

# LET'S BE REAL

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## A FEMALE PERSPECTIVE ON ONLINE DATING

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When a friend asks how I met the guy I have an upcoming date with, I suddenly find myself in an elaborate, fabricated story involving an accidental run in at a library. I just can't bare the humiliation that would come from admitting the truth: we met on a dating app.

I'm sitting on a bus, playing on my phone, when I get an out-of-the-blue notification from tinder: Noah sent you a message. My face turns bright red. I swiftly throw my phone into my purse, hoping and praying nobody saw.

My date, the one I met on Tinder, makes a reference to my profile. I pretend not to hear him, changing the subject rather quickly. I really don't want to acknowledge the fact that we met online, even though my date obviously knows. Pretending we met in another way wouldn't make any sense and yet I have an urge to do just that. Regardless, I don't want to talk about it.

Maybe online dating isn't for me... but I've been in a sad, pathetic way of deleting, re-downloading, deleting, re-downloading, with the trend continuing to this day. Being new to town with a full time school schedule, I have little time and opportunity to meet someone in a more conventional way.

Why do I feel so embarrassed? Ashamed? Less than? Why do I care what strangers think? Why should I assume they would judge me? Here's why:

Meeting someone online goes against every single romantic comedy we've ever seen, every love story we ever dreamt could be our own (except You've Got Mail, a must see if you've ever used the internet for love).

Somehow, it feels as though we as women have an image to uphold. We couldn't possibly admit to using a dating app when that would go against our stereotypical gender role which measures our worth by beauty and likability. If you were beautiful and lovable, why would it be hard to meet someone? In that sense, a woman who uses a dating app might be assumed to be either unattractive or unlikable, or maybe an unfortunate combination of the two, right?

Society imposes many assumptions about women who use dating apps, most of which suggest that there is something fundamentally wrong with us. Why does she need a dating app? She must be desperate for love. She is probably a slut looking for casual hookups. These drastic implications are culturally frowned upon as they are unacceptable traits in women, even in this day and age.

Whatever a woman's reasons are for using a dating app, which I can assure you have nothing to do with being a desperate slut, are her own. Reasons which do not warrant an explanation. Yet somehow, women care. We care because of the impending threat to our status as acceptable women in society.

The funny thing is, there is a huge contradiction staring everyone directly in the face, and that is a part of the reason many women are using dating apps in the first place! This is the imposition that women NEED a man to be happy. If a woman doesn't find a man in time, then she is destined to grow into an old spinster, a cat lady, a hag. People are always asking us women why we are single, why we don't have a boyfriend, or assuring us that the right man will come along soon enough. It's as if finding a man should be our number one priority, above all of our own personal hopes and dreams.

So women are in a hurry to find a man, and yet we're expected to find that man in the right way, an organic way, because we don't want to be deemed desperate or unworthy. At the same time, we all have certain expectations of ourselves, an idea of the person we want to be, a way we want to be perceived by others. If using a dating app damages our image, it threatens our overall self-confidence.

It's all too much. Keeping up with these unspoken expectations of women in modern society is exhausting! So I suggest we stop. We stop trying to appease society by rushing to find love. We stop worrying whether or not we will be judged for meeting someone online. We stop letting these invisible rules guide us in our day to day lives. I'm here to say that it's okay if you're too busy pursuing your goals to meet someone, it's okay if you're perfectly content being alone, it's okay if you're using dating apps for hook-ups! We don't need excuses, or explanations. We can just live our own lives in whatever way we want.