

The quiet toy.



Time for a new box. For a lot of little reasons.

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ing up. I am half his size in every possible way—height, width, weight. I don't mind so much—it doesn't mar my image of us as the perfect couple. But he wishes at times that I were taller, that we didn't have to do all this stretching and slouching just to stand up and kiss."

And how about when they lie down and...? That's what's *really* interesting to think about when you think about mismatched couples. ("It's like thinking about turtles," said a friend, "... or homosexuals. I mean, what do they actually do?")

I had a friend in junior high school who was about four feet ten and idolized a boy about six six—the ultimate nightmare. Her sexual fantasies were detailed plans of how and where they actually

could get together in bed. "If I start out with two pillows at the headboard," she'd figure, "and he bends his left knee over the side of the bed..." Since I was about the same size as she was at the time and her problems were potentially fascinating to us, and we'd spend hours diagramming the possible consummation of this Mut and Jeff relationship. The possibility that people are all the same horizontally never occurred to us, and in fact I wonder about the truth of that theory. Only once did I ask a rather tall male friend, as discreetly as I could, about his sex life with his much shorter girl friend, and since he was inarticulate on the subject, I didn't learn much.

The notion that the man must be a few inches taller (and a few years older) is

one of those cultural norms rarely broken, and broken only in a burst of self-confidence and defiance. Certain chic couples in the public arena have made it acceptable for a woman to be seen with a man half her size—there was Sonny and Cher; there is Dustin and much-taller Anne Hoffman—but most of the people I know aren't quite so cool. I do know three or four exceptionally tall women who have been involved with men much shorter than they, and all of them are women of a fierce self-confidence and strong ego. "Even so," says five-ten Nancy, who works for a local politician, "I thought it was weird and deviant that I should be with a man so much shorter. We used to talk about getting married and I would say, 'I'm not going to be walking down the street with some midget who is actually my husband.'" Another five-foot-ten-incher once dated a man two inches shorter—"and two inches was noticeable," she says. "Fractions made a difference. He was forever trying to arrange it so that if I was sitting on the floor, he was sitting on the rug."

(Fractions seem especially important to short people. Have you ever noticed that they will say, "I'm five feet one and three quarters, almost," and taller folks most often round off to the closest inch? Short people fight for every last inch.)

In most circles, people of the same stature are fairly chauvinistic. In other words, tall hangs out together. My friend Wendy's parties, otherwise occasions I look forward to with delight, are for me the source of neck strain and lower-back pain. She and her husband, who both measure in at around six feet, move with a tall crowd (I am an exception), and I endure the cocktail hour with my neck turned up at an uncomfortable angle. Of course, they have the same complaint about ordinary people's parties, where, Wendy says, she can't relate to anybody while she's stooping. Whole conversations whiz past her, below ear level.

It's too true that our size colors our sense of the world we live in more than almost anything else about us—certainly more than our long hair or short, our buckteeth, our freckles or knock-knees or pug noses. "The world is more or less the same size to me, which is big," says one small woman. "When I face the world, I'm looking into its shoulder blades and collarbones." Sometimes we outgrow the frustrations—the feeling of inadequacy, the feeling of being an Amazon—and come round to acceptance, or at least gentle submission. "I know where superiority lies and it doesn't lie in how many inches you've got on you," says my small friend Carla. And, "I never spell 'man' S-I-Z-E," says my small friend Gloria. And, "I got taller in the last few months, even though I didn't grow an inch," says my small friend Annette, who has a new job and a strong professional sense of herself.

Still, I relay a final message from a five-foot-one-and-three-quarter-inch fiction editor of Redbook: "When people send in their short stories, could they please not address them to 'Short Fiction Editor?'"

THE END