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Manhunt's For Pussies Can our columnist woo the Manhunt fags *and* the marriage-minded ladies of eHarmony? By T Cooper I admit it. Like the rest of you sick homos, I'm a Manhunt addict. It all started innocently enough: As your fearless and friendly neighborhood tranny columnist, I'd devised a daring and clever social experiment in online dating that would plumb the infinite intricacies of, and differences between, sexuality and gender -- all for your enjoyment and edification. Well, that was the plan at least, until I slapped a profile up on Manhunt, got a full membership, and started getting more play than John Mayer, Justin Timberlake, and that guy from Maroon 5 all put together.

But first I want to tell you about my original scheme, which was inspired by those insidious and cloying television ads for eHarmony, the openly homophobic dating website founded by the evangelical Christian-leaning Dr. Neil Clark Warren. I started thinking: *He might've said no homos, but nobody ever said no trannies allowed on the site. Hey, I'm a (trans) dude, and I'm attracted to all genders -- including women -- so why not give it a shot?* I wondered whether I could even pass eHarmony's patented personality test, as I'd read that as many as 20% of people who take the 400-plus-question survey get rejected for being what Dr. Warren deems poor marriage prospects (depressive, emotionally unstable, divorced too many times, gay, etc.).

I'm pleased to report that my (actual) photographs and (95% true) answers to the litany of unnerving questions -- "If you were to marry, how many children would be ideal?" and "Rate your morality on a scale of 1 to 7," for starters -- got this freaky trans queer certified by eHarmony as 100% pure heterosexual male marriage material.

I paid \$59.95 for a three-month membership, at which point I was suddenly matched with scores of women in the New York area who were statistically poised to be my ideal wife, based on "29 dimensions of compatibility." There was Stacey in Mamaroneck, 4 foot 10 and in human resources. We got through several rounds of communication before she closed the match, choosing her preselected reason as, "I think the physical distance between us is too great." Wait, did she mean *height*? Then there was Lori in Queens, a vegan booklover like myself, who claimed that she couldn't live without NPR (me neither!). After she asked about my parents' relationship, what I like to do on Saturday nights, and where I see myself living in 15 years, we lost touch: "I'm taking a break from dating," she opted for.

Can you start to see where one might find Manhunt a little more...dynamic? *Damn*, straight chicks are tedious. It seemed as though my mission had been effortlessly accomplished and I had sufficiently imploded Dr. Warren's binary-obsessed, too simplistic categories of "man seeking woman" and "woman seeking man." But there were also a lot of women who liked how "sensitive" I seemed and how "clean and good-looking" and "not overly Neanderthal" I was. (OK, it was generally white and Asian ladies who were into my profile; the black and Latina ones seem to like their guys a little more, well, *manly*). I didn't mind fucking with eHarmony a little, but I did start to feel bad leading on some of the unsuspecting women who appeared to be taking a shine to me. So I figured it was time to give the fellas a whirl.

Common sense suggests that cruising is merely a search for dick. But I happen to be of the mind that cruising is also very much a search for identity -- one's *own* identity, which is constantly morphing whether we're aware of it or not. Take personal ads. Whether it's an extra inch, a few less pounds, or those "swimmer's builds" that no amount of pools on this planet could possibly support, we all lie about ourselves to prospective mates. It's pretty much a given that a guy who says he's 5 foot 7 is really topping out at 5 foot 3 in dress shoes. Even in person we tend to shape-shift and make adjustments to who we are and who we're attracted to in the moment, or even how we'll have sex, depending on the partner.

White lies notwithstanding, for most people -- gay, straight, and everywhere in between -- the personal ad is simple: (1) You say what you are, and (2) You say what you want. But for a transgender person, cruising can be a particularly tricky prospect that inevitably puts the first step in that process -- identity, as opposed to sexuality -- front and center, since often, what we *know* ourselves to be might not always line up with what others *think* we are. I was thus really curious if I'd pass muster with the fussy fags on Manhunt as easily as I had with the marriage-minded ladies of eHarmony.

