

# Naked Curiosity

by Dennis Scott-Bush



## False Advertising

"Whatever happened to integrity?" John asked, as we listened to the members of the orchestra tune their instruments.

"And what happened to honesty?" he wondered aloud, as the cacophony of strings, reeds and horns gave way to applause acknowledging the conductor's entrance.

We'd come to the orchestra expecting to be swept away by soaring Wagnerian themes and the beautiful strains of Debussy melodies. We were not disappointed.

Unfortunately for my friend and bowling teammate, John, the soundtrack of his dating life has been filled with far less harmonious music.

John is one of the nicest people I know. So, it's particularly disconcerting to me that he has encountered a series of men who modify the truth.

"They all seem to subtract ten years from their age, when they talk about themselves," he explained.

John is fifty. He's not ashamed of it. And why should he be? He's learned many lessons along the way and kept himself in great physical shape. When he's conversing with potential dates, he makes it clear that he's not looking for a young guy but, rather, someone around his own age. Yet, even with that assurance, many of his contemporaries feel compelled to shave off ten or more years – years that are often plainly visible, when an in-person meeting takes place.

My friend, Ted, has been on a zealous mission to find a boyfriend for more than a year. He's played around and, now, wants to settle down. He's tried bars, clubs, personal ads, chat rooms, gay gyms and just about every other place men can meet and either converse in person, on the phone or by computer.

Ted's standards have gone from wanting "tall, tanned, good body and a good job" to "must have a pulse and a penis." When making coffee dates or dinner plans, he tells his nominees for nesting that he's in the market for a real person who doesn't have to look like he stepped out of a porn film or off the pages of *Men's Fitness*. Still, most of the men he's met have described themselves as having 32-inch waists when, in person, their much heftier mid-sections are indisputable.

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"The worst are the dick exaggerators," Ted jokes. "I've had guys who were in my car on the way home to my apartment — moments away from having sex with me — lie about their dick size. How stupid is that? I'm going to see it and I can sure tell the difference between 8 and 5 — even without a ruler."

We all lie. Even the most virtuous among us has told a fib for the good of someone's ego or in a situation where more harm would seem to come from the truth than a falsehood.

The question is not that the lies are being told but for whose benefit?

Is the fuzzy math a way of convincing ourselves that our fictional facts and figures are more attractive to others, when the issue is really that they are more appealing to us?

During my magnet-for-dysfunctional-men phase, I had a relationship with a guy who has since become known as the Slimy Hustler, Liar and Thief. While we were together, he lied often and about a variety of things.

His deceptions were all easily ferreted out as frauds. Even when confronted, he stuck to his stories. Pathological, yes, but also indicative of someone who desperately wanted to be more of a prize than he perceived himself to be.

He was an actor/waiter (and unbeknownst to me, at the time, a hustler) who believed that I wouldn't like him — much less love him — if he wasn't as successful as some of my other friends and former boyfriends had been.

His level of success didn't matter to me but, in his mind, it did and that made it all the more important to him.

For many people, there is no doubt that younger is more desired and valued than older. And, for legions of gay men, he who has the biggest pole vaults to the front of the line. It's easy to understand why folks ardently wanting to make a connection would conveniently forget a bunch of birthdays or distort the actual size of their penile proportions.

Perhaps, if our usual cacophony of catty remarks and savage appraisals could give way to the applause of support and encouragement for people — regardless of their age or physical attributes — more of us would find the courage to tell the truth.

*Dennis Scott-Bush has always been curious and is often naked. His work appears in publications throughout the country. E-mail may be directed to NakedCuriosity@aol.com.*

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