand as if he were royalty and said "I'll have a jack and coke." Confusion set in, was this the same person I had been corresponding with?

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When two glasses of water were placed in front of us, my date yelled "where's my drink? Boy, I'm thirsty!" The waiter said the drinks were on their way but before he finished his sentence, a bartender appeared with a full wine glass and an iced lowball.

"So, your profile said you didn't smoke. Are you a smoker?" I grabbed the glass of wine and took a sip, waiting for his reaction. I could tell he was a smoker by the strong smell being emitted from across the table. And by the remnants of brown, fibrous material lodged between his incisor and canine, I could presume he also dipped tobacco or had poor hygiene.

"I do smoke but, uh, I didn't when I made the profile. I'm going to quit." He changed the subject and intensely stared me straight in the eye without blinking. "You are so damn sexy, I just want to eat you up! I don't even need this plate of spaghetti! I can just eat you!" He looked at me like I was a plate of spaghetti, hardly blinking and leaning forward halfway over his food. His intense gaze made me feel like I was under a microscope, being dissected.

"Thanks?" I quietly responded with some confusion. Should I have thanked him for that? I decided to attempt to save the flow of conversation. "So how tall are you? 6'3?"

"Yep, and 260 pounds of pure lovin', darling. Aint nothin' on me small." He ran his tongue over his upper teeth and cocked a half smile. Wow, I don't remember asking if anything on him was big.

"Once you get some of this, you will be begging for more! And I mean begging, Baby!"

"That's cool. I was just wondering." I started to fork through my alfredo. I was already regretting this meeting. He hadn't stopped eyeing my chest as he reminisced about his ex-wife's body hair and breasts. "She really did have a great pair!"

"Wow, that's neat." I half whispered, looking down at my pasta. "Well, I've got a lot of writing to do tomorrow so, I've got to head out pretty soon." I politely asked the waiter for a to-go box. I swore to myself that I would leave this date with class and dignity.

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"Is this weird?" He turned his cell phone screen toward me, revealing a picture of a smiling redhead with green eyes. "Yes, THAT is!" I said sternly. The cell phone wallpaper was a mug shot of ME from my dating profile.

As I was about to get up from the booth, he scanned my chest in an obvious way to make sure I noticed.

"38D?" Zack narrowed his eyes and began to move his head back and forth, making an engine-like noise.

"Really? I wouldn't tell you even if I wasn't a lady!" I was stunned. I grabbed my alfredo and began towards the exit to the parking lot.

"Oh, darling, I'm sorry, I was just teasing." He followed me out of the restaurant.

"If you were mine, darling, I'd never let you leave the house. I'd keep you locked up and never let you out, so beautiful!" Did he think he was appealing to me?

Obligation and social graces flooded my mind, I needed to be polite.

"Thanks for the dinner." I searched for my keys which were at the bottom of my purse, should have had them ready.

"You know you don't want to go home without me." Zack spun me around, grabbed my wrist and attempted to interlace his fingers with mine. The anxiety and irritation built up inside and my reaction was to thrust my knee into his groin area. He quickly doubled over in pain, covering his genitals. I unlocked my car door, hopped in and started up the engine. Two large fists violently hit the window. "What the hell is wrong with you? You're psychol! Hey! I'm not done with you!" I put the vehicle in reverse and headed out of the parking space. Thumping erupted on the right side; he was kicking one of my tires! In my rearview mirror, I could see him, still running after me.

I relayed the story to my best friend the next day over soup and salad.

"I'm through with any kind of dating, it was awful! He said the

'C' word!" I cried and then I realized how loud I was, other patrons were starting to stare.

"Don't you know that when you go fishing, you never know what you will get." Brooke emptied half of the sugar container into her glass of iced tea.

"Awe Jeeze!" I cut in. She was going to lecture me and I didn't want to hear it.

She grabbed the spoon and began to stir. "Sometimes you will get a carp, trash fish or a Zack... what was his last name?"

"Wellings" I barked, purposely emphasizing the s.

"Yeah, Wellings. Other times, you may get a shark or a bass.

You just never know. If you don't like it than throw it back." She began to fork through her salad. It was a plain and simple concept to her. I knew she was right and I knew I should give online dating another chance. Maybe next time, I will end up with a bass.