In my Manhunt profile I tried to stay as loyal to my true personality as possible. I said I liked guys who were capable of stringing a few words together, that I was looking for friendship first, and that I liked going out for coffee and browsing used-book stores. I put up two face photos and one of my torso. Going against the usual MH grain, my profile stated, "I don't need to see a photo of your dick right now; you don't need to see mine." (My dick spends much of its life in a drawer.) My final photo pictured me pulling down my jeans and striped boxers, grabbing onto and revealing a thick, juicy...organic zucchini.

Almost immediately I received a slew of e-mails and invites to chat (in fact my MH e-mail box is flashing "3 unread messages" at me

right now, and it's all I can do to ignore them so I can finish writing this damn column). Here's a sampling, all from different guys: "Ur yummy"; "I'm going 2 be 4ward and invite myself over right now"; "Look out when I stalk you down there in the E. Vill"; "I'd like to take a bite outta your vegetable"; "You know how to use a semicolon; I think I'm in love"; "Handsome, u better call me later so we can talk dirty"; "If you'd let older (45) guy suck you off while you watch porn... no recip... swallower... please call me anytime"; and so on. I'm not saying I'm the hottest person in the world -- not even close -- but I just might've inadvertently stumbled upon the go-to elixir for those sporadic times I lapse into feeling ugly, flabby, old, not masculine enough, and so on.

And yet the time would eventually arrive for me to come out to these guys as FTM. I know I was using a pseudonym and it was just a fun experiment, and my ego wasn't supposed to be wrapped up in it, blah blah blah (not to mention I have a partner and am not looking to hook up), but I was nevertheless completely and utterly blindsided by how difficult it became for me to disclose my gender status. I found myself not wanting to disappoint these guys who were attracted to me and completely accepting me as part of the gay male petri dish that is Manhunt. To be perfectly honest, I kind of liked how it felt.

But inevitably, for many of the guys, any attraction they had for me would suddenly disappear as soon as they learned that I had not been born male, that I was not sporting a penis like theirs in my shorts. Initially they'd be all eager to meet up for a date, to talk on the phone or video-chat, or just to hook up NSA that night -- but when I disclosed, the persistence and frequency of the correspondence would diminish. My favorite was Kevin from Hell's Kitchen, who had been messaging with me on AIM faster than I could type (and I type fast), but after saying he was cool with the FTM thing and still wanted to hang out, he suddenly became deeply and irrevocably engrossed in a musty old *Sex and the City* rerun, and his messages stopped flowing.

I have to say, though, for the most part dudes were pretty respectful. This might have more to do with the fact that the word *conversation* was front and center in my profile's headline than the general tolerance of difference in the gay male population, but still I was impressed with a lot of my new buddies. Interestingly, I found that the more I communicated with a guy before disclosing, the more likely he was to express interest in learning something new by pursuing a possible relationship. It was the guys to whom I disclosed in early replies who were more likely to respond immediately with something like "Cute, but not interested" or "I don't know what FTM is, and I don't want to know."

The mind, it seems, is perhaps more powerful than the libido, and not the other way around, as I've always assumed. The same body and person that some guys found attractive in the first place switched to being completely unattractive with the introduction of this new piece of information -- as though the trappings of masculinity are strictly limited to the presence of a penis at birth.

It might've been nice to meet some of these men in person to see which would prevail, brain or libido, but I never got to the point of meeting anybody from Manhunt in person. Like on eHarmony, I felt I needed to draw an ethical, if shakily so, line somewhere. I'm not the first, and I certainly won't be the last person to cruise Manhunt with unclear motives, but the "great tranny lie" that freaks people's shit out so much and is the stuff of sad films like *The Crying Game* and *Boys Don't Cry* is certainly something I felt I had to tread lightly.

I will tell you one shocker from my month on Manhunt -- it's quite possibly the great lie of the gay male populace, if you will. After a couple weeks, I lost count of the number of men who, after finding out about my gender status, said something like "Wait, so ur a guy, but with a pussy? That's cool. Actually pretty hot," or "I've always wanted to have sex with a pussy, even though I've never seen one." Y'all are a bunch of closeted straights, is what you are -- and I'm thinking they should maybe consider changing the name of the site: to PussyHunt.

*T-Cooper.com*

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