

Pirkko, 35



Pirkko, 35 Country singer in unknown band.

Living with 8 years younger unemployed man, Anteo, and son Juhana

I signed us both up for this. I'm not looking to trade Anteo in for someone else, but I don't want him to feel too secure in our relationship. Men that feel too secure start taking things for granted and the next thing you know, they start looking at other girls. One important fact to learn about men is that they only bring you flowers if they feel they have to. If Anteo feels he has to pursue me, make an effort, he will always be a bit more careful, remember my birthday and bring me roses. I imagine that he, being a bit younger, would consider himself a great catch, that I should be thankful as it is objectively desirable for a woman to have a young lover. I don't give a damn about what everyone else thinks, as long as Anteo is not everyone else.

As an artist, a country singer, it is always good to get some media exposure. People will recognise me and if I'm lucky they'll buy my album. It could use a push. If I really wanted to make it big, I guess I should make out with another woman, but there is a limit to everything. Heidi says she is more turned on by two women making out than two men. I know my sexual preferences well enough not to agree. Men. And a tad young.

Working up the courage to sign up wasn't particularly hard. I actually signed up for "Loves Me, Loves Me Not", but I never heard from them. I guess we were too old for them. In any case, this'll be a good test. David gets to play a bit in a not so raunchy programme in prime time TV. And if he still prefers me after having tasted the tonsils of those young silicone dolls, I wouldn't be surprised. I have content.

Juhana, my son, is eight years old. His father's name is Mike and works at Helsinki Sanomat as a photographer. It was a one-night-stand, that started at some budget bar in some suburb and ended in a luxury suite at Radisson on his gold card. We traded number out of politeness rather than of interest, but I'm glad I did. You should never marry for the sake of your kid.

After four years, I had had enough. Mike just worked and worked, and Juhana did nothing except screaming and shitting. The divorce was less of a hassle than the marriage, and the allowance was alright. Mike almost fought me over NOT avoiding custody. I have to nag him every once in a while to take Juhana to see his grandparents. He has got a new girlfriend new, that's 25 and poses naked for one of those magazines. I don't care. I'm happy that Anteo likes Juhana and even happier that the feeling's mutual. But who am I kidding? Juhana likes everyone. He is everything but picky. As long as it is a man and the man is not a dork, he'll love him. That Anteo actually enjoys fiddling with the radio controlled toy boat is pure bonus.



Anteo, 27

Anteo, 27 year old, unemployed graphic worker.

Living with 35 year old partner Pirkko, and her 8 year old son Juhana

Took Juhana to the park today to play with the boat. The new engine really gives so much better acceleration and higher top speed. Juhana was close to crashing the boat several times. I think I have to tweak it down a bit. I really like that kid, but it saddens me that Pirkko sometimes seems to look at me as little more than a baby sitter that gets paid in sex. I'm really in love with Pirkko, though. But I'm not accepting that attitude much longer. I need respect.

I wish Pirkko would take it a bit more easy. I'm not sure what I must do to really prove to her that I love her. That all my attempts so far have failed is obvious. I can never really be sure. Sometimes I see in her eyes that she really loves me and is happy that I love her back, love to kiss her neck and snuggle my head into her shoulder. But quite often, I just feel insecure. Not sure that she really loves me, like she could just up and leave at any moment. That's really though. As if I have to conquer her, or court her over and over again. Like there is no end to it. I wish life was simpler.

Met my new job advisor down at the unemployment agency today. Pretty woman in her late 20's. Very involved and interested. A lot of other unemployed graphic workers on her roster, apparently. Graphic work is hard to come by these days, but she recommended me a few courses that might increase my chances. It is so bad that I just don't know my way around a computer, nor seem to be able to learn. Very sweet woman, by anyone's standard.

I'm not really sure about what this upgrade business is good for, or what will come of it. I'm not sure why it is so important for Pirkko that we participate in this. I think she is looking to prove something to herself, but I'm not exactly sure of what.

Fantatising of finding another woman is natural, of course. Someone "better" than Pirkko, whatever that means. Someone that just makes your heart race. Someone tall and thin with redblond hair that will melt your heart when she looks at you. Actually, I've always had an eye for older women, that's how I got together with Pirkko from the beginning. But recently, my eyes have opened up to a world of younger women, like in their early 20's something like that. I never seem to react on women my own age. But maybe that will change as well. Imagine taking your pants off, lay down on the bed with your eyes closed and just surrender yourself to another person, with soft skin and warm breath. Hear the sound of a jumper falling on the floor, inside-out. Feel how the bed rocks when someone glides down beside you. This is how Pirkko has it, she deserves it, and I'm happy to provide it for her. But to be perfectly honest, it would be nice to be the person in the bed from start, for once.

