

Miss Match

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Chapter One: Friday afternoon.

Winifred Beatrice Kazlowski stood alone in her bedroom looking at herself in the full-length mirror. She was tallish at five feet, nine inches and slender without being skinny or poorly proportioned. A full head of dark hair, which shimmered with natural auburn highlights when the sun caught it right, framed a nearly perfect face. Straight nose, dark eyes, full lashes, strong cheeks, and perfect skin that showed only a few light wrinkles near her eyes until she smiled completed the picture. When she smiled, it only got better, even if the wrinkles deepened. As her gaze dropped and she inspected the rest of her body, she calmly accepted the fact that she had perfect breasts. Even under the black dress she wore, she could tell that they were firm, real, and what men would call perky: not too big and not too small. The fact that her nipples were pushing up through the fabric of the dress did not hurt the image either. Her flat stomach was tight, but she was not ripped like those girls in the exercise videos. She twisted half around and examined her rear. It was firm, round, and petite. She had worked on that over the years and unlike her stomach, it was, in fact, the product of a workout routine. A lot of her height was in her long legs, and these, too, showed no signs of wear and tear. Her skin was snug over the well-muscled, yet subdued and shapely, thighs.

Turning full to the front again, she smiled and thought, *You are one smokin' hot babe, even if you are hitting forty this week.* This was not arrogance or narcissism but just a simple statement of fact.

“Yeah. Too hot,” she said aloud as she stood away from the mirror and pulled the dress back over her head. She tossed it on the bed and grabbed a bra. Once properly installed, she pulled on a tan blouse and reached for a pair of jeans. Pulling them on, she noticed that they were well fitting enough that her backside was still going to be a distraction. Tonight was her first date with Bob, and she didn't want to kill him. Off they came, and on went a set of dark slacks. Pulling her hair into a ponytail, she was able to destroy the *Charlie's Angels* look, but she shrugged; she was still

pretty sexy. “Oh, well.” She smiled. “There’s only so much one can do.” Not wearing makeup would not help diminish her looks. She never wore makeup. Maybe sometimes, a little eye shadow and subdued lipstick, but that was all.

Finally, she pulled out her digital tape recorder and slipped it inside her belt and into the pocket of her money belt. The recorder she had selected was flat and barely made the slightest bulge beneath the bottom of her waistband. She positioned it so that she could turn it on and off by putting her hand in her pocket. Of course, to do that, she had cut the bottom out of the pocket. That way, her slender fingers could feel the buttons on the recorder through the material of the money belt. She had been practicing around the house for months to make sure she got it right.

Everything had been fine until her husband, Noah, found it. He had not taken it well at all. But it was even worse when she finally told to him that she was doing it for a class she was taking. She had explained to him quite a while ago that she wanted to start taking classes at the university just to improve her mind and stay sharp. It took a while, but eventually, he agreed that it might be beneficial. For her current class, she had told him that a big part of her grade was to conduct interviews with various people and then write a little story about what she thought about them. The course was in the marketing curriculum and was supposedly designed to help marketing agents understand their potential purchaser. The subjects, she said, were being selected by a job placement company in order to introduce variety and maintain anonymity for the student. The class would not work well if the subject knew they were being evaluated as a potential buyer. Unfortunately, most of the people already had day jobs, so the interviews needed to be done in the evening. In return for pretending to be an interviewee, the people being interviewed were going to get pointers on how to behave in an interview.

Noah still didn’t like it. Taking one more glance in the mirror, she thought, just for a moment, that maybe her being hot was the only thing that had kept him from nixing her project. She rejected the idea. She liked to think that he loved her for a bit more than that.

The day he had found the tape recorder and she had told him about the class had been a pretty rough day, but she forced herself not to think about that now. She had to be ready for her date with Bob. Checking the mirror again, she admitted that she had been able to play down her looks

a bit and now looked more like she wanted. It had taken almost ten minutes of work, but she had transformed herself from the formerly stunning beauty that she was, to one who was simply lovely to look at.

During her transformation, she reflected on the relationship she and her husband had. Noah had started a manufacturing plant using his inheritance. He opened it only a few months after he had graduated from college with his degree in mechanical engineering. They had already been dating all through senior year and the next step after opening the plant was to ask her to marry him. She had always admired the fact that he had known exactly what he wanted in life. She remembered that when they had first met, he had told her he was going to get his degree, start his own company, get a trophy quality wife, and start a family. She had taken the reference to “trophy quality” as a compliment since he had just asked her out on their first date.

In contrast to his technical degree, hers was in English literature, but she had actually found chemistry and chemical engineering to be interesting as well. She had even considered a minor in chemistry at one point. When she had become bored with her literature, she signed up for a Chem-E course to invigorate her mind. After they were married, she started working as the receptionist at her husband’s business. The job saved money, which is important in a startup business. In that role, she found that her English degree was rather useful. In college, she had found that her interest in literature was in learning why people liked some books and not others. In her role as receptionist and partner, she used that knowledge to prepare an exceptionally successful set of marketing materials. Together, he knew mechanics and she knew marketing as well as what materials to use in the engineering designs.

She was good at being the receptionist and had spent almost fifteen years sitting behind that desk, greeting the customers and making them feel at home. Her pleasant attitude and good looks worked in favor of the business. When her husband finally brought them into his office, they were primed to be agreeable. Even though she ran the entire office, she often felt that Noah thought that her main role was to look hot and get the customers, most of whom were men, into the mood to be generous. Her role as sexy receptionist almost took a nasty turn on more than one occasion, but the worst thing about it was that she somehow always seemed inferior, even though it was her marketing that brought in the buyers.

These were special buyers. Noah ran a little production line stuff, but mostly, what he did was create new parts from raw blocks of copper, brass, steel, or iron. It was also part of her job to select the proper alloys of these metals. She had tried to get him into ceramics, but the process was too different, and he didn't want to retool. So he would bring in a client who needed a specialty part designed and then he would make one. Working with the client, he would build a prototype of the complete project, and when it was fine-tuned and considered finished, he got a fee plus 20 percent of the patent. Eventually, he did not need to invent any new items, but he still did so just because he liked it.

“Oh crap!” She had gotten distracted by her trip down memory lane and now really needed to focus. She was going to be late. But maybe that was a good thing, especially on a first date. *No*, she thought, and she took one last quick look at her notes, slammed the rest of her drink, and ran off to brush her teeth so she wouldn't smell like a lush when she met Bob.

Kissing her daughter Brea good-bye, she called back to Noah who was in his own study, “I'll be back in few hours, honey.” She heard him call “bye” as she shut the door.