

Have I Been Ghosted?

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It started out innocently enough. I mean, I've been out of the scene for a long time being that I've been married for 18 years. We met through a mutual acquaintance. It wasn't supposed to happen this way. I guess these situations are always a bit awkward. Things were fine, great even. Sure, we had the occasional miscommunication. The relationship was new so at least I didn't care. Then came the occasional texts telling me that she didn't feel well at the last minute. I'm not a monster. So, I said, "of course, stay home and take care of yourself." I started to get a bit worried when the texts would come more often. A sore throat one week would keep her from coming over. The next week it was the flu. It was winter so I understood. I mean, I wasn't feeling well myself. Maybe we had picked the same bug up on the subway. It was possible. It seemed like everyone was coughing. I was trying not to think the worst. I mean, my dogs really liked her. Wasn't that the hardest part in any relationship? They, whoever they are say that dogs are a good judge of character. I always felt like an entirely new person after she came. Sure, there was a price. I wasn't sure that it was worth it. I felt guilty. But, oh my god, it felt so good at the same time. Everything felt right again. Things just made sense, even for one day. The joy that she brought me was like none other. The smells that she left behind were unmistakable. They'd linger for only a day but enough to keep me wanting her to come back. The feeling of sliding into bed after she was gone was so pure and fresh, like no one had ever been there before. Even my shower felt different.

The night before she would come over I'd skitter about, putting things away, embarrassed that she'd think I was someone who hadn't gotten her shit together by this point in her life. I didn't want to be "one of those women," whatever that means. I would even make sure that the hair was out of the sink. I didn't want her to think I was gross. I'd even vacuum in my fervor. My heart would start to race around 10pm wondering if she would

text. Would she cancel or just change the time? Maybe she'd come later in the week? I could handle anything if she didn't bail altogether. It started to impact my family. They were noticing that I was anxious. I couldn't tell them what was going on because they never understood. I had tried to get them to help me but it was too much.

But spring came and the texts started coming at an alarming rate. I started thinking there was someone else. I hated thinking that someone else could be experiencing my smells, my sense of order, my lack of dead skin cells preventing me from a peaceful night's sleep.

I felt inadequate, struggled with the idea that I was a cliché. I felt like a stereotype. You can see the headline: Woman in her late 40s just can't have it all. To each text, I'd respond almost the same way—I'd thank her for letting me know, that I was sorry that it didn't work out and that she should let me know when she was available. I was trying to communicate that I cared, that I was interested, that I would give her the space she clearly desired. I didn't want to make the same mistakes I had made in the past. This time it would be different. I would make sure she would know that I valued her, respected her, that she was a person in her own right. There wouldn't be any undue pressure. She could call the shots. I was just grateful to have her in my life. I really was. Never mind the fact that I am supposed to be able to do this on my own. I shouldn't need anyone else.

Then my self-esteem started to take a dive. I mean, who did she think I was? In the space of one week I got a series of texts. First one was that her back hurt too much to come over. The second one was that she had to go to a funeral. The third was that she had to register her kid for kindergarten. Any of these texts in isolation are plausible excuses but honey, if you don't want the goddamned job cleaning my fucking apartment, just say so. I'll find someone else.