In any case, I'm pretty nervous. I've never been good at making smalltalk with strangers. Just imagine the pressure when you're in that room with the women the computer has determined you perfect match. And imagining Pirkko is in the same position at the same time someplace else. I'm not very enthusiastic, that's all.

Took Juhana to a café with Minni (my job advisor) today. I really like her. It turned out that she is breeding dogs in her parents' old summer house as a part time job. Imagine creating a business of your own just like that. Impressive. I'm taking Juhana there sometime.

Ritva, 25



Ritva 25 year old dairy worker.

Partner with Erkki

Working the night-shift isn't really a problem. We do meet in the afternoons, when Erkki comes home from work. That gives us enough time to eat something and cuddle a bit before I have to run off to catch the bus. Of course, you miss waking up together, but we get that on the week-ends and then it is really special. The only thing I can really complain about is that since I've been home all day, I'm usually the one that cooks dinner. I realise it is easier and all, and that unless I did cook we would probably not have time to eat together, but it still annoys me. Erkki does try to compensate, at least sometimes. He makes me breakfast in bed some weekends. Satu, my girl-friend, complains that he should do some more of the household work though. I'm actually the one that does the most of it. The laundry especially.

Markus and Satu signed us up for this. I don't really know why, as a joke maybe? I'm not looking to upgrade. Satu keeps telling me that I should find a man with a nicer body, keeps saying that I'm too thin for Erkki, whatever that means. I try to tell her that it doesn't work like that, that just because she and Markus rides across the world on a bike and coach each other in the gym, it cannot be like that for everyone else. Markus is a hunk, though, I'll give her that. It was so long since I made love to someone that's not overweight that the idea kind of interests me. To sleep with someone who doesn't get tired after a couple of minutes. But trying to improve on Erkki is hard when you're never around. If I started working the day-shift maybe. But I'd have to nag and I don't want to be like that.

Erkki actually thought this was a good idea. He said it would be like taking our relationship on a test-drive. I'm not certain what that means but I'm glad we can talk about it. I'm not feeling we are a borderline couple on the verge of breaking up. We are pretty happy as is. At least I think so, but Satu keeps telling me that it is just because I've lost perspective on things. My mother remarried after Dad died, when she was 62, so I guess it is never too late to upgrade, right? Anyways.

Mum keeps nagging me about children. Grandchildren, that is. I must admit I'm not too keen. I can't really see myself in the role of being a mother. A lot of running around changing dypers, being stressed and trying to stop them from hurting themselves or try to make them stop crying. It doesn't feel like Erkki is so keen either, which feels good. Of course we've discussed it once or twice, usually after sex, but we usually move on to other topics pretty quick. We like it like it is. I think.



Erkki, 26

Erkki 26 year old computer telephone support.

Partner with Ritva

It's a bit sad that Ritva works the night-shift. It is good money, though, and I'm that kind of person that needs some space and be left alone so being home alone in the evenings is often quite enjoyable. At work, I'm usually on the phone for 10 hours straight with annoyed people that should never have been in front of a computer in the first place. A few quiet hours at home with a book is usually what I need to calm down. Ritva usually has the food ready when I come home; we eat and talk a bit and then she dashes off to work. It works, but, needless to say, it would be nicer to go to bed together and wake up together. Now that only happens on the week-ends when you're tired after a long week. Ritva wants to cuddle in bed and all of a sudden, half of the day is gone. Besides, you could set the clock after our sexlife.

Markus and Satu signed us up for the upgrade. I'm guessing they wanted to enroll themselves but ended up enrolling us instead. Lack of balls probably. I honestly thinks it will be fun. I've actually gotten my act together, started to eat better, work out (when Ritva is working, of course), etc., since we got the letter that said we were going to be on. I'm ready for this.

I've always loathed picking women up in bars and the like. Even though the situation is contrived, I think it will be more relaxed than in a beer hall. Conversations will be natural, I think, since we all know why we're there. No pressure, and importantly, Ritva is in on it all. I don't know what I believe will come out of this, but one never knows. People on TV are usually beautiful people.

