Putting Down the Drug, Picking Up an Addict

Plus: A moment of reckoning while on tour with Miss Fame.

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When I was a kid, I was taught that having a strong will was a good thing. I mistook this to mean that being stubborn was a good thing. I knew everything. My way was always better than someone else's advice because others didn't understand me well enough to realize that I know what works best for me. What works best for me led me to seroconverting and finding myself entrapped in drug addiction. I made these choices that I'd have to learn to live with.

Have you ever woken up in a state of fear? Sometimes it's mixed with shame and regret? I woke up one morning feeling scared of the world and what it might mean now that I had just relapsed on meth. Could I call my sponsor?

On this particular morning, I awoke next to a man that I shared a relaxing night with—a night that followed a drug and sex binge that included him. But on the night he and I actually slept, we had eaten pizza and those chocolate molten cakes from Dominos. This guy in 33J had no idea that I had relapsed. He had no idea I had been sober before this. I wondered what he would think if he found out. Why was I ashamed of my sobriety? I found out he was also HIV positive, so I felt completely comfortable with him in that arena. We found each other, so maybe this would be the man for me.

If you've been following my story up until this point, you'll notice a trend with me. If a guy is attracted to me and accepts my HIV status then I immediately hear the wedding bells ringing. If there's one thing I've learned, it's not to answer the door in a wedding dress—which kind of sucks because I would look killer in a Dior gown, don't you think? Anyway, I only learned about my dating patterns by making mistakes. Oscar Wilde put it best: "Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes."

First let's give 33J a name because calling him 33J is a little ridiculous as he will be popping up a lot over the next few entries. We shall call him "Collin" and not because his real name is remotely close to that, but because it's the name of the character in the original 90210 that becomes Kelly's boyfriend—the guy who is a huge drug addict and sends her spiraling thanks to her lovely codependent nature. I guess that about sums up where this story is headed, right off the rails. Talk about character development.

I called my sponsor and told him what happened with my relapse, and I agreed to meet him sometime that week, but first he suggested that I make an important phone call. I had to practice rigorous honesty, and that meant that I might lose out on recent opportunities that had come my way. At that time, I had started touring with Miss Fame from Rupaul's Drag Race S7. I was hired under the impression that I would be a reliable and sane travel companion and choreographer—not a giant mess. The booking was a job, not a party invite. I realized I needed to be honest with Miss Fame about my personal challenges. She wanted someone who wasn't a mess, and at the moment I was methy.

Collin invited me over for some food and to hang out later that evening, but I still was nervous to tell him I planned on staying sober. Would he still want me if he knew I was a sober guy? I had to keep asking myself why I was ashamed of wanting to better my life.

He started telling me about his friends who had invited us to go away for the weekend at a cabin in the Poconos. It sounded really nice and like it could be a lot of fun, but I already had a trip scheduled on my calendar for Chicago to perform at Roscoe's with Miss Fame and Chad, the other dancer. so I declined Collin's offer. He was a little disappointed, but this was the universe working in my favor, because who knew what trouble would have ensued if I had not continued working on the tour. We went into his kitchen and he offered me a cigarette, and something in me said, "Well, it's better than a lighting up a meth pipe." I had smoked during the using, but even though I didn't plan to continue with the cigarettes while sober, I needed something at that moment.

So that weekend, I packed and went to Chicago for the gig. I was walking on egg shells and really focusing on the best ways to stay sober. I looked up meetings, and I said prayers every five seconds. It's what was working for me. I really needed something to help me keep my mind off all the booze around us. One thing that helped me was directing my attention to the gig. It also helped that Chad had a really sound mind. Those damn Marlboro Lights really helped me focus on other things, too.

The gig went better than expected, and I stayed sober. I was able to have a good time, but as we returned to NYC, I felt myself needing a meeting. However, I had made plans to go to Collin's and have dinner and chill out. My phone battery was low, and I was afraid to tell him I needed a meeting before anything else, including before having dinner with him. Worried of what he might think, I made a decision and went to a meeting without alerting him I'd be late to his place. I figured it would help for the time being.

After the meeting I headed over to his apartment where he was more than a little upset with me, spewing mean comments about how I was like every other tweaker, not showing up when I said I would. He even went as far as accusing me of probably getting plowed by a bunch of guys instead of showing up for dinner. I swore up and down that I hadn't been with anyone. As we sat in his kitchen, I was afraid to tell him the truth, but it had to be said.

"Collin, I'm sober," I told him. "I was at a meeting. I met you on a relapse, but I want to stay sober. My life is better when I'm living it sober, and I'm not truly living unless I'm sober."

He had been pacing back and forth, but he stopped dead in his tracks, completely shocked by my announcement. “Richard, I just did G thinking you weren’t coming. I invited friends over, and you’re going to spring this on me? I heard you had been sober, but wasn’t sure.”

We talked about it for a few minutes, and he said he wanted to get to know me, and maybe, just maybe he thought that this could be a good thing for him.

His friends arrived, complete hotties. Almost immediately they were getting naked after putting their stuff down. They took out their drugs and their paraphernalia and got out glasses and poured juice from the fridge. Collin promised he wouldn’t get high with them as they got naked and started having sex in the other room.

I stood in the kitchen chainsmoking and wondering why he wouldn’t ask them to leave. I guess I was being a party pooper. I was too scared to leave because I worried he might pick up drugs, too. But after a while, I decided to head out, knowing that I didn’t want to get stuck in the mix.

Why was I so into this guy who seemed so bad for me? I felt so attached to him so quickly. It was so hard to find guys who wanted me and accepted my status, but he faced the same problem, so we connected. I thought we could be good together.

My exit wasn’t a goodbye at all. Oh no, it was the beginning of our relationship and the many roller coasters I was sure to experience over the next year.

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