Next Stop: Infatuation Station

I took the train into Manhattan from Fire Island to go on my first real sober date with Mr. Man. All I could could hear was the conductor of the train saying was, “Next Stop: Infatuation Station.”

November 5, 2018 By Richard JMV

I woke up in bliss. I was excited to start my day. I showered and made myself a little more presentable than usual. I felt tingly inside and wanted more of what I had the night before. A man had gotten in me not just physically, but also spiritually. I could still feel him. It was like in Under the Tuscan Sun when Katherine describes ladybugs to Frances. I understood the reference all too well now.

It was a beautiful Monday afternoon in 2014 on Fire Island and I was working a lunch shift in the summer sun. I was newly sober and discovering what sex and dating was like for me. I was doing that thing where I’d run out front on the porch to see if Mr. Man was walking by. He still hadn’t walked by, but maybe he was at the beach. I just wanted to casually bump into him. He just wasn’t turning up, so I just went about my job. It’s not like we had talked about him swinging by to say hi. I was just hopeful.

Toward the end of my shift, I went out on the porch one last time to talk to a regular customer and ask her if the drink I made her tasted good. I had never made a mudslide while sober, so I wanted to make sure. She assured me it was the best one she had ever had. I guess I hadn’t lost my touch. Out of the corner of my eye, I suddenly saw him. I felt my heart skip as I turned my head and we made eye contact. We exchanged smiles and he parked himself at the edge of the stairs to the porch with his friends behind him. I walked over to him and said hi and he told his friends he’d catch up, and we talked for a second and he kissed me. He liked that I tasted of peppermint. “You taste so good,” he said and kissed me again. There was something about this man that made me lose the little cool I had. I wanted to know him better.

Believe me, we found more time for each other that week. We bonded in public with clothes on and even deeper with clothes off. Every glance and every touch was electric. We sat across from each other, typing notes back and forth to each other in emojis, flirting and making inside jokes. He called me his peach bottom and I loved it. There was even a house down the way from him that said Peach Place and I sent him a picture and he sent a smile in return.

He was beautiful, and I definitely could see him being my Prince Charming because he could turn on that charm and I would feel my body get weak, heart melt, and I would crave him. Each time we saw each other that week he was vacationing on Fire Island, I wanted more. When it was time for him to leave the island, we decided that I’d go into the city on one of my days off. He was

nervous with me being newly sober, but we really liked each other. He returned to the New York City, and I was hoping we could really go on a date.

A week later, I finished my lunch shift and ran to the house to shower quickly and grabbed my bag and ran to the ferry and was city-bound. The plan was that I would stop by my apartment and get ready and we would go to dinner in Hell's Kitchen. I was so nervous and I wanted my outfit to be perfect and to make sure every hair was in the right place. Naturally I had to restyle it. I was rushing around and didn't want to be late for our first official date, but of course I was. He didn't care much and thought it was kind of cute. I had an overnight bag with me because we had talked about me staying over at his place that night. I was getting to see inside his real life, and I liked it.

At Room Service, a Hell's Kitchen Thai restaurant, we sat and bantered back and forth. We smiled and rubbed our knees together under the table. My heart was racing, and all I could think about was getting back to his bed and tearing every article of clothing off of his perfect body. As we ordered our dinner, we realized we both had dietary restrictions. I was Paleo and he was Atkins. Dinner was really amazing and we just understood each other in that moment. We left the restaurant and we put his arm around me and kissed me as we walked toward the train to head to his place. He also held my hand.

HOLD UP: Guys don't do this. Guys don't hold your hand in public. They just don't, at least not this soon. They don't do it in Hell's Kitchen. They don't want other gays to think they're taken. There was something very different about this guy. I liked it. I held his hand glowing and the smile was not leaving my face anytime soon. It was like in Chosen, the final episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, when Spike and Buffy grab hands and their hands ignite in fire from the passion. Yeah, it was just like that except no real fire.

We got off the train in Brooklyn. We strolled from the train, and he made sure we stopped at this place called Momofuku Milk Bar where he insisted on paying for dessert because I grabbed the check at dinner. He order a piece of Crack Pie and Cereal Milk ice cream with cereal bites on top. I had never seen or heard of this place, but if he said it was good, he must be right. Like Jasmine did with Aladdin, I trusted him. We sat on a bench outside on the sidewalk where garbage was piled across from us and he giggled and said, "Only in New York is it romantic to sit and eat ice cream across from rotting garbage."

I didn't care. I loved everything about this moment. He had me try pie, and then put the ice cream cone in my face to lick it. It was so good. I remember to this day something he said that night. We spoke briefly about sobriety and he said, "If for nothing else, do it for vanity." I laughed because as a gay man, he had a point. Preservation is important to me.

We got back to his place and I hopped in the shower. I was nervous, so many thoughts going through my head. This was real. We were at his place, not on Fire Island. We weren't just having fun. We were dating. I guess that's what it's called when you're going on dates and the added bonus of the sexiest man taking you home. We got into bed and cuddled and giggled.

All of the tricks I had learned to entice guys weren't working, it was awkward when I wasn't being

authentic, so I just allowed myself to be me. He liked me; the real me. He started kissing me and I returned the favor. The way he touched me made my temperature rise, and his body pressed against mine. We were entangled in each other and we rolled around naked. I made my way down his body and everything felt perfect and incredible. He was a lover. He said that everything about me felt perfect. He put on a condom and we were one perfect rhythm. I still wanted him in me, giving himself to me with no boundary between us. I wanted all of him, but still I knew using a rubber was right. We were being responsible adults.

This man was absolutely incredible in every way imaginable. We woke up the next morning cuddling and kissing. He laid in bed for a few minutes before he told me that it was time for him to get up and get ready for work. He started with his morning routine of prayer and meditation, and I really thought it was sweet. I hopped in the shower just so I'd be ready to leave when he was even though I wanted to spend all day in bed with him.

On the way out the door, he grabbed himself a protein bar and asked if I'd like one. They were called Quest bars. It was chocolate chip cookie dough. I assumed that all protein bars were all gritty and tasted gross. He promised these were better. He handed one to me, and I read the statement on it: "You are on a quest. Never stop." It made me happy. It motivated me a little. I pulled back the wrapper on the way to the train with Mr. Man and took my first bite—I was definitely on a quest.

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