Sometimes, I think that maybe I'll fall in love. That maybe that big love will hit me (again) and I'll fall head over heels for someone on the show. That scares me. It is not like when you were in your teens, and "upgrading" (if you can call it that) was business as usual. I'm over thirty, and MARRIED, and if I fall in love, those moments will be captured forever and broadcasted all over the country for everyone to see. It scares me, even if I do long to be REALLY in love again, feel the heart pumping in your chest and be in constant pain unless you are with HER. Ritva and me are good, but I sometimes think we are doing something wrong, or that we've stayed together too long. I want the rush back. Where's the rush?

I've not told anyone, but I'm thinking of quitting my job. Lately, I've come to understand that I hate it. First I thought maybe just work 75%, but then I figured, "fuck it". I've had my life's share of computer illiterates. I want to chill for a while, take a trip or two with the car, go canoeing. Catch up with my life; let my thoughts catch up with my body. Stop stressing.

I need to tell Ritva, but the right moment has yet to surface. I don't think she'll be pleased since she's pretty concerned with money and economics. She wants the economic stability, and I can't say I blame her. However, I think I've made up my mind and going through with the plan is all that's left to do. I've earned more than her for as long as I can remember, night-shift or no, so I think I'm well within in my rights to do this. I do need to tell her, though. Before she gets any idea of buying a new car or getting a house or anything. Then she'll just assume I'm trying to go against her which means I'll have a living hell at home too. She can be very stubborn at times.

Päivi, 24



Päivi 24 year old conference hostess.

Living with Mauri

One thing that has been on my mind lately, for the first time for years, is the one act of adultery that I ever committed during my time together with Mauri. I was drunk and on the way home from some conference with a lot of Japanese or Chinese people that were planning on building some copy of some Danish small town in their country and were selecting plants, looking at architecture and whatnot. Endlessly boring, needless to say.

Anyway, I was on my way home and stopped on a motel and met this interesting guy that was actually a TRUCKER. Very manly, very straight-forward and very much unlike anyone I've ever met. He was from Belgium, I think. He undressed me with his eyes from square one, and I never felt so sexy and exotic in my entire life. We ended up doing it in my room and I never for one second had any problems or second thoughts. It was electric, and made my life brighter for several months after. This was three years ago, and I'd stopped thinking about it, until recently, when we got the letter saying that we had been selected for the Upgrade! show. Since then, it has entered my thought time and time again.

I think we're on equal terms when it comes to this. There's no discontent and I've had some really good years with Mauri. I think that it will actually be fun to see what your true feelings are when you are tempted or how easy it is to fall when someone is trying to seduce you. Even though I'm open for any outcome, I'm pretty certain that me and Mauri are going home together as a couple; otherwise, I would never have signed up for the show. If that was so, we'd be in therapy and not on national TV.

When we decided to apply, we agreed never to ask about what happened with the new partners. Mauri won't keep that bargain, I'm sure, but I won't tell. A deal is a deal.

I think Mauri thinks a lot about kids. He speaks about kids a lot and wants us to move to a bigger apartment and stuff like that. Not really subtle, right? Coming home to dad is even worse. He keeps talking about how it is to live alone and that he would have the time to take care of grandchildren. Always children, never child.

I don't want children, at least not now. Maybe later; when things are a bit slower. A year maybe. Maybe two. I can't possibly run around with a big stomach among hoards of conference guests. Also, I don't like the thing about everyone wanting to touch the stomach. That's way too personal for me.

Mauri, 26



Mauri 26 year old stock broker.

Living with Päivi

I like Päivi well enough. She has the figure of a woman born to raise children, real curves and does not look at all like those thin ones with eating disorders that are standard issue nowadays. Better yet, she's not ashamed of her body. If I can't keep my hand off her, for example if I grab her ass while walking down the street, she just purrs, she likes it. Not at all like Nina, that didn't even want to hold hands. That's good for my self-esteem and I don't have to spend so much time being jealous anymore.

I think we're on equal terms when it comes to this. There's no discontent and I've had some really good years with Päivi. I think that it will actually be fun to see what your true feelings are when you are tempted or how easy it is to fall when someone is trying to seduce you. Even though I'm open for any outcome, I'm pretty certain that me and Päivi are going home together as a couple; otherwise, I would never have signed up for the show. If that was so, we'd be in therapy and not on national TV, as Päivi is fond of saying to everyone that asks.

Infidelity is so much more than just sex. Its the feelings that count. To hold somebody's hand can easily be a lot more unfaithful than sticking a dick in a hole. As long as Päivi and I go home together afterwards, I don't really care what happens during the Upgrade! week. Looking at other women, fantasising about other women, usually leads to a deeper appreciation of the woman that you actually love. When I fantasise about women I see, I usually think that I'd choose Päivi over them. It is got to be an active choice, right?

