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GIRLYMAN – Excerpt

Back at the office, Rosa says to Girlyman, “Thank you so much, that meant a lot to me.” Like any man, Girlyman recoils slightly at such overt displays of sentiment, but he has the self-control not to let it show.

“Anytime, sweetheart,” he says.

Girlyman believes he excels at shopping for women because he knows how to spot the innate beauty in every woman—no matter how plain or overweight—and how to choose garments that accentuate that beauty. Girlyman wishes he didn’t love women so much: it can be a real distraction. Sometimes he’ll be sitting in a café, trying to get work done on his laptop, and he’ll be drawn into the girltalk swirling around him. He’s fascinated by the way women sit so close to each other, gazing into each other’s eyes like lovers. He’ll follow the conversations as though watching programs on TV, the pair agonizing over their parents getting old, the woman calling friends on her cell phone to get advice about what to do with left-over frozen embryos.

Maybe you know Girlyman. He works in your office, or one very much like it. He tags along with the girls when they go out for lunch or coffee. They get their salads, their lattes—he gets burgers, regular coffee. The women apologize to him when they complain about the things men do: he never puts the toilet seat down, he lets the kids eat sugary cereal, guys don’t get it about foreplay, guys do whatever their dick tells them.

“Is that true, sparky?” he says, patting his lap, and they laugh.

The women turn to Girlyman for the male perspective on pressing questions, like when is it OK for girls to ask guys out, what’s the right thing to say when a guy can’t get

it up. In return, he's given extra leeway: to point out a pretty girl at a nearby table (though he'll never call her "hot"), to make a few harmless generalizations ("let's face it, women do not understand how to drive fast") that elicit playful hand slaps.

The other men in the office are perplexed by Girlyman. He'll join them occasionally, for discussions of cute girls, for softball games against rival companies. But there are awkward silences when he raves about romantic comedies. Girlyman is often mistaken for gay. This doesn't bother him, though, because he knows it makes him less threatening to women.

Far from being gay, Girlyman usually has a girlfriend. He got to know his current girlfriend, Clara, as she recovered from a bad breakup. They spent long hours gabbing in coffee shops, Girlyman massaging her hands as she discussed her ex-boyfriend's anger issues.

The first night Girlyman slept with Clara, he suggested they just cuddle. The next morning, when he reached for her, she melted in his arms. As they made love, her strong muscles from swim team were an exciting new sensation. Girlyman couldn't believe her ex-boyfriend had called her beautiful upper body "kind of freaky."

Now that they live together, Clara is naturally aware of how much he hangs out with other women, but she insists it doesn't bother her. She says she's grateful for all the girlfriends he's brought her. But he knows she worries he'll fall for somebody else, because he understands how a woman's brain works.

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