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Nadia

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Meatto: Nadia

NADIA

Keith Meatto

Steve was our best guy friend until he met Nadia. Then he disappeared like it was South America, 1973. She banned him from Trivia Night and Karaoke Night. She said not everyone cares about minutiae or wants to sing for fun. Maybe so, but then she banned him from Midnight Movie Night at the Alamo. She said she hated movies in the theater; she got bored, she got restless, and she had a small bladder, and whenever she went to the bathroom she missed some crucial scene. Sure, Steve could have come out anyway. But when it comes to women he has no backbone. Or else he knew he could be lame and we would still be his friends.

Nadia was pretty but less pretty than she thought. She had pipe-cleaner wrists, and her mouth puckered like she sucked on Sour Apples, and no way that was her real nose. And how many girls can make a sweatshirt look slutty?

Meanwhile, she acted all superior because she had never worked a day job. Steve called her an Entrepreneur. Really, she was a This and That Girl. Her talent was to convince rich people she was useful. Before she met Steve, she was a Nutritional Consultant; people paid her to tell them to eat more vegetables and fewer cupcakes. She laminated photos of Swiss chard and kale and gave them to her clients as reminders. Another time, she was a Holistic Organizer, which meant she told housewives how to arrange their furniture and cutlery. There may have also been some Buddhism involved. But her best racket was when a family in the Hill Country paid her to clean out their mansion. She rooted through their attic and basement and closets, made lists, sold the valuables online, and hired a Dumpster and guys to cart away the rest. For this, she charged \$1,000 a day, plus expenses.

Later, she decided she wanted to be a boudoir photographer and take saucy pictures for women to give to their boyfriends or husbands. For this, she needed our help. She needed a portfolio to get clients,

but she didn't want to pay models. So she wrote us an email and asked if she could photograph us in our bras and panties. Tasteful photos, she said. Nothing pornographic. But we did have to sign a release that allowed her to post our pictures on the Internet. And P.S., she wrote. Don't worry. I don't want super pretty or thin people. I want regular, plain women.

When we read that, we wanted something senseless and violent to happen to Nadia, like those women in India last week who got trampled in the school stampede. But Steve is our friend, so we said we wished we could help, but we were too busy with work to slink around in lingerie. And later, when Steve asked our opinion of Nadia's latest business, we grit our teeth and said it was brilliant. We hoped he would get bored with her shallowness and narcissism. But they stayed together for weeks, months. And this is Steve, who used to think signing a cell phone contract was too much commitment.

Time passed. We saw Steve less and less often and when we did, he had changed. He pursed his lips like Nadia. She had bought him all new clothes that made him look like a hairdresser. He had even adopted her vocabulary, words like 'approximately' and 'more or less' and 'actually.' But there were no drill holes in his skull, so she must have sucked out his brain through his nostrils like the Egyptians did with the mummies.

This went on until their one-year anniversary. Then we called a Crisis Meeting. Stacy said we should sleep with Steve and then stand back and watch the flames. But who would be the home wrecker? Stacy said she had the most experience. I said it depends if you mean Quality or Quantity. Paula said Steve had grazed her boob once. I said they were sluts; I'd never sleep with a friend. They both laughed and said, Yeah, right.

What if we took him to a strip club? What if we treated him to a special massage in Chinatown? What if we poured fertilizer on his lawn and spelled out 'Nadia Sucks' in burned grass?

While we debated, Steve moved into Nadia's apartment when his lease expired, which meant we couldn't visit him without an

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appointment. She booked him every weekend they were in town. They took vacations to Mexico, to Europe. Steve didn't make that much money. So either he went into debt or she bankrolled everything. Either way, he owed somebody something. With interest.

One day Steve called and invited us for drinks at Lockstep: just him, no Nadia. We were thrilled. Only when we got there, he had a bottle of champagne in a silver ice bucket. Before he said a word, we knew he and Nadia were engaged.

We toasted and said we were happy for him while we vomited inside our mouths. We should have known. We should have done something. Why hadn't he told us before?

Then he said he wanted us to be in the wedding party. We said women weren't allowed to be groomsmen. He laughed and said that Nadia wanted us as her bridesmaids. She was an only child and didn't have any close friends. And she would have asked, only she was afraid that we would say no.

We drank champagne so fast the bubbles went up our noses and then somebody knocked over the bottle, and, by the time the busboy mopped up the puddle, we had pulled our act together enough to tell Steve: We would be honored.