

SINGLE IN THE CITY

In Southland, a Goodman is hard to find

By ARLENE SCHINDLER
Special to *The Times*

FOR most of the dating world, thin and chiseled are the ideal. Just think of a random list of heartthrobs: Brad Pitt, Justin Timberlake, Hugh Jackman, Colin Farrell, Adrien Brody. . .

Me, I'm the Jack Black type (pre-Atkins). Or for that matter, the John Goodman, Forest Whitaker, Robbie Coltrane or even the James Gandolfini type. I've always preferred larger men. (Need evidence? The Big and Tall Men's Store has me on their mailing list because of all the extra-large gifts I've given.) Show me a big man, someone with a real hedonistic gusto for life, and I'm there.

But try telling that to a plus-size single Angeleno male. Big men in L.A. have experienced so much rejection that when a woman really likes them, they just think she's crazy.

I went out with one guy who had almond eyes, a cupid's-bow mouth and the aquiline features of a Greek god. We did a lot of eating and laughing and kissing. It was, pretty much, heaven. But when the relationship moved to a more physical level, he got cold feet. I've come to recognize this as "the dance of ambivalence" that fat men engage in with serious contenders.



VINCE BUCCI *Getty Images*



CHRIS CUFFARO



Associated Press

BEEFY BRIGADE: *Hollywood whippets such as Brad Pitt and Justin Timberlake don't fill the bill for gals whose prefer the comforting heft of a Jack Black, left, John Goodman or James Gandolfini.*

Thin men automatically assume they're attractive — or irresistible — and are only too eager for the appreciation they assume is their due. (No matter what the reality may be.)

But rotund men? They require a massive amount of trust before they will consider "the reveal." Exposing their excess glory means addressing the unmentioned elephant in the room: namely, themselves. Their women have to prove their sincerity, over and over again.

It usually takes three dates for the inquisition to begin.

"Why do you like me?" (Girthspeak for "What is wrong with you?")

"Why are you with me?" (Translation: "I like you, but haven't you noticed I sweat a

lot? So if you're going to dump me, do it now, before I get too involved.")

Try responding with something like, "I find you charming and handsome," and they stare at you like you've got two heads.

ADD the fact that many extra-large guys are not the frequent daters the slim, smooth-operators are. So they distrust their date's motives and tend to exhibit a strong case of "I would not belong to any club that would have me as a member."

Of course, there are thin men who do all these things too, but not with the vehemence of the big man, born of too many first dates who said, "You're not my type."

So how does one plumb the depths of such self-imposed despair? To create comfort, one must persevere with a chorus of validation. A formerly fat ex-beau of mine has become my greatest ally in winning over the portly psyche, and it sounds like the care and feeding of a small child or shampoo directions.

Praise, repeat, praise, repeat.

Hug, kiss, repeat.

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