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Swipe Left For Danger:

The dynamics in Margot and Robert's relationship left me with a productive discomfort because it caused me to reflect on how digital interactions often overshadow in-person interactions in modern relationships, which can lead to misunderstandings or inaccurate perceptions. This tension between the digital and physical world reveals deeper challenges of vulnerability and trust in modern dating. This discomfort was unsettling because it showed how false perceptions could potentially lead to uncomfortable and dangerous situations. Ultimately, it forced me to confront the risks we take when we rely too heavily on digital interactions to form connections.

My initial reaction to Margot and Robert's interactions was a mix of discomfort and frustration. I watched Margot navigate through her own feelings with uncertainty and constantly questioning her perception of Robert based on his strange behavior. The detailed portrayal of Margot's thoughts, particularly her hesitation and self-doubt, increased my frustration but also increased my empathy for her. I saw her struggle with the same concerns that many people deal with in modern dating by wondering what someone's intentions are and who they truly are behind a screen. However, this discomfort was productive as it made me reflect on the risks of developing connections with people through digital interactions. How often do people, like

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Margot, create idealized versions of people when we meet them online, only to find those versions don't match with reality?

The one scene that struck me the most was when Margot started to resent Robert while at his house, but then she felt backed into a corner because she wasn't able to communicate her discomfort to him. Roupenian writes this so expertly from Margot's perspective, which caused me to empathize with Margot's reluctance to confront her doubts. It brought up questions about how often people (women, in this case, especially) find themselves in this situation and feel compelled not to speak up to avoid awkwardness or escalating the situation. Why do social pressures around politeness often leave people (particularly women) feeling trapped in uncomfortable situations? I realize my discomfort came from Margot's helplessness during this scene and a recognition of the risks that come with misjudging someone's intentions.

Another element of Margot and Robert's dynamic that intensified my discomfort was the imbalance of power in their interactions. Margot is presented as a young, uncertain college student, while Robert is older, more reserved, and socially awkward, yet his presence holds a weight that Margot feels compelled to accommodate. This dynamic is reflective of a larger societal issue in which women are often taught to prioritize others' comfort over their own safety. Margot's internal conflict—her desire to avoid an awkward situation versus her growing sense of unease—felt painfully familiar and highlighted the silent, often invisible pressures women face

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in similar circumstances. Roupenian uses this dynamic to expose the ways power imbalances, even subtle ones, can influence decision-making in intimate situations. For me, this reinforced how important it is to not only recognize these pressures but to challenge them in both literature and real life.

Another aspect of Margot and Robert's relationship that increasingly unsettled me was the power imbalance. Margot is an obviously young, bright-eyed college student. Robert is older and socially awkward, yet he's still the one in control of the situation, and Margot feels compelled to accommodate. This dynamic represents a broader cultural issue where women are often taught to prioritize others' comfort over their own safety. When Margot has an internal struggle because she's in an uncomfortable situation where she has to decide between an awkward situation that could potentially be dangerous versus her growing sense of unease. This makes me feel uncomfortable because I know it happens far too often, and even worse, behind closed doors, and women are put in such a vulnerable position. Thus, Roupenian needs this scenario to showcase that even with the slightest power dynamics can influence decision-making in intimate situations. For me, this reinforced how important it is to recognize these pressures.

Looking back on my reaction to reading Margot's story, I felt discomfort as she quickly got attached to the idea of Robert, which later turned into reluctance. This was mainly because her early interactions with Robert were primarily through technology, and once they interacted in

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person, her perception of Robert quickly changed. As Roupenian writes, "She still didn't know much about him, because they never talked about anything personal" (Roupenian 3), which suggests that Margot's perception of Robert was purely based on surface-level interactions that felt exciting yet vague. My discomfort grew as I realized how easily we can create false perceptions of people when interactions are mainly through digital means rather than in-person interactions that give a better understanding of a person's character. Margot is the ultimate cautionary tale of how first impressions can create dangerously inaccurate perceptions and how easily people can fall victim to them.

However, if Roupenian had Margot try to express her discomfort or convey her hesitation to Robert, I would have felt differently. This lack of communication (while realistic) highlights the vulnerabilities that come with avoiding confrontation, leaving Margot in an unbalanced and uncomfortable position.

In this alternate scene, Margot expresses her hesitation and discomfort directly to Robert before they leave for his house. After he suggests going back to his place, Margot hesitates and explains that she's feeling uncertain. Robert is surprised by this, but he still listens to her concerns. Instead of ignoring her discomfort or trying to convince her, he reassures her by saying, "I want you to feel comfortable. We don't have to go anywhere you're not ready for." They both agree to end the night and go separate ways with some level of respect for each other,

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rather than tension and resentment. This interaction would represent an ideal version of what open communication could achieve in modern dating, which is a shift from manipulation to mutual understanding and respect.

If the story included a scene like this, my emotional response to the story would've been less uncomfortable because Margot wouldn't have been in a situation where she wasn't in control. This alternate scene highlights the difficulties of trying to communicate your feelings while also trying to be nice. This is a struggle that is common in modern dating. Additionally, this scene gives the reader a different view of the relationship dynamics between Robert and Margot. It highlights Margot's ability to face tough situations and removes the pressure for her to hide her feelings of discomfort. Furthermore, this alternate scene would've left me with a feeling of empowerment and relief. Also, it would make Robert's character more complex. By having him respect her boundaries, the reader's view of him would shift from a creepy guy into a more considerate guy. This shift would change the story's main critique of modern dating culture into a more hopeful scenario where both people are given space to communicate openly—a stark contrast to the often unspoken misunderstandings that characterize digital dating.

Ultimately, while the original story shows the risks of miscommunication in modern dating, my alternate scene shows an optimistic version. By writing this alternate scene, I was

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able to reflect deeper on how societal pressures and norms impact modern-day relationships and

how they could be navigated more safely.