

## **Insights: Is She Really Going Out With Him?**

### **More lessons in online dating.**

By Gidget Leigh

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The first time I went to the bathroom to change my tampon, I noticed there was a window. I pulled back the curtain. The window was painted shut and there were security bars. There was no easy way of escaping this date. I'd have to hang-in there until closing time.

Chris found me online four days prior. His fascination with my profile and my red hair led him to inquire if I was still available. After several phone conversations and e-mails, he suggested I come see his band perform on Saturday night at a bar 30 miles from my house. My red flag went up when he admitted he was a musician; however, he said he did it for fun and had a day job as a sales person.

I accepted the invitation and did the date commute in heavy traffic. One hour, 45 minutes later, I was parking at his apartment complex. When I walked up, the inside courtyard pool was a graveyard for leaves, almost filtering the backlighting. He stood in his door, smiling, and waited for me as I approached.

While we all can lie about a few pounds when we are e-courting, height is a hard, verifiable figure. Chris told me he was 5 feet 6 inches tall and asked me, as a 5-foot-10-inch woman, if I had a problem dating shorter guys. When I got to his door, he was 5 feet 3 inches in shoes. I do not have a problem with height. I do have a problem with insecurity and dishonesty.

When I entered his apartment, I remembered all the questions I forgot to ask on the phone and in e-mail. Questions I normally don't have to ask the 25 to 32-year-olds I usually date.

"Welcome. Glad you made it. Here, let me give you the tour," Chris said.

My five-second visual assessment had already delivered run-now results. From the multi-colored brown shag carpet to the brass and glass bookshelf adorned with trophies on the top shelf, I was not in the apartment of a successful, 43-year-old salesperson. Forgotten question: "Do you own or rent?"

It was a one-bedroom. Not much to see: galley kitchen, bathroom, bedroom with a down comforter. I sat down on the living room futon and he brought me a glass of water. I saw the ashtray on the coffee table. Forgotten question: "Do you smoke?"

"I had a great time at the birthday party today. My grandson was so excited," Chris said.

"Grandson? I forgot to ask if you had been married before. Wow. How old is your son and where is your wife?" I asked.

"He's 19 and my grandson just turned four. I never married the mother and didn't know I had a son until they came to me for money. I only knew her for two weeks," he answered.

I could almost forgive his living situation, but this was too much for me. I'd gone from dating boys who watch the Simpson's and listen to Blink-182 to dating NPR-listening grandpas with illegitimate children. Forgotten questions: "Do you have children? Were you married?"

The first date now shifted to a duty date. This was like interviewing for a job I'd never take just to have the practice. I was there and I was going to make the most of it. I needed to shave my legs and color my hair...date or no date.

He insisted on driving to the bar. We got into his cracked-windshield pickup truck. The Service Engine Soon light remained on.

The bar was less than two miles from his apartment. It probably met Webster's definition of dive: duck-taped vinyl bar stools, pool tables, electronic darts, and a neon chalkboard announcing that Sunday's NASCAR special was \$2.50, 20-ounce Budweiser. Music was not the primary function at this venue. I didn't get the sense that musical tastes were very discriminating judging from the drunks at the bar. My nephew could play his toy xylophone and deliver titillating

entertainment to this audience.

But, as duty dates go, things could have been a lot worse. I had a seat at the groupie girlfriends table. I had beer. I had musical entertainment. I had a lead singer date that didn't actually have to interact with me. This permitted me to check my cell phone messages and write notes while the other groupie girls went to the back to play darts.

Duty turned into agony when I realized I'd be on the barstool for five and one-half hours. I was being held hostage and force fed "Brown Eyed Girl" and a helping of "People Are Strange" for good measure. I went to the bathroom every two hours to swap out tampons and to stretch my legs.

While I was on one of my final bathroom runs, the guys played a Joe Jackson-esque version of "Is she really going out with him." I chuckled as I flushed and finished the song.... *Cause if my eyes don't deceive me, there's something going wrong around here.* When I came out, Chris was walking to the table. His Axl Rose bandana looked moist. He removed his prescription sunglasses and let them dangle from his neck on a leash.

"So, I have to ask. Is there a spark? Will we have a second date?" he said, panting like a pound puppy begging to be taken home.

I hate this part of dating. "I had a great time listening to you guys. You are such a talented singer. But, I'm not feeling it, I'm sorry." He looked like he needed further explanation, so I added, "I have to be honest, I usually date much younger guys. Your admission that you are a grandfather made me realize that I don't think I'm ready for this," I said. I know it was a lame excuse, but I had to pick something he couldn't change or talk me out of.

I made the escape home in less than 30 minutes and immediately got on the computer and decreased the age range desired on my online profile. I also made a promise to myself to put a time limit on first dates. Though the Internet makes dating in easier, I still need to remember to keep things short and ask the right questions before venturing out the door.