

Building Mister Right

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I was raised to be a courtesan (said Sinderella). I was schooled in the tantric arts, I was taught to move and dress seductively, I was instructed in all the many ways a woman can please a man and I was warned what attitudes and behaviors to avoid.

When I was sixteen I went to work on Xanadu, the pleasure planet in the Belial Cluster. My clientele included some of the greatest names in the galaxy. I was even given to +++Lance Sterling+++ for a week after he set the people of Hacienda III free.

There was no aspect of pleasure that was unknown to me, and no sexual art, no matter how strange or painful or alien, in which I was not an acknowledged expert. And because of this, I was in great demand. Even the Earth Mother tried to buy my contract and move me to her establishment on Praesepe XIII, but of course my employer would not part with me.

Then, one day, when I was twenty years old, I found myself walking down the long corridor to meet my next assignment. As I passed the multitude of rooms, I heard the moans and sighs of rapture -- but only from masculine throats. And a thought occurred to me that should have been obvious the day I arrived there: that Xanadu was a pleasure planet for only half the race, that the women provided pleasure but did not receive it.

So I decided to take my savings -- and of course, being a woman I'd had no place to spend all that money on Xanadu -- and start an industry that would do for women what so many industries did for men.

I realized that I would need men who were as skilled in the giving of pleasure as I was, and I spent the next year auditioning perhaps a thousand of those with the best resumes -- and while I will freely confess that it was not an unenjoyable year, I nevertheless found some major or minor fault with each of them.

It was then that I decided the only way I could be sure of providing the perfect lover was to build him. I queried a number of women, asking them to describe in detail all the physical features and behavioral characteristics of their ideal man, and then hired Bellini, the Monarchy's greatest designer of androids, and set him to work.

The women had been unsure of the perfect eye color, so we decided that they would appear blue in certain light, gray in others, brown in still others.

It didn't work. The women I invited to inspect our prototype found a changing eye color very disconcerting.

There was the same problem with the length of his hair. We tried short hair, long hair, even no hair, but there was no consensus.

Things became even worse as we got to the more important features. Since this was to be the ideal man, far superior to all others, we gave him a fifteen-inch phallus. The first three women to see it ran screaming from the room; the fourth kidnapped him at gunpoint and neither she nor the android were ever seen again.

Musculature was another problem. Should it be Herculean or Apollonian? We tried the heavily-muscled Herculean model first; it broke the ribcages of the first five women it hugged. So we went for the slender, delicate Apollonian; two of its first three sexual partners broke its ribs in the throes of passion.

When it came to speech, we ran into still more problems. Fully half the women we questioned stated that

men had nothing interesting to say, that all they really wanted to do was talk about themselves. But the other half insisted that our prototype be capable of speech, because they wanted to be complimented and flattered to preserve the illusion of romance before they climbed into bed.

So we took this into account, and everything seemed to be going well for a day or two. Then the complaints began: a few sweet nothings whispered before a roaring fire was fine, but couldn't it think of anything _else_ to say? 48 hours of nonstop flattery tended to sound, well, if not insincere, at least _programmed_, and nothing is a greater hindrance to romance than a lack of spontaneity.

So we went back to the drawing board and gave our prototype the equivalent of fifteen post-graduate degrees. He was able to converse thoughtfully on any subject, and we removed all trace of ego so that he would have no urge to speak about himself.

I should have known better. The typical comment was: "If I'd wanted to go to bed with my college professor, I would have." One I particularly remember was: "Do you know how quickly an analysis of the annual fiscal expenditure on Sirius V can quell the fire within?"

There were the same problems with the prototype's taste in art, in music, even in women. Each woman wanted to think she was the only one for him, but that meant reprogramming him each time, so that at noon he loved slender blondes and at two he loved pudgy redheads and at four he loved drunken brunettes.

I had run through most of my money without a single one of my female volunteers agreeing that I'd created Mister Right. Then, when +++Lance Sterling+++ sent word that he'd like to spend another week with me, I gave the android to the first woman who asked for him (she later dismembered him with a butcher knife) and went back to my former life, convinced that Mister Right was as much an unattainable dream as the Perfect Woman.

So don't you denigrate Faraway Jones. A love like that means a lot more to a woman than most of the things I built into Mister Right.

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"Actually, there are nineteen perfect women in the universe," said Catastrophe Baker to the room at large. "I've been with thirteen of them, and I've got almost half my life left to hunt up the other six."

"So you really knew +++Lance Sterling+++?" said Little Mike Picasso.

"Yes, I did," answered Sinderella.

"He's one of my heroes," said Little Mike wistfully. "I always wanted to paint his portrait."

"I wouldn't have minded meeting up with him myself," chimed in Gravedigger Gaines. "Heroes like him are few and far between."

"I heard all kinds of stories about how he died," said Three-Gun Max. "I wonder if anyone knows what really happened?"

"One of us does," said Nicodemus Mayflower.

"You heard it?" asked Max.

"I _lived_ it. I was there."

"Sure you were," scoffed Max.

"It's true!" said Mayflower heatedly, and skinny as he was, I again was struck by how much his lean, angular face looked like my notion of Satan. "I spent ten years with him, fighting villains and evildoers!"

"I don't believe it," said Max. "There are heroes so big they blot out the stars for parsecs. He was one of them. Why would he bother with _you_?"

"I can find out if he knew him," offered Sinderella. Everyone turned to her. "He had a scar on his shoulder. Describe it."

"A scar?" repeated Mayflower. "I always thought it was a tattoo. It looked like a big, bloody L."

"Is he right?" asked Max.

Sinderella nodded her head. "He's right."

"Not everyone's a freelance hero or soldier of fortune," said Mayflower with just a touch of bitterness. "Some of us function better in structured situations."

"I can't imagine why," said Baker.

"Save the arguments for some other time," said Max. He turned to Mayflower. "Okay, you knew him. So let's hear how he died, and how many of the enemy he took with him."

"From everything I've heard about him," said Little Mike Picasso, "he'd have sold his life so dearly that they'd have needed one hell of a mass grave for the men who finally took him down."

"Do you want to hear about it, or do you want to tell me about it?" demanded Mayflower irritably.

"Let's have it," said Max.