

MATCHSTALK MAN

by

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Sandra sat with her head buried in her hands. This was the position she always adopted when things were going wrong in her life. Most frequently this was how she found herself after her latest male encounter. When she was in this mood she also talked to herself, in fact, talked with herself. Real conversations, with her sensible self.

‘Why do I always attract the same sort of men?’

‘It’s not as simple as that Sandra.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘Well, attracting them is one thing, but then you are the one that accepts them. You could say – thanks, but no thanks – but you always say, yes’

It was a fair point, Sandra had to agree.

Weekends for Sandra and her mates were spent ‘living it large’. The dreariness of spending all week with one ear glued to the phone at work had to have an outlet. This, in effect, meant ‘pubbing and clubbing’, invariably leading to ‘pulling’. Sometimes the final item on the menu was rendered redundant as the men involved actually lasted more than one weekend, a few months on occasion. In Sandra’s circle it wouldn’t be right to be seen without a bloke, certainly not at the end of the night.

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The fact that Sandra always attracted the same sort was hardly a surprise. Given her background, job, and social scene she was unlikely to meet any philosophical types. No, Sandra’s men were physically fit. This was either natural, due to their manual labour, or because they worked out (or possibly both). The ‘work out’ boys do so simply to attract the shallow Sandras of this world. Vain, peacock posing, charming charlatans.

Sometimes the ‘pulled’ would have an underlying aggressive streak. All, without exception, were cockily controlling. One other bizarre common feature was that their names only ever had one syllable, even if a diminutive of their given name. Did this make them, somehow, more masculine? Sandra wondered whether an ‘Adrian’ might be different. Thus far they had all been mismatches. The latest was the final straw.

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Karl, in many ways, was the culmination of her previous collection. To begin with he was no different from the others. After a couple of weeks (a long termer, then) he would come round before they went out. Apart from what he called his 'starter' for the evening, he would choose her clothing for the night.

The first time around she found this quite a turn on – the putting on and taking off of clothes while he lay on the bed making his choices. It took only two more weekends for this to reach breaking point.

Each week he had chosen ever more revealing outfits. Sandra was not averse to this, she had bought the items after all. When 'pulling' was on the agenda she was perfectly happy to put herself in the shop window.

It was when, at her skimpiest, he actively encouraged his mates to 'feel her up' that brought it to a head. That was the night Sandra finished with Karl.

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That was when it all started. First the phone calls, obscene and abusive. When Sandra stopped picking up the handset, messages were left on her voicemail. Then the texts –

Nobody finishes with me you slut. Your day will come

The contact became ever more threatening. Emails and lurid comments posted on Facebook followed. Sandra called the police. They could do, and did nothing.

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It was the weekend again. Sandra had tried to put events to the back of her mind. She was going to have a good time. She took Trev home. Karl got out of his car at the end of her street, and approached her house.

He took the petrol soaked rag from its polythene bag, and then the box from his pocket. He struck the match and placed the flaming cloth through her letter box. One final phone message.

If I can't have you, nobody can.

If only she hadn't stopped fielding his calls.