I'm a bit afraid of falling in love. I mean, I'd have to start that entire learning to trust business all over again. I want to have children eventually, and if I meet Her this week, I'd have to wait another three or four years to make sure it works before having kids. My life's just a big wait, or so it seems. And breaking up now would mean moving house, dividing assets and all that. People that break up must really have an ass of a relationship. Otherwise they would never have the strength to go through a divorce.

Päivi and I have had our years of learning to trust. And I trust her well enough. Mum wonders why we are not married and Päivi's dad talks on and on about grandchildren every christmas. Of course you feel the pressure. I sometime lie awake thinking of children, what it was like to be a child and of course I want one. But sometimes I look at Päivi and hear this strange voice in my head saying that I'm not supposed to have one with her. It is complicated. At some point, however, I have to have children. After all that is the meaning of life.

When we have the time, we work as scout instructors down at the Christian center. I'm not particularly religious, or religious at all anymore, but I do enjoy the kids. Lacking religion conviction, I should probably resign, but I'm not doing that until my group moves on to the senior activities. That just wouldn't be right.



Raija, 26

Raija, 26.

Applying with stepbrother Mauno

I must admit I'm a bit scared about all this, but Mauno is probably right, as he tends to be; he keeps telling me it's gonna go just fine. I just have to constantly remember not to call him "bro." I mean, it is not like we share a biological parent, but he is my brother. And those nick-names are kind of hard to unlearn.

This is going to be fun. Going with your stepbrother must be the best way of doing it. I mean, I don't need to care or worry at all, and if The Upgrade! is no different from other game shows in the genre, then there will be at least a couple of nice hunks there for me to rub shoulders with. I really need a man. It's been a while. I guess it is the biological alarm clock, but I've been thinking about kids more and more during the last couple of months. I've never even gotten pregnant accidentally, so I don't know if my systems are working alright. It is kind of scary, actually. It is going to be a big part of your life and you take it for granted, but there is no telling if it is gonna work. Let's clear our minds of this now, shall we?

I'm between jobs at the moment, so chilling out on a nice big island with a hot sun and free drinks might not be so bad. It will be like the vacation I never had, or rather, never could afford.

I've applied to a dozen jobs. Just things that I'm qualified for and not some fantasy administrative profession. I'd rather be a stylish secretary that answers the phone than running around trying to coordinate a project or something or other. I'm just not that kind of woman. And besides, I really don't want to think about work when the day is over. I have friends and a life and I like it to continue like that. I know my priorities.

This is my boyfriend wishlist: he mustn't be a sports nerd, no endless Friday nights of TV football and visits to stadiums on Saturday afternoons. He needs to want to spend time with me, even during the Champions League semi-finals. Lover, not fighter. Someone that finds out nice things to go to, things to do like water skiing or mountaneering, etc. A good job is also important. A bank teller or a consultant maybe. Perhaps something in uniform. Interesting in bed, or creative. But no ear-blowing.

Mauno, 27



Mauno, 27.

Applying with stepsister Raija

Henrik got the idea to open a coffee shop. He said, all we ever do is drink coffee, why not make some money on it. And if it doesn't go well, it is not the end of the world. This world is all about free business. And the government always pays in the end.

Going bankrupt wasn't really that smooth though. Not only does it drain your funds; it also consumes a lot of energy. I've just recently noticed quite a few of my shirts has stains. Rinkles on my pants. I need to pay off my debts and get going again. Get back on track. I always used to be the winner. Luck seriously needs to change.

This Upgrade! thing is going to be a nice vacation. A few weeks in the limelight, a few weeks away from it all. I used to model, and unless I fuck up royally, I'm just too handsome not to vote for. I'm going to play this beautifully. I'll endure any challenge event. I'm going to be the hunk of the season. Any cash prize will have my name on it. I'll step over bodies if I have to.

Raija is my sister-in-crime, and I love her like if she was my biological sister and not just my stepsister. But I worry: she will try to find THE man here. All good and fine, but the people on the island will be bad people. I can't control her. She needs a man we can trust. I just hope they won't find us out.

I watched the last Upgrade! season closely. Taped all the episodes and collected news paper clippings, and I think I understand the psychology behind it all. All I need to do is connect with the viewers. If Raija hooks up with some no-brain fireman their sympathies will go to me. It's good I picked up a few tricks before dropping out of actor's training. I've got to construct the most favoured couple. Some quarrels with Raija that leads to her hurting me. Perhaps even some crying. The women loves that. We'll just have to find a place where we can plot that's not bugged or filled with cameras.