

Does This Dress Make Me Look Fat?

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I was a catch.

Six months into recovering from a spectacular car accident— my temporary colostomy reversed by the good graces of Medicaid--forehead only one shade of purple--jaundiced arms hairy and limp, freshly sprung from their rancid, graffitied casts. So it was a surprise when a lanky, green eyed man, skin the shade of polished teak walked up behind me at Art Maui. “My mom thinks I should marry you.” I turned, taking in the sinewy goodness of his forearm before answering. “Don’t you think we should dance first?”

This would have been a great comeback line if it had been that, but I worked from my time honored theory that the mark of true love was directly proportionate to the ability to step-ball-change in unison. This maxim got me a trip to the ICU. If I hadn’t been working so hard to get my friend, and former dance partner to have sex with me, I might have been able to warn him that the road ahead was ending. Perhaps if I hadn’t been pitching my, *the right girl will love the gay right out of you*, spiel, I might have noticed we were flying off a forty foot cliff--plummeting into the Pacific Ocean.

In front of a clumsy painting of hibiscus at Art Maui, love came in the form of a virile man that didn’t seem to notice I had been taken out of the box and shaken up a bit. Our romance was; Peter Gabriel songs, white sand beaches, mangos picked from the tree outside his mother Darien’s house and driving around in her Honda Accord. Darien aka Starheart, was a recent transplant to Maui and subscribed to the insta-evolved self-naming to which so many post hippies imbibe. She wasn’t alone. At any African drumming, pot-luck, barefooted, patchouli

laden shindig one could run into Rainbow, Jai, Raven, Starchild, Nirvana or Everest. I went to school with a Buckstar Starbuck, but that's a different story. Derick, one r, followed Starheart from San Francisco to Maui, giving up his life of hang gliding off Mt. Tam to restore my self esteem, return me to life. When he looked at me he didn't see broken and vulnerable, he saw beautiful and sensitive.

We moved into a *hui*, a modern-day commune. Derick cobbled a windsurfer out of old equipment and forged a rack for his car from scrap metal. I pictured us on a deserted island, *Blue Lagoon* style, living off the land.

When the food stamps and unemployment checks couldn't cover his beer and cigarette habit, I got a job washing dishes at Mama's Fish House. The sex was great.

Derick's slow breathy kisses and long curious fingers grounded me, but the specter of myself as a twenty year old with a belching, leaky colostomy bag lingered, even though my intestines were rejoined. No longer the supple dancer, desperation to gain control overcame me.

I ate nothing but pineapple.

No one noticed the first twenty pounds. It was the subsequent twenty pounds, then ten more that got peoples attention. Derick liked my supermodel thin aspirations. I liked that when I lay on my back my underwear stretched across my hip bones creating an airy canopy over my pubic area. At five nine and one hundred fifteen pounds, I shed the geriatric posture of a woman trying to conceal a volatile colostomy bag. Clothes hung on me. Derick bought some cut offs and short skirts from a second hand store that showed off my new figure, but encouraged me to keep the billowy dresses just the same.

Not one man thought I was too skinny. In fact I garnered a station in life I hadn't ever occupied. Women were suspicious of me and didn't want me to talk to their men. In one short year I managed to go from a walking PSA cautioning against driving while drunk, to femme fatale.

Being a two income couple afforded us the basics; rent, beer, cigarettes, food (for Derick) and cocaine. "I used to have a problem with coke," Derick said, during one of our first dates. At first it didn't faze me. It made him horny, artistic, restless, and I liked it.

The light was dim when I awoke. My eyes adjusted easily to the soft orange glow cast from the bedside lamp with the red scarf draped over the shade. Before me Derick stood, failing miserably to hide his escapades. With one of my stretched-out bras stuffed with socks, a loose flower print dress, lipstick and eyeliner he asked without a shred of irony, "Does this dress make me look fat?"

His masculine frame didn't lend itself to drag. Most of the time I felt like I was helping a homely girl enter into proper society. This *Emma*-esque ritual became more commonplace. I tried to get in the spirit. I pulled my hair under one of his flannel shirts, donned his jeans and stuck a sock in my underwear. I looked like an irritated twelve year old boy. It didn't make me feel sexy. Having sex with Derick in drag, while he instructed, "squeeze my tits;" didn't make me feel sexy. I wasn't looking for broken and vulnerable, I was looking for brawny and capable.

I don't know where the dildo came from. As far as I knew, there wasn't a sex toy store on Maui. Come to think of it there wasn't a Starbucks. That means he either brought it with him, or had a dildo dealer, neither scenario comforted. Whatever the case, the day I walked in on him

dressed like a tranny prom queen with an unnaturally large dildo firmly planted up his ass, I knew I had reached my limit.